

**Ghanaian Men And The Performance Of Masculinity: Negotiating
Gender-Based Violence In Postcolonial Ghana**

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Abstract

Within contemporary scholarship on formations of gender and their connections to violences, important questions concerning the politics of masculinities arise. Leading scholars, such as Kopano Ratele, argue for African contexts to be theorized beyond frameworks developed by scholars such as Connell, Kimmel, and Messerschmidt, whose research is grounded in work outside the continent's histories. At the same time, many scholars and policy-makers share the recommendation that global goals for a sustainable world-order demand the reduction of violence, especially violence against women and girls. Masculinities scholarship has, overall, explored the meaning of violence against women for diverse masculine constituencies in much less depth than it has engaged questions of the constructions of hegemonies, the experiences of violence within men's own lives, and the impact of changing economic and political orders on constructions of masculinity.

This thesis seeks to address the gap between theorization on masculinity which respects diversity and complexity and theorization on violence against women, particular intimate partner violence within marriage, which tends to imagine a homogenous perpetrator: husband. It is vitally important to investigate and contextualize the discourses of people gendered as 'men', within very specific contexts, to explore the connections made between 'becoming men' and the meaning of domestic violence in their own spaces. Of particular focus in this thesis is an interrogation of the place of domestic violence in men's social worlds. The thesis contributes to knowledge on masculinities by offering an unusually detailed set of culturally sensitive and contextual insights into the social world that is iteratively navigated by married men in a manner to gain recognition as credible, a world in which previous research has already revealed to include women's experiences of abuse, discrimination, and stigma from their husbands.

The thesis uses qualitative methods to generate material from men in north-western Ghana through in-depth interviews and focus group sessions. The work takes as a useful entry point the lived experiences, language, and vernacular understandings of people who are, in twenty-first century Ghana, legally criminalized for domestic violence. While such criminalization is welcome, from diverse points of view, the research undertakes a complex qualitative search into how possible 'perpetrators' themselves construct the connection between masculinity, the contemporary socio-economic order, and violence against

women, especially wives. The material is analyzed intensively through thematic discourse analysis, and the argument overall is that that violence against wives is discursively connected to how the 'states' and 'citizens' discursively construct masculinity, femininity, and the credibility of violence within a larger gender-nation battle. The analysis simultaneously reveals a dramatic distinction between the construction of violence against wives as legitimate 'correction' (something far from a criminal court) and its construction as 'abusive,' and thus potentially actionable. This distinction alone deepens an understanding of the difficulty of implementing any Domestic Violence Acts, and also leads to questions about the construction of homosociality as a zone of safety and status, one threatened by behaviour from twenty-first century wives.

This thesis both confirms earlier research on masculinities and domestic violence in its clear revelation of discursive collusion between men on the appropriate forms of disciplining intimate partners, and also suggests some debate in this collusion. The overarching contribution of the research comes in its argument that the possibility of domestic violence is embedded within contemporary meanings for masculinity, wifhood, marriage and the nation.

Key words: men, masculinities, Ghana, domestic violence,

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If I may use the words of the great Sir Isaac Newton, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” ‘Standing on the shoulders of giants’ is exactly my experience, having come to this far in my academic journey. This thesis would never have been possible without the expertise and assistance given to me by many individuals. The journey has not been easy; the challenges have been enormous, but through a collaborative and supportive work from many individuals, our various efforts have been paid off. To the many individuals who contributed directly and indirectly to this project; to you I acknowledge my deepest debt.

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I owe much of who I am today to my parents, especially my father. But for my father, this dream would not have materialized. My father’s words to me when I dropped out from school were, “Isaac, education is the only asset that can help you. I was not privileged to attend formal school. I am ready to sell whatever I have to send you to school”. I am hugely indebted to my parents for instilling in me a spirit of hard work, discipline, personal sacrifice and perseverance. They have helped me developed tolerance for frustration and the spirit to defer personal gratification for beneficial future consequences. To my siblings, I cannot express my feeling for your constant encouragement. You always believe in me and my intellectual abilities and this belief has kept me soaring. Also, never enough and inexpressible thanks to the one who does not want to be named here, but she knows who she is to me. I love you for your relentless encouragement Alice (Mama Alice I call you). And to my son; Kilian, thank you. You have endured my absence and I understand the pains you went through in moments when you needed me most. The price of my absence is this proud

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my parents; Mr. Abraham Dery and Mrs. Albertina Dery. I am deeply appreciative of your enormous support and love. In the year 1994, you both made me to understand that you cherished one thing which neither of you had the opportunity to pursue. I am proud to represent the Dery's family today in my capacity as a son to have achieved what you both longed for. You both cherish what you would call 'the White man's hoe' (formal education), but you never had the opportunity to pursue this dream. In many of our conversations, you told me painfully how you treasure this 'White man's hoe'. You could not go to school, but you entrusted your scarce resources in me and I am proud today of that investment. I dedicate this thesis in recognition of your own aspiration and I stand on behalf of your children to say 'ye gerebanye neng ye nang dema a gaa ne sakuul'. You have always believed in my intellectual abilities as early as Primary school. Your love, prayers, and immeasurable support have been my source of strength and thus sustained me to complete this race.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract..... | 2 |
| Acknowledgement | 4 |
| Dedication | 6 |
| Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION AND TRAJECTORY OF THE RESEARCH..... | 10 |
| Focus of this study | 16 |
| Research questions | 17 |
| Outline/structure of thesis | 18 |
| Chapter conclusion | 20 |
| Chapter 2: THEORIZING AFRICAN MASCULINITIES | 21 |
| Introduction | 21 |
| Theoretical Interaction between hegemonic masculinity and African theorizations of masculinities | 22 |
| The emergence of masculinity studies in the context of a rising HIV pandemic..... | 28 |
| Complex theorization of African masculinities | 35 |
| Theorization of African masculinities in the context of colonial constructions of masculinities | 37 |
| Contemporary Theorization around alternative African masculinities | 41 |
| Masculinity and violence | 46 |
| Politics of ‘belonging’, ‘unbelonging’, and citizenship: masculinities and violence against women within African-focused theory | 49 |
| Masculinities research in Ghana | 52 |
| Marriage as a cultural terrain for the perpetration of domestic violence..... | 57 |
| Engaging with the complexities of domestic violence..... | 62 |
| Theorizing domestic violence in Ghana | 63 |
| Battling with the passage of the Domestic Violence Act | 63 |
| Theorizing and contextualizing domestic Violence in Ghana | 69 |
| Aetiology of Violence | 74 |
| Chapter conclusion and focus of current study..... | 78 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology..... | 82 |
| Introduction | 82 |
| Approaching research through a feminist epistemological lens | 82 |
| Choice of a qualitative methodology..... | 86 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Study Context and Participants..... | 87 |
| Locating the research participants..... | 87 |
| Navigating the fieldwork contours | 90 |
| Community entry | 92 |
| Participants recruitment..... | 95 |
| Focus Group Discussions..... | 96 |
| In-depth Interviews..... | 100 |
| Use of language during interviews..... | 102 |
| Reflection on my positionality | 102 |
| Developing an analytical framework | 107 |
| Ethical considerations | 109 |
| Chapter conclusion | 111 |
| Chapter 4: NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MASCULINITIES | 112 |
| Introduction | 112 |
| Binary-based expectations and boys' struggle for incipient masculinity..... | 113 |
| Becoming of age and the hegemonies of age..... | 124 |
| The 'father figure' as a form of surveillance..... | 127 |
| Men's Relationships with Other Men in A Homosocial Field | 134 |
| The problematic of men's relationship with other men..... | 134 |
| Men's constructs of 'successful' and 'failed' masculinities | 139 |
| Discourse of governmentality of the home | 147 |
| Chapter conclusion..... | 150 |
| Chapter 5: REGULATING WIFEHOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDERED HIERARCHISED SPACES..... | 153 |
| Introduction | 153 |
| Modes and processes of regulating wifehood..... | 154 |
| Scenario one | 154 |
| Scenario two | 158 |
| Scenario three..... | 160 |
| Representations of 'marriage' and 'wifehood' | 170 |
| Constructions and discourses of violence..... | 178 |
| Violence as discipline-corrective violence | 185 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Men accounting for their violence..... | 191 |
| Extreme or unacceptable violence | 194 |
| Chapter conclusion | 196 |
| Chapter 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING OF FINDINGS | 199 |
| Introduction | 199 |
| Engaging with dominant arguments in the literature | 200 |
| 'Women of today are spoiled': Engaging with the discourse of time..... | 201 |
| "The good wife" as a tool of masculinity | 202 |
| Tensions and contradictions about meanings of 'domestic violence' | 206 |
| Tackling domestic violence: whose definition and whose intervention?..... | 207 |
| Rethinking domestic violence: the place of vernacular | 209 |
| Chapter conclusion | 213 |
| Reflections and limitations of the study | 215 |
| Bibliography | 219 |

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION AND TRAJECTORY OF THE RESEARCH

While growing up as a small boy in a small village far north of Ghana's Upper West Region, discussion issues related to gender openly and freely, especially sexuality or sexual identities, masculinity, femininity, domestic violence, among others have not always been an easy discourse. Discourses on domestic violence have always not been easy topics for public engagement due to the cultural belief that what happens within the confines of the domestic space should be seen and resolved privately without betraying secrets of the family to external audiences. This current study emerged out of my own personal lived experiences and political ambitions as a gender activist and my deep desire to fight to ensure that society becomes a better space for both men and women. My many years of engagement with social issues in Ghana encouraged me to think that we must continue with the already mounting conversation among dominant Ghanaian feminist scholars such as Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Agnes Atiah Apusigah, Tsikata, and many others on gender. Through a considerable engagement with major scholarship on gender in Ghana, I noticed that much debate has raged over the years in the areas of gender-based violence, masculinity, femininity, socialization, reproduction and sexual rights, and political participation of women, mostly concentrating at the national level. Such research has been a great of source contextually and nationally rooted insights on social norms and the politics of masculinity, thus making domestic violence as a problematic phenomenon more publicly visible. For instance, in a study conducted by Ampofo (2001), it is evidenced that among the dominant norms policing the boundaries of masculinity and femininity are local ideologies and ideals of how to be a 'man' which is expressed differently from femininity. With this as a theoretical backdrop, Ampofo (2001: 198; see also Ampofo and Boateng, 2007) suggests that being a man or woman should be treated as a contextual framing since every society has set of rules and ideals, both overt and covert, that govern what it means to be recognized as a man and a woman respectively. These norms and ideals, the author noted, operate at different levels as powerful regulatory frameworks in which any form of deviations or non-compliance with such dominant cultural expectations are severely sanctioned and outcasted. Suggestively, these norms shape the nature of interaction and flow of relationships between men and women as gendered beings.

But my interest in researching what I would describe as a fairly understudied field in Ghana has generated countless moments of critical reflection and questioning. Right from conceiving and conceptualizing the idea that birthed this research, to the stage in which I had to commit myself for a whole three-year period researching and reflecting on discourses on masculinity and gender-based violence, it has been a whole period of anxieties, trauma, questioning, apprehension, and a range of experiences. The anxieties of researching discourses on masculinity and violence stem from my own positionalities as one of the participants (Dagaaba men) who I am researching. Talks on masculinities (and of course, a discourse that has always been contrasted with femininities) have never been common discussions, especially in a father relation with his male children. Fathers are traditionally required to train their male children, as mothers do to their female children, up to acceptable standards. While I have spent a significant segment of my life with my biological father in the village, I have not had enough exposure to basic issues on gender and sexuality except learning them from colleagues outside the home space. Neither my father nor my mother were willing to venture into discussing what appeared to be 'tabooed' topics. Discussion around sexuality, for example, were seldom surfaced. My father was training me and my siblings to be morally upright and different from those who were perceived to be morally rotten. This was probably due to our religious values that preach children ought to be obedient and loyal to whatever their parents tell them. Discourses on the meanings of being a man, who ought to be different from a woman, were always common in daily conversations, but being a child takes away your right from being curious and to interrogate further. Traditionally, a good child is one who only listens to elders and asks few or no question at all when in a conversation with elderly people, including parents. When a child cultivates the habit of only listening without asking curious questions in the cultures of the people of the Dagaaba tradition, such a child has always been touted as a disciplined and obedient child. This cultural wisdom has always, and is still guiding how children interact with their elderly counterparts among people of the Dagaaba extraction. Traditionally, what parents tell their children has always been perceived as the best narratives that every parent wants his children to hear and learn in the ritualization and socialization process of growing up as adult.

While growing up in a large compound, comprising of many extended family members as it used to be the case, I witnessed different reactions, behaviors, and attitudes of adult men in the family. Many metaphors and scenarios seeking to communicate, subtly, the boundaries of masculinity and femininity were common. In some circumstances, such metaphors and scenarios were just inexplicable to me to comprehend as a supposedly disciplined and obedient child. For instance, in some cases, my paternal uncle would communicate his position as a husband and yirdandoo through the metaphor and threats of violence as normalized masculinized traits. During one of my uncle's encounters with his wife, he was heard to have told his wife this; "If you joke with me today, I will kill you, bury you here and no 'dog' will raise a voice". With similar behaviors exhibited by my mother in the same compound, I would hear my father tell her: "You know that I don't want to treat you like the way other men are treating their wives. Don't force me to be like them". Growing up in the midst of these contradictory experiences and being constrained by my position as a child to unravel the meanings of these constructions and experiences, I only became alert, after taking a course in gender and development at my undergraduate days that I was exposed to theories of masculinity and femininity. In fact, in one of the selected readings for the course, I managed to grasp the meanings of the discourses that both of these men were seeking to communicate. Both my father and my paternal uncle were deploying discourses on masculinity and femininity from different lenses. For my uncle, being a husband gave him the cultural license to imagine killing his wife and expecting no 'dog' to raise a voice on his gruesome and murderous behavior. And for my father, he knew of the range of destructive and unproductive behaviors that other men put towards their wives. He is capable of becoming like any ordinary man who maltreats his wife if he is stretched beyond his point of tolerance. Essentially, both of these men's positions suggest that the kinds of behavior a wife put up towards her husband at a specific time has much influence on the sorts of reactions, behaviors, and attitudes to expect from a husband. And some of these behaviors are perceived as normal as seen in the words of my paternal uncle; 'no dog will raise a voice'.

After enrolling in the gender and development course during my undergraduate days, my interest to know and learn more about gender, especially masculinity and femininity, initially from a cultural perspective, was triggered and strengthened. One initial plan was to

familiarize myself with the range of discourses that prevail in the circle of men and women, especially in rural Ghana. As part of deepening my perspective on gender, I spent some months with Plan Ghana; an international child-centered NGO in the Upper West Region as an intern. As part of my role as an intern, I was charged to document, through field observation, the gender dynamics between men and women in a farming project which sought to empower rural women. One interesting observation in almost all the communities was that women who hitherto expressed interest in participating in the farming project finally withdrew from the project and their explanations were difficult to believe. Their excuses were that their husbands did not support their participation because their participation will destabilize men's position as men. In other words, women's participation in the said project will potentially enable women usurping in men's position as capable providers which was considered a serious taboo. In order to ensure that women do not break such cultural taboos, the best option was to withdraw from the support that the NGO was offering to women in agriculture. Meanwhile, women were noticed to be largely in charge of ensuring that food is ready for the husband any time the husband so wished to eat as noted by Dery and Diedong (2014). The irony was that men's position as capable husbands were limited to providing raw grains to wives and the latter must ensure that raw grains are transformed into edible food and such food ought to be judged to be enjoyable by a husband. My interest did not end there, but stretched into a Masters' Degree in Gender Studies, where I took questions of violence against women, women's rights, and rural poverty centrally into my own theoretical thinking and research.

My fears of researching 'tabooed' and 'private' topic; domestic violence, became heightened, but this time around, there was some form of positive push and encouragement that after all I am not alone doing such research. This force, I ought to argue, pushed me beyond my initial interest in researching domestic violence from cultural perspective. As I put together my initial thoughts in the form of a research proposal, and having contacted Professor Jane Bennett who gladly welcomed my interest to explore domestic violence as an increasingly complex issue, to a large extent, Jane had already figured out part of my fears. Jane went like, 'Kopano Ratele has written a lot in the area of masculinity studies in Africa. He is a great scholar in studies on masculinities in Africa'. In my initial proposal, I did not make masculinity a core theoretical lens of my study. I did not

include masculinity as a core component of my study because I thought that I would be over stretching on the cultural limits by researching only tabooed topics. This raised fundamental questions on how I could manage with very elderly men on topics that were considered tabooed for a child like me in the eyes of my participants. Although discourses on gender are central in daily interactions, open discussions on masculinity and femininity are largely perceived not only taboo, but evidence of lacking moral virtues in the cultures of the people of the Dagaaba tradition. This fear surfaced strongly in my interaction with elderly men in the study as demonstrated in the section on positionalities. Upon extensive reading of the literature both in Africa and in global context, I could draw on the experiences of other researchers to overcome such fears.

My interest and aspirations in social issues became more intensified when, together with some colleagues, we undertook research on the meaning and process of access to and control over land as a fundamental asset of livelihood among peasant farmers in contemporary Ghana. This study was to complement my extensive field experience while working as intern with Plan Ghana. Through the said study, we engaged with the various debates that underpinned the dynamics and complexities of access to and control rights over land among men which was different from women. In other words, the social identities of women constrained them equal access and/or no ownership rights over landed property compared to their male folks. Significantly, we theorized that there was a perceived clash between modern discourses on gender equality and equity and unproductive cultural values and norms that affected the social standing of men and women in society. From the said study, it became clear that ascendancy to positions of authority such as chief, head of household, and inheritance were based on masculinist notions (Dery *et al.*, 2013: 1583). The masculinist notion further points to a dichotomy of women as 'crop owners' and men as 'owners of land' and everything within it. Based on this and the evidence that women have little or no access to productive lands, we argue that women's potentials to contribute to overall productivity and nutritional supplements of families are hugely hampered. The situation also renders women economically marginalized—dependent on men—hence their ability to contest violence tendencies is hugely compromised. The situation becomes more complicated when cultural norms are unfairly used to deny women their legitimate access to their deceased husbands' property (ibid: 1585)—even though land was seen as family-

owned and women belong to families, women were found to belong to no family when it comes to property sharing or inheritance. Women needed to negotiate access to land through gatekeepers such as husbands and landlords—another masculinist zone that women struggled to navigate. The feminization of poverty in the Upper West Region was evident to be influenced by complex web of factors, some of which have enumerated above.

My scholarly and theoretical engagement has enabled me to understand that domestic violence is an 'insidious enemy' which is perpetuated by matrix of factors in Ghana. Such factors are endless to list here, but for purposes of clarity, contextualized construction of masculinity and femininity, traditional gender role ascriptions, gendered socialization, cultural norms, patriarchy, and ruling relations of power could be cited here (Ampofo, 2001). In my previous study (Dery and Diedong, 2014) which explored domestic violence from the perspectives of few adult men and women, it was observed that issues of masculinity and femininity were key drivers of domestic violence. Participants indicated that when men's sense of masculinity is endangered, they imagined violence as a readily available alternative; a position the current study is interested in exploring further.

Pulling together all my findings as well as my field experiences, it is suggestive that even though men held some progressive perspectives regarding domestic violence and gender relations, these perspectives became complicated and over shadowed by traditional or conventional norms surrounding toxic ideologies and gender stereotypes, including ideas on what Ratele (2006) terms as ruling masculinity and emphasized femininity. I should add that there were mix of perspectives (as revealed by my research), some of which contest or resist dominant gender norms, an intellectual lacuna appears apparent hence the need to further engage these differing perspectives in relation to men's discursive framing of domestic violence. Based on the findings from my previous research and my own lived experiences, it has always been the recommendation that more nuanced and in-depth research is needed to further our understanding on men's constructions of gender and masculinity and how this influence domestic violence in contemporary Ghanaian society. How do dominant cultural ideologies, norms, and discourses on masculinity relate and shape different forms of domestic violence against wives? Findings from this project are anticipated to deepen the already budding conversations on masculinity, femininity,

sexuality, and domestic violence; territories which have been considered as tabooed areas in the local realm of thinking about being men and women.

Woven together, these subjective experiences, exposure, and research form the core foundations for interrogating men's discursive constructions and representations of masculinity in the context of gender-based violence at PhD level. In a way to comprehensively understand and theorize domestic violence in Ghana's Upper West Region, I embark on this PhD project to explore how men embody, (re)produce, and represent masculinities and the ways through which these productions, embodiments and representations of masculinities may, or may not, encourage acceptance of violence against wives. I argue that men should be approached as a complex class of gendered beings who embody different interests. While some men may endorse traditional models of masculinities, that is, trying beyond imagined limits to live up to dominant ideologies and representations of masculinities which may involve violence, many men may resist violence as alternative to fulfilling normative masculine identities.

Focus of this study

Through my previous research and engagement with the burgeoning literature, I realized that certain voices were less dominant but such voices matter a lot in the fight against domestic violence. Following this identification, I began to question whether enough conversation and engagement with the voices of men has been a well-covered territory. I consistently asked myself these questions; "To what extent have men's voices been added to the debate and chorus of voices mostly from the viewpoint of women especially on men's violence? How can a critical exploration of men's discursive constructions of masculinity and men's own subjective experiences and realities contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of the meanings of domestic violence? After a, thorough firsthand informal conversation with many men and women on the discursive meanings of being men, I realized that there were always tensions and pressure in men's negotiation with their position as supposedly responsible men and husbands. In fact, from some informal conversations with especially Dagaaba men, it came to light that many young men found themselves confronted with enormous social pressures to navigate in order to attain respectable social statuses. With this as a form of anecdotal evidence, my research interests and theoretical thinking began to develop and widen further by each day. Throughout many

of such informal conversations with both young and adult men, discourses on gender normativity, especially ideals on masculinity and femininity, patriarchy, marriage, cultural norms, expectations, and obligations, socio-economic pressures, and expressing some degree of 'social belonging' and respectability emerged as dominant discourses.

Upon spending a considerable amount of time reading and engaging with the literature, I noticed that much discussion has gone on among many scholars, but at the same time, something very critical is less explored. In other words, while the literature suggests that much debate has raged among different scholars in Ghana, the voices of men on their own reflections and theorizations on masculinities and social change introduced by modern discourses and values and how such reflections and theorizations influence gender-based violence is less clear. But as Ratele (2016) has consistently admonished, researching discourses on gender-based violence without engaging adequately with the subjective locatedness, realities and experiences of men is likely to yield incomplete narratives. To him, as African researchers, we ought to take the impact of a range of contextual realities of men in relation to men's constructs, meaning-making and negotiations of masculinities seriously. In this study, I propose to interrogate in-depth, the contextual realities of men in their representations and understandings of masculinities as well as men's own experiences of the complex processes of becoming men as such processes intertwine with men's acceptance of domestic violence. By focusing on the voices of men, my study both corroborates and extends theories on masculinities in contemporary African contexts.

Research questions

This study approaches men's violence as a complex social issue that occurs within the context of political and cultural spaces. Approaching men's violence against women as a complex social ill may perhaps enable us to unpack in fine-grained, specific public and private organizing practices, norms, and ideologies that facilitate the normalization of domestic violence. In this thesis, I am interested in arguing that men's violence against their wives does not happen in a socio-cultural vacuum. While acknowledging that a great deal of scholarship exists on men's violence in the context of Ghana, the majority of such studies often situate men's violence as a decontextualized phenomenon- often relying heavily on national dataset (e.g., Adayfio-Schandorf and Sam, 2006; Mann and Takyi, 2009; Ghana Statistical Service et al., 2009; Amoakohene, 2004). The current thesis seeks to depart from

such dislocation of evidence by exploring domestic violence from a range of perspectives, including the wider societal constructs as well as individual men's own knowledges, reflections, and understandings about domestic violence in relation to their representations of masculinity in their day-to-day activities and relationship with wives. I am interested in highlighting men's everyday talks, language, and discourses around the meanings of domestic violence.

This thesis is guided by the following overarching questions:

- a. How do men's exposure and experiences of discursive constructs on masculinity inform their current masculine dispositions and perceptions towards intimate partner violence?
- b. How do men construct, manage, and negotiate their masculine identities meaningfully within a rapidly changing socio-political economy?
- c. What are the social costs of embodying non-violent masculinities in a patriarchally entrenched context of northern Ghana?

Outline/structure of thesis

The introductory chapter has set out my personal and political inspirations and background that motivated my selection of this research topic. As part of the chapter, I attempted to contextualize my own effort, both in the past and in present-day on unpacking the complexities of social issues and ruling ideologies policing gender relations.

In chapter two, I tried to give a detailed review of the vast body of literature, both empirical and theoretical on masculinity and domestic violence as part of a broader continuum of gender-based violence. The chapter examines a number of studies that explored the ritualization of becoming men. The chapter goes on to explore masculinity as a political concept and what this portend for the possibility of domestic violence. The exploration of masculinity as a political construct further engages and looks at a selection of Africanist writings that critique Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity. The second section of the chapter goes on to give a very brief overview of some of the successes and gains achieved around men's violence towards women by the Coalitions of Women's Movement in Ghana. I specifically focus on legal definition, responses, legislation and policy initiatives developed by government of Ghana as part of efforts in reducing gender-based violence. In particular, I highlighted the contribution of women's movement towards the successful implementation

of the Domestic Violence Act of the year 2007. My interest in this chapter is to point out the frontier of knowledge in the areas of masculinity studies, especially within the African continent and domestic violence. By doing this, I am able to situate my own work within the broader conversation on masculinity and domestic violence. The review of the literature further informs the analysis of my data as presented in the analytical chapters.

In the chapter that follows; Chapter three, I set out the methodological framework and epistemological backdrop that largely underpin the research. In this chapter, I provide details and step-by-step procedures, as well as the methods used to generate relevant data, including individual interviews, field observation, and focus group discussions. The chapter further describes the complexities of conducting fieldwork in rural locations which come with its own set of dilemmas. I tried to discuss such dilemmas, as well as the decisions that were taken throughout the field work. Issues on ethics and the meanings and implications of doing research on very sensitive topics are discussed in the chapter, as well as engaging in reflexivity as a researcher.

Chapter four attempts to map out and analyze respondents' discursive constructs and experiences of growing up as men in rural north-western Ghana. The overarching goal of the chapter is premised on a critical deployment of the concept of incipient masculinity as an important theoretical and analytical lens through which respondents' current masculine dispositions can be evaluated and re-read. The chapter concerns itself with a critical engagement with men's understandings and meanings of being a boy in a socio-economically marginalized and patriarchally entrenched society. In tracing the trajectories of growing up as men, I effectively excavate how men's current masculinities are either modelled after what they have been trained to internalize as appropriately masculine, or otherwise and what such modelling portends for the internalization of variable patterns of masculinities. The outcome of such deliberations is to estimate how different categories of men are likely to interpret and translate social norms and expectations of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity in their relationship with their intimate partners in heterosexual relationship.

Building on from the theoretical arguments of previous chapter, chapter five continues to engage with the notion and language that men used to frame 'discipline' and 'violence'. Specifically, the chapter concerns itself with participants' own deployment of homosocial

logic and the language of discipline as a powerful discourse to frame their actions as non-violent towards their wives. By this, the chapter explores what appears to be complex social organization of domestic violence. In engaging with the social organization of violence, the chapter unpacks how men's highly complex relationship and negotiation with the politics of masculinity influences their deep acceptance of their actions as 'discipline' and not violence against their wives. It further examines men's own definitions, understandings, and knowledges on domestic violence. I highlight how contemporary discourses around gender are resisted by men. The majority of men in the study revealed deep resistance, confusion, and tensions towards feminists' configuration and call for gender just, violence free, positive behavioral and egalitarian regime for both men and women. I draw attention to how participants in this study tacitly and effectively negotiated this resistance as threats to their positions as men through the deployment of culturally sanctioned acts.

The final chapter attempts to integrate and summarize the key theoretical arguments of the previous chapters. By integrating them, I seek to demonstrate how the overarching aims, objectives, and research questions of the thesis as presented in chapter one has been addressed. The chapter concludes with some reflections on areas that need further scholarly attention in future research.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have made attempts to describe how ideas about this research were conceived and conceptualized. In doing this, I locate my own research experiences and political agenda as feminist advocate on social issues, especially on gender-based violence. The chapter further details the aims, objectives and research questions of the study with a view to unravelling the discursiveness of domestic violence in relation to men's own theorization of masculinities. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: THEORIZING AFRICAN MASCULINITIES

Introduction

Critical studies on men and men's expressions of masculinities constitute a serious area within feminist thought globally. Such theorization has usefully moved debates away from the assumption that masculinities among men are unilaterally, and 'naturally', associated with a set of traits which inform their desire to dominate and control all women and other less powerful men. While this can be argued to be a fairly recent development in African-centred scholarship, it is important to note that feminist scholarship on meaning of gender-based violence and HIV/Aids has been part and parcel of continental research since the 1990s. The advent of masculinity studies has built on, and deepened, the many inroads made by scholars in women's studies in Africa before the turn of the 1990s, when masculinity studies started to gain a firm rooting as a scientific endeavor (Mama, 1996). Given that questions of political and economic instability dominate much scholarship on masculinities in contemporary African contexts, while realities of violence of myriad kinds are part and parcel of the negotiation of heterosexualities, I argue that critical attention on how to approach African masculinities in diverse settings is vital. Kopano Ratele (2016) eloquently charts the complex territories of African masculinities in one of the most detailed and in-depth engagements and insists that masculinities in Africa constitute complex 'working models' of the possibilities of survival as 'men' in rapidly changing, diverse, and demanding continental contexts. He argues that while some models easily accrue validity, – gaining hegemonic positions within specific contexts, others remain marginal–struggling to work through the prevailing socio-economic and structural realities. Such conflicted and processual masculinities he sees as operating alongside the ruling models, a situation he coins as "hegemonies within marginality" (Ratele, 2016:12).

Drawing insights from the recent work of Kopano Ratele and other African-based scholarship on masculinities as well as recognizing theoretical contributions to masculinities studies within international literature, my aim in this chapter is to weave through a complex tapestry of research through which tensions, conflictual, contradictory, performative, and unstable gender identities are theorized as constantly in dialogue, articulated, contested, forged, and negotiated over time and space. For the interests of my own research, this review is particularly interested in the theorizations of relationships between masculinities

and violence against women, particularly in the home sphere. Shefer, Stevens and Clowes (2010) suggest that such relationships reveal articulations of gendered performance and as Ratele argues the “liberation of masculinities” from historical constraint and complex oppression as black and African entails detailed analysis of localized masculinities, the notion of ‘home’ and ‘tradition,’ and the realities of the facts of gender-based violence (Ratele, 2016).

This chapter introduces some theoretical debates through which ‘African masculinities’ have been researched, imagined, and theorized. The chapter is organized into two main sections, where the first engages with the vast body of literature on African masculinities while the second section looks at theorization of gender and domestic violence, and in Ghana specifically. The goal of the chapter is to illuminate the core theoretical arguments through which my own research has been designed, and highlight the critical terrain to which this research hopes to contribute. In outline, the chapter is structured in four sub-sections: ‘African’ masculinities, key theoretical debates (from ‘African-centred research), international overlays and concepts, debates on masculinities and violence/domestic violence.

Theoretical Interaction between hegemonic masculinity and African theorizations of masculinities

In this section, I attempt to engage with Connell’s theory on hegemonic masculinity and how African scholars have engaged with the concept since its inception in the early 1980s. Here, my aim is to critically assess Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity and how relevant it is in nourishing and guiding research in African context. While Connell’s theory on hegemonic masculinity has undoubtedly influenced (and is still influencing) significant work in the field of masculinity studies, I will make modest attempts to deconstruct this theory as both useful and unhelpful in studying masculinities in an African context. This, I seek to do by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the theory. This study seeks to investigate and analyze how gender becomes an institutionalized product through which discourses on masculinity and femininity are articulated, reproduced and sustained over time.

Key to the conceptual work on masculinities was the notion of hegemonic masculinity, a mesh of traits, roles, and beliefs which constructed an ‘ideal’ masculinity within a given context, and against which other masculinities might compete for recognition (Carrigan,

Connell, and Lee, 1985; Connell, 1983; 1987). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has long been associated with the sociological work of Robert Connell; who took a key interest in theorizing and problematizing ruling class, power, and hegemony. Connell's initial work has been heavily influenced by Gramscian ideas on class (Connell, 1995). Connell's conceptual and theoretical arguments have since penetrated gender scholarship and still attract much utility in current scholarship on gender, social hierarchization, masculinity or critical men's studies, femininity as well as feminist theorization of patriarchy (Ratele, 2016). While Connell and associates' work took seriously masculinities as multiple cultural practices which are influenced by historical development, complex gender struggles, and psycho-social investment over time and space, their theories have sometimes been heavily criticized (e.g., Ratele, 2016; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Demetrious, 2001) across the length and breadth of the globe, especially Connell's later deployment of the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

By hegemony, Connell refers to the point where institutional powers and cultural ideals converged to produce a standard definition and aspirational image of being a social male (Ratele, 2016). Hegemony produces power and hierarchies which may attract violence. A hegemonic masculinity is formed and a particular definition generated either democratically or persuasively. This does not mean that the majority of social actors are in support of the definition, but they may benefit indirectly by holding unto such ideals. To quote Connell, hegemonic masculinity refers to "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women over time and space" (1995: 77; 2005: 77). Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the culturally celebrated ways of being a male in a specific social context, a position which sparks rivalry against other masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is the power of embodiment within culturally and contextually valued ways of being seen or evaluated as a man or a boy; such "hegemonic masculinity" becomes the grounds from which other men and boys measure themselves against the non-ruling masculinity (Ratele, 2006b). Hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, forms cultural prototype with clearly marked expectations as rule of thumb for others. Hegemonic masculinity embodies the production and maintenance of behaviors, ideas, practices, structures, and systems that inevitably

normalize male dominance and supremacy over others. As a result of the many implications of hegemonic masculinity, it is deeply a polemical concept. Due to the dominance nature of this type of masculinity and how it flags rivalry of the existence of other masculinities (Ratele, 2016), only a handful of men can honestly and unproblematically achieve it. Hegemonic masculinity is more of aspirational than a realistic and sustainable socio-cultural project. Despite that only a small fraction of men (and some women) can adequately achieve hegemonic masculine positions; nonetheless, hegemonic masculinity should be of utmost concern to us as far as gender power relation between men and women is concerned (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity can be so powerful and influential that it almost permeates every corner of society. Due to the dominance and power inherent in hegemonic masculinity, it positions itself as the measuring gauge for other masculine identities (Kimmel, 2001).

Although only a small number of men can realistically attain hegemonic masculine status, the pressure is so strong such that men who are unable to assume hegemonic position become complicit. By being complicit, such men indirectly benefit from the patriarchal dividend accruing from the gender discrimination and oppressive structures which disadvantage largely women (Connell, 1987; 2005). For instance, in a context in which violence against women is endemic, men who are not actually violent against their wives but are silent on such violence perpetrated by other men are likely to be charged as complicit. They are complicit because they enjoy indirectly from the generally oppressive system which regulates women's lives (Gqola, 2015). Again, it is imperative to acknowledge that different men have different levels of access to this patriarchal dividend. The hegemonic masculinity thesis however fails to demonstrate the extent to which some men who wield power and authority do not romanticize and glorify normative masculinity through using power unfairly over others or power consumerism. Also, it does not show clearly, the link between men who are powerless in comparison to other men but try to gain authority and respect through tacit consumerism and use of violence against relatively less powerless men and against women.

Even with the fundamental underpinning of hegemonic masculinity, it is predicated on deeply problematic assumptions on power relations as proponents Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) noted in their later writing. Traditionally, hegemonic masculinity was

formulated to analyse structural constraints and power. Little attempt was made to interrogate power and other forms of resistance as co-constitutive. The concept fails to problematize the complexity of power and multiple forms of resistance in the negotiation of gender. Although gender has not been thoroughly foregrounded in Michel Foucault's (1994) theorization, Foucault's work offers nuanced insights into the co-constitutiveness of power and resistance. It is theoretically incoherent and empirically risky to ignore the fact that even in the most powerful group or context, there are likely to be different forms of resistance expressed either consciously or subconsciously. Such form of resistance may manifest itself in a rather silent manner, but by no mean powerless in determining social relations. Resistance could draw on many subtle strategies which may not be the widely known modalities. To therefore project particular individuals or group of individuals as entirely powerful and others as powerless is potentially limiting in appreciating the real complexities of gender relations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Power does not necessarily flow hierarchically, but could be deployed as a productive force in social relations.

After many years of independence among African countries, the shackles and injuries of colonialism are still scarring in the memories of its citizenship. During colonial rule, many models of attaining meaningful masculinity were tempered with, eroded and/or replaced with racist and hetero-patriarchal ideals (Morrell, 1998; Miescher, 2005; Miescher and Lindsay, 2003; Adu-Poku, 2001). African men needed to compete not only with their fellow Black men, but needed to always compare themselves with the White "masters". At the same time, men have their traditional authority at home to protect. For instance, in pre-colonial Ghana, a typical Ghanaian man relates with his multiple wives in better and complementary manner and not in a hierarchical outlook (Miescher, 2005). Hagan (1983) reported a nuanced relationship, collaboration, and interdependence between men and women in predominantly fishing communities in Ghana. Hagan argues that women who operated as fishmongers could determine and control what to use the proceeds from the sales of the fish on independently of their husbands who were the fishers. During colonialism, the concept of men as breadwinners was introduced and Ghanaian men needed to fulfil this as a new way of attaining successful masculinity (Adu-Poku, 2001; see also discussion on Miescher's work on multiple masculinities in Ghana above). Largely,

colonialism widens and undermines the position of women rather than enhancing it as noted by some scholars (Lindsay, 2007).

The question of the existence of single hegemonic masculinity in colonial Africa has been at the centre of much feminist discussion over the years. While acknowledging the influential role of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, many Africanist feminists have pointedly interrogated the relevance of this theory to a continent that has witnessed complex processes. For instance, scholars such as Lindsay and Miescher (2003), Morrell (1998), Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), Fuh (2009), Ratele (2016) and many others have queried the analytic value of a single model of hegemonic masculinity. During colonial period, many hegemonic masculinities coexisted, for instance, the position of village chiefs as a political figure, senior masculinity gained through elderhood, Presbyterian or missionary masculinity gained through religious commitment and leadership, the economic 'big man', and exotic masculinity rooted in access to foreign goods gained through attachment to colonial administrators. Which of these positions is Connell's hegemonic masculinity making reference to? Many dominant African scholars on the theorization of the multiplicity and mutability of contemporary African masculinities have consistently raised similar questions over the past years (Ratele, 2014; Morrell et al., 2012). For example, in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, young men who migrated to eke out meaningful masculinities through causal work such as the young men in the study by McKittrick (2003) in the Ovamboland and those of Lindsay (2003) and Brown (2003) of Nigeria became important economic figures—they became financial breadwinners in the face of challenging economic realities. In fact, it is alleged that some fathers depended on the financial supports of migrant sons to fathom credible manhood (Ocobock, 2017). In the case of South Africa, the discourse of migrancy and its associated privilege of an ability to remit money to family members staying back in the villages became another platform for the negotiation of power relations (see Murray, 1980; Reynolds, 1984). Once men migrate in search of economic fortunes to fortify their masculinity, women became heads of the household who exercise control and authority over junior ones, as well as ensure the smooth running of the family. Leclerc-Madlala (2005a) argues that endemic rural poverty which propels labour migration led to many changes in societal structures in such a way that women are often left behind in the poorest communities where they play a double role of mothers and fathers. In some cases, it is

reported that women single handedly decided the timing of a boy coming of age hence to go through the necessary initiation rites (Ngwane, 2003). What this means is that women who historically were subordinated in the presence of their husbands became powerful figures in the daily management of the home in the absence of male husbands; a position traditionally meant for men. It is alleged that even when men had finally returned home after long period of masculine expeditions and pursuits in the mines, their positions at home as fathers and heads became insecure and tampered with as more and more children associate with mothers rather than their fathers; a situation which questioned the credibility of men as proper fathers (see Posel, 2003; Ngwane, 2003; Reynolds, 1984). Due to these varying positions which all variably offer some form of hegemonic privileges, theorists such as Lindsay and Miescher (2003), Ampofo and Boateng (2007), Groes-Green (2012), Beasley (2008), Fuh (2009) and Ratele (2016) have insisted that it is not always easy, visible, discernible nor obvious in arguing for a single hegemonic masculinity, but rather multiple hegemonic masculinities. In fact, to talk of a single hegemonic masculinity in colonial Africa will be amounting to pushing an unhelpful and unprofitable agenda that clouds myriads of complex realities.

As far as the initial framing of hegemonic masculinity is concerned (drawing on class analysis), it is a flawed concept in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ratele et al., 2005). For theorists such as Ratele (2009) and Morrell et al. (2012), masculinity is always in motion amidst cross-culturally similar qualities. Just like other African scholars mentioned above, Ratele (2009) thinks that it will serve a better purpose when masculinity is interpreted within a web of complex intersecting factors rather than seeing masculinity as a concept of totalizing project. For Ratele, masculinity can best be understood in Africa when read with an intersectional lens as many competing factors are co-opted in the making of African masculinities.

While the theoretical currency of Connell's theory on hegemonic masculinity cannot be in doubt and indeed, has undoubtedly inspired expansive growth of scholarship since the late 1980s till now, African scholars, in particular, are in a battlefield with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity which did not address satisfactorily the myriads of challenges confronting the continent over time. What I sincerely suggest we do as researchers in the field of masculinity studies in Africa is that while we cannot avoid drawing on Connell's

hegemonic theory, we need to be extra careful and vigilant at which point in our conversation on masculinity to use it or not to use it. We need to desist from dancing to a Western tone which composes the constructions of masculinity as universal and timeless essences. As Africans, we exist as a unique people and continent characterize by a gamut of cultural, economic, social, racial, historical, poverty, unemployment, and traditional complexities. To apply Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory wholesale in a complex context as Africa may clouds useful nuances which may very much differ from a typical Western context. My proposal, as Miescher and Lindsay (2003) have already suggested, is that we need to use the theory of hegemonic masculinity more carefully and modestly when theorizing African masculinities. This is because African masculinities are influenced by a wide range of complex and competing forces which are constantly shifting.

The emergence of masculinity studies in the context of a rising HIV pandemic

In what is today known as Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, African masculinities studies has travelled far in history in the African continent (Ampofo, 2006). Masculinities studies have emerged as a mainstreamed scientific study driven largely by research on questions of HIV transmission in Sub-Saharan Africa. The uncanny nature of the HIV/Aids pandemic has generated endlessly frustrating debates and responses in many quarters ranging from feminists to political arenas (Ampofo, 1999; 2006). Despite many years of intense advocacy, research and prevention efforts seeking to reduce the HIV/Aids epidemic, the spread of the disease remains unquestionably high and worrying and greater numbers of women continue to bear the brunt of the situation in developing societies (Ampofo, 2006; UNDAW, 2004: 5–6). The outcome of complex discussions among policy makers, on one hand and feminist researchers, on another, have seen the emergence of two strands of arguments. First, there is growing consensus that more women than men are at a higher risk of contracting HIV; and two, the empowerment of women became an international imperative due to their perceived vulnerability to HIV. Unlike the global South where the mobilization and activism of homosexual movement has led to more attention paid to men's health needs, in developing countries, interventions initially targeted to empower the sexual rights and choices of women in relationships to the neglect of men (Eves, 2010: 48).

Despite efforts seeking to foster quality behavioural change and gender equality as measures in curtailing the feminization of the HIV epidemic, many critical concerns have

been raised over the years as countervailing forces in intervention agendas. Predictably, one of such concerns is the tendency to conflate gender with being a woman; and two treating women as though they exist in a cultural vacuum by solely addressing their reproductive needs. Conspicuously, the gender of men was left untouched or minimally discussed. This created a cleavage between discourses on HIV and gender. The consequent of this neglect, I ought to argue, essentially victimizes the woman as a gender category responsible for the spread of the disease (Campbell, 1997). The detachment of the spread of HIV from a critical understanding of gender misses something very important. This neglect does not say much about the contribution of local notions of masculinity in relation to women's victimization of HIV and men's own implication of the epidemic. In a typically patriarchal context such as sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), women can be empowered to the highest levels, but this may not effectively translate into them having the power and ability to determine and negotiate comfortably and freely their sexual lives, especially in heterosexual relationships (Wood and Jewkes, 1997; Gupta and Weiss, 1993). Another very fundamental debate which has remained little undiscussed is the locatedness of the spread of the pandemic within the context of social and economic circumstances. The socio-economic realities of women feed onto the vulnerability of women to the disease. As argued by Campbell (2006), efforts seeking to offer quality dividends in the field of HIV/Aids must first and foremost tackle issues of growing unequal socio-economic power relations between men and women; a situation which creates facilitative ground for the continued spread of HIV/Aid. What we need to do is a careful and constructive engagement with the complexities of notions of being men and women because gender afterward does not concern only women, but men, too (Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 1).

As a result of the ineffectiveness of earlier approaches to treating HIV epidemic, there is a broad consensus that, gender (masculinity and femininity as social constructs) is an important consideration in the fight against the disease (Jewkes et al., 2003: 132; WHO, 2003; UNAIDS, 2000a). What appears to be a major turning point in interventions, research and policy framing in the context of HIV/Aids is the outcome of the 2000 and 2001 World AIDS campaign trails. The outcomes of these two global campaigns have catapulted renewed interest and investment in the currency of involving men and boys as key partners in discussions around the possibility of eradicating one of the world's most dangerous

phenomena (see Campbell, 1997; Carovano, 1995; Hunter, 2005; UNFPA, 2000). Research on masculinities and femininities has since blossomed drawing inspiration mostly from these early 2000s campaigns. This platform has created and indeed, opened up space for nuanced discussions and understandings on masculinities as complex communities of practices which variously underpin and implicate HIV.

Unfortunately, the constructions of African sexuality in the context of increasing rates of heterosexualized HIV/Aids pandemic have received deeply terrified, objectified, moralized, and stigmatized responses from the international community (Schoepf, 2001). The creation of different categories of 'men' through the HIV-focused research: 'men as multiply partnered', 'men as migrants,' 'men as partners of sex-workers,' 'MSM', 'men as sexual risk-takers,' and 'men as reluctant to use condoms' further muddies the politics of HIV/AIDS. This has been the impact of HIV research on 'masculinity studies' and without doubt, 'African men' have become strongly pathologized within the early research as insensitive to partners, dangerous, and cross-border 'carriers' of the virus. This has led to the reproduction of a regime of neo-colonial constructions of the African continent—further casting powerful and negative images on mostly heterosexual men and sometime homosexual people too. As succinctly argued by Schoepf (2001: 338), the HIV/Aids pandemic that has confronted the continent over decades has seen the reproduction of power hierarchies between African and the West. Such hierarchies, Schoepf contends, are masked in a range of discourses, for example, the willingness and readiness of the West to commit funding and other resources to help fight an African disease—HIV/Aid. This further tacitly reproduces hegemonies between the West and sub-Saharan African because the latter is perceived to be incapable of dealing with a disease which is claiming millions of lives on a daily basis.

The different zones of power politics and tensions that pervade in the context of HIV pandemic has created bundles of knowledges not only between Africa and the West, but between feminists and policy makers in the continent. This has propelled the reproduction of what Foucault (1977) terms as "regimes of truth and contested claim of knowledge" in relation to HIV/Aids discourse. Two competing regimes of knowledge appear quite strongly in the knowledge politics of the epidemic of HIV in Sub-Sahara Africa—the biomedical regime which is informed by positivist and imperialist paradigms deployed by international donors,

on the one hand, and the cultural politics of history between Africa as a colony and the West as colonizers, on the other (Schoepf, 2004: 15). The latter school of thought mostly draws on the discourse of invention and some elements of denialism in discussing HIV/Aids. The two bodies of knowledge have seen innovative and critical debates and interpretations in relation to the pandemic in an increasingly complex context punctured by myriads of political, social, and economic realities across Africa. The complexity of Africa has been a major source of challenge to the biomedical framing of HIV which emerged as a dominant political discourse in 20th century western capitalist economy (Craddock, 2000; Schoepf, 2001). In the context of Africa, individuals do not have the free will and choice to choose what they individually want to do with their lives; people live in spaces which bind together rather than individualized people.

Another danger which has dominated the knowledge politics of HIV/Aids, I ought to say, is the politics of otherness and essentialization. For instance, the western biomedical discourse locates the transmission of the disease in specific groups and age; commonly called the 'risk groups' (Schoepf, 2001). 'Risk groups' is a political description which refer to specific groups of people who are perceived to be the major reservoir for the spread of the pandemic (Craddock, 2000). Of course, while the spread of HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa has been thought to be predominantly common among heterosexual relationships, the debate is more nuanced than this generalization. The 'risk groups' have been taunted as a major source of the disease further creating layers of otherness and shifting of blames (Schoepf, 2001). Problematically, anybody who is perceived to be outside the zone of this designated group becomes a powerful individual whose sexual practices are deemed to be unproblematic, less risky, and safe while painting the other group what Leclerc-Madlala (2005a: 33) terms "dubious visibility". This theorization misses fundamental nuances around the question of social identity as a complex, contested and malleable construct in Africa. Gender identities in African have been debated to be constantly in the making (Morrell, 2001). The consequent of this is the imposition of a dominant hegemony and power on the out-group members (people located outside the supposed risky zone) as sexually responsible individuals while simultaneously silencing and ghettoizing multiple identities in the in-group (people perceived to be sexually irresponsible). The dominant and powerful group is thus distanced from the overarching politics of HIV/Aids while the less powerful

takes the image of a stigmatized and objectified other. Consequently, this has the tendency of communicating to people who are tagged as sexually responsible as safe thus increasing their chances of contracting the disease (Craddock, 2000). This is because such people may be encouraged to think that the disease exists in the bodies of only sexually irresponsible people and among specific cohorts of people. The implication is that, while ignoring their susceptibility, they are simultaneously increasing their chances of infection through other alternative, less dominant routes.

Further, the framing of HIV/Aids as a discourse of specific age cohorts, identity, and gender stands the chance of pushing many other out-group members into practicing what may widely be described as decent sexual thing. As I would argue shortly, one of the most discussed groups alleged to be responsible for the spread of the disease in Sub-Sahara Africa is that of female sex workers and women between the ages of 15 and 49. When this is the generally accepted understanding of the modes and processes of the transmission of HIV/Aids, people may think that it is unproblematic; in fact, it is safe to have sexual knowledge with decent women and virgins who are incapable of transferring the disease unto others (see Craddock, 2000).

The concept of ruling masculinity has been an important theoretical tool among many African-based scholars in attempts to understand the spread of HIV/Aids (Ratele, 2006b; Campbell, 2006; Steinberg, 2008). Ruling masculinity becomes important in the discourse of HIV/Aids because in an environment in which occupying the universally dominant spot on the hierarchies of masculinity is associated with sexual promiscuity, sexual double standard, and the shame associated with being diagnosed with the virus; healthy, safe and responsible behaviours are likely to be compromised. It becomes almost problematic when being a real man is conflated with a man's ability to have access to the body of women and this could involve patronizing in sex purchases. The idea of ruling masculinity is part and parcel of the social world in which males and females' lives are routinely influenced by how social actors see, experience, and act upon many normative ideas on being a male or female.

The politics of dominance and power between the two contracting groups do not operate only at the local levels, but transcend international boundaries. In other words, the HIV/Aids discourse is both local and global. African patterns of sexuality have received its fair share of the global politics on the HIV pandemic. The African male has been historicized to possess

an insatiable sexual desire which gives him the urge to be sexually promiscuous and always looking to satisfy his sexual urge at the least opportunity (sometimes with casual sex workers) as well as multiply partnered (e.g., Ratele 2006; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Pattman and Chege, 2003). Somehow, the essence of such theorization is to facilitate a reproduction of another colonial and imperialist gaze; a situation in which the African male's sexuality is often compared and contrasted with a rather monolithic, healthier sexual practice of their western counterparts (Schoepf, 2001). What is more, the African male's sexuality is already negatively flagged against a pure and powerful sexual practice of the West; a position which creates symbolic boundaries and hierarchies. Even in neo-colonial discourses on African sexuality, different discourses, including the commodification of sex are variously deployed to further paint sexual practices in the continent risk factors for the transmission of the disease.

Again, this is located within a broader framework of blame and group politics. It has been noted that people who operate within the circles of truck-pushers/drivers, mine or casual workers, sex workers, and people largely described as 'youth' are of major concern in the spread of the epidemic in the continent (see Caldwell et al., 1989; Schoepf, 1993; 2001; Craddock, 2000). The interconnectedness of migrancy and the vulnerability to HIV infection has been centrally foregrounded in the work of Campbell (1997). In Campbell (1997), it is argued that migrancy, especially in the context of mining zones in Sub-Saharan Africa become enormously volatile spaces for the spread of HIV and the chain of infection becomes particularly complex and almost inevitable when migrant mine workers return to their families of origin (see McKittrick, 2003). This is particularly problematic, somehow unfair when migrant workers are not willing to test on their HIV status due to local notions of masculinity which conflate being a man to being insensitive, heroic and strong-hearted (Pattman, 2002). The risk of being labeled feminine lies at the core of many men not going to test their HIV status as Pattman noted in his study.

Despite the above arguments; unfortunately, this does not always concretely represent nor come close to discussing, an undoubtedly complex social phenomenon—HIV/Aids. This renders fighting the pandemic an already lost battle even among development interventions. To attempt to tackle a complex social issue by decontextualizing its locatedness within the broader framework of complex meanings of being men and women

is like 'using one hand to clap and expecting maximum sound'. The complex realities that motivate the different sexual patterns and practices of people perceived as 'risk groups' as illustrated above are left unaccounted for by the supposed western biomedical discourse on HIV/Aids. Complex interplay of societal conditions and systems produce and reproduce inequalities that pervade between and among genders, with mostly women bearing the largest brunt of the situation (Bennett, 2008:3; Craddock, 2000: 154).

To be vulnerable or susceptible to HIV/Aids is not only about being a female or male, young or old, heterosexual or homosexual, but it is a question of socio-political conditions. The situation becomes more complex for women to negotiate considering that most of what appears to be unsafe sexual practices are influenced by the growing gender inequality; a situation which also affects women's negotiation of safe sexual practices (Jewkes et al., 2003). This situation is deeply unhelpful towards effort seeking to galvanize rapid and positive sexual behaviors and practices thus further contributing to gendering and feminizing the spread of HIV/Aids as Jewkes et al. (2003: 130) noted in their study.

The question that may be of interest to many of us in the evolving complex discourses, contestations and politics on the HIV/Aids epidemic which are predominantly embedded in western biomedical discourse versus complex African socio-cultural context is; how sincere are western biomedical discourses in the fight against the HIV pandemic across Sub-Sahara Africa? Is it another form of reproducing a regime of neo-colonialism and imperialism? By attempting to answer these complex questions, I seek to argue that there is nothing very special about these western discourses apart from their intention of reproducing (in subtle manner) different layers of neo-colonial discourses and processes. International donors who seek to reproduce these neo-colonial processes and discourses are ready to offer financial capital and other forms of logistics to states that are perceived to be struggling in fighting the spread of HIV, especially in contexts where women are the large numbers of affected people (Craddock, 2000). International donors are quick to deploy the funding politics to assist because the fear is that countries which are perceived to be high risky or HIV prone can contaminate citizens of other less risky countries through various cross border processes. This is particularly true in the past several years when novel forms of international funding have emerged which primarily target cities in South Africa where the epidemic is alleged to have reached alarming proportions. The framing of the HIV epidemic

as a problem-oriented rather than a complex issue laced with the everyday realities of human lives proved unhelpful (Ampofo, 1999). Against this reasoning, more funding attention is focused in very specific countries and in very specific projects closely tied to HIV/Aids. What becomes more problematic in the process of ameliorating the so-called plights of citizens affected by the epidemic is that funding tends to operate via centralized offices. Donor funds always use what appears to be a top-down approach often relying on government ministries; an approach which further complicates the likelihood of early treatment (Craddock, 2000; Schoepf, 2001). In some ministries, funds that are meant for alleviating the poverty of HIV positive people are diverted into other projects which may have minimal bearing on the health condition of these people. In a complex context such as SSA where discourses of social medicine remain key (Kark, 1974), exclusively focusing on the biomedical aspect of the HIV at the expense of a more comprehensive and locally grounded understanding of the complexities of human sufferings misses fundamental nuances.

Complex theorization of African masculinities

Masculinity as a mainstreamed strand of feminist research in Africa has witnessed a growing scholarly investment over the past many decades. This section seeks to map out the emergence of 'African masculinity' as a problematic category within social science. In particular, I attempt to sketch out theorization of African masculinities as a contested zone in which different forms of hegemonies are contested for. Since the seminal work of Robert Connell on hegemonic masculinity in the 1980s, sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed expressive and innovative debates often assuming multi-disciplinary focus on men and masculinities post 1990 (Morrell, 2001; Lindsay and Miescher, 2003; Ouzgane and Morrell, 20005; Shefer et al, 2007; Reid and Walker, 2005). I should acknowledge that these represent some of the dominant collections of essays within which various authors across the continent presented critical analyses and discussions seeking to grasp the meanings of being on men and masculinities spanning time and space. The growing interest among academics, feminists, gender activists and social thinkers in the 1990s did not only reflect the on-going global deliberations on men and masculinities, but was also inspired by the dividend of research on the HIV/Aids epidemic in the continent as I have argued above. Discussions on the best possible ways of comprehensively fighting the epidemic saw the mobilization of different forms of discourses. However, what later became apparent in

much of the scholarship was the fact that the spread of HIV/Aids was not only generating worrying concerns, but it was deeply implicated in processes of gender (e.g., Wood et al., 1998; Leclerc-Madlala, 1999; Shefer & Foster, 2009; Vetten and Bhana, 2001; Pattman & Chege, 2003; Jewkes et al., 2003). With this body of evidence, a window of opportunity was created for further exploration and engagement with the gendered processes, patriarchal roles and power relations and their implications on the interactional relations between men and women, on the one hand, and among men themselves, on the other (e.g., Ratele et al., 2007; Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Shefer et al., 2007; Swart et al., 2002; Mills and Ssewakiryanga, 2005; Murunga, 2009).

While enormous evidence has emerged across Sub-Saharan Africa to suggest that patriarchal norms continue to support male dominances and privileges, many writers have started to assert that the same patriarchal norms are major sources of worry for men and boys. This argument has been central in the writing of Ratele Kopano. In Ratele (2008), he argues that while we acknowledge the danger of patriarchy in the lives of women and girls, we must equally be critical on how patriarchal norms generate damaging feelings among men and boys. Such passionate argument has resulted in concomitant increase in research focusing on men and masculinities both at the local and national levels, significant empirical evidence generated. The outcome of this saw a shift of research focus from solely focusing on men as the enemy to locating the problems that men cause within the broader socio-cultural context. The impact of the socio-cultural spaces of men cannot be ignored as it influences the enactment of a range of behaviors between men and women, more especially in the wake of growing concerns of gender-based violence. Masculinity is a product of a social system which reproduces and maintains patriarchal norms underpinning the relationship between men and women.

In attempting to map out the vast body of empirical and theoretical literature on African masculinities, two main schools of thought emerge among African scholars. These two schools of thought are a) those African scholars whose research and arguments are fundamentally rooted in colonial constructions of masculinities such as Lindsay and Miescher (2003), Morrell (1998), Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) among others; b) those African scholars whose work problematizes and locates African masculinities as endlessly complex and worryingly tenuous, including the likes of Kopano Ratele (2001; 2006; 2008),

Reid and Walker (2005), Ampofo and Boateng (2007), Adinkrah (2012), Godwin Murunga (2009), Morrell (2001) and many others. The latter school of thought has been very vocal in arguing for alternative masculinities in light of a constantly changing socio-economic-political terrain in which different categories of men negotiate for recognition in their day-to-day engagements. While theorizations from these two schools of thought on African social identities have slightly different theoretical backgrounds; nonetheless, they have cross-cultural dimensions and elements of similarity. My aim here is not to argue of the theoretical supremacy of either of these schools of thought; rather, my focus is to survey, analyse and contrast dominant theoretical debates, notions, discourses and questions around the imposition of patriarchal norms, ideals and expectations on the assigned bodies of men and women within the region of Africa. While my focus is essentially underpinned by scholars from the global south, my review will interact with other literature emanating from other regions of the globe, although on minimal basis.

Theorization of African masculinities in the context of colonial constructions of masculinities

The wide flow of research on masculinities generated through HIV-prevention research is not however the only source of contemporary theory on masculinities in African contexts. There is substantial research often slipping across disciplines which has been conducted in the field of gender identity–masculinity, femininity and sexuality in the continent (e.g., Vetten and Ratele 2013; Clowes, Ratele, and Shefer 2013; Reid and Walker 2005; Shefer et al. 2007, Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Miescher, 2005). As I have hinted earlier, there are two strands of theories on African masculinities; the interaction of African masculinities with colonial constructions of masculinities and the contemporarily complex theorizations. The former school of thought locates African self-identities as fractured by discourses of colonialism. According to proponents of this school of thought, African ways of becoming men and African idealization on what to put up to other audiences as a signifier of masculine maturity and oratory hence social status have been fundamentally tampered with by colonial encounter and the imposition of colonial ideas and ideals on masculinities. In his book *'Making men in Ghana'* (2005), Stephan Miescher eloquently charted a complex trajectory of how cultural identities among the Akan ethnic group of southern Ghana in the early twentieth century were forged, contested, and reconfigured. Miescher insisted that

there were essentially three routes of attaining manhood; a) manhood through the status of an elder–senior masculinity, b) marrying multiple wives and giving births to many children, c) manhood through economic ‘big manship’. According to the author, although age was an important signifier of adult masculinity, an individual’s public oratory and his image as a good counselor and adviser in a period of adversity were emphasized as hegemonic. Unlike the previous generation in which the position of a big man was rooted in a man’s ability to control and wield power over large crowd of family members such as wives and children (Obeng, 2003: 193), Miescher argues that the commercialization and industrialization which came with the colonial van complicated the position of an economic big man. Stretched in a different direction, the position of a big man was opened up and new possibilities emerged. Rather than controlling a large crowd of family relations as the dominant norm (Miescher 2003), trading and commercial cocoa farming became lucrative avenues for attaining the position of a successful big man. Against this backdrop, not only were many men becoming financially impotent; the gendered division of labour became widened and exaggerated as more and more men moved into cocoa farming businesses.

Prior to colonial encounter, most societies in the then Gold Coast operated were noted to operate under the system of gerontology (Lentz, 2006). The arrival of the British colonizers, and in order to ensure that the aim of colonialism materializes, modern political positions such as chiefs were introduced, especially in northern Ghana—which created another zone for contest for power (Miescher, 2005). So, in a typical Akan community during this periodization, social relations were deeply hierarchical. That is, new forms of hegemonic masculinities were introduced and many men appeared to be enthusiastic in gaining recognition in new ways of being men because the old ways of implementing manhood became obsolete. That is, new forms of hegemonic masculinities largely based on western ideals became the main measuring benchmarks. But as Miescher has noted, only a hand full of men could honestly and unproblematically achieve this new status of becoming men of credible social essence.

The terrain was becoming seemingly frustrating among indigenous men to attain the position of meaningful men. What is more, polygamous marriage became an important frontier for many men to negotiate the social terrain of manhood—carving a masculine niche for themselves (Miescher, 2005). For other anthropologists, it has been argued that

marrying multiple wives was actually priced as topknot as women were counted as part of the properties of a man (McCaskie, 1981:486; Goody, 1962: 79). Unlike the past where the gender relations between a man and his wife were expressed in a complementary manner; in fact, the division between what a man could do and what his wife could do were not clearly delineated but this became clearly delineated by the introduction of many ethno-patriarchal discourses including wage labor (Arhin, 1983). As is the case of Ghana, Hewlett (1989) study among pre-colonial Aka groups of southern Central African Republic and northern Congo-Brazzaville reports similar evidence. Hewlett (1989: 101) argues that “men do not have physical or institutional control over women, violence against women is rare or non-existent, both women and men are valued for their different but complementary roles, there is flexibility in these gender roles”. It is even argued that women, especially the ‘*Ohemaa*’ in pre-colonial Asante kingdom which practice matrilineal system of inheritance commanded a respectable degree of power and could occupy positions of political leaders (Arhin, 1983; Aidoo, 1985). According to some authors, the ‘*Ohemaa*’ was widely consulted on important and complex communal issues and her advice was taken with maximum seriousness (Arhin, 1983). The coming of the colonialists and their deployment of a range of paternalistic and chauvinistic languages delegitimizes the position of women; which apparently was put on a lower scale. But the endlessly frustrating moments of colonialism present rather well-demarcated boundaries between masculinity and femininity with the former assuming a more superior and economic position. As it were then and it is still now, successful masculinity is seen in a man’s ability to fulfil his economic mandate as a breadwinner by providing for the gamut of needs of his family (Miescher, 2005).

According to Miescher (2005), the coming of the Basel Missionaries did not give men the leeway to embody better options in their project of masculinities. Rather, men’s enthusiasm was deeply wounded when the Basel Missionaries introduced rather restrictive codes on the meanings of proper men which emphasized loyalty and monogamous marriages (Ampofo and Boateng, 2007). Arguably, the road to becoming a man of social essence became rough and deeply complicated for the majority of men.

Among the Dagaaba of north-western Ghana where this study is situated, the anthropological work of Lentz Carola (2006) has produced some insightful information on the constructions of gendered identities. The Dagaaba, like their southern folks, express

masculinity in a variety of ways in different time framing. While marriage is a key discourse in the contours of manhood among the Dagaaba, it is slightly perceived to be rather problematic, especially for the young males. The Dagaaba are among the ethnic group in Ghana that practice patrilineal system of transmission. By this system of practice, a man demonstrates his manhood through marrying and giving birth, especially to male children (Adinkrah, 2012; Nukunya, 2003; Manuh, 2009: 16). The accumulation of livestock was perceived to be a key marker of successful masculinity because by this accumulation, a father is able to pay off the bride price of his children's wives (Lentz, 2006). Paying bride price is a traditionally valued way of becoming a proper man since by this standard, one becomes an adult male. Like Lentz (2006), Abdul-Korah (2008) linked the migration of the Dagaaba to southern Ghana to normative masculine expectations introduced by colonialism. To him, the Dagaaba migrate to search for better fortunes; what he calls 'bright lights' to compensate them for a situation of bereftness which has rendered many of them virtually incapable men. According to the author, migration was minimally relevant to the Dagaaba kindred in pre-colonial day Upper Regions. The introduction of wage labour and its assorted privileges created an important interface for men of the Dagaaba kinship to redeem their masculinities.

The work of Paul Ocobock (2017) on the *Politics of manhood* illuminates different forms of contestations around the question of becoming a man among twentieth century Kenya men. Like Miescher Stephan's study in Ghana, Paul Ocobock employs similar trajectory by tracing becoming a man pre, during and post colonialism. Ocobock (2017: 1) argues that boys only become of age when their parents marry a wife for them. However, contestations persist between the colonialists on one hand and local indigenes on another on which age should be agreed on as acceptable age for a boy to attain the status of an independent adult man. Eventually, the power of a patriarch to rule over junior ones was disrupted by the British colonial administration (Ocobock, 2017: 2). According to the author, this disruption was a deliberate attempt by the British intruders to interfere with the power of the elder man.

After gaining political independence, Ocobock noted that the majority of his elderly respondents felt that colonialism did little to facilitate the elevation of the position of an elder as it used to be in pre-colonial Eastern Africa. It is alleged of a disconnect embedded in

irreconcilable feelings between the power sharing dynamics of elderly men of the 'good old days' and young generation of modern day Kenya as Ocobock observes among elderly respondents. The 'good old days' connote a period in which elders exert maximum control, authority and power over young ones. This privilege has been eroded by the onset of colonialism as Ocobock argues. New forms of behaviours such as hard-work, law abiding, and monogamous relationship circulated among men during colonial day Kenya (Ocobock, 2017: 4).

Morrell (2007) waded into the raging debate of African masculinities and colonialism by arguing that the institutionalization of colonial discourses which stratified men and women as different groups has been the underbelly of the current models of masculinities among African men. He argues persuasively, that the violence associated with men's projection and representation of masculinity in post-colonial Africa; precisely South Africa is the by-product of the cruelty of apartheid and colonialism. Rather than discussing roundly the violent masculinities of men, Morrell insists that it is more profitable to engage with colonial discourses on gender relations. The colonial stratification of people into racialized categorizations and its attendant power politics negated anything black to violence (Morrell, 2007: 18). But Morrell warns that violent masculinities should not be mistaken for blackness. He opines that to be a violent person (man or woman) is deeply socio-cultural and psychological and not skin color (ibid).

Although the contexts for the discussion so far are far from being uniform, one thread can be extrapolated as common among them. Throughout the discussions, we see that the discourse of manhood does not exist as a predictable construct; but rather, it interacts with changing set of realities. Significantly, it is observed that masculinities are always in motion and this was further complicated by colonialism; a geopolitical project which inferiorized and somehow demonized local notions of manhood (Miescher and Lindsay, 2003). Western models of being a man assume supremacy while simultaneously relegating indigenous models of attaining manhood to the background.

Contemporary Theorization around alternative African masculinities

Among proponents of this school of thought is Kopano Ratele. Ratele's theorization on African masculinities has been noted to be one of the prolific, creative, sophisticated and

contemporary as he is able to rope in his theorization a range of discourses and variables. Ratele's theorization has produced smoldering evidence that locates masculinity as complex and multiple. For instance, in Ratele (2008), he argues that while men and boys vastly benefit from patriarchy which enjoins male dominance and authority over women and girls; boys and men are simultaneously haunted by the same patriarchal system. Ratele (2008) insists that when the terms and conditions around patriarchal masculinities rooted in male dominance change, the situation generates a great deal of panic among men. One tenet of patriarchal masculinity is male dominance. While dominance is not the birth right of only males, just like masculinity, structures of gender relations, gender processes and dominant norms and role expectations of being a man has been foregrounded by postcolonial social thinkers as key discourses in deepening understanding on the complex enmeshment of violence with dominant masculinity in relation to women, children and other men (Ratele 2006). When men perceive that access to such male privilege is unlikely, men begin to question the system (Ratele, 2016: 5). Ratele (2016) argues that different categories of men can actually wrestle with a great deal of energy shifting discourses and ideas on the meaning of being men. When the good old days' practices become unattainable, men may look to implement their masculinities via a repertoire of elicited behaviors. One of the evolving threats of men's sense of manhood is the advent of democracy, discourses on women's empowerment, and the public stressed of traditionally hetero-patriarchal masculinities (Ratele, 2016: 6). This situation leads men to scapegoat women as the cause of the moral panic and identity crisis that pervade among men. It is speculated that some men interpret their identity crisis as a derivative of a zero-sum game in which more women are now benefiting from the dividend of democratic and legislative consolidation (Ratele, 2008). The consequence of this is that men need to explore the range of available discourses which can be deployed to compensate for ruling masculinity in very specific situations (Ratele, 2006).

Some scholars also have noted that the changing economic realities, urbanization, and women's economic empowerment have profound consequences on the meanings of being a man across Sub-Saharan Africa (Ratele, 2016; Amoakohene, 2004; Bowman, 2002; Abane, 2003; Amstrong, 1998). Arguably, these changes are rendering many men across Africa less powerful and dominant (e.g., Silberschmidt, 2005; Cornwall, 2002; 2003). The transition into democratic and post-apartheid state has rendered many men in South Africa less capable of

commanding the needed economic and social respects. The traditional and patriarchal ways of asserting manhood have allegedly been tampered with by the onset of constitutional regime (Walker, 2005). What the majority of men in post-independent Sub-Sahara Africa are feeling is a deep-seated bereftness; a situation which has left many feeling hurt and unable to asset traditional ideology which legitimizes masculinity through display of a successful breadwinning and authoritarian qualities (Morrell et al., 2012; Morrell, 1998; Silberschmidt, 2001: 657; Cornwall, 2003: 235).

It is important I ought to say, despite the changes that the world of men has witnessed over the past several years, some traditional ways of attaining masculinity have not been completely eroded or ruptured (Mungai and Pease, 2009: 96; Morrell, 2001; Ocobock, 2017:57). Perhaps, such expressions have only metamorphosed into something slightly different, but not entirely new. Of course, we cannot discount the important role played by feminists such as in destabilizing the hegemony of gendered power that circulates in the circle of men. Many men are beginning to lose that grip of a patriarchal and authoritarian male figure which was rooted in being a successful economic breadwinner and provider. Many men are paradoxically catered for by their wives due to the changing economic landscape. This is so strong a cause to worry about when men's feelings of nostalgia are evoked upon leading to men's feelings of deeply wounded selves and identities as real men (Walker, 2005).

Despite the tendency of many men to resist change in traditional ways of enacting manhood, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that some men are recalibrating their sense of masculinity by adapting and re-aligning with the prevailing socio-economic practicalities (Morrell, 2001; Walker, 2005; Cornwall, 2003). Despite being aware of the privileges, authority, and power associated with the position of a breadwinner, some men are beginning to take on masculinities which are non-hegemonic. By non-hegemonic, I mean masculinities which do not glorify violence and authoritarian male figures even in traditionally male dominated cultures. For instance, a study conducted by Andrea Cornwall (2003) found that some Nigerian men in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1990s have traded off their position as economic providers and took on more domesticated, inclusive, and less controlling ideals. According to the said study, some participants think that "there are many ways of killing a cat". They achieve self-esteem and

respect through involvement in religious portfolios and achieving higher education (Cornwall, 2003). These are some alternative ways of attaining meaningful masculinity different from the traditionally patriarchal and hegemonic modes. Men are aware of the benefits of the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 1987), but are determined to relinquish this while enacting non-hegemonic ideals as rightly noted by Cornwall.

A growing body of evidence suggests that men's hyper-masculine ideals intersect with other salient subjectivities of men (Clowes, 2013a). Consequently, such hyper masculine behaviours do not affect only persons described as women, men themselves are reported to be vulnerable to different forms of harm (e.g., Krug et al, 2002; Norman et al, 2007). Despite the alarming rates of men who are likely to suffer from their own behaviours and acts, evidence from Walker (2005) which studied young working class men in South Africa suggests that men are beginning to refrain from masculine ideals of their past generations. More men are beginning to open up to embracing more equitable and egalitarian masculine ideals which are not based on traditional forms of manhood. Many men are beginning to see that male violence has huge costs not only to women, but men themselves. The conclusion of Walker's study is that there are masculine ideals which are at the embryonic state. These masculine ideals according to Walker are non-traditional, non-hegemonic, and equitable. These ideals are struggling to find a niche in the masculine ladder but how this can get overwhelming support is largely based on the social context (Walker, 2005).

Taking the discussion further, Godwin Murunga's gender-focused work has acquired momentum in the context of masculinity studies in the continent. While focusing on men, securities and masculinity in Kenya, Murunga's work linking gender-based violence to discursive performance of masculinity has been a source of great inspiration and offers new theorization on the question of men. Murunga (2009) theorizes that masculinity is a complex cultural construct in which many men and their varying interests, attitudes, and reactions to gender are as complex as their framings of masculinity. He discusses this in light of men embodying varying interests and desires which inform their dispositions and habitus to discourses on gender. Murunga, while noting the danger of patriarchal masculinity among men and boys, he admonishes that we need to go beyond normalizing men as sole beneficiaries of a patriarchal system; a system which produces violence, to locating complex desires of men some of which are non-violent (Murunga in a conversation with Jane

Bennett, 2010; Fuh, 2009). Murunga argues that not all men benefit in equal quantity the privileges of patriarchy and that men have an important role to play to consolidate the gains of feminism. He reasons that there is value in involving men and boys in fostering positive behavior hence the necessity to engage with the problem of men in society. While acknowledging that masculinities are complex products of patriarchy, there is always the possibility for positive change since masculinities are not discretely performed (ibid).

Some theorists have equally argued that masculinity and the desire to enact violence are interwoven among some men in specifiable contexts (Barker and Ricardo, 2005; Ratele, 2016; Luyt and Foster, 2001). To be seen acting as a real man to some men is to dominate and control others in different relationships while others may not subscribe to this belief. While different men may have different interest and motivations to, or not, to subscribe to the dominant ideas on normative masculinity which appeal to men to dominate others due to the relationship they have with other people—women, children and other men, it is imperative, theoretically, to fully explore and understand these varying motives as Ratele (2016: 54) admonished. In a context where no meaningful or practically no viable alternative routes to attain dominance exists, some categories of men may subscribe to violence as a good measure of their masculinity. In other words, violence becomes readily imaginable masculine tool when limited options exist for men to draw on in developing meaningful prospects and chance of becoming successfully masculine. I would argue that a culturally sensitive awareness and understanding of the link between men's imagination of a successful man, men's translation of social norms and enactment of violent masculinities may represent the lost key to reducing violence against women and girls and against some men. This is especially important in economically impoverished contexts where the prospects of attaining a traditionally valued manhood embedded in access to jobs is almost non-existent, thus further deepening the precariousness and perniciousness of manhood (Ratele, 2014). Where there is no viable source of economic and social power for men, there is a good chance that violence is most likely to become closest alternative in the implementation of credible masculinity as evidenced in the work of Luyt and Foster (2001). This does not mean that only men deserve better social and economic power and fortunes as a gender, women, too deserve some level of social and economic empowerment. However, it becomes a worthy course to embark on such that men's dreams of a

respectable masculinity can be nourished and realized. By this, the prospects of reducing violence against women and girls and against other men are likely to be a success, at least for some time.

Despite research which emphasizes the psychological and emotional consequences of economic and political destabilization for masculinities, this should not be taken to suggest that the end of the road for men in their diversely-influenced attempts to appear sufficiently masculine. There are certainly many ways of adjusting and re-aligning to the economic and political changes that Africa as a continent has witnessed over the past three decades and so (Morrell, 2001, Lindsay and Miescher, 2003: 4; Ratele, 2014; Moolman, 2012).

Masculinity and violence

Research has proliferated in Sub-Saharan Africa in a manner that violence against women and girls (VAWG) and against other men has been widely reported to be unacceptably high (Jewkes et al., 2011). The centrality of gender processes and dominant roles and expectations of men and women has been foregrounded as a key discourse in understanding the complex enmeshment of violence with masculinity. Situational challenges of men's position have been taken up and widely acknowledged among different scholars as a potent zone that mostly tend to foment hypermasculine acts, including violence. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, as elsewhere in the world, violence has been theorized in multiple ways to be deeply interwoven with dominant ways of demonstrating masculinity (e.g., Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2008; Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; 2008; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Clowes et al., 2010; Vetten and Ratele, 2013). With the outpouring of research in Sub-Saharan Africa, many studies have illustrated the interlockedness of dominant notions of masculinity to acts of violence to be complex as would be seen shortly. Many scholars have argued that, although hegemonic masculinity could potentially facilitate, lure and/or to some degree, legitimize violent and aggressive practices of men towards women and children; other men are also variously implicated in the enactment of hegemonic masculinity by men (e.g., Ratele, 2008; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Clowes et al., 2010).

A growing body of evidence from Eastern Africa has created an important zone for the exploration of a range of dislocating factors and violence both in the domestic and public arenas. For instance, emerging evidence has suggested that young men tend to perpetrate

and in some instances, also experience violence in a rapidly urbanizing economy (Ocobock, 2017: 2). This has been foregrounded in growing levels of socio-economic marginalization and mass poverty, as well as political instability and economic inequality (Ricardo and Barker, 2009; UNICEF, 2012; Ocobock, 2017). The growing rates of socio-economic poverty and inequality means that young men have to fortify their masculinities by looking up to viable alternatives. The psychosocial investment that different categories of men put up in their day-to-day interactions in pursuit of social recognition and respectability in an increasingly marginalized context is not effortless (Ocobock, 2017; Fuh, 2009). For many men, especially young ones who are unable to fathom traditionally celebrated models of manhood, migration provides yet an important interface to negotiate alternative possibilities of becoming men of social essence (Ocobock, 2017: 61; Fuh, 2009). In other words, young men explore the discourse of migration as a form of agency through which they simultaneously gain independence from the surveillance of their fathers, experience life in the urban cities (Abdul-Korah, 2008), or what McKittrick (2002) terms 'seeking life within the exotic', and explore new possibilities for celebrating their youthfulness and consequently gain masculine maturity (Ocobock, 2017: 58).

As with Ocobock, Ricardo and Barker (2009) argue that in a context in which credible masculinity is contingent on economic success, the growing marginalization of men could generate enormously damaging feelings; first among men themselves as failed individuals and second, men may tend to embody deep-seated feelings and sense of failure of the state in facilitating meaningful implementation of manliness. In the state of growing disempowerment and impoverishment, men as social beings need to communicate to society of a sense of meaning, fulfilment and purpose. It has been established in Bhana and Pattman (2011) that in a community in which credible masculinity is demonstrated in economic success, some young women/girls become complicit in perpetuating this ideal by expressing love in only well-to-men ('sugar daddies'). Where there seems to be limited opportunities in attaining traditional models of manhood, it has been widely assumed that one potential alternative means of communicating masculinity is the deployment of a range of hyper-masculine behaviors, including large-scale violence both in the home and in the public (Ricardo and Barker, 2009; Silberschmidt, 2001). The dominant argument has been that in a community in which economic success communicates credible masculinity,

violence tends to be an exaggerated alternative in situation of perceived disempowerment (ibid). Such violence could be targeted primarily at women and girls, but at the same time, about a good number of men and boys are affected by the violent behaviour of other men. It becomes more problematic when young men believe that their masculinities have not been priced well or not respected enough among their peers; a situation which may further invite the deployment of acts of violence and aggression (WHO, 2000; Silberschmidt, 2001; 2005).

The work of Mills and Ssewakiryanga (2005) in Uganda further complicates the politics of credible masculinity in the midst of rising economic hardship. Mills and Ssewakiryanga's (2005) research focuses on theorization of masculinities as poised between materialism, patriarchal ideology of a capable man, and socio-economic changes. The authors locate the importance of researching masculinities as complex emotional and discursive spaces in which a man's inability to convince a girlfriend of his material worth stands potential chance of ruining his masculinity. They argue that a man's failure to meet the material needs; not just financial, of a girlfriend is enough to be interpreted by other men as masculine impotence. To be graded as an impotent man; impotent not in biology, is a form of disempowerment and emasculation that men face. In attempting to over this feeling of impotence in the form of growing emasculation, the authors foreground credible masculinity to be deeply laced and opened to the credibility of violence, especially against women. This gives men a redeemed image of masculinity. Acts of violence give men a sense of authority and power (Ratele, 2008: 520).

The belief in the efficacy of acts of violence and aggression in communicating a credible sense of masculinity has generated endlessly complex debates and discussions across Sub-Saharan Africa continue to rage on among scholars. The work of Heald (1999) in Uganda and Brear and Bessarab (2012) in Swaziland offer perhaps a good starting point in this regard. These studies have produced enough evidence to suggest that the acceptance of acts of violence against women does only not operate at the individual level; it is embedded in the broader continuum of hegemonic model of manhood and social norms. Heald (ibid) argues that in a context in which becoming a man is a process in which young men are bombarded with messages of the acceptability of violence; violence as the rightful property of men, it becomes a readily imagined means in the project of masculinity as men grow. Brear and

Bessarab (2012) in their study argue that men perceive domestic violence as acceptable in situations in which they (men) perceive the behavior and actions of their wives to be inappropriate; a situation which is likely to be read by the public as the failure of the man to act in his patriarchal capacity as a man. In other studies, such as Jewkes and associates (2009), Dery and Diedong (2014) and Rani and co (2004), this link of the discursive efficacy of violence and acting as a credible patriarch has been well established. In these studies, intimate violence becomes an acceptable form of expressing male control and behaviour in situation of perceived threat to men's position as heads of households. This suggests that the acceptability of intimate violence is deeply rooted in social norms which rationalize, and in some cases, encourage the use of violence as an acceptable way of acting out masculinity (Rani et al., 2004; WHO, 2000). Overall, the acceptability of what constitutes acceptable violence against women and what does not remain a complex and contentious discussion and must thus be pursued as a matter of specifiable social context (Barker and Ricardo, 2005).

Politics of 'belonging', 'unbelonging', and citizenship: masculinities and violence against women within African-focused theory

The process of internalizing and representing discourses on masculinity and femininity is deeply political, complex and shifting. Through this process, the politics of identification; to belong and not to belong are central and well-rehearsed among heterogeneous people. This politic of belonging (or unbelonging, the opposite) carries important connotations and social significations which regulate the boundaries of masculinity and femininity. To appear to belong to a specific ideological classification is to appear capable, competent and willing to articulate, negotiate, and defend coded roles and expectations that give credence to a specific category of being (see Morrell, 1998; Ratele, 2008). This is relevant, especially when one set of social classification appears to carry more social currency and legitimacy compared to others. This can foment exaggerated and dangerous forms of representations and behaviours in order to appear acting within the rubric of dominant discourses of the winning and more rewarding style of being (Morrell, 2005; Ratele, 2013; Gear, 2005; Fields et al., 2015; Govender, 2011).

The process of identification is central in determining and demarcating the boundaries of gender relations. It is not only important in determining gender relations, but it lies at the

very core of the cultural constructions and representations of valued social and collective identities within specific social spaces. Several African scholars have consistently argued that this process of identification; to belong or not to belong, is not only political, but is vastly punctured by racial, social, sexual orientation, class, religion, and age which are discursively invested, invented, and performed over time (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010; Morrell, 2001). These significant positionalities play important role in influencing how different people seem to appear more legitimate for a particular category of social being than others and the available agency, capital and actions to draw on. To critically discuss about African masculinity is to deeply engage with the specificities of a complex local social context. As argued by Ratele (2014), engaging with the different situatedness of men is a productive way towards identifying and discussing about hegemonies within marginality.

The politics of belonging is not unproblematic; it is always contested thus leading to the expression of personal, emotional feelings and sense of attachment to discursive norms policing the boundaries of masculinity and femininity. I ought to say that masculinity and femininity are oftentimes discursively constructed within the context of banality and mutually exclusive in outlook. They are expressed as either/or opposition. Many scholastic endeavors have, however, challenged a supposed unidimensional, vague, and simplistic theorization of masculinity and femininity often rooted in the politics of belonging and unbelonging, especially in a deeply complex context (see Morrell, Jewkes, Lindegger & Hamlall, 2013). Some other scholars have argued that to appear to belong to a specific social identity or social space is a multifarious political concept which can be grasped in several ways depending on the actors and audiences at play—invoking on ‘audience-actor’ relationship (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011). To be perceived to belong is deeply political and often associated with either citizenship, or collective identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006). To belong is not entirely about socio-spatial, territorial and physical boundaries, but the ability to express an inner and intra-psychic feelings of hope, belonging, affiliation, security, safety and oneness in either real or virtual spaces.

As I argued above, to appear to belong is a political project rooted in power struggles and relations. But depending on how the boundaries of belonging and unbelonging are routinely regulated and monitored through gendered bodies, some identities, behaviours, norms, beliefs, and practices may be seemingly perceived to be normalized, naturalized, and possibly fixed, while simultaneously flagging others as illegitimate hence unnationalistic.

One of such instrumental ways in which identities are configured through gendered bodies is the codification and regulation of permissible sexual practices and engagement between citizens (Tamale, 2011; Lewis, 2011: 208). Masculinities and femininities are deep-seated cultural practices and yet they sometimes tend to be viewed as though they are unproblematic hence natural (Ratele, 2016: 9). In many post-democratic states in Africa, legal frameworks are oftentimes at odd with specific ways of being citizen by way of sexual ideology (Bennett and Reddy, 2007; Bennett and Tamale, 2011: 1). To express a sexual identity variant to the nationally accepted standard is to present oneself as unpatriotic and, therefore, not qualified to enjoy certain privileges. People whose sexual identities are not deemed to be patriotic and nationalistic enough in most cases do not have access to legal protections, thus exposing their lives to vigilante and punitive retributions, especially homophobic violence (Epprecht, 2010: 769; Ratele, 2013).

To contribute to gender egalitarianism and better nationhood, or better still, liberate men and women from the bondage of unrealistic and unsustainable notions of masculinities and femininities, it is proper to argue for alternative models of constructing gendered identities. As Ratele (2016:10) rightly argues, in order to destabilize the culturally exalted version of being a man or woman which almost assumes a natural position; it is imperative to denaturalize the existing structures of gender.

However, in as much as we are interested in understanding men's accounts and experiences of masculinities, we critically need to re-theorize masculinity as a complex social issue, an issue bound-up by narratives of violence against women and wives. Equally imperative in this study is interrogating how men as credible cultural gatekeepers view themselves in relation to women/wives. To belong to a particular social classification is not a fixed or sustainable destination, but entails a highly competitive and iterative process in which different social actors constantly negotiate, perform, contest, reconstruct and validate their positions (Ratele, 2014; Butler, 1990). It is a dynamic process in which the boundaries defining one's inclusion or exclusion continue to change over time and in line with different situational requirements and realities, an argument I posited earlier.

The defining boundaries of inclusion or exclusion are continuously challenged due to the increasingly blurred relations between social spaces. Furthermore, we need to be careful in making dangerous conclusion regarding any perceived form of automatic inclusion or exclusion due to the shifting and intersections of a repertoire of social variables within very

specific social context of interest as I have noted above. In addition to this, we should be deeply interested in specifics of the context of interest, the impact of a range of social variables, as well as the norms, pains and damage associated with being excluded from the dominant social category. For instance, in a typical context in which the politics of belonging are tied to being violent, aggressiveness, dominant, and being an authoritarian male figure, these qualities are likely to be pursued as hegemonic and normalized male behavioural traits. Consequently, any male figure who resists to match up to these qualities is likely to be judged down as less of a man—suggesting a sense of unbelonging to the dominant class. This brings to the analysis what some scholars describe as “boundary discourses” (Antonsich, 2010: 12).

I should add that even in post flag independent democratic republics, the shackles of colonialism and the attendant hetero-patriarchal legacies are still glaring and Ghana is no exception. Since the period of colonialism, northern Ghana has remained less developed in many spheres of life compared to southern Ghana. This has left the northern belt of the country largely marginalized economically, socially, and arguably politically. I must admit that, in addition to the impacts of colonialism, political and legal transitions have been noted to add a different layer to local notions of masculinity, femininity, and the politics of space, fatherhood, patriarchal power, economic freedom, and gender discourses (Ratele, 2016; Walker, 2005; Morrell, 1998; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002). As I have argued earlier on in this chapter, evidence does suggest that feminists’ engagement with the politics of space has resulted in an increasingly blurred relationship between traditionally feminine domains, women’s economic freedom, and masculine fields. Consequently, some men always tend to express fear and bitterness of being perceived to be emasculated because one chief route to attaining meaningful manhood rooted in the family provider is jeopardized (McFadden, 2000; Messner, 1997).

Masculinities research in Ghana

The patriarchal claims of traditional manhood which naturalized the position of men in the family as successful breadwinners and providers are largely becoming disillusioned leading to the endangerment of male gender identity. The transition of the then Gold Coast into a democratic state Ghana has generated widespread speculations among many men of an uncertain, insecure, eroded, emptied, and destabilized identities. Since the traditionally

dominant ways of attaining manhood (e.g., senior masculinity) prior to the arrival of colonialists have been rendered valueless and invalid, some men are tempted to think that they have lost something very important. In fact, it may be reasonable to argue of a sense of disconnect between traditional ways of attaining manhood prior to colonialism and the new hetero-patriarchal power, continuing collapse of men's work, political and economic driven modes of gaining social respectability. Many men are beginning to feel a disconnect between traditionally dominant constructions of masculinity and the changes that are brought about as a result of a democratic and constitutional regime. The advent of a democratic and constitutional regime largely frowns on traditionally exalted ways of gaining social respectability some of which are embedded in unfair use of patriarchal power (see Manuh, 2009; Ampofo and Prah, 2009). All these changes feed into expressions of masculinity and femininity among men and women. Display of appropriate masculinity is very dear to the heart of men in Ghana, as elsewhere in the globe, and since how masculinity was expressed, for instance, marrying many wives and exerting authority of headship over a large number of family members have been rendered invalid, men must look elsewhere to reassert their sense of being seen to belong to the social category of real men. Traditionally, real men assert power over the large number of dependents including wives. What we can argue with certainty is that different categories of men may attempt to reassert their manhood drawing on a repertoire of discourses. The likely conclusion we can draw is that many men are facing a deep-seated, confused, insecure, and fragile state of being men enough. At the same time, feminist gains of the 1970s require new and egalitarian gender relations between men and women. This further threatens the positions of men in contemporary Ghanaian society (Ampofo and Prah, 2009; Manuh, 2009; Prah and Ampofo, 2009).

In pre-colonial days Gold Coast and among the Asantes ethnic group, masculinity was expressed in one's ability to exert authority over others (women, younger male) through demonstrable stoic and bravery during communal warfare (Armah, 1979; Adinkrah, 2012). These were the normatively accepted forms of masculinities. Historically, respect, power, and authority are key signifiers of one's masculine status in Ghana (Miescher, 2005). Much socio-cultural importance was accorded to these traits as masculine. Paradoxically, some women exhibited more bravery during war times (noticeably, Yaa Asantewaa who led the war against the British in 1900). However, these cherished masculine traits and acclaim

were not given to them (McCaskies, 2007; Addei and Addei, 2010). Such women were not recognised as masculine but could only be described as “unladylike” or “abnormal femininity” (see Ampofo, 2001; Ampofo and Boateng, 2011). Thus, they were engaging in activities that were outside the socially acceptable scope for women. Women were supposed to be in the domestic space taking care of children and reproducing the next window of generation.

In colonial days Ghana as well as 21st Century Ghana, there is traditional understanding that men are supposed to be brave, courageous, wield power and authority (either from fellow men or women) and one’s inability to demonstrate these qualities means that you are not “man enough” or not “real man” (Ampofo, 2001, Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Adinkrah, 2012). In fact, possession these traits are not enough; one must be able to provide essential necessities for the family—emphasising the breadwinner argument here.

However, despite the hegemonic masculinity that is entrenched and ingrained in the psyche of Ghanaian men, the current economic crises, structural adjustment programmes, urbanisation and their attendant consequences challenge Ghanaian men in their construction of traditional routes to masculinity (Abdul-Korah, 2008). Men’s experiencing of continued distress and despondency tend to evoke new ways of re-establishing altered status (Ocobock, 2017). One commonly used outlet is migration of men from rural Ghana to big cities, including Accra, Kumasi and sometimes Techiman where they anticipate engaging in menial and seasonal jobs such as subsistence farming and ‘galamsey’. I do acknowledge that migration is common in Ghana; however, it is more phenomenal among the three northern regions (Upper West, Upper West, and Northern region) and Volta regions in occasional cases (Abdul-Korah, 2008).

The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of Bretton Woods Institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) did complicate the gender dynamics across Ghana. After several years of gaining political independence, the government of Ghana widely depends on funding from external donors mostly from the World Bank and IMF. Such dependence does not only expose the weakness of an independent nation-state, but it renders its policies largely vulnerable to donor dictates and conditions. When the government of Ghana went begging these Bretton Woods institutions to bail the country out of what appeared to be chronic poverty which was readily accepted, the situation

rendered many women and men hard-pressed. Many portfolios in which women could manage to eke out a decent living like petty trading became unsustainable because the market was flooded with cheap foreign products (Britwum and Manuh, 2009: 240). This rendered many women completely dependent on the earnings of their husbands who were equally struggling to fathom meaningful lives. This further impoverished the status of women thus deepening and entrenching normative notions of masculinity as providers and femininity as a position of dependence. The period also saw further marginalization of women. It is estimated that violence against women escalated significantly during this period as the economic ordering was not favourable to men in their attempts to make meanings of themselves as men (Britwum and Manuh, 2009; Manuh, 2009; Ampofo and Prah, 2009; Prah and Ampofo, 2009). Health care subsidies, rising costs of living, unemployment, and the onset of the six killer diseases which claimed countless lives of infants further problematized the gender landscape. As argued by Ampofo (1993), the SAPs brought untold hardship which further ghettoized the position of the woman. Ampofo notes that the situation during this period created fertile ground for the exploitation of women as they were largely scape-goat as the cause of the growing economic woes.

In the wake of continued frustration and marginalisation of men—their inability to provide daily spectre of needs for their families and condition of living is getting worse every day, nobody undermines the tendencies of violence, armed robbery, and suicidality (Adinkrah, 2012). In his study, Adinkrah (2012) found that about ninety-five per cent of all reported cases of suicide attempts and/ or suicide cases involving men in Ghana emanates from men's perceived inability to fulfil the normative understanding of who a man is and what he should be able to do. The eminent consequences of these self-imposed masculine boundaries; breadwinner, sexual prowess and virility, not embracing female behaviours, etcetera, affect men's relations with others in society. As an alternative to being disdained and publically ridiculed, such men prefer taking their lives in place of the stigma (Adinkrah, 2012: 477).

In a similar study, Dery and Diedong (2014: 9), the link between men's socio-economic status, their ability to provide money for the running of the family (popularly known as chop money)—reinforcing masculine ego and violence was established. Men who are able to provide “chop money” to their wives are publically heaped with praises and hailed as “real

men” compared to their colleagues who are unable to fulfil this socially held mandate. Men’s masculine status is here theorized as linked to one’s economic success.

In Ghana, fatherhood is a prism for understanding masculinity. Sexual prowess and virility are highly respected masculine identities in Ghana. A man’s ability to beget as many children as possible enhances his masculine status. It is therefore little surprising that polygyny is common in the country (although Christianity has come to reduce the practice). The practice of multiple sexual partners or possessing many concubines is celebrated as masculine among men. Among the Akan ethnic group of Southern Ghana, a woman’s life is celebrated when she is able to give birth to ten children. She is particularly showered with gifts when male children dominate. Male children are celebrated because they are the continuity of the lineage. A form of advice to a newly married man from his colleagues and family elders comes like: try and shot well, shot hard in order to have a male child first (emphasising my own experience here). When couples are unable to produce children, they are ridiculed in society (Adomako Ampofo, 2004). Such sayings are not unusual ridicules: Your gun is a dead one; you’re a woman-man; he is a dead wood; a castrated dog is even powerful than you etc. (Aidoo, 1965: 122). Some men will go the extra mile through various means just to get children. Adoption is also not also a common practice in Ghana. In order to avoid public disgrace and upon realising that they are impotent, some men would secretly and confidentially ask their biological brothers or even friends to sleep with their wives. This remains a secret between the couples. A man right from the beginning was made to feel his important and superior position in the family from the beginning of his socialization. All these point out that impotence and barrenness are seriously frowned on in Ghana (see Sarpong, 1977; Nukunya, 1992). For example, in northern Ghana particularly among the *Dagaaba*, when a man dies without marrying let alone bearing children, he is not given a befitting burial as he is considered a child irrespective of his age at death. Again, still in the same context, one cannot be an heir to chiefly position or attain an ancestral status once he cannot reproduce (see Sarpong, 1977). Such people are called "*niekpong bibile*" among the *Dagaaba* meaning literally adult small boy and when gifts are to be shared in the family, people who are much younger but married are served first and even have more decision making powers than this "*niekpong bibile*". This means that age is an odd factor in the calculus of masculinity among the *Dagaaba* in Ghana. However, in matrilineal societies

such as the Akan group of southern Ghana, an elderly woman can take on chiefly positions in the event that there is no potential heir who is a male reinforcing senior masculinity (Miescher, 2007). Similar findings can be seen in Epprecht's (1998) study among the Shona speaking men of post-colonial Zimbabwe. Epprecht argues that men who were of marriage age and who could not marry for a period locally interpreted as too long were accorded little respect and almost always treated close to children (2002: 634). These dynamics and others shown elsewhere, depict that masculinity changes and context specific.

Marriage as a cultural terrain for the perpetration of domestic violence

Although a full scale engagement with the discourse of marriage is beyond the scope of this paper, some brief commentary will not be out of context. The concept of marriage or to marry ("kultaa") in the Dagara (or Dagaaba) tradition, is a principal route to manhood. Marriage in the Dagara tradition connotes a union between two families. "Kultaa" can be interpreted, principally, from two main approaches. First, when it concerns a man, it is known as "de pɔg" which means "to take a wife or a woman for a wife". Secondly, when we approach it in reference to a woman, it is "kul sere", translated as "go to a husband". From these brief perspectives, the concept of marriage in the Dagara tradition appears to be a promising relationship which recognizes the active roles of both a man as a husband to be and a woman as a potential wife. In other words, a man chooses or takes a woman as a wife subject to the woman agreeing to move into the man's house as a wife.

My study focuses on men's discursive constructs of their identities as men in relation to domestic violence as a form of gender-based violence in the family. My interest in discussing violence in the family has been motivated by theorization which locates the home in Ghana as a complex cultural template in which different forms of expectations, roles, norms, and patriarchal ideologies are sources of tensions and struggles between husbands and wives (Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Oppong, 1973; Nukunya, 1969). The home is an important cultural template in which statuses, gender performances, responsibilities, intimacy, and roles are simultaneously enjoyed and suffered on the gender dynamics. The dynamics between the genders in matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Ghana have been reported to vary significantly (Oppong, 1973; Nukunya, 1969). Due to the different gender dynamics between southern Ghana (predominantly matrilineal) and northern Ghana (patrilineal), the processes and manners in which boys and girls are socialized are equally implicated in

gender regimes; with both expected to uphold age-long images of masculinity and femininity (Ampofo and Boateng, 2007). For example, among the Dagaaba of north-western Ghana which is patrilineal in nature (site for the current study), Suom-Dery (2000) argues that the Dagaaba perceptions of a woman are deeply contradictory, rhetorical, confusing but somehow offer useful cultural nuances.

A small body of anthropological literature suggests that marriage is one of the strongest social arrangements which produce arguably the strongest intimacy and most enduring relationship in the context of the Dagaaba community in north-western Ghana (e.g., Suom-Dery, 2000; Lentz, 2006; Goody, 1962). Within this socio-cultural template are social norms, expectations, positions, roles, taboos, boundaries, and obligations. Like other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, marriage and parenthood are important signifiers of status and social positions among the Dagaaba men and women in Ghana.

To start a family is an important marker of adult masculinity among the Dagaaba. Traditionally, the Dagaaba regard the position of the woman (precisely a wife) as a noble, respectable, and an epitome of unity. Suom-Dery reasons that a legally married wife is considered the 'everything' of the home. She is expected to act as a source of unity not diversity in the family. She is called the 'yir-miere' or 'yir-kpeng' (i.e. backbone of the house), or 'yel-maale' (the peace-maker of the house. Suom-Dery (2000) argues that these descriptions qualify a wife as either a 'pɔgmenga' (good wife) or 'pɔgfaa' (bad wife). The saying in local parlance that '*a nisaale ba e dunga*' which translates as a human being is not an animal is widely known among both men and women (Suom-Dery, 2000: 197). This saying arguably is promising as it seems to endorse the dignity of gender neutral people—men, women and children. The contradictory aspect is that whether a woman behaves well as a good wife or behaves badly as a bad wife, women are generally described as 'grown up children'; a position which relegates women to 'nobody' (Suom-Dery, 2000). As Bishop Kpiebeya asserts, "a woman among the Dagaaba is a considered to be only a grown up child. She does not have equal rights with the man in many respects and this has given rise to many all sorts of adverse customs and practices. A woman belongs to the man's clan (becomes the man's property) and not vice versa.... this gives the man authority and control over the woman and not the woman over a man..." (Kpiebaya 1979, as cited in Hawkins, 2002: 284). But the Dagaaba of north-western Ghana (both men and women) cherish social

identities demonstrated in their projection of masculinities and femininities. One of such means to communicate masculinity is to demonstrate who owns who and what is the relationship between the owner (man) and the possessed (woman)? Possession through marriage has come to be associated with credible masculinity as can be gleaned from the quote above. Some of these social identities are gained through marriage, fatherhood, and other respectable virtues (see Ampofo et al., 2009). But Suom-Dery (2000: 200) thinks that the very system which gives the Dagaaba men position to possess and control their wives is generating troubling confusions. He argues that marriage and seeing wives as the properties of husbands reproduces and re-entrenches a repressive social order in which multiple hierarchies are created and relay between men as husbands and women as wives in the home. By seeing the woman as a possessed property, a man has the right to indulge in any form of sexual relationship with other women and exercising exclusive sexual rights over the woman; practices which Kpiebeya astutely lamented as conduits for the production of a suppressive marriage economy (2000). The author further argues that the positioning of men and women in the Dagaaba marriages is a double-edged sword which produces social inferiority of women—presenting a limiting culture—and also social identities through marriage—presenting the Dagaaba culture as positive and dynamic.

From a critical feminist perspective, the concept of marriage is deeply masked in power relations which further reinforces the authority of the male figure while simultaneously subordinating the position of the female figure. For instance, marriage enhances a man's status as a new person; an adult and somebody who matters among his peers. Marriage bequeaths authority to a man in the form of a transfer of guardianship (Ampofo and Boateng, 2007). That is, a woman leaves her parents to stay with her husband after the marriage has been formalized through the payment of bride price. It is not just a matter of transfer of guardianship, but authority to enforce that a married woman complies with rules of her husband and new father. By this, she must acquiesce to her husband with maximum respect and submissiveness because he is the head of the family and a woman can never be independent, let alone being the head of the family in the presence of her husband (see Suom-Dery, 2000). Among the Dagaaba ethnic group in particular, a woman needs to address her husband by a befitting name, not his real name. It is not uncommon to hear or see wives addressing their husbands by the title “N yirdandɔɔ” (i.e. my landlord). Calling

husbands by their real names represents sign of gross disrespect and arrogance of a woman to the man as a head of the family unit.

Traditionally, while a young man is not prohibited from engaging in pre-marital sexual intimacy, he is supposed to express knowledge of himself and demonstrate his sexual virility and prowess by giving birth after marriage (Adinkrah, 2012). He works on the parcel of land given to him by his father in order to take care of his immediate family and sometimes the extended relatives. He begins to build his own family and takes charge of his nuclear family responsibilities (Nukunya, 2003). By this, a man is required to be hard working and productive (socially and economically) demonstrated by how successful he manages his home validated by society. From the above, we see the interlocking nature of masculinity, heterosexuality, and economic success among men. A young adult becomes “a man”, “a father” and “a head of a family”. But their interlockedness produces hierarchies and layers of exclusion. For example, a healthy unmarried man is always a subject of social ridicule and derision as an impotent married man. In Ghana at large and north-western region in particular, masculinity is almost equated to a man’s ability to marry, copulate, begets children (especially male children) and takes proper care of his family (Adinkrah, 2012; Nukunya, 2003).

For context, becoming a man is one of the most exciting moments in a young man’s life in north-western Ghana. In the process of transitioning into adulthood or personhood, a father is traditionally required to allocate a piece of land and a hoe to his coming of age son (see Ampofo and Boateng, 2007). By this, a father is bequeathing certain privileges in the form of freedom and independence to his son as a new person, an adult. In addition to this, the father marries a wife for his adult son. Fathers used to search, court, and marry a ‘good woman’ as a wife for their adult sons. We should say that this trend has since changed as a result of modernization which promotes choices making and love. Men who are of marriageable age (ideally 18 years and above) now think that it is a matter of love hence their responsibility to choose who should be their wives. That is, young male adults now cherry pick wives of their choices and not to be married for thus limiting the hegemonic authority of fathers in the discourse of marriage. This is an indirect contest for power which largely challenges the hegemonic masculinity which fathers used to enjoy. However, paying the bride price of the first wife of a son remains unchanged; it is the father’s cultural duty to

perform the bride price. If the son decides to marry a second wife for any legitimate reason, for instance, barrenness, he is responsible for payment of the bride price of his second wife. In modern day north-western Ghana, young male adults upon becoming men build their own houses separately from their fathers unlike the olden days when large compounds or close-knitted settlement patterns were encouraged as protective against wars. There is an increasing contest for power and authority between modern day young men and their fathers in different realms of endeavours (Van den Berg, Hendricks, Hatcher, Peacock et al., 2013).

The point I have sought to argue is that while the discussions above may be a source of excitement for young male adults as they attain some level of independence, we need to problematize it. From the above, we see thoughts of manhood framed in a problematic, heterosexist, and patriarchal foundation which promote male dominance. Such thoughts are limiting in that they mask gender inequality, promote male dominance and privilege, and reproduce hegemonic cultural order.

If marriage is such a sacrosanct means in attaining successful manhood, why do men in the Dagaaba kinship engage in violence against their wives in the same institution which credits their masculinity? Tackling domestic violence has been a thorny issue among human rights activists, feminists, policy makers, government, public health, and other applied interventionists globally. It has been recognized that addressing domestic violence is an urgent necessity which demands all hands on deck (United Nation 2016). But the important question that remains little answered is how do policy makers, human rights advocates, feminists, and others comprehensively address intimate partner violence without unpacking in closed-grained, the interlocking and interplay of social norms, systems, cultural institutions, and intimate violence? It is important to understand that intimate violence does not occur in a cultural vacuum; it occurs within a cultural terrain which has social taboos, norms, regulations and expectations policing the gendering of men and women. In other words, intimate violence is played out in a dynamic and flux social context. Understanding the social acceptance of intimate violence is part of appreciating its deep-seated perniciousness. By contextualizing intimate violence, we are better positioned to generate useful insights which will not only speak about the occurrence of violence, but could invoke fine grained discussions about the 'how' of violence. Knowing the 'why' and

'how' of intimate violence (challenging the cultural terrain within which violence occurs) are important steps in efforts targeting to reduce its occurrence to the barest minimum.

This dissertation argues that to imagine addressing violence in a more comprehensive manner, we must start to problematize marriage as an important cultural terrain which produces acts of violence. Holding marriage to its fullest scrutiny and rigor is critical in assessing how marriage as a cultural template is implicated in violence. It has been argued that violence is a derivative of everyday practices and social arrangements is to understand how larger orders of social force come together with micro-contexts of local power, to shape human problems in ways that are resistant to the standard approaches of policies and interventions programs (Kleinman, 2000: 227).

Engaging with the complexities of domestic violence

In the past decades, the work by feminists, NGOs, human rights activists, and Civil Society Organizations have produced insightful perspectives on gender-based violence in Ghana. Many of feminists' focus their initial attention within the context of advocacy. As activism spawned and considering that gender inequality was still dominant in the cultures of the Ghanaian people, feminists shifted their focus and complex shapes and meanings of domestic violence as a form of gender-based violence emerged. Feminists advocacy also led to the promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act as will be discussed shortly. Feminists' various engagement brought into the spotlight explanations that locate rape, sexual harassment, trafficking, and domestic violence as part and parcel of the gender processes. What became profound in all the various foci of feminism in Ghana has been recognition of violence as intricately gendered and, without exception, the perpetrators of such violence are men. My own research and analysis revealed critical areas for new research, especially concerned men's overwhelming confusion about contemporary policy-making on domestic violence and on their own struggles and meaning-making around their position as 'being a husbands and men'. In this section, I will review some contemporary theory on domestic violence as a form of violence against women, with particular interest in research linking masculinities to credible violence in Ghana.

Theorizing domestic violence in Ghana

Domestic violence is a wide spread phenomenon cutting across all strata of society. Since feminist engagement with patriarchy and its debilitating norms in the 1980s, domestic violence has since been brought into the public gaze as a complex social ill. So much literature has been written on domestic violence in both developed and developing contexts and the field of domestic violence continuous to amass renewed scholarly investment and interest. The outcome of some kinds of global discussions and debates about gender-based violence has seen the production of complex, large, innovative and largely contradictory perspectives. This section attempts to map out and synthesize the vast body of literature; drawing on predominantly Ghanaian-based scholarship, as well as immersing the discussion within regional and the broader context of international debates. This is important because, gender-based violence is not peculiar to Ghana alone; it is a global phenomenon. However, its manifestation may vary markedly according to a particular context, culture, space and time. Gender-based violence occurs within a psycho-social and cultural context with a greater numbers of men playing central roles in the domestic violence causal chain in a range of contexts. It is imperative, therefore, to problematize the premises under which gaze acts of violence find meanings. This calls for critical engagement with individual men as part of a broader socio-cultural political power regimes and structures.

Battling with the passage of the Domestic Violence Act

Over the past years, considerable attention from different quarters, especially from feminists and Civil Society Organizations has given violence against women and girls (VAWG), and domestic violence more specifically, a major public stress for its long period of invisibility (Ampofo, 2008). The resurgence in feminist activism added much needed monumental boost towards recognizing violence as invisible but devastating in the lives of the victims; women, children and more recently, men. Thus, domestic violence has become an undeclared domestic terrorism with huge social price. Domestic violence has been recognized as part of a broader spectrum of violence against women and girls (VAWG), as well as a product of systemic gender discrimination (see General Recommendation No 19 of CEDAW).

The burgeoning interest across Ghana, coupled with renewed period of NGO-ization which has led to the public visibility and enhanced knowledge of GBV can be described as an

outcome of a well-fought battle (Tsikata, 2009). Many women's led coalitions were formed and different ideologies co-opted to form a formidable force with which the interest and agenda of women could be pursued (Tsikata, 2009). Some of these coalitions included the National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation of 2002 and the Coalition on the Women's Manifesto of 2004. This monumental achievement has been the outcome of what can be described as a battle of cultural sovereignty and universality of human rights. While the initial response from government was very frustration, many feminists; both academic and scholars and a good number of NGOs formed coalitions which gave them a formidable strength to draw inspiration from as I hinted above. But women's activists needed to operate in a fragile and volatile landscape. Women's advocates whose agenda was in direct conflict with the so-called national interest were largely taunted as intruding on the illegal borders. Against this backdrop, women's activists had to couch their messages around questions of micro-credit and welfare of women (Tsikata, 2009; Tsikata in conversation with Mama Amina, 2005). The battle was fiercely competitive and feminists had intense period of discussions, debating, agreement and disagreement, policy engagement, protests, and a series of lobbying and dialoguing (Adomako Ampofo, 2008). Already, feminists had gathered enough evidence to buttress their agitation for better lives for women through the first study which Rose Mary Ofei-Aboagye conducted on domestic violence in 1994. I shall return to Ofei-Aboagye's study shortly. Such efforts culminated in the passing of the long awaited Domestic Violence Bill into law (Bowman, 2002; Amoakohene, 2004).

What appeared to fuel intense feminist activism in Ghana was the reported serial killing and indiscriminate dumping of the bodies of several women between 1997 and early 2000s. This serial killing raised very fundamental questions around the safety and dignity of women in the overall national discourse of citizenship (Tsikata, 2009). No concrete evidence was established on the motivations or reasons surrounding such gruesome killing and dumping of about 20 women. However, anecdotal evidence and intelligent guesses in the Ghanaian media suggests that these women might have been killed as a form of denying women their dignity and rights as citizens. It has widely been speculated that the killing was a form of gendered murder and sexual assault which the state as a sovereign entity should interrogate and bring the perpetrators to book (Tsikata, 2009). Quite contrary, the response from the state was below expectation which further fuelled feminists' activism. In other words, what

appeared to awakened and further intensified women activists' interests were the silences, hesitance and total aloofness that accompanied a rather sad and shameful national disaster.

The passage of the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 (Act 732) occurred at the time when the international community had already kick started in earnest various efforts to deconstruct growing levels of gender inequality and enforcing the human rights of women as rightful citizens, just like men in the 1080s. Post 1995 Beijing Conference, many African countries put in various measures to safeguard the dignity of their citizens, men and women alike through various forms of legislation. Being poised with many human rights conventions, various nation states across the world were, by implication, charged to safeguard the dignity, wellbeing, and safety of its citizens from the hard realities of a social system deeply rooted in patriarchal values which promote male domination and discrimination against mostly women (Manuh, 2007). The Government of Ghana was quick to adopt, sign and ratify almost all international human rights treaties and conventions such as CEDAW in 1989 and DEVAW IN 1993. At the national level, various policy amendments were also put in place, including outlawing traditional practices which were largely detrimental to the dignity, health, and wellbeing of mostly women and girls. For instance, in 1994, the Parliament of Ghana amended the Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29) in which female genital mutilation (FGM) and widowhood rites were criminalized and anybody found doing so is punishable by law. Subsequently, and due to the rising rates of domestic violence across the country, the Government of Ghana instituted the Women and Juvenile Unit–WAJU (now Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, DOVVSU), a special unit under the Ghana Police Serve to spearhead, handle and prosecute cases of domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Act (Act 732, 2007: 3-4) of Ghana defines domestic violence as “engaging in the following within the context of a previous or existing domestic relationship:

(a) an act under the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29) which constitutes a threat or harm to a person under that Act;

(b) specific acts, threats to commit, or acts likely to result in

(i) physical abuse, namely physical assault or use of physical force against another person including the forcible confinement or detention of another person and the deprivation of

another person of access to adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, rest, or subjecting another person to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(ii) sexual abuse, namely the forceful engagement of another person in a sexual contact which includes sexual conduct that abuses, humiliates or degrades the other person or otherwise violates another person's sexual integrity or a sexual contact by a person aware of being infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or any other sexually transmitted disease with another person without that other person being given prior information of the infection;

(iii) economic abuse, namely the deprivation or threatened deprivation of economic or financial resources which a person is entitled to by law, the disposition or threatened disposition of moveable or immovable property in which another person has a material interest and hiding or hindering the use of property or damaging or destroying property in which another person has a material interest; and

(iv) emotional, verbal or psychological abuse namely any conduct that makes another person feel constantly unhappy, miserable, humiliated, ridiculed, afraid, jittery or depressed or to feel inadequate or worthless;

(c) harassment including sexual harassment and intimidation by inducing fear in another person..."

While commending the government of Ghana for taking such a bold decision, a standard which the international human rights community has been pursuing, one important issue of contention is that such policy definition of violence looks broad, but at the same time vague and opens up space for the continued discrimination against women in marriages. From the definition above, we see that the Act appears to promise a better, more egalitarian gender regime, at least at the policy level, but deep down the grassroots level (among the ordinary Ghanaian populace), such definitions remain meaningless and essentially ineffective and can be interpreted in various ways (Ampofo and Prah, 2009: 205). I would argue that one major concern that can easily be noticed in the Act is that marital/spousal rape is not explicitly and concretely discussed and criminalized. Take this statement, for instance, "forceful engagement of another person in a sexual contact which includes sexual conduct that abuses, humiliates or degrades the other person". The first question that one should ask is

whose consent and who determines what constitutes consent in a typical rural, patriarchally entrenched community? Or at what point does sexual pleasure between a legally married couples becomes illegal in a rural community? But one might also argue that this omission is deliberate since the inception of the Domestic Violence Bills has received enormous resistance from many well-meaning people; both men and women. For context, the Parliament of Ghana which is male dominated heatedly debated the Domestic Violence Bills which was laid before parliament for years. Subsequently, there was a resounding objection from the majority of Members of Parliament, including the then minister for Women and Children's Affairs which argued against the inclusion of marital rape as part of the Domestic Violence Act 732 of 2007 (Tsikata, 2009; Fallon, 2008). It is reported that the then Minister for Women and Children's Affairs who happened to be a woman was very vocal in arguing against a specific clause in the DV Bill which sought to repeal section 42(g) of the Criminal Code, 1960, Act 29 (Tsikata, 2009). This clause enjoins quite subtly the sexual exploitation of wives by husbands in the domestic sphere. She was alleged to have spoken to a group of audiences in the Upper East Region during one of her nationwide educational activities to suggest condemnation of the Bill which she insisted could potentially threaten the sanity and harmony of the Ghanaian family (Tsikata, 2009; Ansa-Ansare, 2003). She is quoted to have said "We are first and foremost Ghanaians and so we must first of all find home brewed solutions to our problems" (Public Agenda 2003). Arguably, as a woman, she represents the interests and wellbeing of other women which she would usually refer to as 'my brothger and sisters'; a discourse which was deeply deployed by the national government as argued below. While women's NGOs deployed the discourse of human rights in their pursuit of the Domestic Violence Bill, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs deployed the discourse of sociality in her subtle national campaign against the repeal of the marital rape clause.

Largely, two competing discourses were often mobilized and invoked to justify the massive resistance from Parliament on criminalizing marital rape; the discourse of culture and rights. While feminists were determined to make an important mark in fighting gender-based violence by deploying the discourse of human rights and women's empowerment in an era of liberalism, the opposing other deployed the cultural narrative and sovereignty as counter-productive to the position of feminists. The main antagonists in this case were both

male and female Members of Parliament against a rather minority number of feminists and other NGOs who were supportive of criminalizing rape. The main argument of opponent was the deployment of culture as a native form of resistance which places the criminalization of marital rape under the ambit of foreign ideas which could jeopardize well-knitted families, cultural beliefs and practices that govern marriages in the country (Adomako Ampofo and Prah, 2009: 94; Fallon, 2008). At this point, if one were to look outside the box, the likely estimation would have been that even if the Domestic Violence Act is passed into law, the initial level of resistance from Parliament which doubles as the house of the legislature is enough a signal to suggest ineffectiveness of the Act. As argued by the World Health Organization (2014: 38), “laws relating to violence have been widely enacted but enforcement is inadequate”.

Another danger which is inherent in the definitions of intimate partner violence in the Domestic Violence Act is evidence of some degree of tolerance, normalization and acceptability of violence. This is implied in the following definition of emotional violence; “...any conduct that makes another person feel constantly unhappy, miserable, humiliated, ridiculed, afraid, jittery or depressed or to feel inadequate or worthless”. Part of this normalization is seen in the word “constantly”. By interpretation, intimate violence which do not seek to put a victim in a state of constant hurt and harm is acceptable. It becomes unacceptable when violence becomes a habit, but an occasional use of intimate violence is normal and presumably, a forgivable sin common in every relationship.

Given that Ghana enacted Domestic Violence Act in 2007 and barely after a decade of its implementation, what major changes and improvements in the prevalence of domestic violence can the Ghanaian community boast of as a proud nation? Beyond its instrumental outlook, what else can Ghana boast of as a visible achievement in the field of intimate violence? I would argue that the Domestic Violence Act appears to be instrumentally rhetorical paying only lip services and projecting the image of Ghana to the international community as a progressive and gender just country. This is because certain forms of violence have widely been relegated to the confines of the home and as Prah and Ampofo (2009) note this as worrying. The authors went further to argue that by relegating some forms of violence to the domestic zone, the state is largely charged with complicity and tacitly condones the certain violence against women. This means that something very

fundamental is missed in attempts seeking to galvanize rapid changes in the field of domestic violence.

While on paper victims of domestic violence are eligible to access free medical care and access support from the Ghana Police Service, in reality this does not happen due to complex and unhelpful bureaucratic processes. Government does not resource well institutions that are spearheading cases of domestic violence. In some cases, female victims need to walk over long distance in order to access services; a situation which further demotivates many victims from pursuing violent cases (Senah, 2009).

Theorizing and contextualizing domestic Violence in Ghana

Over the years, post 1990s, various efforts have been made to research gender-based violence culminating in the first ever research in 1994 (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994). Since then there have been several reports suggesting the existence of domestic violence among both men and women to the extent that violence is often perceived as a normalized and acceptable male behaviour in some parts of Ghana (Bunch, 1997: 41; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994; Mann and Takyi, 2009; Nukunya, 2003; Amoakohene, 2004; Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Dery and Diedong, 2014). While this had engineered rigorous scholarly attention seeking to know the prevalence of domestic violence, the majority of such studies are basically descriptive and exploratory. Domestic violence has been reported to be endemic and is likened to intimate terrorism (Manuh, 2009). Perpetrators of violence operate more like a typical case of terrorism because the two use almost the same tactics in their operation. In the case of violence, the perpetrator has an interest in exercising absolute control over the victims (Felson and Messner, 1998). We can equally liken intimate violence to other lethal forms of violence such as armed robberies. Just as armed robbers give warning shoots to deter their victims from exercising any form of agency, violence perpetrators employ similar tactics. In the case of intimate violence, perpetrators issue prior warnings and threats to their victims. When such victims do not heed to these threats and warnings, then, the real intensification of violence is operationalized (Felson, Baumer and Messner, 2000). As argued by Lloyd and Emery (2000: 56), intimate violence is “a conflict negotiation strategy that is enacted when other strategies have failed and the conflict has escalated out of control”. We can, therefore, argue that intimate violence is an interactive process which involves a series of activities.

Despite an impressive body of research on domestic violence in Ghana, little attention has actually focused on engaging violence in a holistic perspective. To move beyond this requires a full scale engagement with the various actors (victims, perpetrators, and social context) such that a broader and better picture about the etiology of domestic violence (the why and how of violence) could be generated (Meier et al., 2001). This means addressing the following questions; how is violence co-produced in different situational contexts in which men and women routinely interact? What is the quality and what is gendered about the relationship between men and women who are involved in intimate violence? Does violence occur in spaces culturally perceived as off-limits for some categories of people or violence occurs within the normal rhetoric of protectiveness? Last but not perhaps, most importantly, beyond the notion of 'men', as a homogenized category, who actually engineers such violence and under what circumstance?

To answer the above questions requires a critical examination of the violence domains beyond large scale surveys or national dataset mostly drawn from samples of female victims. However, much of the evidence on intimate violence in Ghana relied heavily on data from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) (Ghana Statistical Service et al., 2009; Coker-Appiah and Cusack, 1999; Mann and Takyi 2009). For instance, in a study by the Ghana Statistical Service et al. (2009) and Mann and Takyi (2009), a large national population sample was used to generalize for all men and women on domestic violence results. Furthermore, the said studies interrogated domestic violence as something committed by anybody in general and not specifically by known male partners. In the study conducted by Coker-Appiah and Cusack (1999), the main interest of this study was to understand prevalence, types, contexts, responses, and the barriers to help-seeking among respondents on domestic violence. In what appears to be one of the most encompassing studies on domestic violence is the work conducted by Amoakohene (2004). Rather than simply looking at statistics on domestic violence, Amoakohene explored domestic violence from a more in-depth and broader perspective; engaging with the layers of violence women suffer, women's own constructs on violence and their resilience strategies. As far as 2008, Amoakohene's study represents one of the most well-research works on domestic violence as it has integrated some elements that were left out in the previous studies. Arguably, the most comprehensive study on domestic violence after Amoakohene's study in Ghana is the

work carried out by Institute of Development Studies and associates (2015). This study draws insights from the Ghana Family Life and Health Survey (GFLHS 2015); a nationally representative survey which was developed to complement the GDHS of 2008. Comparatively, the GFLHS 2015 somehow offers better gains than the 2008 GDHS. The said survey included more in-depth definitions of domestic violence than the previous survey. While the GDHS 2008 included a domestic violence module which elicited the views and experiences of men and women, important nuances could be missed. The findings of IDS and associates (2015) were foregrounded in mixed method-household-level survey and in-depth data on key factors that may explain the incidence of domestic violence. From this study, findings suggest that about 28% of women and 20% of men experienced domestic violence in 2015.

Even IDS and associates (2015), which claimed to be offering nuanced discussions and opinions to existing narrow and descriptive narratives did not add anything to existing knowledge apart from the use of mixed method.

While using a nation-wide data generated by The Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in 1999, it was estimated that out of every three women sampled, at least one has experienced some form of gender violence (Manuh, 2009: 1). Manuh (2009: 1-2) reports the existence of other dehumanizing acts which all seek to put the lives of women and girls at bay, including rape, forced marriages, infanticides, forced prostitution, murder, and sexual exploitation and trafficking. Manuh further refuted the claim that men who commit violence against women are widely perceived to be pathologized and deviants. The author argues that men who commit violence towards their wives have some interest in using violence and not just because such men are mentally disturbed (ibid: 11). Violence is perceived as a normatively masculine norm hence to be seen as a real man is to believe in the credibility of violence (Ampofo and Boateng, 2008).

In all the studies conducted on domestic violence since 1994, two interrelated discourses bind their findings together; socio-economic and cultural considerations are influential factors that determine the acceptability and normalization of domestic violence among both men and women (Dery and Diedong, 2014).

Part of the cultural narrative that gives credence and legitimacy to domestic violence was local expectations of being a man and a woman (Takyi and Mann, 2006; Tenkorang et al.,

2013; Ampofo, 1993). Besides the mention of cultural narrative as a determinant and justification for a range of domestic violence, we know very little about the meanings of the discursive capacity of violence to fulfil a specific masculine stake in specific relationship in different situations. Despite this importance, there has not been much close-grained research on the contextual narratives, motives, circumstances, which bring the complexity of masculinity (embedded as 'perpetration') into focus. Indeed, very little evidence exists on an engagement with a range of catalysts that fuel violent events (Daly and Wilson, 1988: 173) beyond statistics (except IDS et al., 2015). Violent events are power driven events, goal driven, and always linked to the desire to control others, especially wives in enduring relationships (Straus, 1999; Cahn, 1995). The work of Dobash and Dobash (1984) has been instrumental in feminist theorization on the complexity of violence and the catalysts of domestic violence. In cross-cultural studies on violence, several prominent themes have emerged as potential explanations for the occurrence of domestic violence. Among these themes are those on status challenge, husband's drinking behavior, stressful life events, women engaging in unfeminine behaviors, and the expectations about the meanings of manhood (e.g., Dobash and Dobash, 1984; Lloyd and Emery, 2000; Fagan and Browne, 1994; Rosen, 1996). For instance, a study conducted in Zimbabwe has argued that domestic violence becomes unavoidable when a husband perceives that his wife is asking for money too frequently. Requesting for money on a frequent basis suggests that a wife is not economical, manageable, and perhaps careless about the economic realities; qualities which are normatively interpreted core ingredient of a good wife (Armstrong, 1998). When a woman acts out of tangent, especially when such behaviors are perceived to be challenges to the husband's masculine position, the propensity to enact violence becomes higher. In a study conducted in Ghana by Amoakohene (2004), it is argued that wives are expected to abide by culturally specifiable behaviors which befit their positions as good wives; not bad wives. According to Amoakohene (ibid: 2378, cited in IDS et al., 2015), women in Ghana are expected "to be submissive to [their] husbands, be respectful, be patient, and be dutiful and serviceable, as tradition demands".

Another danger or pitfall of these studies which used large national surveys is that their results remain barely descriptive and rarely interrogate gender as a complex construct in the domain of violence. To discuss domestic violence is to discuss gender because the two

concepts are intricately interwoven. While the essence of descriptive statistics cannot be overruled as far as pointing out the proportion of men and women affected by violence respectively, gender has not been theorized and problematized, beyond the 'inevitable' dichotomy of men-as-perpetrator (husband, intimate partner, family member) and women-as-targets (especially partners and wives, in heterosexual unions) which leave these findings hanging. While the effects and prevalence of domestic violence may explain this, contemporary research must engage more richly with the complexity of masculinity and with men's meanings for 'domestic violence.'

In the study conducted by Mann and Takyi (2009) in Ghana, respondents were asked: "Who hits whom" and "what do women understand by violence?" These are important questions that needed to be foregrounded in complex notions of gender. Unfortunately, these authors limited their analysis by not going beyond discussions around gender of the party who hits the other. Unlike South Africa where the literature is substantial, we know very little about discussions around the gender of the perpetrators and victims in such a situation in Ghana; a situation which merits critical scholarly interrogation. Stark (2010: 209) admonishes that rather than asking the question "who hits the other", we should endeavor to "identify how violence *actually* functions and plays out in intimate relationships to reproduce and extend systemic gender inequalities" (emphasis is mine). Gender must be problematized as an important theoretical construct that underpins relationships in which domestic violence is implicated (Mama, 1997; Bennett, 2010).

A final danger inherent in relying on large scale data set is that domestic violence is decontextualized hence provide little information about the relationship between various parties involve, either directly or indirectly in the perpetration of domestic violence. Qualitative nuances are missed in such analysis. To ensure that quality nuances are brought to the fore which can contribute to a comprehensive discussion of domestic violence, I propose the currency of engaging with the primary narratives of men. Husbands have been noted in Ghana, as elsewhere, to represent the largest pie of the perpetrators of interpersonal violence against wives (Dery and Diedong, 2014) but the debate becomes stimulating and nuanced when other actors such as the active roles of family members, peers, socio-cultural structures and other acquaintances are added. This further raises important questions on the public-private debate of domestic violence. Can domestic

violence be described solely as an issue confirmed to the private intimate relationship, or foreclosed from the influences of other significant situational domains? Will a man actually abuse his wife when he knows very well that nobody will temper with his position and image as a man? Domestic violence occurs because there are multiple stakes to protect in different social domains. These stakes are deeply embedded in power struggles, gender politics, because much domestic violence is normatively perceived capable of shaping the contours and to some extent, it may be understood restoring a relationship to a better position.

Aetiology of Violence

Even though feminists had pushed so hard for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act which finally became a reality in 2007, reports suggest that cultural attitudes which locate the Ghanaian woman in a subordinate and subservient position continue to uphold the right of dominance of men over women (Boas, 2006). For instance, the cultural norm of paying bride price has not changed significantly and husbands continue to explore this as an alternative way of expressing dominance and power over their wives (Dery and Diedong, 2014; Boas, 2006; Abane, 2003). The payment of bride price is an important cultural practice that cements the marriage between a man and his potential wife and between their extended families. Marriage has been theorized as a crucial patriarchal domain that creates hierarchies between men and women (Dery and Diedong, 2014; Ampofo and Boateng, 2008; Ampofo and Prah, 2009). When boys internalize that paying bride price credit them access to a woman, it becomes almost problematic and ingrained in their discursive constructions of masculinity (Ampofo and Boateng, 2008). Marriage and bride price becomes intricately valorized cultural domains for the constructions of credible masculinity.

Customarily, a Ghanaian husband of a typical Dagaaba tradition has been thought to have the right to discipline his wife (or wives) and other subordinate family members as part of his duty as head of the family (Dery and Diedong, 2014). A typically successful Dagaaba man is one who is able to enforce control and discipline in his family; and his authority has no bound, at least in his own nuclear family. By this authority, he is thought of to have the power to do whatever he wants with his life and resources and a good wife does not show any form of interest interrogating his behavior (Dery and Diedong, 2014). To interrogate this is demonstration of characteristics of a bad wife who must be corrected. Part of this

correction involves the deployment of culturally acceptable forms of discipline (Dery and Diedong, 2014; Boas, 2006).

Culture is a dynamic construct that needs to be discussed to constitute a core domain that fuels the perpetration of myriads of violence against women. According to some authors, domestic violence needs to be discussed within its cultural framing (Dery and Diedong, 2014; Ampofo and Prah, 2009; Ampofo et al., 2005). Culture is never a static construct and depending on the fluidity of culture, the characterization of acts of violence; what constitutes violence and what does not also vary. This is problematic when juxtaposed with the legal definition of domestic violence. Due to a specific cultural framing of violence as acceptable or unacceptable, victims, especially women are able to negotiate the terrain of either reporting or enduring the pains as part of the cultural wisdom of a good wife (Ampofo and Prah, 2009). What constitutes violence is not a universally accepted notion and certain cultures may give husbands the cultural right to correct their deviant wives and such corrections should be within the acceptable limit (Ampofo and Prah, 2009). Despite this, it remains an important area to interrogate the point at which violence becomes 'corrective' (one which is deployed by the cultural narrative of domestic violence) and at which point does violence becomes domestic violence (one which is deployed by legal definition) in an intimate relationship? In the domestic arena where husbands and wives share intimacy, how do we demarcate a clear-cut line between actions which are characterized and qualified as domestic violence and those which are not considering how intimacy can overshadow violence in the domestic relationship? This forms a major area of concern for the current study as illustrated in the empirically grounded analyses in later chapters.

Despite the existence of the DVA, patriarchal ideologies underpinning the notion of being a Ghanaian man in relation to others, especially women remain unchanged over the period and gender-segregated division of roles remains the daily norm among families (Ampofo, 1993; Dery and Diedong, 2014; Abane, 2003). With culturally defined roles for men and women in the home, it generates zone for concern and confusion when a woman fails to measure up to the standards of such cultural demarcation. The repercussions of such confusion could mean a husband taking the necessary steps to be seen acting in his capacity as man of the house. Acting as the man of the house is a political strategy that ensures that the images of a man is not ridiculed by the omnipresent gaze of the real or imagine

bystanders. What is likely to emerge in such situation of confusion is enactment of a range of acts which seek to communicate to others a sense of being a man.

From a study conducted by Manuh (2009), poverty emerged quite strongly as one of the motivation for men's violence against their wives. Poverty affects both women and men in the domestic violence causal chain. For women who are poor and thus depend on their husbands, they stand a higher risk of experiencing acts of violence. This is because whenever a husband interprets the behavior of his wife to be dislocated from the normal borderline of acceptable femininity, the situation may invite violence (Manuh, 2009; Dery and Diedong, 2014). On the other hand, a man who struggles to ensure that his family is in order by meeting their basic needs; he may resort to violence whenever he thinks that his position as a family man (provider) is threatened (Dery and Diedong, 2014; Manuh, 2009). But this should not be taken *carte blanche*; violence equally occurs in rich homes. The credibility of violence among men provides us with the urge to further interrogate and understand dominant notions of masculinities and femininities in Ghana. This is particularly important in a country like Ghana where masculinity is volarized in men's position as breadwinners and femininity contingent on a wife's dependence on her husband. How do we reconcile this volarization of masculinity as capable breadwinners in an increasingly complex and threatening socio-economic context such as Ghana?

It has been argued that women who have power and authority outside their families are at a lower risk of experiencing intimate violence (Jewkes et al., 2002). Other scholars have argued contrarily. A study by Krug *et al.* (2002) notes that more decision making powers through affirmative action and higher educational attainment by women constitute a high risk threat to men's ego, prestige, and status as husbands in society hence increases their vulnerability to violence. This is perhaps due to the fact that educated women who are knowledgeable—knows their rights and are economically empowered may resist the patriarchal norms which give more privileges and superiority to men at the expense of women. Thus, such women engage in what Connell (1987) terms "resistance femininity" which comes with a cost. This situation may provoke or threaten men's hegemonic status as breadwinners. Consequently, when men's status quo is threatened, violence may be resorted to as a mechanism to regaining and reconfiguring control in a society with clearly marked gender expectations to put women in their "rightful position" (Jewkes *et al.*, 2002).

Ampofo and Prah (2009) argue that women who are economically independent stand a higher chance of experiencing violence because her position as an independent woman is enough a threat to the masculine image of a husband. In other words, her economic autonomy may encourage her to assert power and control in setting spaces which may be interpreted as threat to the position of her husband thus predisposing her to a range of violence. These complexities challenge developmentalist approaches which foreground women's empowerment as panacea in reducing gender-based violence. Domestic violence is both a development and social problem.

Yet, a different school of thought draws a link between parents' alcohol consumption and domestic violence (Krug *et al.*, 2002; van der Straten *et al.*, 1998; Watts *et al.*, 1998; Rao, 1997; Jewkes *et al.*, 2002). However, what is unclear in the alcohol and violence relation is whether high alcohol consumption increases or decreases tendencies of domestic violence. The relationship between violent acts and alcohol use continue to be contested with some school of thought pointing to a thin relationship arguing that alcohol use intersects with web of factors, for example, hegemonic masculinity, deviance and improper socialisation which all help perpetrate violence against women (Osgood *et al.*, 1988; Leonard and Quigley, 1999). Pernanen (1991) opine that "violence is a form of guided behaviour with rules and expectations that are applied and generally followed despite times of very intense arousal states...The quality of guidedness does not change abruptly but persists even when an aggressor has been drinking" (p. 194). This suggests that there are other factors rather than alcohol *per se* that predisposes men's aggressive behaviour especially in a patriarchal society.

As Dery and Diedong (2014) note of the Dagaaba, in some families, women or wives become complicit in perpetuating hegemonic ideals by describing men who are unable to live up to the onus of credible manhood in derogatory terms such as "useless men." To call a husband a 'useless man' in this cultural setting is a damaging description which ought to be rewarded with an appropriate quantity of violence. Such toxic labelling connotes a lesser man; one who does not measure up to other males of similar age cohort. More importantly, men who seek to meet that universalized label of a dominant male may resort to violence as a way of controlling and living out their true manliness; a situation Dery and Diedong (2014) report to be pervasive and worrying.

One key concern that has been observed to be a crippling force that seriously militates against efforts seeking to promote gender equality in the context of domestic violence is corruption. It has been alleged that corruption in the Ghanaian legal systems and the police service is as endemic as stories of domestic violence (Boas, 2006). The endemic nature of corruption means that many stories of domestic violence will not be prosecuted and the highest bidder, mostly the male violent perpetrator roams freely as a free citizen. Being burdened with this situation, many violent victims are not motivated, or do not trust the outcome of the police service and the legal enforcement agencies. This situation does not motivate women in particular who are going through violence to report their cases to the legal institutions because the frustrations alone are enough of re-victimization (Ampofo and Prah, 2009). The alternative route is that most victims resort to the traditional system of resolving family's disputes (Manuh, 2009). In most cases, women are encouraged to settle domestic violence at home and some authors observed that women who have been abused by their husbands are alleged to have portrayed bad character and behavior hence the necessity of the beating (Ampofo and Okyerefo, 2014) these authors noted that the general perception is that good wives are those who have not been abused by their husbands and to be seen as a good wife is to be submissive and subservient to the husband figure. But here too, it has its own set of complications as such traditional institutions are male dominated. The woman may end up being blamed for causing her husband to beat her on the grounds that she did not put up an appropriate behavior (Manuh, 2009). Due to growing lack of trust from the legal and police service, the situation further entrenched violence as a private matter that needs to be resolved in the confines of the home (Senah, 2009: 288). In light of this and apart from the DVA, the government has little to offer when it comes to domestic violence which is largely interpreted as a domestic dispute which ought not to be discussed outside the family zone (Manuh, 2009).

Chapter conclusion and focus of current study

Moving towards the contextual framing of my own work, I take seriously the theorization of masculinities from theorists and researchers such as Kopano Ratele, Ampofo Adomako, Robert Morrell, Walker and Reid, and many others whose theorizations have generated complex discussions around the question of masculinity as presented above. It is important that we continue to complicate theorization on masculinities as a contextual field of

enquiry. From the review above, it is important to note the complexity of masculinities and how different theorists and researchers locate their theorization often drawing on a wide range of discourses. From the reviewed literature presented above, different scholars theorized masculinities as poised between nationalisms, heterosexuality, marriage, patriarchy, and socio-economic change; the importance of researching masculinities as complex emotional and discursive spaces; the continued theorization of masculinity as open to the credibility of gender-based violence, especially against women in the domestic sphere; and the weight of 'masculinity' as a political form of accreditation without which economic and social human-being for men is extremely challenging. The broad range of theoretical engagements has generated catalysts for further theorization on the shapes and processes of masculinities and how these are implicated in acts of violence, especially against women in the home. The broad theorization on African masculinities has put the relevance of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity under intense stress. Different researchers have critically engaged with the concept of hegemonic masculinity by deploying a range of variables which are little considered in the concept of hegemonic masculinity. It remains yet to be seen whether there is anything like a single hegemonic masculinity in a complex context such as Africa. The concept of hegemonic masculinity contrasts with the varying debates on and multiple contestations around gender identity in diverse socio-cultural contexts thus casting shadows on the silence surrounding the discursive dominance around unified standardized masculinity that is oblivious of and denies diversity. Insofar as gender discourse around the man question is concerned, we have travelled far from a unified/same to embrace also a diverse/difference trajectory that allows for at once disaggregating, differentiating and extending while collectivizing men's experiences. There is, I would argue, an overarching analytic consensus that in the midst of a shifting socio-political-economic landscape and queerness, the meanings of being a man are also changing (Hamber, 2012). The changes that are occasioned by the evolving socio-political-economic landscape means that different men wrestle with new realities in different ways insofar as representations of credible masculinity are concerned.

But even Kopano Ratele whose work on masculinities cuts across many foci, his theorization is not without its own set of challenges. Throughout Kopano Ratele's theorization of masculinities, he consistently and frequently mobilizes and deploys the term 'Africa' in a

rather loose sense. He consistently uses Africa as a generalize descriptor for the continent. To some extent, we could gain a quick view about Africa as a colonized continent from his theorization; but at the same time, we risk essentializing. Which Africa is Ratele always referencing in his work? Ratele's work on African masculinity is heavily influenced by theories on race and how race as a political construct determine 'Black masculinities vis-à-vis white hetero-patriarchal ideals (Ratele, 2008: 517). Arguably, this is understandably right in the context of Southern African where masculinities are both raced and gendered. Significantly, discourses on race may offer little or may not offer anything concrete in the theorization of masculinities in contexts such as Ghana, Nigeria, and many predominantly black societies. While acknowledging the influential contribution of Ratele in the continent, my own work seeks to offer a small window of opportunity to engage with the narratives and discursive constructs of masculinity in relation to domestic violence among a cohort of rural Dagaaba men in north-western Ghana. In this qualitative study, I use 'African masculinity' loosely. I believe that the phrase 'African masculinity' quickly deploys 'masculinity' as though it were static, timeless, ahistorical, and unmovable and does not experience identity shifts and/or change in a globalizing world.

While the emergence of the DVA has come a long way in encouraging quality behavior between men and women, the cultural complexities of domestic violence is worth interrogating. Such cultural complexities serve as serious counter-productive forces that hinder the efforts of gender advocates, feminists, human rights activists and the national government in eradicating all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence.

My own work is interested in discussing the discursive construction of masculinity and different categories of men negotiate the discursiveness of masculinity in intimate relationships. I am interested in engaging with the range of discourses that a cohort of men of the Dagaaba ethnic group of north-western Ghana deploy in their negotiation of the meaning of being men in relations to their wives in the domestic sphere. My research is interested in the broad range of processes and modalities that men perceive to be normatively ideal for the projection of credible masculinity over time and space. From the literature review, many scholars have theorized violence against women as a fundamental modality of expressing and articulating manhood. My study takes interest in this and seeks to further interrogate and complicate the connection between credible masculinity and

violence. Domestic violence should be understood as an issue that occurs within contextually and culturally dynamics spaces. It is therefore imperative in line with this, to explore how men represent domestic violence in relationship to their own notions of competent masculinities and their own representations of both 'the domestic' and 'violence'.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter seeks to map out the methodological and epistemological frameworks that underpin this thesis. In outline, the chapter first describes the overall research design and methodological and epistemological quests. The chapter then outlines and details the step-by-step pathways that were carefully selected and employed in order to generate enough empirical data to achieve the overarching aims and objectives of the study as presented in first chapter. As part of mapping out the step-by-step pathways, the chapter strives to give detail account on data collection methods, participants sampling and recruitment procedures, participants' inclusion criteria, community entry process, interviewing and fieldwork practicalities, data analysis. I also highlight the complexity of working across different local dialects and engaging in a back and forth movement between translated interview materials and raw data captured in local dialects. and ethical consideration. While considering these areas as important in generating culturally situated meanings and contextual data, I engage with my own positionality both as a Ghanaian male and emerging researcher. By engaging with my own positionality, I situate my research within feminist epistemology which understands the positionality of the researcher as a critical dynamic in the generation of data (Bennett, 2008). The point of acknowledging my own positionality in a typically familiar fieldwork space both as a Ghanaian and researcher is to challenge some hypothetical assumptions around the question of a stable positionality of a researcher. The overall goal of the chapter is to demonstrate the realities in undertaking fieldwork and to explain how some practical issues were resolved, some limitations encountered, and what deserves more attention in future research. In essence, the chapter strives to facilitate meaning-making and synthesis of the analytical chapters even among independent people who have not been to the field.

Approaching research through a feminist epistemological lens

This thesis seeks to explore in-depth men's discursive meanings and constructions of masculinities in the context of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence in patriarchally entrenched rural north-western Ghana. To effectively and critically engage with the varied narratives of respondents, it is important to argue that social research such as mine is embedded in specific ideologies depending on what such research aims to

generate. This said, this thesis is informed by post-structuralist feminist conversation, especially the voices of Africanist feminist writers such as Jane Bennett and Sylvia Tamale on the complexity of knowledge as deeply embedded in local values, perceptions, nuances, metaphors, lived experiences, and even biases among different social actors over time and space. The current thesis is thus interested in interrogating and foregrounding discourses on masculinity and intimate partner violence against wives through men's own perceptions, ideas, and interpretations

Approaching ideas about masculinity and intimate violence against wives as discursive rather than solely material has been a central interest of feminist methodological and epistemological theorization, especially among Africanist writers. Growing scholarly interest among African-based feminists has been a source of great challenge to epistemological theorization that locates research as dichotomized (Bennett, 2008; Tamale, 2011). To be sure, there is a growing consensus among many leading African feminists of the necessity to destabilize epistemological essentialism. Dominant voices in the methodological debates among feminist researchers in Africa call for researchers to complicate the representation and construction of knowledge (Tamale, 2011).

The complexity of imagining the claims of knowledge, especially in an African context has been a major source of deliberation in challenging the hegemony of knowledge which has been dominated by mostly western writers until fairly recent decades. Notwithstanding this, there has been exponential growth of scholarship that gives further boost to the constitution of relevant knowledge often drawing attention to issues of intersectionality. Dominant argument among post-structuralist feminists is that of the rootedness of knowledge through perceptual local language and meaning-making (Thompson, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2007). One of the critical thinkers in this endeavor is the work of feminist researcher, Jane Bennett (2008). For lack of space, I will frequently use Bennett's work as emblematic of a general consensus among many African scholars in the epistemologies of knowledge production. Bennett's (ibid: 5) writing has been very critical on the question of imagining a 'field' and 'home' as an African researcher in attempt to generate relevant empirical data. Bennett argues that knowledge production and representation through empirical research in Africa must embrace and respect differences as what is counted as valid knowledge is complex and not straightforward. One basic argument in Bennett's (2008) work has been

that research within Africa must take seriously the positionality of the African researcher as part and parcel of broader methodological design. The implication of such encouragement is that contemporary researchers who are interested in qualitative nuances and the different locatedness of knowledge need to desist, or reject positivist essentialization of knowledge production and sharing. The ability of an African researcher to engage in self-reflexivity is critically essential in the process of knowledge production and sharing (Bennett, 2008). Knowledge emerging from fieldwork is co-constituted and not unidirectionally produced as claimed by positivist school of thought. I shall return to this debate shortly under researcher's positionality.

Suffice to add that, the advent of 'voices' of African feminist researchers has challenged the smokescreen or methodological hegemony of positivism which projects knowledge as 'absolute' and 'true' (e.g., Mbilinyi, 1992; Bennett, 2008; Mohanty, 2003; Tamale, 2011: 14). Representing knowledge as 'absolute' dislocates such knowledge from diversities, varying lived experiences, differences, and contextual realities. What constitutes relevant knowledge has been contested by researchers, including the above-mentioned feminist researchers. Central to the concern of many African feminists is to rigorously engage with the various shades of relationships and experiences that exist between a researcher and researched in the articulation of knowledge. Such deliberation further challenges positivist essentialization which projects the researcher as an omnipotent expert and the participants as passive subjects in the field (Tamale, 2011). To summarize, my engagement with participants in this study has encouraged me to understand that what constitutes knowledge does not exist in an individual, but engaging with multiple perspectives contain real value. Participants drew on many discourses to frame their thoughts, sometimes often moving back and forth in a changing socio-political context.

This thesis draws insights from dominant conversations on qualitative research as a form of social inquiry. Especially, the work of Whitehead (2005: 2) stresses the importance of a qualitative research which forms part of a broader field of social inquiry. The author reasons that using a qualitative methodology enables a researcher in gaining a better "understanding of the cultural system and context in which one is studying". Whitehead (ibid: 4) further notes that qualitative research as a form of social inquiry excavates in greater depth, valuable insights and nuances about the "socio-cultural contexts, processes,

and meanings within cultural systems". By this, some scholars underscore the importance of a qualitative research as an "interpretive, *deeply* reflexive, and a constructivist process" (Whitehead, 2005: 4; Denzin and Lincoln, 2007:2). Likewise, Reeves and associates (2008: 512) argue that through a qualitative research, a researcher is able to "get *the* inside-out of the ways in *which* each group of people sees *and constructs their social world*" (emphasis is mine). Further, Wood (2013: 22) suggests that qualitative research involves the "exploration and analysis of people's values, *norms* and perspectives" and the manners in which such perspectival values and norms influence specific behavioural reactions to social phenomenon. Wood further argues that interacting with the range of voices among social actors encourages "consideration of the ways in which people make decisions and participate in social action". While agreeing with these scholars, I would argue that my engagement with different respondents facilitated and determined narratives that emerged out of "complex relations *and conversations* between knowledge about people [*men*] and *social systems of power*" (Biggs and Powell, 2001: 7, emphasis added). Essentially, by using a qualitative methodology, I seek to research the "general understanding of the stock of meanings and their relationships to each other" among participants (Silverman, 2006: 134).

In the course of conducting my fieldwork, I met many different men who demonstrated both similarities and diversities among themselves. What remains important, which this study is seriously interested in is the fact that despite their similarities, at the individual level, they offered quite different life experiences and qualitative nuances. These individually different life experiences and realities remain a beacon for this study as these experiences are being informed by varying social norms, values and practices that operate within a specific social space. The social and political embeddedness of knowledge in every research is, therefore, worth acknowledging as valid or contextualized knowledge cannot operate outside the realm of social ideas, engagements, and realities. There were both similarities and generational differences between me and my participants. The production of knowledge in a research such as mine, can therefore be argued to be a result of an intersubjective interaction, sharing of similar experiences, and understanding between the researcher and the research participants.

Guided by African feminists' conversation on epistemology, methodology, and the co-constitutiveness of knowledge, my analysis seeks to acknowledge the dual voices of both

the researcher and the participants in the production of local-level knowledge on masculinities and domestic violence. Against this background, the thesis pays critical attention to how my presence in the field influenced the readiness and willingness of respondents to disclose information relevant to them to the researcher.

Choice of a qualitative methodology

A research methodology, according to Sikes (2004: 16), refers to the “theory of getting knowledge” leveraging on compactible “methods or procedures” that are suitable in generating empirically relevant data that seek to answer, or capable of answering a research objective. In her view, a research methodology represents the overall integrated approach, philosophical thinking, and overarching strategy that a researcher adopts in generating data that provide the evidential basis and conviction for the construction of valid knowledges (ibid). Likewise, Clough and Nutbrown (2008: 18) and Cohen et al., (2009) define a research methodology as the step-by-step process and procedure that “explains and justifies the particular methods used in a given study” in generating knowledge.

Being guided by the overarching objective of this study and taking seriously feminists’ theorization of knowledge production as briefly sketched above, the thesis is guided by a qualitative methodology which privileges close interaction between the researcher and participants through individual interviews and group conversations (Bryman, 2004). My choice of a qualitative methodology is informed by the value that qualitative methodology offers in gaining in-depth insights of the social world and realities of respondents through close interaction, observation, and dialogue. In other words, gaining access and capturing participants’ own world through their stories, behaviors, discourses, descriptions, feelings, and words; either spoken or gestured can only be maximized through a qualitative methodological framework (Bryman, 2004; Power, 2002; Taylor and Bodgan, 1984: 5). Utilizing a qualitative approach is a valuable and powerful means that enabled capturing fine grained experiences, views, and narratives of the varying categories of participants which cannot be based on discrete facts or figures in the case of a quantitative methodology (Cameron, 2001). Generating contextually relevant data through fieldwork has been foregrounded as an important component of post-structuralist engagement on deconstructing knowledge (Whitehead, 2005). But my choice of a qualitative methodology over a quantitative methodology does not aim to suggest superiority of the former to the

latter; rather, it is a matter of epistemological and theoretical aims of the study (Babbie, 2007: 16). I would also argue that qualitative research methodology respects differences, diversities, essences, and commonalities, as well as duality of relations that characterize social relations and interactions between the researcher and participants in fieldwork (Denzin, 1997).

By engaging participants qualitatively, I argue that they are offered some power and agency to reflect upon and engage with their own views, feelings, beliefs, norms. Focus groups offer opportunities to co-develop discussion, and while that is itself a process fraught with the social dynamics of peer surveillance, it may simultaneously generate self-reflection. The interviews conducted were designed so that, in a similar way, participants could take up space to theorize and narrate their ideas and experience as 'experts'. I discuss the differences between these two methods below; here I simply note that both methods were selected in relationship to their fertility around con-construction of research material.

Study Context and Participants

Building on the trajectories of the step-by-step processes and procedures that took place in the course of my fieldwork, this section details broadly the context of the study and participants whose narratives form the basis of the thesis. The context for this study broadly is Ghana; a democratic republic located in West Africa. Ghana has a total population of about 24 million with women constituting the majority (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). Although Ghana is a force to reckon with when it comes to stable democracy and political transition, the country is one of the most gender unequal (socially and economically) countries informed by a deep-seated patriarchy, rising levels of mass unemployment, and endemic poverty. Ghana attained independence in 1957 but one can argue that the legacies of colonialism and its hetero-patriarchal masculinities and marginalization are still glaring even today. Ghana has ten administrative regions. Out of the ten administrative regions, this study specifically focuses on the Upper West Region which is patrilineal in nature.

Locating the research participants

This research was carried out in six rural communities across six districts of predominantly Dagaaba speaking ethnic groups namely Lawra, Jirapa, Lambusie-Karni, Nandom, Wa Municipal, and Wa West. The household structure of authority in these selected

communities is patriarchal and predominantly based on male-headed figures. By traditional belief in the superiority of men over women, men control and determine all decision making within their extended families. Land-based agricultural production in the form of subsistent farming is the main source of livelihood for the selected communities, although a small number also engages in petty trading and other economic activities.

Owing mostly to migration in search of fertile land for farming, people from different geographical, ethnic, and cultural origins have replaced the hitherto homogeneity in population. Due to the search for productive lands for agricultural activities, it is not surprising to observe a contrast from a previously monolithic population composition largely based on kinship and ethnic groupings to some more sophisticated and dynamic cultural, social and political practices hierarchies. The emerging population dynamics also means the formation and hierarchization of new collective and subcultural identities. Unlike gender identity in the past decades as detailed in the literature review section, my engagement with respondents suggests that people achieve social status based mainly on social bonding and associative life, and common neighbourhood social events performances rooted in shared impoverished economic precariousness. In each of the selected communities, settlements are sparsely built and tiny villages are linked and connected to major towns in the region by poor and sometimes, un-motorable roads network, especially during the raining season.

While in the field, I observed that there are likely to be high school dropout rates among girls compared to boys; a situation which was observed to be predicated on an unequal gender landscape. In one of my field visits, I had an encounter with this girl who was busily selling pito (a locally brewed gin). This is what she shared with me: "Me, my parents asked me to sell pito today. It rained yesterday and they're in the farm farming. So, I was asked to leave school in order to bring the pito to the market. People are buying and when the pito finishes, I return to school tomorrow".

When asked whether her brothers, if any, are in school or not, she replied: "Oh, boys are different from we girls. Naa and Francis (names of her brothers) have gone to school. They are boys and boys don't sell. How can you even say boys should sell pito? They won't be able".

This encounter with a small girl who would be ten years old gave me a powerful hint on the meaning of boyhood and girlhood and subsequent extrapolation of masculinity and femininity. Accordingly, selling pito is traditionally a practice prescribed for girls while going to school is boyish. Right from a tender age, this girl is conditioned to internalize that specific activities are meant for her in her social category as a girl, not based on her capacity, while other activities are the preserve of boys. The anecdote offers a glimpse of a pervasive and deeply-rooted set of gender-norms, which of course influenced my own reception as a researcher (a married man, familiar with the area) and the worlds of all my participants.

These rural communities were selected in conjunction with the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Services; a special unit in charge of handling and prosecuting gender-based violence. Their recommendation was influenced by statistical reports which revealed that cases of domestic violence were pervasive. In some of these communities, some DOVVSU officers confided in me that cases of domestic violence were generating significant worries and that we needed to continuously engage with the range of perspectives in order to grasp its complexity. On several occasions, that I visited DOVVSU, I met many women coming from some of these recommended communities to lodge cases of domestic violence against them. Only two men were witnessed coming to DOVVSU to report some cases of women's violence against them. My interest was not the numbers of women or men reporting cases of domestic violence, but gaining deeper understandings of why domestic violence is of considerable concern to society. Although these communities share many characteristics in common, they offer great deal of diversity in terms of socio-economic, linguistic and cultural nuances, and socio-political constructs. That is, Dagaare is the main dialect spoken by people of the selected districts except in central Wa Municipal where Wali is widely spoken. How people talk, use words and the meanings and interpretations of the same words vary significantly. As would be seen in the analytical chapters, the concept 'dɔɔlong'(masculinities), 'pɔɔlong' (femininities) and domestic violence were conceptualized differently among respondents using the same local dialect as demonstrated in the second analytical chapter.

The majority of participants were of lower educational qualifications and of working-class background with a few others of middle-class background. Their family structures ranged

from extended families to nuclear families. The majority of participants were married in heterosexual marriages with an average of ten years in marriage life. The choice of selecting these rural communities was informed by the study's interest in understanding in-depth, discourses and voices of local people about their discursive constructions, meanings, practices and representations of masculinities. What are the dominant discourses that inform local people's understandings and dispositions in relation to their identities as men? Do dominant discourses on being men encourage local people [men] to be accepting of violence against their wives even though the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 of Ghana prohibits this? What are the nuances that shape local people's countenance of domestic violence? While this is a body of research on the meaning of gender-based violence in Ghana, as identified in the literature review, this has concentrated in urban communities and is imperative to shift scholarly attention to the discursive constructions of masculinity in relation to the perpetration of domestic violence in local communities.

It was crucial, in developing material from non-urban areas, to collect as much data from heterogeneous populations residing in different rural communities as possible. Given that these rural communities proved to be a huge source of empirical data—providing a rich tapestry of diversity in unravelling socio-economy, culture and local politics besides linguistic nuances, I was motivated to subscribe to the recommendation by DOVVSU to recruit respondents from these areas.

Navigating the fieldwork contours

In order to understand and appreciate the complexities of local notions of masculinities and how this influence domestic violence against wives in north-western Ghana, I decided to embark on a field-based research to collect empirical data, analyse the data and present such information to an outside person who has not been to the field. The worth of any qualitative research is recognizable through the transparent processes in collecting, analysing, explaining, and presenting the textual data. Gaining the buy-in and support of community gatekeepers on a research project can prove to be a real time challenge. During the community entry process, I had to travel back and forth in order to gain the approval of community gatekeepers. At every stage of the process, I had to draw on my past working experiences while being reflexive in order to mediate and navigate the complexities of relationships between the researcher and potential respondents. At the end, this was worth

doing because in the cultures of the people of Upper West Region, credibility is very important and depending on how community gatekeepers perceive the credibility of a researcher, the quantity of information given differs. I should add that gaining the approval of community gatekeepers is not enough to guarantee obtaining maximum and rich data. In some community, gatekeepers readily and gladly welcome my project to be conducted in their communities, but it was important to continually maintain and renegotiate the credibility and trust of potential participants themselves. In fact, this was a dynamic and continuous process and I had to always negotiate my relationship and shifting positionalities with respondents. Before durable rapport could be established, I had to engage in extended and clear conversations with community gatekeepers and their constituents on the desirability and genuineness of my project. In fact, this period has elapsed the timeframe I indicated in the doctoral proposal I submitted to my university for approval.

Some of the community durbars lasted for more than I initially anticipated. In some communities, prospective respondents initiated and asked many useful questions during the durbars. This was part of gaining insight on the credibility and trustworthiness of the researcher as well as the purpose of the project. As a researcher, I could not have ignored the numerous questions (although some questions were unrelated to my project) that potential participants asked than to extend the duration of the meetings close to five hours non-stop. At a point in time, I had to define closure. In my previous experience in communities where there are people who describe themselves as “local experts”, the ability and skills to say no to further questions is important. I had to adopt this position in two communities because unrelated questions were dominant.

From these lengthy discussions, I could notice that some men were ready to offer appropriate and useful supports, assurance, advice and critical feedback on certain issues I needed to know while others were purely pursuing their own hidden agendas. The latter group thought that I was a rich researcher whom they could use to easily enrich themselves. From my earlier interaction with some gatekeepers in two communities, I was reminded to be careful with the varying interests of community members. One of such people (gatekeeper) shared this with me; “My brother, you need to know the caliber of people to seek help from here. There are some community members who are interested in their own interest. When they see you as a researcher, they want so many things from you. But you’re

not here to solve all their problems for them. Just watch closely". I heeded to this priceless advice as I continued into the community entry process.

Community entry

After a series of reconnaissance visits to all the six study communities and having obtained the support and buy-in of various stakeholders—the chiefs and their elders, Assembly members, Magazia (Pognaa), Tindambas etcetera— official entry into the communities was obtained. I contacted the chiefs because they command the highest authority in the traditional landscape of Ghana, including the Upper West Region. Obtaining their permission or approval to conduct the research was a prerequisite since traditionally, a visitor cannot go to somebody's 'house' without soliciting acceptance from the family head. Through the initial gatekeepers together with the community chiefs and elders, community-wide durbars/meetings were arranged for boys and men aged 15 and above between mid-October and early November 2015. During the community entry, the purpose, data usage, ethics, and every information necessary about the study were clearly explained to the gatekeepers and the other participants.

Despite the participating criteria, some communities' elders insisted on the participation of both men and women during the community-wide durbars. Although I could refuse women's participation at the durbars, it was worth allowing their participation afterwards—in fact, it paid off. Through their participation, I could make some preliminary observation on local perceptions of masculinities and how masculinities and femininities are played out among men and women in such social events—community gathering. For instance, the sitting patterns and who speaks at what time, were framed in clearly masculinized styles. Men, being traditionally considered heads of the family were seen comfortably seated, while nursing mothers with little babies at their backs were standing on their feet. Another important observation was that much elderly women—60 years plus and the pognaa—were given sitting places. This sitting pattern suggests some pattern of masculinity and femininity which people assume based on their age and social standing in the community. Despite the traditional perception of a woman as unequal with her menfolk, some exceptional men (although on the minority) were seen giving their seats to breast feeding women in one community. What I cannot guarantee is whether such exceptional men did this out of their

own willingness and enthusiasm, or it was done just to satisfy the presence and attention of the research team.



Table 1, A section of community durbar with both men and women



Table 2 Community durbar with only adult men

Organizing the community durbars was as important as the end results of the study. On one hand, it was essential in order that productive rapport and trust with prospective participants and community at large could be established. On another hand, it created good grounds for easy acceptance of the research team into territories that were somehow unfamiliar to the team—the team's second home by way of research (but not in its classic sense).

The gatekeepers were well-respected and influential in their respective communities. Although the research team was kind of part of these communities (taking on the identity of insiders by virtue of same or similar cultural backgrounds), we took the community entry process seriously. This was necessitated by my previous working experience that when your community entry is not properly carried out, community members are always sceptical in giving you detailed information since they may not have enough trust in your (researcher) ability not to judge their worldviews. As Chambers (2005: 163) argues, the process of building quality trust and rapport is a gradual process through which the research needs to take one step at a time.

The research team was well received by the community members throughout the research process. For example, water was always offered to the team upon arriving in almost each community as a symbol of love and a message signalling '*ye wa yengni*' (you are warmly welcome). Even though some communities fetch their drinking water from the running streams which may contain some impurities hence unhygienic, the research team (comprising of principal researcher and a male research assistant) could not refuse the offer. Refusing the offer of water would place the research team in a position that would be detrimental to the amount and kinds of information you can access. In other words, refusing the water would create hierarchies between the researcher and the prospective participants. To avoid this, the research team always sip the water to show our acceptance and appreciation of the offer (albeit we may not necessarily be tasty). This, in part, indicated showed that we were part of the community.

As part of laid down tradition, the team presented kola nuts and a bottle of hot alcoholic drink to each community chief and his elders. After the exchange of the gifts and having explained the purpose of the study, some chiefs expressed their readiness to support the

team carry out this research to a successful end. Others could not hide their feelings that afterwards, somebody (especially a man) is interested in their opinions and experiences. Accordingly, women and men are situated differently in society with power almost exclusively vested in the hands of men. However, the debate needs to move beyond this unhelpful gender-erected binary which are crippling some men. As one male community leader contends:

You see.... when we talk of gender, we don't always talk about men.... but gender is far beyond just looking at women's issues. That is incomplete! Often times, we see gender as exclusively tied to the disadvantages that women and children face in society. As for we men, even NGOs these days don't involve us. But...we have our own problems just like women. I am really glad that you're interested in our wellbeing, too. We have been left out of discussion for far too long.

Participants recruitment

Respondents whose voices form the core of the analysis in this thesis consisted of individual adolescent boys and adult men of the Dagaare speaking ethnicity who resided in rural communities. In this section, I attempt to detail the process and criteria used in recruiting participants for the study. The recruitment process started with an initial sample of potential respondents who were recommended by community gatekeepers. With the initial recommendation from key gatekeepers, I then used a purposive sampling technique to further screen these participants for inclusion and exclusion. But is this sampling and recruiting respondents ethical? Would not there be biases in my findings? This initial sampling process generated ethical complications as some of the recommended participants alleged that they did not give absolute consent to be included in the study. In fact, some alleged that they were ordered by their community elders to participate in the study. I also noticed that community gatekeepers only recommended those groups of men they felt were suitable for participation due to the perceived belief of some form of financial reward likely to accrue from participation. The risk is that; my findings could be biased by this careful selection of respondents by gatekeepers. These respondents were selected because gatekeepers thought they could only say what was satisfying and pleasing to hear as a researcher. Considering that one primary inclusion criteria for participating in the study as well as my ethical commitment of causing no harm to respondents is voluntary participation, I gently explained and excluded respondents who were not willing to volunteer to participate. I also told the gatekeepers that I wanted them to use the selection

criteria in recruiting respondents and not randomly select participants. I was compelled to screen and recruit new participants through a second phase which involves recruiting participants during the community durbars. I decided to recruit participants during the community durbar sections using purposive sampling against potentially snowballing technique, or recruiting individual men through households because I thought that the durbars could serve as key occasions in which greater number of men in the area were likely to attend since traditionally, men are decision makers of households. Besides this, some of the communities have large population sizes and moving from house-to-house would be too involving, physically and financially. Snowballing technique would have been more useful in gaining access to chain of network of contacts, but in the current study, it was likely to offer same perspectives.

In conducting a qualitative research, it is important to be careful on who is qualified and willing to participate. One objective of the study was to get heterogeneous participants willing and ready to contribute to the conversation on discursive constructions of masculinity and how local perceptions on masculinity influence domestic violence. With this in mind and considering the primacy of diverse and heterogeneous perspectives, I settled on using a purposive sampling technique which hugely facilitated gaining complex narratives on specific phenomena (Neuman, 2006: 222).

Focus Group Discussions

It is noteworthy to share that focus group discussions serve as one of the most efficient ways to generate large-scale, local-level and sometimes complex qualitative data (Patton and Cochran, 2002). In navigating my fieldwork in rural north-western Ghana, I noticed that focus groups are powerful sources of qualitative data, and in particular, group contexts allow participants to query, challenge, clarify, discuss, agree or disagree, and reaffirm with other discussants. Such engagements created a think tapestry of reciprocated knowledge and topics sharing not only among discussants, but a useful space for the exchange of ideas between participants and the researcher. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics under consideration in this study; masculinities and domestic violence, I initially suspected that focus groups may not produce much needed and detail data since respondents may resist discussing and sharing about masculinities and domestic violence as tabooed topics. While in the field, I noticed that it was rather the contrary as many respondents used the groups

as powerful homosocial platforms to showcase and demonstrate command of traditionally hegemonic masculinities with other men present. Group contexts on topics such as gender are really powerful grounds for quick understanding of complex meanings and knowledges on normative ideas on gender as revealed throughout my interview transcripts. They are also great sources of data, especially the interactive advantage of generating and reproducing collective and dominant normative discourses on specific topics (Smithson, 2000). I would argue that the manners and ways people interact or talk to each other within a social context such as a peer group is an active doing of meanings making. That is, people are able to reproduce daily discourses as well as reveal their reactions to social issues including domestic violence. Each focus group was structured into two main sections; the first concentrated on discourses on masculinities; while the second explored meanings of domestic violence. Questions such as 'how does it look like growing up as a man?'; 'what does it mean to be recognized as a man in this community?'; 'what are some of the socio-cultural standards and expectations that people categorized as 'men' are supposed to engage with?'; 'will you subscribe to argument that it is masculine to abuse your wife whenever your orders as a man and husband are disobeyed without any reasonable excuse?'; 'what do you understand by domestic violence?'; 'do you think women of today are better off or worse off in terms of their behaviors and representations of femininity compared to women of past generation?'; 'does this change in behavior influence the pervasiveness of domestic violence against wives?'. Depending on the responses to each of these and other questions, appropriate probes were made to further elicit for nuances and clarifications. In some cases, questions were not linearly asked as some responses always lead to another question which might not be next on the flexibly semi-structured interview guide.

In most cases, I went home vastly confused and disappointed in myself. Maybe I did not ask the right questions or I asked the right questions but in an ambiguous manner because my initial conversation with discussants in various groups did not produced the kinds of information I was eager to hear. As I sat down to analyse, preliminarily, the data across both focus groups and interviews, then I realised that I needed to appreciate the complexities of my participants' views on such concepts as domestic violence and masculinities in a group context vis-à-vis a one-on-one interview space. The group context is a complex homosocial

space in which different men always wanted to appear in line with the dominant way of speaking as men, lest they are socially embarrassed and stereotyped. I also observed that there is more power play perhaps symbolically, among discussants in the context of focus groups whereas such power gradient is minimally observable in case of individual interviews. In this study, I treat talks within focus groups as performative in which men engage in exaggerated narratives just to be seen as belonging to the dominant class.

The focus groups were segmented according to specific age cohorts (18-25, 26-30, 31-55, and 56+) but not based on professional and marital statuses. In the context of this study, tradition requires that younger people listen to their elders without questioning whatever such older people say. Taking this into consideration, segmenting according to age was very crucial in order that young participants could feel free to challenge the views of their fellow colleagues. The importance of segmenting group discussions has been highlighted by researchers such as Morgan (1997), as well as my own previous research experience. Morgan argues that segmenting discussants, especially based on age is a necessary process as it determines homogeneity. I would add that it does not only determine homogeneity, but influences heterogeneous perspectives thus giving the investigator the opportunity to “examine differences in perspectives” (Morgan, 1997: 36) within, between, and among individual respondents in different groups. Morgan further suggests that group segmentation “allows for more free-flowing conversations” and comparison of opinions across different discussion sections.

As a human being and researcher, it is impossible to remember all that participants discussed or demonstrated—gestures, language, laughs, nodding, etcetera—during an interview encounter (albeit field notes can be taken during the interviews). In light of this, each focus group discussion lasted for approximately 3 hours and were each tape-recorded with explicit consent and approval from all the participants. Recording interviews was very essential as I was able to probe further important issues that needed clarifications which would not have been the case in the event that I am overwhelmed by note-taking during the interview process. In most cases, there were breaks in-between group sections and some group discussions were carried over into the next day due to insufficient time. Dominant voices among Africanist feminist scholars such as Jane Bennett argue that researchers need to respect, protect, and be accountable to the research participants (Bennett, 2008: 5)

hence when respondents felt that they were exhausted, I had to respect their opinions. But such breaks were important occasions for validation, clarification, and reaffirmation of what discussants engaged with in the previous section.

However, in conducting my fieldwork and in critically reflecting on the transcribed data as the fieldwork unfolded, I noticed that despite the beneficial qualities of focus groups, they are some disadvantages which are worthy of sharing. One of such disadvantages is that whenever dominant voices emerge, such voices sometimes went unchallenged, or some voices attempt to silence less dominating voices. For instance, when I asked discussants questions on domestic violence, some unmarried participants did not feel it was right challenging opinions of discussants who were married.

If I were to conduct group discussions in the near future, especially on domestic violence against wives, I would consider segmenting groups by marital status as marriage was perceived to be a dominant source of concern in challenging the married discussant's voice as an expert's voice. Although I carefully segmented discussants, there were still possibilities that some discussants' opinions remained unheard and therefore were likely to be ignored. In instances such as these, I asked specific discussants their take on a topic. In some cases, I could deduce that some discussants would be willing to speak but remain silent. Some of the gestures suggesting that a discussant wanted to speak included smiles, nodding of head in agreement, shaking of head as disagreement, among others. Questions such as the followings were used to probe and elicit responses from different discussants; 'my brother, will you like to say something about what your colleagues have discussed?', 'I can see that you've been nodding your head, what do you want to add to what your friends said?', 'my brother to my right, you've not shared with us your thoughts on this topic. What do you want to say about what others have spoken about?' etcetera. This became necessary due to the heterogeneous composition of each group. In some cases, discussants who remained silent opened up and contributed meaningfully to the discussion. In this study, I am not interested in the positions and actions that respondents were/are likely to take on domestic violence against a wife, but why respondents think that specific positions and actions are better options in specific scenarios—stressing the situational discourses on domestic violence.

For practical reasons, including time and financial constraints, the goal was to interview approximately thirty participants through group discussions. One group with five discussants each, was targeted and conducted in each of the six communities. This was due to the difficulty in getting more men to participate in the study since they were at the peak of their harvesting season.

In-depth Interviews

To corroborate initial findings from the focus group discussions, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen of respondents who initially took part in the FGDs, purely on voluntary and willingness to participate. This was informed by the study's desire to thoroughly build on, corroborate, and expand relevant topics and questions which were little discussed during the FGD sessions. The choice of this data collection technique was informed by arguments and previous experience (Ganle and Dery, 2015) that people may not necessarily tell the truth in any objective sense when it comes to sensitive and controversial disclosures such as domestic violence within a group context—more controversial perspectives and accounts are not likely to be guaranteed. The interviews served as valuable sources for deeper examination of the subjective experiences, attitudes, “thoughts, values, feelings and *repertoire of perspectives*” (Hammond and Wellington, 2013: 91) of participants on the subject under consideration. The interview context creates the opportunity for respondents to clarify and speak to remove ambiguity in their own words, phrases and meanings which is most likely to be lacking in group conversations.

Interview instrument

Taking clue from initial evidence from the first few interviews of the study, domestic violence against wives was always framed as something others do and no respondent was always willing to share his own personalised narratives on violence. Bearing in mind this distancing tendency, I thought that framing interview questions in the first person was likely to yield no better information. Already, my attention was drawn to the claim that men who abuse their wives were most likely to be of working class background compared to middle class folks. Flexibly semi-structured interviews encourage participants to discuss issues important and relevant to their lives whilst simultaneously allowing the researcher to introduce new and important areas. The interviews were framed in semi-structured format and this gave participants the flexibility to express their opinions and experiences in their

own terms and in a much-detailed form. To encourage more elaboration of information in most cases, I used prompts and probes such as 'could you shed more light on what you mean?', 'by this, do you want to suggest that...?', and 'is it possible to explain further what you mean by that?' to clarify areas that were less clearly expressed. In certain instances, during the interviews, it appeared more rewarding probing in the third person as other scholar such as May (1993) suggested. Asking questions in the third person's point of view, albeit sounds indirect, offered useful insights, especially on disclosures which were somewhat sensitive. The following questions were often used to elicit for information whenever respondent appeared to be sensitive to personalised disclosures on violence; 'Is it right for a man to beat his wife in any circumstance and why?', 'What do you think a man in your community will react to a situation in which his image as a man is likely to be questioned by the behavior of his wife?', 'Some men think it is masculine to use violence against their wives whenever their orders are not obeyed, what is your opinion on that?', 'My friend told me that families relationships have worsened in recent years in our communities, do you share the same opinion with this my friend and why?', 'A man told you that he will never abuse his wife, what do you think about this man?'. These probes and questions were very crucial in situations where the researcher was unable to get the fuller picture of what a participant attempted to proffer. These were also valuable in instances where some participants appeared to be excited and ready to discuss in-depth certain arguments. By using a flexibly designed semi-structured interview guide, I acknowledge the capacity and power of respondents as experts in articulating and sharing their own experiences. As I sat down listening to participants narrate their stories in a relaxed atmosphere (mostly at the home of the interviewee for interviews and school premises for group discussions) thus shifting the attention and power of the researcher to discussants themselves, I facilitated participants to uncover and rediscover their own social world and the meanings of this world to them as gendered beings. That is, using a semi-structured format gave participants the opportunity to qualify and explain their ideas better, especially during the individual interviews.

Overall, the quality and depth of the interaction was more important than just paying attention on the list of questions on the interview guide. This is a cultural privilege an insider

research probably enjoys over an outsider researcher; you do not rigidly stick to a research guide but the cultural nuances are important in bolstering the findings.

Use of language during interviews

Although Dagaare, Wale, and Birifor were the traditional languages, many people greeted and interacted with the research team in English in assumption that English is always perceived as the main language for most educated people. In many of the group conversations, there was always a conflict between which language to use, although I told respondents that they could choose to speak any local dialects which I am a native speaker. The tendency to switch from the local dialects to English language made me to observe and reflect on some form of hegemonic practices in which speaking English was a source of power and belonging to elitist class. As noted by one of the respondents in a group discussion which was predominantly influenced by the desire to speak English, “My brothers here spoke the white man’s language–English. For me, I think it is important to speak in Dagaare. English is not our language. Speaking in Dagaare adds a flavour to what I am going to say. Do you understand?”. The contest for linguistic hegemony was particularly noticeable in focus group sections. Such claim of hegemony was observed to be supported by colonial legacies, including English as a form of colonial artefact. By asking the question, ‘do you understand?’, this respondent is claiming authority and authenticity because he claims speaking in the local dialect adds weight to whatever stories he wanted to share with his colleagues and the researcher.

Reflection on my positionality

This research was conducted in a region where I was born and had my educational qualifications up to first degree. Having grown up and worked for years as development worker in the same region, it means that local language was not a problem as I am able to engage in a fruitful conversation fluently in any of the local dialects such as Dagaare, Wale, and Birifor. Drawing on my past working experience and my dual identities both as a male researcher and a Ghanaian by birth, I went to the field fully aware of, and mindful about, local conventions and etiquettes of acceptable and unacceptable modes of dressing and behaviors. In the cultures of rural communities in north-western Ghana, dressing codes speak volumes about the credibility and kind of person a researcher is. The work of Chambers (2005; 2012) re-echoes the need to dress appropriately and being culturally

sensitive in a manner that can facilitate the free-flow communication and sharing of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. I was careful in my dressing styles; what to put on and what to do at what time and on what occasion. For instance, on one occasion, I had a scheduled group discussion in one of the communities. Upon arriving in the community, the research team got the sad news that the one of the gatekeepers in the said community has lost a brother. Even though we could proceed with our discussion with the discussants since some participants were already gathered, it would seem 'unGhanaian'. As part of traditional practice, I sympathized with the bereaved family and community at large. Although this may appear time consuming, such social events gave the researcher the opportunity to demonstrate that I am one of their own and that I understand what the implications are to do one thing at a particular time. This further gave my respondents the trust and confidence to believe in me throughout the research.

In planning this research, many questions have emerged, questioning the feasibility and openness of possible respondents to what appeared to be tabooed topics such as domestic violence. Many academic colleagues have been critical about how I would be able to navigate the complexity of discourses that are likely to emerge among different respondents. This became necessary, when questions on imagining a fairly young male like me questioning and interrogating his elders about some of the most sensitive topics in the Dagaaba tradition. In carrying out my fieldwork, this feasibility challenge became apparent since my own research involves conducting interviews with adult men who are supposedly in position of authority. The question however remains: How could I be able to earn the trust and support of very elderly participants to speak clearly and freely on the repertoire of perspectives and discourses on domestic violence? How do I ensure that I balance the relationship between being a fairly young male researcher with the patriarchal authority of elderly respondents (especially much elderly participants) in order that I do not step on unacceptable cultural territories? These were very important questions that I needed to pay special attention to as part of planning my fieldwork.

Being a fairly young researcher puts me in a very advantageous position in accessing the richer data from many elderly participants. Some of the elderly participants assumed the position of experts/coaches while placing me in the position of a learner. For instance, in some communities, and without explicitly knowing my marital status, I was thought to be a

'small boy' (unmarried) in their presence who knows nothing much about marital issues and local notions of masculinity. In this case, they assumed the position of 'coaches' or 'masters', while I took the seat of a 'naïve learner'. Occupying the position of a 'master' was empowering experience for participants as they felt less threatened by my presence and position as a doctoral student. Fortunately, I seized the opportunity of being perceived a 'small boy' as an asset for me as I sat innocent (assumed the role of a learner learning from my masters), while participants took the driving seat. This provided me with novel ways of observing and capturing the rich nuances embedded in the arguments, contradictions, and non-verbal cues among participants especially in group context. One of the main discourses that emerged in this relationship was the discourse of time; 'now' and 'then'. Elderly men took the opportunity to coach and share with me their feelings and vent their frustrations on modernisation and how it has corrupted the behaviours of women of today to be bad women as presented in the analytical chapters.

But there were a range of problems which I had to face and one of my main challenges was my own identity, ideas, perceptions and ideology. It is important to note that the process of interviewing participants, especially much elderly respondents was not one-way affair, but it was deeply reciprocal. For instance, in some communities, some elders would share old stories which they think are important to me as a young person, asked tricky questions, observed the bodily language of the researcher, and would sometimes give incomplete answers expecting that I should have known what in essence they want to say. While I must indicate the significant properties associated with my shared similarities with participants, it has at the same time constrained me accessing some information as some participants often left sentences largely incomplete—withholding important information. For instance: "You are a student and you might have read all that you're asking us today. You know more than we do. For us, we're uneducated and old" (Man, 50 years, FGD).

I was able to successfully navigate my way through in eliciting the necessary information with elderly participants. I did this through utilizing my cultural experiences to dialogue with elderly participants to understand that, a child or a 'small boy' as they called me, will forever remain a child in the presence of elders—a child can never claim to know more than his/her parents.

On one occasion, while I was on medication (I was on malaria medication which means I had to take the medicine at specific time), I decided to take along with me bottled water such that I could take my medicine without bothering people for water. This was largely misread as a condescending behaviour. On my visit to one of the communities, I went to see a sick school boy who has been my friend since the first day I went to that community. Upon reaching the boy's house, two adult women—the boy's mother and her friend—were standing in the compound. After exchanging greetings, I was offered water by the boy's mother. I could not believe what I heard from the other woman; "He does not drink our water. He carries his water along with him'. She added that 'our water is dirty". Although the comment could be taken as mundane as it might look, it was in real sense a loaded comment that could be decoded from many lenses. Within her comment lies the fact that community members, although may look disinterested in you, are making keen observations and those observations could be used against you or used in your favor. At that point, I was viewed as an elite person who is above drinking 'dirty' water which local community members took as a luxurious commodity. This has the tendency of creating positions between the researcher and the community members. This perceived sense of hierarchies between community members and the researcher could indirectly punish me by denying me access to important information. I quickly had to explain myself to the woman before she broadcasts me across the length and breadth of the community that the *wulwule* (teacher) as I was always called does not drink their water.

While I was interested in showcasing local knowledge among participants on discursive constructions on masculinities and domestic violence, communities' members had different and sometimes huge expectations altogether. In other words, while I was interested in telling their ideas, stories and narratives to the outside world and other governmental agencies, participants wanted immediate answers to their many problems ranging from their families to the community. Whenever I tried explaining to participants that the impact of my study might not be short term, expressions on their faces were nothing short of, perhaps a betrayal of the trust they have in me to use my powerful position as a doctoral intellectual from UCT/South Africa to influence or lobby Western philanthropists, local politicians or the government to come to their aid. In this scenario, participants saw me to be both a 'useful insider' and at the same time, a 'powerful outsider' who can use my

privileged position as a researcher to attract assistance of various forms to their communities. A traditional leader in one of the communities angrily remarked: “Many of you (researchers/students) will usually come and collect our knowledge, the only resource that we the poor also have. You will go and sell that knowledge to the white man/woman and buy ‘big big’ cars and you don’t bring us anything” (Man, 60 years, Community durbar). A major challenge that many researchers face in carrying out research with ‘economically disadvantaged’ people, and especially their own people is the tendency for participants to imagine an overhaul improvement in their life.

This was further accentuated by the common perceptions among the local people that writing down names of people is synonymous with aid giving. In the course of writing down potential names for the group discussions during a community durbar, I heard this conversation between two elderly men (one joined the meeting quite late):

A: Ah, what are you people writing for?

B: The young man (researcher) asked those of us who are interested in his study to write down our names.

A: What will he give at the end of the study?

B: He did not say anything but I think he is from an NGO.

A: Then, let me also write down my name so that I will not be left out of any benefits.

These perceptions among many rural people have been influenced by understanding that anybody who conducts research is being sponsored by an NGO. At this point, I was confused as this question troubles the line between a “philanthropist” and an “academic researcher”, especially when participants already believed that I could offer a straightforward solution to the array of problems facing their communities. Once again, I told participants that I am a student and that the information that they (community members) will give me would not be devolved to anybody aside its intended purposes—for the purposes of academic assessment.

All these posed serious dilemmas for me to contend with considering that I could not, on my part, practically fulfil the expectations of my participants, while the latter fulfilled their part of the bargain. To some extent, participants may be right to call this relationship an unfair exploitation. Although participants saw me to be that powerful, in real sense, I was as

powerless as they themselves in attracting government's assistance to their communities. If such requests were within my ability as an individual, why not, but these were beyond the limit of the perceived powerful position in which I was supposed to occupy. I explained to participants that I would try as much as possible to get their needs across whenever an opportunity pops up, but also stressed that this should not be seen to constitute a promise.

While conducting my fieldwork, the imperative of being reflexive became very key. The imperative of being reflexive has been underscored by many researchers, including Agee (2009). Agee (2009: 432) argues that having a set of good research questions in qualitative research requires continuous reflexivity. Reflexivity, as Agee suggests, entails constant refinement and cross-examination of the dataset which is necessary of every rigorous research. Reflexivity is an iterative process which takes place at different stages in a research and this process enables a researcher to discover, confirm, and validate the discourses, "intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions" (Agee, 2009: 432). A reflective process keeps researchers building, redistilling, and rediscovering the range of normative discourses that are relevant which also help a researcher gain more knowledge about specific topics.

Developing an analytical framework

As I have argued earlier on, this study is influenced by poststructuralist feminists' theorization of knowledge as contextually complex and perspicuous. Having used focus groups and in-depth interviews to generate rich data from respondents, it is imperative that I develop an appropriate analytical framework that ensures that differing perspectives and discursive accounts on domestic violence and masculinities among respondents are catered for in the analysis.

The processes adopted in the current qualitative analysis revolved on carefully listening to the tape recordings several times, distilling what is at stake in various interviews, and subsequently transcribe and make meanings of the repertoires of discourses among respondents. Interviews were transcribed verbatim into English from the recorder by the principal researcher while retaining some quotations in the local dialect for illustrative purposes. Interview transcripts were read several times and closely and manually coded by the principal researcher—employing the line-by-line approach of coding transcripts. The

transcripts were later cross checked by a senior colleague to ensure linguistic accuracy. The transcripts produced large volume of data some of which were irrelevant to the study due. Some data were considered irrelevant not because they do not make sense, but because participants especially in the groups took the flexibility and opportunity to discuss other unrelated topics. After organizing and distilling codes into useful and meaningful categories, various themes were developed and formed in conjunction with my supervisor.

Just as there are many methods of data collection in a qualitative research, data analysis can be approached from a variety of frameworks (Punch, 2005). Different analytical frameworks present different meanings and how qualitative data is interpreted. Qualitative approaches are hugely diverse, complex and nuanced. Adopting a particular analytical lens over another in a qualitative research is largely informed by the researcher's theoretical and epistemological position. While there are many analytical tools available to researchers such as Narrative Analysis, Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory Analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, among others, I used a Thematic Analytical approach to guide my analysis. As pointed out earlier, my research does not subscribe to a realist social world where the researcher only gives voice to the participants, but that the researcher is seen as an active player in the process of co-production knowledge as espoused by critical paradigmatisers. Thematic analysis is ideal for exploring areas which are under-researched as it strives to capture the qualitative richness of the data. Thematic coding, I would argue, involves rigorous rereading and writing of interpretations of concepts and perceptions that ensue from the dataset and subsequently arrange codes into coherent topics and headings. Thematic analysis pays special attention on themes across multiple sources of data such as focus groups and in-depth interviews which emerge out of radical reading of emerging patterns of codes. Thematic analysis acknowledges how individual respondents make meanings of their experiences and realities and how the broader social community influence those meanings, while at the same time retaining some focus on the material and other realities influencing peoples' behaviors.

A thematic approach of analysing qualitative data was then used by inductively engaging with the data set as well as deductively cross checking with existing literature (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to develop coherent arguments. Using a thematic analytical framework is useful, epistemologically, (which is compatible with feminist epistemology) as it

acknowledges men's feelings, meaning makings, constructions and experiences on thoughts, values, ideals and norms, while simultaneously situating discursive narratives within the broader socio-cultural domain. Through this approach and considering the researcher as an active player in co-creating meanings out of participants' discursive accounts, various themes were developed and generated through an iterative process. In developing themes, I moved back and forth between my initial coding frame and the data set. In the process of developing and refining well-encompassing, relevant, and recurring codes into various analytical themes that could contain what is implied in discursive constructions among respondents, the logic of my argument became clearer. In order to avoid charges that I probably selected data to fit *a priori* analytical arguments, I decided to focus broadly on illuminative and core themes that recurred in both focus groups and individual interviews.

Ethical considerations

All the research participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of Cape Town ethical review policy and standards as well as the ethical standards of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service who is in charge of violence cases. Since the topics under consideration in this present study are quite sensitive and may entail some personalized narratives and painful disclosures, there was much caution in asking questions which have the tendency of provoking participants, especially those who have identified themselves to have ever perpetrated violence against their wives. Drawing on experiences in previous studies as guiding flags, there was need to be mindful of the risk, especially those risks that can upset respondents in the course of asking questions. That is, there was care in asking questions that were ethically friendly—ensuring that boundaries that may create hostility during and after the research process are not exceeded. In one particular interview, we had to go on a small break. This break was important because it gave the participant time to organise himself.

Researcher: Have you ever heard of domestic violence in your lifetime?

Respondent: (silent for several minutes. His posture suddenly changed. He became visibly disturbed).

Researcher: Are you okay bro? Will you like to take a break before we continue? Maybe we take some snacks and come back. Is this a good idea?

Respondent: Sure, let take a break bro.

We went for a short break of about 15 minutes.

Researcher: Can you tell me something about your children, and what you like about them?

Respondent: I have three children. Two girls and a small boy. They're lovely kids. They're good in school too. The first one is about to celebrate her 10th birthday.

Researcher: Oh, Happy birthday to her in advance!

Respondent: Thank you bro. I don't know...may be because she is the first child, she is too stubborn. She does not behave like a girl. She is that aggressive and virtually beats all the other children around here. I just imagine when she grows up with such behaviours...her husband will be in trouble (laughed).

Researcher: How do you see your family? Are you happy with how your family is fairing now?

Respondent: I think, am okay with how things are going. We may not be the best of families, but others equally envy ours. I am happy because I have a son. Other men are not lucky like me.

While noting the possible discomfort which might have compelled my respondent to be silent, he made powerful revelation about domestic violence and taken-for-granted discourses on masculinity and femininity. The respondent talks about his daughter being unacceptably aggressive and this was of major concern to him as a father because he thought that his daughter is acting unfeminine and this will trouble her marriage. His narrative talks to discourses on heteronormativity. I took this moment as a perfect opportunity to pursue issues of marriage and domestic violence. I used this opportunity to probe how such respondent imagine the daughter's husband might behave in a case in which his wife acts unfeminine? How would he, as her father, feel if his son-in-law beat his daughter? These narratives are embedded in the broader empirical chapters (4 and 5).

Researcher: What are your thoughts on men who are violent towards their wives?

Respondent: Umm...violence is bad. Domestic violence is a terrible experience... I mean it is not good. I was beaten several times by my uncle. I felt like, gosh...scaring. Whenever I saw

my uncle who inflicted violence on me, I was always like...afraid. Sometimes, I went hiding...I don't want to see him. Perhaps, he hates me...but sometimes some women understand the language of violence than a word of mouth. When you speak to them by word of mouth, they don't take you serious... so acts of violence become louder.

It is important that I fully understand and be aware of issues of sensitivity, which could lead to the disclosure of private experiences and narratives in the research process. In line with ethical commitment and as a way of ensuring the paramount confidentiality of participants' information, there was need to empathise with the status, position, and specific needs of participants and also reassure them of data sensitivity and management, and strict adherence to privacy of data throughout the research process.

Chapter conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate the manners, steps, processes, and procedures that were followed in generating rich data that form the core of the analysis in the subsequent chapters. The current study utilized FGDs and IDIs due to their ability to complement each other and produce greater understanding of the experiences, perspectives and social processes regarding domestic violence and masculinities among Ghanaian men. In using both FGDs and IDIs, I hope that these methods have helped to mitigate some of the problematic aspects of my positionality. Multiple methods of data collection also enable cross-examination and triangulation of varied views among respondents to further strengthen validity and rigor.

Chapter 4: NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MASCULINITIES

Introduction

This chapter attempts to map out and analyze respondents' discursive constructs around their experiences of growing up as men in rural north-western Ghana. The overarching goal of the chapter is premised on a critical deployment of the concept of incipient masculinity as an important theoretical and analytical lens through which respondents' current masculine dispositions can be evaluated and re-read. The chapter first concerns itself with a critical exploration and engagement with respondents' understandings and meanings of being a boy in a socio-economically marginalized and patriarchally entrenched society. In tracing the trajectories of growing up as men, I effectively excavate how men's current masculinities are either modelled after what they have been trained to internalize as appropriately masculine, or otherwise and what such modelling portend for the internalization of variable patterns of masculinities. The outcome of such deliberations is to estimate how different categories of men are likely to interpret and translate social norms and expectations of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity in their relationship with their intimate partners in heterosexual relationship.

Being guided by a thematized analysis of interviews and group narratives, the chapter first engages with theorization of incipient masculinity within the context of gendered based expectations. This theme explores how respondents negotiate and navigate the complexities of growing up as boys who are traditionally expected to communicate and demonstrate knowledge and competence of their social category differently from girls. This is followed by a critical engagement with how respondents navigate the liminal space between incipient and adult masculinities. Age becomes an important consideration in men's contest for gender hegemonies. The next theme problematizes the father figure as a powerful form of surveillance in policing the boundaries of young men's pursuit of credible masculinities. The power of the father figure is demonstrated in how fathers variously act in their cultural capacity as traditional trainers and coaches whose interest is to perpetuate dominant notions of what it means to be a man. We see this clearly displayed in fathers' own vested interest in seeing their sons excel in traditionally masculinized expectations and fields. In what appears to be a slightly shifting territory, the next theme pays attention to how adult men relate with their fellow men in their everyday interactional spaces.

Specifically, I attempt to interrogate and problematize men's relationship with other men as a powerful form of homosocial male bonding in which different behaviors and patterns of masculinities are configured. It became clear that some of such configured behaviors are translated into private relationships as part and parcel of articulation of successful masculinities. The last section pays attention to men's articulation of successful masculinities in an increasingly changing socio-economic context. Overall, the chapter attempts to problematize masculinities as deeply complex and mutable institutionalized cultural practices internalized by diverse groups of men. The arguments are foregrounded in men's own self-reflected stories and narratives on growing up as men and what this process entails.

Binary-based expectations and boys' struggle for incipient masculinity

This theme explores the concept of incipient masculinity in attempt to excavate, understand and appreciate the meanings and dynamics of masculinity among young boys (now adult men). This is important because childhood can be described as a stage in life characterised by an increasingly complex, divergent and somehow gendered experiences. My interest here is to explore and engage with participants' reflections on the range of processes and how boys are able to manage in a meaningful way and negotiate the gendered and complex tensions that pervade in the interactional spaces of boys and adult men.

Incipient masculinity refers to the unconscious internalization of the meaning and representation of the social categories of 'boys' within a social context. It involves the complex notions of the meanings and ways of 'doing boy'. When asked how growing up as a man means, participants constantly and repeatedly asserted their childhood experiences as difficult and complicated with very limited room for deviation. Adolf, 30, recounted this complexity: *"In the family, my father outlines what is necessary and what is not...in the community, there are laid down expectations too. So you try to meet those expectations in order to be seen in that category [boys]. It was sometimes limiting and a bit of struggle. You have no option"* (Adolf, ID1). While Dong, 32, shared similar view on how complicated growing up as a boy could be, he added that the only sweet part of his childhood experience was: *"enjoying all the little little things which elderly ones give to children. At least you are not expected to do much work as the elderly. Aside this, the rest was basically a 'struggle' with limited room for choice making"*. Maaro in a different interview clarifies, *"You know*

that situation in which you cannot really influence what you want to do. That is the experience. You are asked to do this and that is supposed to be done without question. Nothing like option. It was like crazy but I think it was all part of the training process". The language of almost all the respondents was framed around the notions of 'struggle' and the need to live up to the social challenge required of them as 'boys' which was largely perceived to in stable motion. That is, to be seen operating within the normative framework of credible boyhood, one must ensure that he must be seen to abide by the gender codes of his social category even if it means going contrary to one's personal interest and wish illustrated in Maaro's extract above, "*You are asked to do this and that is done. Nothing like option*".

What is fascinating in across the transcript narratives of respondents is their framing of boyhood experience not as a dislocated and decontextualized engagement, but a problematic social project which was judged in relation to girlhood and more importantly in relation to the past ancestral lineage of manhood. In fact, the desire to protect past ancestral lineage of manhood muddies the supposed stability and limiting choices of masculinities. Thus, the challenge that participants were found to be negotiating was not an issue that involved only boys, but boys' behaviours and actions were assessed and evaluated in comparison to those of girls—their sisters. In a typical scenario, boys are demanded to be knowledgeable of the boundaries between their positions and that of their sisters. According to Amatus: "what you are capable of demonstrating as a boy differentiates you from your sisters. That is the beginning of your identity...manhood. So when you're unable to follow what your father wants you to be like, you're likened to a girl". What Amatus is theorizing is that growing up as a boy is a competitive process in which boys ought to shrewdly strive for recognition through some well demarcated boundaries which distinguish the category 'boys' from the social category 'girls'. He further invokes the figure of the father as an instrumental figure in the patriarchal re-entrenchment of gender binaries. These gender binaries are deeply hierarchical and whenever a boy fails to live up to the expectations of his father, he becomes a girl; occupying a supposedly lower rank. But Amatus' theorization becomes problematic when ability is conflated with credible manhood illustrated in "what you are capable of demonstrating as a boy differentiates you from your sisters". Does this suggest that being able to demonstrate what one's father

expects from him is an automatic inheritance package for boys? Does the phrase, *“what you are capable of demonstrating as a boy”* open up space for alternative ways of being a boy?

While this was the dominant idea among the majority of participants in both focus groups and individual interviews, it seems other participants had a different thinking around their childhood experience largely based on what they could do or not do. In an individual interview with Abu, who proudly described himself as a very “stubborn” and “bully” boy when he was young, his perspective is quite interesting. He narrated that: *“It was all fun growing up as a man. Sometimes I sit to reflect back and I notice that I have come a long way. Some experiences were really fantastic ones; especially when it comes to wrestling. I was always the winner. I can’t imagine that today. It was all crazy”*. Effectively, Abu is theorizing that there are different forms of hegemonies that young boys could access and enjoy during their childhood stage depending on different forms of agency. He draws on the agency of a “stubborn” and “bully” persona in order to find life during his childhood days, worth living and enjoyable—always winning wrestling. The form of hegemony is intimately connected to time and how one approached the social world, as well as possessing the necessary capital. While other respondents theorized their childhood experiences as nothing but a ‘struggle’ due to such participants’ lack of access to the hegemonies of stubbornness and bullying, Abu’s narrative rather situates his experiences as ‘fun’, ‘entertaining’ and ‘fantastic’. Abu further locates his experiences in a world of ‘craziness’. I want to interpret this locatedness of his experiences as hegemonic which credits his position as a winner while others of similar age cohorts are strugglers.

In addition to knowing the sort of capital to deploy in order to be seen as a winner or a loser are responses which indicate that growing up as a boy and living up to the requirements of the social category of a boy means internalizing, knowing, and externalizing the value of what it means to be a ‘boy’ who must remain different from a ‘girl’. It is not enough to know the value, but one must be ready and willing to face the repercussions of any form of deviation, or failure to match up to the standards of boyhood, what Amatus frames above as ‘likening to girls’.

In a separate conversation, Oper argues that, *“boys are always expected to know their left hand from the right. That is the beginning of manhood. Then, you begin to show boys’ qualities and not anything which girls do. The two are different. A boy is supposed to tell the*

world that you are different from your sisters... you observe what other boys are doing and you copy that. So depending on how you are trained, you can either function properly as a man which is the desire of every father or you are publicly shamed for failing to match up to your colleagues”.

This extract points to very problematic assumptions and discourses in navigating the trajectories of credible boyhood. One of such discourses is the relationality and communicative imperatives of boyhood and girlhood illustrated by, *“you begin to show boys’ qualities and not anything which girls do. The two are different. A boy is supposed to tell the world that you are different from your sisters...”* What this means is that right from childhood, boys are conditioned to understand that they are different from girls and should, as much as possible remain different from girls except in the event that they want to cease being boys; the consequence of which is the label girls. To be labelled a girl in this context is deeply damaging and stereotyping to the social standing of any well-meaning boy; the consequence of which affects the father figure as well. It is not enough to be called a boy, but that one must communicate his credibility as a boy to the world. This communication seeks to solidly affirm the social standing of the category ‘boys’ embedded in traditional trainings. For instance, *“depending on how you are trained, you can either function properly as a man which is the desire of every father or you are publicly shamed for failing to match up to your colleagues”.*

Knowing one’s left from the right was a dominant discourse among participants as straying too far from the acceptable territories was perceived to be socially costly; it leads to the feminization of boys and their fathers. Accordingly, only boys who are feminized and fathers who are failed trainers are denied the reward of social capital in the form public praise. In other words, to be seen as a credible boy is to thrive to avoid public shame which affects the father figure. Shame thus becomes an important feminize quality which boys ought to avoid in order to present themselves to the world as credibly masculine and knowledgeable of their own world.

But there is more to learn from incipient masculinity than just simply knowing what it means to be a boy and not a girl. As it has emerged from the reflection of respondents above, fathers have real interest and investment in seeing their sons display qualities traditionally described as correct masculine qualities. But what happens when a son fails to live up to the

normative benchmarks on incipient masculinity and how does that impact on the image of the father figure? Some participants went further to indicate their desire to pursue harsh punishment for their children who fail to protect and uphold past ancestral practices on correct masculinity. This was clearly illustrated by Alphon who says: *“if I see my son doing activities that can make him feminize and questionable, I will disown him. He is likely to bring shame and disgrace to the family. That is not how I trained him. A boy needs to be socially outstanding. You don’t go around doing everything. You need to know your right from your left”*.

In a separate discussion with Dong, his comments corroborated those of Alphon. He narrated, *“I think a boy should pursue boyish ventures. Those things that make you socially outstanding. You need to disassociate yourself from anything girlish...That is not our portion”*. The ending part of Dong’s comment *‘this is not our portion’* is a very important comment and we should be interested in pursuing this further. Dong’s statement is indirectly reaffirming the discourse of ‘knowing one’s left from the right’ and the currency of being socially outstanding which were largely situated within gender binaries.

From the two excerpts, there are some key concepts that need to be highlighted. First, and perhaps unsurprisingly, we see gender as a relational construct in which boys are traditionally expected to perform specifiable tasks different from girls. These activities and roles are not explicitly enumerated in these narratives but it appears these respondents are suggesting a clear knowledge of what is acceptable for boys to engage in and what is inappropriate (‘questionable’) for boys. This is what Dong vividly draws our attention to when he opines that, *“Those things that make you socially outstanding”*. To know the demarcation of these roles and activities and going the contrary is to invoke on the wrath of one’s father. The discourse of ‘shame’ becomes critical here in maintaining and policing the boundaries between credible masculinity and femininity, and introduces a range of theoretical questions possibly unexplored in previous research on constructions of masculinities as dependent upon the gender binary. While the power of non-conforming gender performance to effect shame has been explored, my participants prioritized this as dramatically key within the sustainability of the contemporary family. This is vividly revealed in the comments of Alphon who argues that, *“if I see my son doing activities that can make him questionable, I will disown him. He is likely to bring shame and disgrace to the family.*

That is not how I trained him". By this very narrative, Alphon is suggesting that rather than being shamed and disgraced as a failed father and patriarchal trainer, it is socially profitable to 'disown' his son who engages in activities which can potentially ruin the hard-earned reputation of his family. He tacitly deploys the language of the family to shield his own interest in avoiding public shame whenever his son veers off the masculine mark. From this, respondents' argument that their childhood experiences have been 'limiting' becomes clarify.

Incipient masculinity remains, fundamentally, the very core and starting point of the meaning of masculinity as well as the various stakes that are likely to offer greater rewards in the world of men as opposed to the province of women as demonstrated above. When a boy fails to abide by the gender codes associated with his category as a male, his prospect of being included in the realm of proper boys is very slight. This is contained in the commentary of Amu in the following statement; *"when you are unable to man up to the requirements of your category... associating with feminine and weak stuff, your inclusion into that group [boys] becomes questionable. Society queries your actions and behaviours"*. While agreeing with Amu, Oper further situated the debate within a larger context of gender binary; *"Being a boy means you're unique. People must see you demonstrate this"*. Being unique and avoiding society's queries as a boy was not the desire of only Oper and Amu, but other respondents showed important interest. For instance, Andy thought that attaining the position of *standing out* means that a *"strict knowledge of the need to always appear strong and okay and to try as much as one can possibly do to avoid being seen to be sissy"*; a quality almost all participants repeatedly disdained as unworthy hence characterized as feminizing. To put it in a different direction, being sissy is not the portion for proper boys. From this, it is evident of some feel for the game of boys in which the fear of being judged down plays a central role in determining what logic of practices young men are likely to adopt at specific moments in order to *'stand out'* among their colleagues. It is not enough to attempt to *stand out*, but the most important and in fact, the ultimate goal is to appear as a real boy and not 'Other'. This is part of *"knowing your left from the right"* as a boy.

Another important discourse deployed in the narrative of Oper is that of public performativity. Oper frames credible incipient masculinity in a dramaturgical language.

Effectively, a boy needs to demonstrate to public audiences in order to solidify his uniqueness as a boy and not a sissy figure. In other words, a boy does not communicate his position as a boy to himself, but must do this in the interest of the public. And by implication, a boy ought to demonstrate the sort of training his father has been giving him. It is not only fathers, but the everyday behaviour of other male colleagues, however mundane they may look, serve as potent ground for the habituating of specific qualities and behaviours.

Significantly, an important pattern of flow of dominant arguments in the narratives of respondents in their attempts to be part of the complex landscape of 'doing boys' suggested ideas on multiple forms of social pressure and policing as important regulatory mechanisms. What is stimulating is what appears to be element of internal or intrapsychic regulation among participants. Before one thinks that others outside there in the wider public are observing and judging his discursive display and performance of gendered practices, activities, roles, and behaviours, one astutely assesses himself to be sure he is in the right direction. This self-assessment ensures that a boy makes good impression and presentation of command of boyhood scripts in order to validate and justify his inclusion. To avoid being perceived vulnerable and sissy, boys were reported to engage in some form of hysteria and always needing public confirmation as masculine proof as demonstrated in the excerpts above. Interestingly, this is often intended to broadcast one's masculine credibility. This is clearly captured in the statement: *...they punch you one or two times and you cannot react.* From this, I would argue that element of masking emotional vulnerability becomes clear in men's stories as maintaining one's masculine identity is an ability to punch back even if you know you cannot confront your opponent head-on. We equally see the discourse of toughness deployed in this sense. When others punch you and you are non-reactive, you are perceived as sissy and less of the cultural standards for boys. The essence of the myriads policing mechanism is that of some form of social assurance. This perception of social assurance gives competition boys a good and sound judgement as a deserving boy when they are able to withstand others.

It emerged that peer pressure and the desire to prove of being capably and competently masculine are intimately entwined in the social world of young males. The comments of Chris below illustrate this clearer:

“As a boy, you don’t look sick and emotional. That is not allowed. That is women’s...you don’t act weak. Being emotional will make you very vulnerable...you get bullied by other guys... even your own friends. They punch you one or two times and you cannot react, you become a playing ground for any young guy. They use you to practice their masculinity... You lose that thing...your identity as a man”.

Dong agrees with Chris saying, *“Doo ba kono’, that is what elders will advise you... You are forced to hide your feelings in order to be part of your peers. You don’t want to fight but running away is frowned upon. Even if you cannot fight, you have to pretend...you have to try your best”*.

The language, *‘Doo ba kono’* was predominantly used among participants in their expressions of credible incipient masculinity. The closest English translation of *‘Doo ba kono’* is *‘a man does not cry, or a man does not know how to cry’*. Crying is considered a sign of being feminine—a quality suitable for girls and women. In other words, emotionality is associated with women/girls and when a boy associates himself to anything close to emotionality, or acting in a sick manner, he renders himself susceptible to being bullied by other peers illustrated by, *“Being emotional will make you very vulnerable...you get bullied by other guys... even your own friends”*. This, therefore, implies that to be recognised as a worthy boy, one must in all capacity, disassociate and distance himself from these qualities.

What appears a profound position which respondents would not be interested in in their capacity as boys is the position of serving as a theatre for the rehearsal of masculine practices. None of the participants was enthusiastically interested in serving as a training ground for the rehearsal of incipient masculinity among his colleague boys. This is certainly what is contained in Chris’ statement, *“You lose that thing...your identity as a man”*. However, the danger of such embodiment are reasonably visible. For instance, one’s ability to punch back at a colleague is a protective cover from further harm from peers. This means that *“Even if you cannot fight, you have to pretend...you have to try your best”*. Arguably, running away from a fight is enough evidence to judge one position down as less of a credible boy. The language of “man up” is implied in respondents’ attempts *“to be part of their peers”*. We further see the influential role of elders in advising young males to pursue credible boyish practices and behaviours. Elders are interested in encouraging young males

to remain strong, emotionally, in order to be counted as real men by not crying even if it means hurting their personal feelings.

One important recurring pattern in men's narratives on incipient masculinity across both interviews and group discussions was the need to always be on the guard to defend and protect oneself and others around, especially girls. This was clearly captured by Jonas in the group discussion when he says: *"A boy is supposed to defend himself and his sisters outside the home. He is the leader among his sisters. He must take actions that can protect them all. That is a real boy"*. According to Frank, *"a boy must ensure the safety of his sisters when they are going on a journey. Boys are always boys and girls are girls. That is why boys always lead"*. While agreeing with Jonas, Amos' comments detail that, *"a boy is known by his ability to serve as shield for his sisters and others. He is always the master of the situation"*. And for Dong, to be able to lead is to be smart and intelligent; *"whenever there is any problem, the boy should be able to device a way out. Get a solution to it. That makes the difference between you and your sisters"*.

From these narratives, a sense of filial responsibility is strongly highlighted as part of boys' performance of credible incipient masculinity. Accordingly, young boys have, somehow, a filial responsibility to always lead and protect their sisters—be they younger or elderly—from any form of harm—evidenced by one's *"ability to serve as shield for his sisters and others"*. Thus, incipient masculinity was argued to mean taking on the role of protecting and defending their masculine reputation through taking on any possible form of threat to their sisters' safety; always ensuring the *"safety of his sisters when they are going on a journey"*. Protecting and leading were expressed as part of the specific mandates of their social categorization which situates boys differently from girls mostly in the form of hierarchy. One's ability to lead is expression of smartness, intelligent, and ability to look beyond the ordinary. Arguably, these are qualities that girls lack by virtue of their social categorization as female who should depend on their male folks.

A dominant position of most respondents was that girls needed to be protected since they were naturally the weaker and vulnerable category. According to Maaroo, *"girls are less strong and they look really vulnerable out there. You ensure that they are not harm by those bad boys"*. Taking these narratives together, we can estimate one line of argument among respondents; they have a moral and cultural responsibility to assume a paternalistic position

of a protector and leader and ensuring that the safety of their sisters is maintained. This could mean and expressed through a range of recourses. To allow one's sister or other followers to be harmed by other bad boys is enough evidence to judge one down as an incapable boy.

Interestingly, incipient masculinity appears to assume a normatively dominant position—offering a great deal of processes in maintaining the patriarchal gender order as illustrated above and how masculinity negatively affects the overarching gender relations. When boys embody messages that suggest a hierarchical arrangement of positions between boys/men and girls/women and among boys/men themselves—giving rise to the configuration of a specific habitus with a particularistic goal (maintaining power, dominance, toughness, and leadership), such dispositions are consequently and naturally inscribed in the form of common-sense knowledge which are passed on from one generation to another. They assume a common-sense position because boys are taught to internalize such messages as natural imperatives illustrated by *“Boys are always boys and girls are girls. That is why boys always lead”*. Further to this, Andy argues that, *“I was always encouraged by what I was taught as a boy. I needed to show my peers that I know the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ of boys. It was a common-sense kind of thing for any boy who wanted to go high in the community to imbibe those laid down “dos” of boys.*

What I ought to add is that being recognized as a credible boy, and for that matter, masculine, is situationally achieved and one must ensure that the necessary steps, actions, and precautions are taken to avoid public embarrassment through the loss of masculine identity as a boy. To lose one's hard earned identity as a boy so cheaply is just not an option. As a result, one always needs to engage in taking different forms of actions to counteract any form of social pain when confronted. This was further supported by statements such as: *“Even if you're not capable, you just have to pretend and be like, all is well...you don't need to show any sign of weakness”*. Pretence is thus theorized as an important discourse and a form of self-masking that is valued in social market place among men. Pretence as a form of self-masking is an important survival strategy and a shield deployed by respondents to ensure that they are not perceived to be wussy—emphasising the necessity to avoid appearing feminine. This is an important strategy in avoiding peer intimidation, peer bullying, and status challenge within the political game of incipient masculinity. This

summarises a common thread which runs through almost all the narratives of respondents on the impermanent nature, as well as the complexities of maintaining social identities in the context of peer group.

This idea of masking oneself 'even if things are not moving well', although may look questionable and troubling, nonetheless, it is of considerable importance in the process of establishing and maintaining a sense of masculine identity. Despite the problematic and precarious nature of manhood and considering that boys operate in a community with rules and regulations policing boyhood practices—always needing to demonstrate proof—it may be of great interest to know how different boys react to the gender stereotypes dictating what it means to be a real boy. This certainly has received mixed responses among participants with the dominant ideas suggesting naturalness of the gender order, but there are always minority voices speaking against the dominant standpoint as different men are implicated in the process. Such minority voices are evidenced in the excerpt of Adolf, *“My brother, you see this thing called manhood, it is not helping. You have to always try and measure up to that image [of a man]. You sometimes need to cover your own weaknesses which do not fit well the general rules. This is dangerous...see. How long can we [as men] continue to hide our feelings in order to be seen as men? We need to refashion things. We are tired”*. And for Dong, he argues that the cultural status quo must be challenged. He says, *“we have all been trained to know what being boys and men entails, but the world has become something different from that of yesterday. This means that we need to look in a different direction. This is time to open up space for options”*. These comments of Adolf and Dong are very important and must be underscored. While acknowledging the rigid expectations of having to distinguish oneself from others as a real boy displayed in ability to conceal descriptively stereotypical qualities, these same stereotypes live after or affect boys in several ways. Although Adolf did not articulate well in what sense he thinks that he is tired of having to hide his feelings; we are able to extrapolate that the processes in trying to constantly measure up to the standards of boyhood are becoming more restrictive and complex by the day. Already, Dong earlier on narrated that his experiences during childhood were nothing than “struggles” and here, he throws a major challenge on the necessity to destabilize the patriarchal status quo. Adolf reasons that the social processes which sometimes demand hiding real pains and feelings behind the language of masculine identity

are unhelpful. Accordingly, it is just painfully unbearable hence the need to refashion things out. Presumably, this is a call to imagine more accommodating and healthier masculinities among men because Adolf thinks that men are tired of having deceived and denied themselves many quality feelings. I want to believe that such expressions are productive window of opportunity to explore in engaging with alternative forms of masculinity since some men such Adolf and Dong are beginning to understand and acknowledge that what they have been taught to embody and internalize as appropriately masculine traits are at the same time crippling their own personal, mental, and emotional development. In other words, men are unable to bring out the other facets of their lives due to pressure to act congruently with scripted gender qualities.

Pulling together men's reflections about 'incipient masculinity' reveal critical themes concerning the importance of a public performance of masculinity on which the status of one's father depends and the simultaneous deep theorization from all participants' dependent on the stability of some kind of territorial binary. The public as a territorial space in which boys need to demonstrate credible incipient masculinity and the conflation of such public performance with the image of a successful father are two fundamental points which should be highlighted in respondents' conversation on masculinity. These theorizations on the meanings of being a socially outstanding boy merit further interrogation. With this in mind, and considering that my ultimate interest in weaving together a cohort of analytically based and complex arguments leads to new insights of thinking about 'gender based violence'.

Becoming of age and the hegemonies of age

For context, becoming a man is one of the most exciting moments in a young man's life in north-western Ghana. In the process of transitioning into adulthood or personhood, a father is traditionally required to allocate a piece of land and a hoe to his coming of age son. By this, a father is bequeathing certain privileges in the form of freedom and independence to his son as a new person, an adult. Dominant responses among respondents suggest that age is an important and dynamic factor that constrains young boys from accessing gender hegemonies which are easily accessed by adult men. Attaining specific age is associated with

certain hegemonies which are differentially accessed among young boys and adult men. Participants argue that attaining the age of eighteen (18) is an exciting and important stage in their lives. Accordingly, it marks an important point of transition into adulthood and such transition is associated with a marked shift in what is traditionally expected of them as young adults who are different from children (boys). The comments of Oper illustrate this vividly: As you grow, a time will come when you become independent. That means, you are ready to start a family on your own. That is the joy of every young man". Dong points out that transition means becoming a new person (socially) with new set of responsibility: "You are seen as a new person because your social standing in the community and family has changed. At that point, you're expected to act differently from your boyhood stage.

From these extracts, one can concretely argue that transition into adulthood is associated with some form of hegemonies rooted in enhanced social status. It is evidenced that such hegemonies assume the form of *"being independent and starting one own family"* which is different from the childhood stage during which almost everything is dictated. Abu's comment clarifies this: *"Being a child means a stage in your life with very limited options. You don't do what you wish to do... no choices. But as you attain the age of eighteen, it is hurry.... you are sort of independent and everything is in your palm. What you are expected to pursue and demonstrate as boyish are likely to change over time"*.

Putting together the discussions above, certain discourses become dominant and instructive and must be highlighted. Heteronormativity is expressed as a valued signifier of credible masculinity. It is not only a dominant characteristic of manhood, but a great source of gender hegemonies, *"you are ready to start a family on your own. That is the joy of every young man"*. Boys are not expected to practice heteronormativity hence they lack access to certain privileges and cultural capital. To attain the status of an adult is to be *"seen as a new person"* We see this eloquently articulated by Abu in the following statement, *"...no choices. But as you attain the age of eighteen, it is hurry.... you are sort of independent and everything is in your palm"*. With this body of evidence, one can understand the frustrations that were embedded in the narratives of respondents in telling about their childhood experiences which were framed in the language of limited options. The manner in which Abu mentioned 'hurry' suggests a moment of joy, breakthrough and excitement from their limited choices.

In critically analysing the reflections of respondents on navigating the liminal space between childhood and adulthood, we notice similar complication much as experiences of incipient masculinities. To some extent, such complications are even dangerous and exclusionary. While the majority of respondents' comments are rooted in excitement, their framing of adult masculinity as heteronormative is problematic. The conflation of adult masculinity with heteronormative maturity means that when one does not fulfil the mandate of a heterosexual being, or fails to start his own heterosexual family, he is graded on a lower scale in the category of men. Such people are even castigated and excluded from privileges of real men by cultural standards. We see the politicization of masculinities highlighted. With this, I would caution readers not to take the expression that attaining adult masculinity is a source of masculine self-aggrandizement as absolute truth of all men in the Dagaaba tradition, but that the joy of becoming an adult male is limited to some men since not all men of adult status access in equal quantity the joy of adult masculinity.

This is certainly central among other respondents who argue that young boys who transitioned into young adulthood are supposed to demonstrate good command, knowledge and awareness of their new social world—knowing the boundaries of their new masculine roles. This is what Adolf describes in the following narrative; *“as you become an adult, everything becomes too complex and taken to a different level”*. And for Abu, *“when you migrate into adulthood, you are expected to take on many things. This is not always easy, but you have to”*. Amos went further to argue that moving away from incipient masculinity into adult masculinity means a period of huge restriction and surveillance; an argument which resonates respondents' theorization of their childhood experience as “limiting” and a “struggle”. He added, *“Once you migrate into adulthood, you're beginning to assume a more restrictive position. You're expected to develop yourself in line with what you represent as an adult... There are some behaviours you need to throw away and take on others to match your current position”*. What is apparent in the above is an indication that masculinity is worryingly tenuous and complex in which different forms of masculinities are expected of both men and boys largely dependent on age. Age is thus foregrounded as a fundamental capital in the gaining masculine maturity. Accordingly, boys/men must iteratively perform what is ideal about a specific stage of their lives. Age is thus conceptualized as an important signifier in discussion around masculinity.

In closely observing the narratives of respondents as demonstrated above, it is reasonably evidenced of some dominant theorization which situates the continuity of credible masculinities within well calculated interest in maintaining discourses of patriarchal hegemonies. Respondents' understanding is that boys are traditionally supposed to assume the position of future patriarchs hence needed to operate at a certain realm of thinking and reasoning; by being smart, intelligent, protective, defensive, and possessing the qualities of a leader. From the respondents, it is indicative that the majority of boys wanted to appear as real boys, but largely, they are unable hence some appear to be complicit in upholding and maintaining the gender hierarchies. They do this through a range of self-masking and intrapsychic policing to avoid being ridiculed. Overall, respondents' theorization frames being young as a period of endurance rather than enjoyment. The next theme speaks more to the impact of the parent figures, especially the figure of the father in moulding the masculinities of their male children.

In reflecting on "being a man" among respondents, age emerges as an important bridge which must be crossed, and a 'moment of time' which becomes wrapped into new world of expectations of masculinity, those in which 'incipience' must be shaped into 'adult' gender performance. Can contemporary Dagaaba men change the 'ways of the fathers' in relation to what it means to engage with a 'wife' in a relationship? This forms the main burden of the next theme.

The 'father figure' as a form of surveillance

One dominant theme that was articulated within respondents' narratives was the father figure as an influential figure of surveillance in shaping the contours of dominant constructions of incipient masculinity. The emergent idea that fathers create dichotomous and separate communities of practices for boys and girls was constantly acknowledged as a key aspect of men's struggle to find meaningful balance in their current masculine pursuits as indicated in the narratives of participants. Participants kept making reference to their fathers as the major source and enforcer of the struggles that they experienced and/or are still experiencing. The language that participants commonly draw on framed incipient masculinity in the context of compulsion; '*my father taught me that to do this or that*'; '*my father trained me to be like or that*'; '*my father encouraged me to behave in this manner*'; '*I was taught by my father to cherish this or that...*'; '*fathers take pride in children's masculine*

activities', 'I was expected to be like this...'; 'I was told to...'; and 'we were all taught that a boy or a man ideally supposed to be like this...' These were common phrases deployed throughout the transcripts as part of describing the influential roles of father figures in the enactment of a range of masculine dispositions of young males. These statements draw our attention to the important role of the 'father figure' in the masculinization of young boys. Andy argues that:

As boys, we were taught that to be recognized as a real man, we were expected to kowtow in very specific direction. You see how goats are always tied in a line. They must follow the same direction in order to remain together. That is the same thing for us. When you attempt to pull out, you're dis-organizing the normal line. You are therefore 'required' or 'expected' to demonstrate these behaviours in order to be credited with your masculine status. You will be taught what counts relevant or not.

From these phrases and the extract of Andy, it is clear that fathers have a real interest and investment in the masculine success of their boy child as the future *yirdandoo* (heirs of family titles and customs). The idea that fathers need to inculcate in their male children, behaviours and values that can uphold in high esteem family norms, reputations, and honour such that the family image is not dented in itself is a powerful form of surveillance that operates within the family space. The family is likened to the 'goats tied in a line'. There is a particular destination that they must all corporate in order to arrive safely and orderly. The father is the head of the household which is likened to the owner of a group of goats. The own must ensure that all the goats operate and corporate in unity. Any form of strange behaviour is perceived as pulling out of the agreed direction which stands to dis-organize the orderliness of the family image.

According to Abdul, "a father prepares the sons on what it means to be called a male...what the implications are in the event that you are unable to successfully accomplish those standards. He teaches you how to be a good head of the family. That is part of the training you receive from him". Amatus went on to argue that: "A dog does not beget a cat" and Kofi added that "Charity begins at home". Similarly, Oper thinks that a "hunter trains his son how to do hunting. A farmer does the same thing. Your father expects that at age 8, you follow him to the farm as a boy". What Amatus and his friends in essence are trying to draw our attention to is explanation (maybe uncritical) that once a father identifies himself within a specific model of masculinity, automatically, the son is expected to follow suit in same masculine pursuit (s). Take for instance, this comment of Simo:

Fathers expect their boy child to comport himself. He doesn't bring disgrace and shame to the family's reputation. Everywhere you go people should be able to tell that you were brought up in a good family. 'This is the son of that man'. A boy is expected to internalize all these attributes in order that his parents feel proud for giving birth to a boy.

From this statement, fathers have specific expectations from their boy child and the latter's failure to live up to those expectations generates feeling of resentment, hurt, shame and disappointments in the form of threat of masculine reputation. A father is traditionally charged with the task of grooming, training and teaching his boy child how to live up to what he the father represents illustrated by the adage that "A dog does not beget a cat". This is yet another form of patriarchal power that fathers exercise over their children.

If non-violence and accommodating behaviours are part of the traditional training process, then one would have argued that coming from a good family as respondents rightly articulated is a positive encouragement. To comport oneself is to behave well and demonstrating command of good mannerism publicly. If this is exactly what these respondents are seeking to advance, then it makes sense to argue that such trainings are likely to have positive, real impact on boys in their future imagination of themselves as men.

This disappointment in the form of disgrace and shame which a father is likely to experience and the need for boys to take traditional trainings with the needed seriousness is further illustrated by Dong who thinks that,

When you are growing up, your parents expect a lot from you. Fathers are interested in their male children becoming important tomorrow. That is the joy of every father. They don't want to feel disappointed in your future. You represent the future generation of your family. You are therefore expected to go through some training. These trainings are different for boys and girls. You are prepared psychologically to fit well into society.

The masculine investment that fathers put in by strictly training and surveilling the behaviours of their boy child was evidenced in Nisong's comment: "My son is a hard-working son...I like him. He has taken after me. He has the same hard-working blood as me...he is not like the lazy type of man. He takes care of me...I thank God; I was able to raise him up to this level. I trained him well". The impression on Deme's face was expression of joy and happiness as he narrates how he is happy seeing his two sons succeed in life—

buttressing the local adage that *“A dog does not beget a cat”*. He is happy not because of anything, but the simple fact that his two sons are making it in life which is directly his point of concern and investment when he was training them. This is succinctly captured when Deme proudly and eloquently pointed out that the trainings that he gave to his sons are not after all in vain; *“they are both responsible and doing very well in life...they are just like those my days”*.

From the above, there are three very important points that need special commentary here; ‘A dog does not beget a cat’, ‘This is the son of that man’ and ‘future value of surveillance and trainings’. These statements should be read beyond their superficial meanings. These metaphorically framed statements are important in our discussion around questions of fathering as a powerful form of surveillance. This is important because once fathers know that their status as good trainers (whose training prowess must be noticed in the appearance of their children wherever they go) will ensure that appropriate regulatory mechanisms are put in place to ensure strict compliance. Fathers surveil their male children to enforce appropriate behavioural compliance such that their masculine reputation as credible fathers will be recognized and praised. Fathers appear to have some personal investment in how their boy child succeeds in the future as illustrated by Nisong’s and Deme’s comments above. Vii rightly captured it:

When your father trains you well, people can tell straightaway. Your father is respected for the good training”. And for Dong, “when a boy is able to perform what society expects of him, his father is being praised. This makes him happy because his son is capable of living a lifestyle congruent with the general perception of manhood at that age.

Underlying these statements is a feel for the enforcement of patriarchal values and messages which were clearly evidenced in participants’ comments. This is what Dong is making reference to, “We practice patrilineal system of transmission. We are patrilineal in nature. The man is culturally supposed to know the XYZ of the family...So a boy is taught and required to know some basic traditions of the family”. Once a father identifies himself as a believer of a patriarchal system, he would be interested in ensuring that his boy child is trained and be ready to follow in his footsteps in order that his (father’s) name remains visible and the patriarchal order remains intact; an argument which builds on the adage that

a “*A dog does not beget a cat*”. This is adding a different layer to the discussion as boys who are unable to measure up to what they are traditionally supposed to know and command generate internal feelings of hurt and shame among boys themselves as they are graded on a lesser scale compared to other boys of same age cohort. As a measure to forestall possibility of social pain in the form of shame and disappointment, as well as maintain the values of a patriarchal order in the form of patrilineal transmission and family traditions, boys are required to look up to their fathers in their everyday social performances. Fathers are seen as role models whose behaviours must be emulated by sons who want to attain the position of real men. This suggests of the existence of hierarchies in the relationship here as fathers are powerfully positioned up there and boys occupying the position of supposedly passive learners. This is well articulated by Dong who argues that: “*a boy is traditionally expected to get closer to his father (emphasising positioning and hierarchies) in order that he receives and be trained in the right way (emphasising passivity and subordination). These trainings put you in the right path. They define who you are (emphasising family background) and what you represent*”. And on the part of Abu “*a boy is supposed to be knowledgeable such that he could learn the tradition of his community*” and Aaron stressed that a “*boy by tradition is supposed to know the landmarks of your father’s land*”.

From the comments above, it appears clear that boys rarely have alternative ways of acquiring the necessary gender trainings at their own wish as they are always expected to be modelled by the examples of their fathers. The words ‘expected’, ‘required’, and ‘supposed’ as illustrated across the views of men indicate that boys need to compulsorily emulate and internalize whatever their fathers train them on without questioning the relevance and/or resisting such trainings to the individual boy. What are fascinating in the comments above are elements of citizenship. Boys are perceived as real citizens and by their positions as future heirs, they are supposed to be knowledgeable about basic history of the family and community at large. Arguably, girls are less of citizens hence there is no need to learn and know issues about “*landmarks of your father’s land*”. To be knowledgeable about boundaries is to be a proper citizen.

The trainings that fathers give to their male children are not mere trainings, but complex forms of instructions and orders that ensure that the father figure retains its social relevance

and primacy. Inferring from the above, there are competing discourses here: discourse of gender binaries in which boys attach and model themselves after their fathers, not mothers; and discourse of appropriate gender matched trainings for boys. As part of the binary and gender trainings, Abu recounted what he was taught: *“Men are seen to be top there while women occupy the down stairs. That is at least what we were all taught”*. Dong expressed the view that such formative period is important in boys’ dispositions to gender relations and making sense of themselves as boys. He narrated: *“It is during such trainings that your father would tell you what nobody will tell you. He tells you what is culturally rewarding as a boy and what the punishments are in case you fail and what to do in case of failure. That is the beginning of wisdom”*.

The process of masculinising and initiation of boys into adults is sine qua non to acquiring wisdom. Arguably, to be seen as a credible man is to possess the requisite knowledge and wisdom. What is important in this discourse of fatherhood as a form of micro-level surveillance is access to, and use of, patriarchal power over children. The form of power inherent here assumes a hierarchal observation in which fathers exercise their individuals’ mechanism of surveillance to judge which behaviours, actions, and performances of their boy children are desirable and need to be celebrated and which ones are undesirable hence sanctioned. Abu narrated that, *“fathers ensure that boys are brought up in line with generally accepted moral and social values and norms. A lot is expected from the male child. You’re your father’s asset”*. This further stress the idea of patriarchal values attaches to male children as they are being described as ‘the asset’ of their fathers hence need to be well groomed to face the unknown future. Power can therefore be seen here to be a relational construct in which fathers observe and judge their children through different forms of surveillance.

Another form of surveillance which regulates the behavioural and cultural performances of boys is institutional surveillance. Here, the modus operandi in which surveillance or ‘culture of regulation’ takes is located within a complex and naturalized system in which individuals’ actions, behaviours, and social practices are closely patrolled, judged, measured and assessed with offenses facing varied forms of punishments. According to Amos, *“society expects boys to be socially outstanding and that society judges you vis-à-vis your colleagues”*. According to Dong, *“when you’re able to go through the trainings well, others*

identify you based on your behaviours. 'Oh, he is from that family', 'he is the son of that man' are common statements you hear from community members". This is an important form of institutionalized surveillance in which boys are generally expected to act strictly in accordance with the norms guiding boyhood in their respective families of origin. The idea is that a normalized system exists with some kind of standardized laws or scripts which serve as the overarching regulating framework for people found within a specific context.

Deep-seated within the normalized system of regulation is discipline as a powerful language that is used in enforcing compliance. That is, those whose behaviours fall outside the conventional codes of conduct are heavily punished. Joe recounted this when he says:

As boys and girls in the family, we were 'expected' to engage in activities that were considered 'culturally appropriate' for what we individually represent. I can remember one day; I went to help my sisters who were cooking dinner in the kitchen. When my 'father' returned from the farm and saw me in the kitchen doing what was perceived as illegal for me as a boy, he 'insulted' me very well and told me that unless I wanted to be 'impotent'.

Jonas, while agreeing with Joe that you do not expect a boy in the kitchen (a feminine space) added how harsh the associated punishments are for veering off: "*when a boy goes to the kitchen to assist, the 'father' 'knocks' the boy head or 'punish' him for trying to learn the 'wrong thing'. That is not the place for the boy. That is girls... society has demarcated the boundaries*". Abu elaborated this further saying that: "*as boys, we were 'constantly reminded' of the need to 'distance' ourselves from the kitchen... Anything that makes you less important*".

So far, I have attempted to trace the theoretical importance of my participants' (some of them being fathers themselves) reflections on the power of 'fatherhood' as both an ideal and an 'experienced' influence on the discursive constructions and negotiations of masculinity. What is important is that men's reflections raise critical questions about their possible constructions and acceptance of violence in the home as part of being men. We see this possibility when men are likely to have experienced their actual fathers as capable of hitting/beating/controlling wives and the normalization that surrounds such behaviors. That is, articulation of the relevance of 'being watched by others' and simultaneously inspired by 'fatherhood' entails complex questions about the possibility of changing their concept and acceptance of 'domestic violence' as would be demonstrated in subsequent themes.

By this, I am seeking to connect and build, based on respondents' own reflections, an analysis which seeks to help unpack and understand the link between participants' reflections on 'being men' and their deep tolerance for 'disciplining of wives' as a non-violent activity.

Men's Relationships with Other Men in A Homosocial Field

The sub-theme strives to critically engage with men's relationships with other men across different fields in order to deepen a better understanding and appreciation on how men relate to discourses of power and violence across discursive spaces (both within and outside gender categorizations). The theme further strives to present detail narratives on the different forms of investment that men pursue in their desire to appear visible and function— a position that epitomizes an idealized frame of manhood 'this is the man'. Indeed, men's desire to gain and maintain patriarchal power (realistically or rhetorically) over others is not unproblematic—different masculine interests compete for ascendancy in the process of gaining occupation of the top spot in the social hierarchy in relations not only between men and women, but among men themselves. As such, this theme explores the value of 'failed masculinity' and how that matters in the lives of men. Through engagement with the complexities underpinning men's constructs of 'successful' and 'failed' masculinities, my findings illuminate how different men are negotiating and circumventing local notions of masculinity. Specifically, attention is given to hierarchies of masculinities and men's masculine positions taking in their interactional spaces. The argument attempts to chart through the unpredictably complex and aspirational nature of masculinity in a rather neoliberal context. By this, the argument would demonstrate the necessity to contextualize discussions on masculinities as men attempt to redefine successful masculinity relating to the emerging socio-economic realities that they face in their day to day lives. We need to be critical of the contextual socio-cultural realities of men in attempt to theorize masculinity.

The problematic of men's relationship with other men

As evident in Hearn and Whitehead (2006: 45-46), an important entry point in gaining fine-grained and nuanced narratives on men's propensity to perpetrate violence is by engaging critically with men's relationships with other men and the various stakes that are available in these relationships. The relational social network or social environments shape men's

tendencies to configure and enact various forms of masculinities, including the desire to use violence, discipline, and other controlling acts against their wives. I will try to argue that homosociality is a critical and public desire, as a route for the construction of successful masculinity, for my participants. At the same time, some reflections, drawing on excerpts among respondents problematize this.

According to Dakurah, *"It is not easy to say no to what your friends are doing. You may wish to say that but it is not going to work that way. Everybody wants to do things this way and you are like let go that way, you cause confusion. You are likely to be the odd one and this comes with consequences"*. Vii added that men do not live in a social vacuum, but live in a context which is governed by rules and expectations about the meaning of being men. He added, *"As men, there are times you just cannot help than to kowtow to the prevailing social world. You need to act in line with what your colleagues are up to. That defines you as part of them. You don't live in a one man's island. This might look odd to you as an individual but that is the norm. So, what your friends are doing which is accepted in the eyes of the wider society, you must also do that"*. From these narratives, it is clear that the desire to be part of the social world is a compelling force that influences men's alliance and compliance with the behaviours of their fellow men. In other words, in order to avoid the social stigma associated with the image of "an odd one", men are encouraged to act in line with the prevailing norms even if this is against their personal interest. Appearing to be the odd one is to appear non-conformist, or to be socially unbelonging; a position which is subjected to a range of social pains, including ridicules, mockery, names calling, and peer rejection. The pressure to express belonging is a strong force to reckon with in patterns of men's behaviours. This is what Augustine draws our attention to in the following statement; *"When you're not living up to this thing of manhood, especially in the midst of your peers, they will mock and call you names. The last time, we went to drink and when it was getting to the evening, I told my friends that I wanted to go home. In fact, I could not take in more drink. They were not happy. They told me that my wife was controlling me and that I like food. So I had to stay back just to prove to them that my wife is not controlling me"*. The comments of Augustine vividly illustrate ambivalence around two fundamental issues; first his own personal interest, and second his desire to communicate credible masculinity by avoiding the pain and stigma of being called 'dominated' by no other person than a wife. By

this, Augustine is interested in pursuing a certain model of masculinity which centers around dominance.

But Augustine's desires of expressing belonging are extremely dangerous and political as new or alternatives masculinities are unwelcomed thus further entrenching the polar dichotomy of masculinity and femininity. Drinking is expressed as an important form of male-bonding which is a masculine ideal. We see Augustine's desire to prove a point of belonging among his peers by giving up going home (which was his personal interest) and rather joined his friends, although he acknowledged that he could not take in more drink. In the context of this deliberation, it becomes socially rewarding to sacrifice one's personal interest and succumb to the ideal definition of masculinity among these group of men. Being at home is perceived as femininising and real men do not associate themselves to this domain. This is a strategic approach which Augustine deployed to communicate to his peers that his wife does not control him; a message which indirectly merits his agency to escape mockery and name calling.

By sacrificing his own desire and interest and succumbing to peer pressure in a homosocial space, Augustine does not only aid to reproduce a particular masculine image and gender stereotypes laced with hierarchies between men and women, as well as the gendering of space, but he is interested in gaining some form of symbolic capital in the form of recognition of belongingness. He demonstrates this in not wanting to appear to be 'controlled' in his relationship by his wife. To be controlled by one's wife is femininized masculinity. The respondent had to weigh the cost and benefit of his decision to either obey his wife's call in which case he will be judged to be less of a man, or ignore a wife's call and continue to bond with his colleagues even if that is against his personal interest.

What is fascinating is that these forms of ignominies do not emerge from strangers, but emanate from men own closest network of peers and friends. These are the same network of people men drink with, laugh together, play together, and do almost everything in common. The dichotomization of the public as traditionally masculine and the home as feminine becomes important consideration in Augustine's deployment of a specific logic which frames his continued association with his mates as part of the conversation around normative masculinity. Peer networks of friends are major sources of calibrating masculinities as demonstrated above. In fact, peer context serves as an important defining

arena that promotes and defends whatever is perceived to be hegemonic masculinity. Peer group has the power to impose a particular definition of masculinity and due to the fear of having one's hard earned status recalibrated, men have the power to co-opt whatever agency that is available to them to avoid rejection (refusing to honour his words of going home).

While it is imperative to underscore the significance of homosociality among men, it is critical to stress its influence in men's configuration of problematic masculinities. In a different interview with Amos, (Amos initially hinted that he used to be a violent man) he was momentarily silent but finally opened up and shared with me how his association with his male colleagues took a better part of him and led him to configure problematic masculinities. He argues, *"My brother, you see men, we are our own problem. If you want to discuss about society's problems, start from men. I told you I used to be violent. I used to beat my wife like she's a piece of rag (silent). You know why"*

Interviewer: No, could you share with me.

Amos: Those days were really terrible days in the history of my family. Whenever I reflect on this, I feel it was my fault. Everything was not working. You know how some friends can be...they will deceive you, you cause troubles and they leave you to suffer those troubles alone. I used to drink myself off. You know, when you take more than your body can contain, you become something else. At the least thing, I would treat my wife like she does not matter. It was really bad bro. Now, I don't go out with them again and I am now a peace-loving man.

Although the following excerpt is quite lengthy, it is useful in illuminating powerful debates in men's relationship with their fellow men and their tendencies to enact violent masculinities.

Augustine: As men we're not the same. We've varying desires. Some people are naturally born violent and wicked. Others too get corrupted through exposure to bad class of people. Friendship is like a virus. It affects everybody in the group. So, when you associate yourself with a gang of violent men, you don't expect to be the same person as you were before. Your association with the group is a sort of bonding...whatever the members do, it affects you because you're part of them. So if they associate their sense of masculinity to acts of violence, it means that you have to abide by the general group's principles.

We see men's argument that links male bonding to destructive masculinities contained in the illustration of Amos who has repented from his violent behavior: "Those days were really terrible days in the history of my family. Everything was not working. I used to drink myself off... At the least thing, I would treat my wife like she does not matter. It was really bad". Now, I don't go out with them again and I am now a peace-loving man. Choosing to avoid male bonding which privileges the status of a peaceful man, Amos draws on a power/resistance strategy. Amos believes that his avoidance led to stopping drinking which subsequently enhanced his prospects of a peaceful man.

But Augustine believes that male bonding is not terribly damaging after all there are a variety of men in society; those who solve problems (positive role models) and those who cause problems (negative role models). To him, it is not about avoiding male peers, but knowing the calibre of men to associate with and what to discuss with them; "*When you associate yourself with the wrong people, you will get the wrong ideas*". Men's bonding with other men creates a dangerous terrain for the configuration of different patterns of masculinities which translate into men's relationships with their wives at home as demonstrated above.

In these narratives, the traditional importance of friendship rooted in sharing and getting each other's problems solved has been erased partially. What should be added at a different level is that despite the tendency to argue that male friendship has been problematic, it creates room for reinforcement of masculinities in heterosexual marriages, particularly violence against wives. Amos added that "*I was misled by friends. Some friends can put you into trouble...that was my experience. I acted like the innocent sheep sent to the slaughter house to be slaughtered*". In what appears to be the outcome of contemporary relational network of male friends, participants expressed sentiment to suggest that male friendship is a major source of discomfort and discouragement in men's desire to enact non-hegemonic, non-violent masculinities. With the evidence at hand in this study, one can argue with a certain degree of certainty that men's peers unsupportive of men who attempt to embody and adopt new and more gender sensitive and equitable behaviours lies at the heart of many men's unmitigated and insatiable desire to engage in aggressive, dominating, and non-caring behaviours towards their wives. Where some participants appear to be

interested in non-hegemonic masculinity, the counterbalancing forces and social embarrassment/stigma of male peers are omnipotent.

Although violence was not the main focus of the interview question and was not mentioned in any part of the question, questions of violence became a common denominator in all the above excerpts. This suggests that respondents are aware of the danger inherent in their relationship with other men and how this potentially fuels domestic violence tendencies in their families. In each of the narratives, a form of domestic violence or controlling behaviour is mentioned at least once or twice. Significantly, the majority of respondents noted that their uncritical consumption of friends' advice and encouragements has been inimical to the development and progress of their relationships. It also prevented developing positive and accommodating patterns of masculinities anchored on intimacy.

So, without embarking further at this point of the analysis on my participants' reflections around domestic violence and their relationships with wives and marriage, I want to note that their discussions on the importance of 'other men' in their lives readily invoked the challenge of their intimate relationships, not with men, but with women, especially with 'wives'. Just as comparison with 'girls' arose frequently in participants' ideas about incipient masculinity, so the tensions between homosocial desire and intimate relationships with wives arose in participants' debates about peer relationships with men. We will continue to see this trend within the next analysis which focuses on how participants constructed 'successful' and 'failed' masculinities.

Men's constructs of 'successful' and 'failed' masculinities

Overwhelmingly, there is a strong evidence of a common thread which binds the narratives of participants in both group and interview contexts to suggest that an important aspect of successful masculinities lies the discourse of men being seen as traditional breadwinners. Also, there are materials about control ('putting house in order'), 'listening to one's wife', and most importantly, 'being recognized to matter as a 'man'. Understandably, participants thought that being sufficiently manly epitomises the position of a capable, hardworking, independent, and a responsible married man who does not depend on others in any way for survival. This position was perceived among participants to be a necessary condition, but by no means sufficient for being a man. Participants narrated that attaining financial

independence is a prerequisite social requirement for starting one's own family; a valued practice of successful manhood. Marriage was perceived to be a complex construct in the views of some participants; it is not sufficiently masculine to just marry, but your ability to put your house in order essentially distinguishes one's location on the social hierarchy from others. In other words, one's ability to marry and take good care of the gamut of needs of his family credits him a better deal in the circle of men.

Interviewer: you mentioned successful masculinity in your comment, can you share with me what you mean by that?

Abdul: Me, to be a successful man is to be a functional man. That is your ability to be independent, hardworking, patient, forgiving, caring and above all your ability to adequately provide for the basic needs of your family... all make good ingredients for a masculine man. If you can't come close to these qualities, you don't matter that much.

Sam: For me, a real man is in charge of his family. He controls and manages family members, especially his wife. If you cannot control her, then, you are not recognized. If you cannot control your wife, then, your masculinity is not complete.

Seth: Ah me, successful masculinity is listening to your wife when she is speaking to you. That is caring and caring is part of what being a man entails. Giving her a listening ear makes her feel cared for and when she feels happy, I feel happy too. She sees herself to matter and there is peace in the house. For me that is what I see as successful masculinity.

Amatus: For me, to be seen as a successful man is to be recognized as a real man. We have real men and men by name. You are able to put your house in order. Your house cannot be on fire and you pretend to be a man. You're not. You have to let people know your worth. You control your environment.

Amu: If you ask me about successful masculinity, it is that position in which society recognises your position. For me, you need to be a firm and responsible man.

Taller: We have men and there are men. If you're a man and your wife always shut you down, then you are not proper. For me, successful masculinity is when your actions are feared. 'Vent ka fo yirdeme zooru fo'. That makes you a real husband.

Although 'successful masculinity' has been valorized as good 'breadwinning,' there is also important material about control 'putting house in order,' 'listening to your wife' and most importantly, 'being recognized and listened to' as a 'man'. The English translation of 'vent ka fo yirdeme zooru fo' is 'let your family fear and respect you'. Accordingly, although all men (husbands) are traditionally expected to act as teachers and controllers of their individual families, one's ability to enact credible acts of 'discipline' in order to communicate his position as a husband credits and solidify his position as a respected and proper man.

Interestingly, traditional notion of manhood a complex and fluid project as demonstrated in the various narratives of respondents. Although there are elements of hegemonic masculinities which can lure men into configuring hyper-masculine, dominating and risk-taking behaviours in always trying to put one's house in order, other qualities appear promising. We see some respondents' theorization of manhood in a positive light drawing on traditional masculine virtues such as being patient, forgiving, honor, hardworking, caring, loyal to family, independence, and giving attention to wives. If these qualities are really practiced and taken up in practice by these crops of men such as Seth and Abdul, then we can estimate that manhood offers an opportunity for embodying some form of positive masculinities which are worthy of attention. I want to believe that some traditional masculine virtues remain valuable and can be harnessed in men's imagination and re-orienting towards non-hegemonic masculinities.

Again, we are able to deduce two categories of men— 'real' or 'functional' men and 'ordinary men'. In the theorization of participants, real men are those who are able to 'man up' to the tasks of their social categorization with demonstrable competence. They are those who are able to demonstrate the following qualities: *independent, dominant, action orientated, strong hearted, being responsible, and being able to put things under control*, whereas those in the category of 'ordinary men' are presumably the opposite. Augustine cleverly distinguishes between the two categories of men in the following statement; "there are those who are just 'masc' and not 'culine'. The hard-working ones are masculine. After calling you a man, what else can you show to others to prove that you're a 'doo-menga' (real man)? That ability puts you in the class of real men"

Amu argues that successful masculinity is about one's ability to "be firm and be a responsible man" as contained in his narrative is a loaded message and can be interpreted

in very many different ways depending on which analytic lens one wants to deploy. Being firm could mean an entrenched and authoritative position. To be recognised as sufficiently manly, you must ensure that whatever orders you give, audiences, including wives, other men, and children must heed to them without fail. This is a firm position which places one on a better level than others who are not firm. This position aid in maintaining hierarchies between a man as an instructor and those who are audiences.

In the context of this study, participants theorized marriage as one important marker of attaining the position of successful masculinity. It does not only show difference among men, but participants thought that marriage is an important vehicle through which a wide range of symbolic capital can be gained. Being able to marry and ably provide for the upkeep of the household—ensuring that one’s family does not starve—is a means of expressing middle-class masculinity. It does not just end with marrying, but your ability to provide shelter for your family. This was articulated metaphorically among participants to mean ‘differentiating the real men from men’.

The institution of marriage in north-western Ghana is a far more complex patriarchal terrain than we might have probably estimated. It is a complex social institution in which a man who defines himself masculine should be able to pay bride price to a prospective wife’s parents before the marriage can be deemed legitimate. Within the same context in which marriage is expressed as an important signifier of successful manhood, the economic practicalities are hugely disadvantaging men from perform this with ease (Hunter, 2005a; 2007). One ability to pay the bride price is a source of cultural capital embedded in notions of ‘ownership’, ‘guardianship’, ‘authority’, and ‘patriarchal power’ over the woman and the children if there are any. Sam argues that *“Your ability to pay the bride price places you a step ahead of your colleagues who are unable to pay or yet to marry”*. This therefore implies that marrying and being able to pay the bride price play important role in the calibration of hierarchies of masculinities among different categories of men. It is also a source of power and authority. According to Joe, once you are able to meet this cultural obligation as a husband, *“you have the power to train and correct your wife as a measure to avoid public shame”*. Part of the cultural capital of marriage is symbolic recognition and social respect. This is illustrated by Vii who argues that *“You are treated with much respect and dignity*

differently from other categories of men even if you are all of the same social status and age. People recognise you as somebody who matter”.

Fatherhood became one of the many cultural capitals associated with marriage. Men who are able to pay for the bride price of their wives have a legitimate claim of ownership of their children which gives such men the leeway to claim the status of fathers. This becomes more relevant when discussing marriage in a patrilineal society such as the current study context in which children belong to the man's clan and not the mother's as practiced in matrilineal societies. In the event that a 'married man' fails to pay the bride price to the woman's natal family, he cannot claim ownership of the children and to some extent, he cannot exert too much power and authority over the woman, although she stays in his house. This is what Augustine illustrated:

When you're properly married, your wife gives you what is due you. She respects you like a husband. But when you cannot pay her bride price, she can decide to respect you or not and you cannot do anything to her". And for Alphon, "you're treated like a small boy when you cannot marry. When men are discussing important matters, you don't matter. When you cannot afford the bride price, you have no right over that woman. If she dies today, her family will come for the corpse. She can just walk over you and you are powerless.

Accordingly, marriage as a patriarchal template bequeaths authority to a man in the form of a transfer of guardianship and authority to control his wife. The traditional process in which a woman leaves her parents to stay with her husband after the marriage has been formalized through the payment of bride price cements a man's position as a hegemonic figure. This is illustrated by Theo's comments, "so after I marry her, I have to get her parents the money. This money guarantees your ownership of the woman.... she becomes your property. She becomes your part of your clan...she needs to honour and obey me as her husband when I talk to her. 'Poge ba so o menga'". The hegemony associated with such transfer of guardianship is authority to enforce that a married woman complies with rules of her husband without which one becomes a powerless husband figure. By giving her consent to marry, a woman automatically gives out her rights to be an independent person illustrated by the phrase, 'Poge ba so o menga'. This phrase, literally means that 'a woman (married) does not own herself'.

While this was the dominant discourse on marriage, Baba disagrees. He argues that *“You don’t buy your wife. Can you buy a human being or have you ever heard that human beings are sold at this market? You only gave out a token. That is an appreciation”*. He reasons that both marriage and bride price are important pathways to attaining full personhood. He added, *“for me, I believe marrying enables me serve as a good provider. Marrying and paying her bride price is an investment every married man is doing. When you marry, you become a complete person and you’re treated differently from the ordinary ones. Your wife is always home to serve you”*. But Theo’s theorization is problematic as he deploys the discourse of breadwinner in a master-servant relationship. The position of the wife is likened to a servant who is always home to ensure that the husband is served properly. This is part of the broader theorization of successful to be premised on one’s ability to control and gain attention from a wife.

Respondents who were not married were perceived to be differently categorised through the use of language and were always placed lower on the masculinity hierarchies. Such men were largely perceived to be ‘feminized men’, or at the minimum, ‘children’. This was summarized by Frank who says; *“you are just a representative figure of men or better still you are seen and treated like a ‘boy’... Marrying constitutes an important part of what we represent as men. You have to prove your sexual virility through marriage. Marriage ensures the continuity of the next generation”*. Men who were described as children were not socially recognized and treated in the same amount of respect as their colleagues who are able to marry and procreate. Unmarried men, irrespective of their age are not traditionally allowed to occupy certain traditionally important positions within the ranks of traditional leadership and even within the family system; they are rendered to mere figures. In the view of Amu, *“even if you are aggressive, brave, and physically muscular but remains unmarried, your masculine status remains at the level of children and women. Society questions your sexuality and sexual potency. So in order to prove to society that you deserve recognition and respect, you must marry and get children”*.

As I argued earlier, marrying accords men the status of adult manhood and such status bestows various forms of social capital to different categories of men. In the context of this study, respondents reported that adult men who died unmarried are not giving a befitting burial. Their funerals are not taken seriously compared to a duly married man. What

became interesting is that different forms of dirges are sung to ridicule the dead man for leaving an irresponsible life style. During a typical Dagaaba funeral, respondents pointed that different lyrics of dirges are sung and community members are knowledgeable in making meanings of these dirges. Accordingly, dirges in the Dagaaba tradition are sources of social control and enforcer of dominant notion of sexuality. Frank thinks that *“the xylophonists who play dirges during funeral are important figures who maintain social control. They communicate to the mourning crowd that you were a responsible man or not. You were not just any man, but somebody who will be missed. He was a real man”*. Such dirges are powerful warning signs to any living male soul who is not living up to the local standards of a manhood. From interview transcripts, it became clear that funerals among the Dagaaba plays tremendous roles as an important mechanism that maintain the meaning of being a man beyond its sad moments. People who lived their lives well are celebrated while those whose lifestyles could not match up to the universally accepted models are ridiculed publicly, although such people are dead.

To die unmarried was reported to be a serious social taboo and men who died unmarried are not qualified to be ancestors except there is a known disability that constrained one from marrying. This was illustrated by Daud who argues that, *“to become an ancestor, you must have left behind children. When you live behind children and your funeral was befitting, you merit recognition as an ancestor”*. Asked whether women who left similar legacies are qualified as ancestors, Daud argues that the position of an ancestor is associated with responsible men. He added, *“You know women are not part of a man’s family. They are visitors and visitors do not assume traditional titles”*. What is implied in such constructions of ascendancy into an ancestral position is problematically rooted in discourse of citizenship and belonging. It is not everybody man (and not even a woman) who qualifies to become an ancestor after death, but that very specific qualities are deemed necessary markers. According to some participants, dying childless means that your ancestors will not be willing to welcome you hence your soul will be hanging in the air; a danger no respondent wanted to face. This was clearly highlighted in the narrative of Frank, a duly married, wedded man who does not have a child at the time of this interview. Frank spoke in a worrying and painful voice when he states that, *“As you see me, I go through a lot. People talk about me. I have married for many years but no child now. God forbid but if I die without a child, my*

family will not be happy. There is nobody to continue my generation. My ancestors will not welcome me since I don't have a child". Logically, bearing children, or biological fatherhood is an important passport in one's journey to the land of the ancestors.

But marriage was not an end in itself. It was reported to be a useful means to an end. Even after marriage, many processes need to be followed in order to attain full benefits of sufficient masculine status. Frank, the son of a village catechist argues that it is important that after marrying, one gets the union blessed by a religious figure, in his case a Catholic Priest. He argues that wedding is yet another crucial way of expressing successful masculinity because it is not every man who is able to have his relationship blessed in the church. Wedding is theorized by Frank to be a source of cultural capital in which married couples are acknowledged during the sermon. This is a source of joy and social respectability as well as status elevation. He added that, *"my Christian teaching recognizes me as a worthy man. Any young man who has not blessed his marriage is not properly recognized in the church. So, the respect the church accords me is different from the respect the church will accord another man who has not wedded his marriage"*. Doing wedding in the church is a way of expressing religious masculinity which is of the same or similar value to middle-class masculinity. It is similar to middle-class masculinity because before the wedding can be performed, the man must first of all pay the bride price to the woman's family. Paying the bride price is a valued cultural practice which symbolises that both families of the prospective husband and wife have agreed to bless and confer the new personhood of their son and daughter. And by having his marriage blessed in the church, Frank is able to compensate for his inability to procreate as hinted above. This means that there is no one singular way in attaining credible masculinity, but several ways, but different routes are associated with varying quantity of cultural capital. Perhaps, the discourse of religious masculinity became a common zone for the contest for credible masculinity as ostensibly, the majority of respondents described their religious fraternity as Christianity.

There is very strong evidence among respondents in this study to suggest that deep-seated poverty is compounding the elusiveness of their pursuits of successful masculinity. Being trapped in endemic poverty for a long period of time, some participants argued that they have every reason to feel insecure since they have something important to protect as men—they felt threatened because they are unable to fulfil their traditional core mandate of a

successful family provider through financial independence. Traditionally, being an independent is a major source of men's dignity, respect, and authority both in the home and in public. Publicly, men are supposed to attend social events as heads of households. During such social events, men are variously evaluated and graded in the form of hierarchies. Frank illustrated this in the following, *"We live in a society where social events such as funerals and weddings are important events and people use them to compare you with your colleagues. The community monitors to see who attends such events and who is unable. That speaks a lot about your masculinity"*. Those who are unable to attend social events in these rural communities cannot evade attention as local community members know one another too well such that they are able to tell who came for a particular gathering and who did not. The success of a typical rural man in the context of north-western Ghana is measured by the number of social events (especially funerals and weddings) one is able to attend and solidarize with others. Attending social events is an important social investment that pervades in the circle of men. But attending social functions is associated with economic power. This is what Dakurah draws our attention to, *"You can't mingle with your own peers during social functions because you don't have the ability. When others are buying pito (locally brewed gin) for the bereaved, you're empty"*. Rural men mostly live on a shared philosophy anchored on 'I am because you are and you are because we are'.

Putting all the narratives together, 'successful marriage' is as important as successful masculinity among participants in this study. What is key in such theorization is the conflation of 'successful masculinity' with 'marriage' among respondents. Analytically, the meaning of 'domestic violence' thus becomes something of critical importance in men's theorization of masculinities. Domestic violence becomes an important feature in maintaining masculine credibility in the volatile space of the family.

Discourse of governmentality of the home

Successful masculinity was profoundly connected to men's ability to govern their social spaces, especially the homes. To put it in raw words of participants, being a real man is tied to *'putting your house in order'*. One's ability to demonstrate command and control over his own social environment is normatively masculine. It means an ability to exercise patriarchal power and control over one's immediate environment including women, children and other men. This is illustrated by Amu in the following, *"you must have the voice to talk and being*

listened to without resistance. A man speaks and get heard. That makes you a man of substance". The process of controlling one's immediate environment is what I want to describe as the governmentality of the home. Within this discourse of governmentality are issues of financial prowess, authority, voice, power and ability to sanction unwarranted conducts and behaviours. As Joe asserts:

In our generation, men who are controlled by their wives are accorded little or no respect at all. Men are supposed to take control of their surroundings. Any man who is dominated by his wife is not considered an honourable man. Women don't control men...men control women". Theo added that "when your wife does something outside and everybody around smiles and say, yes, this is a wife! This is the pride of every responsible man. The proverb that 'you can't hide and chew crab in the public' explains it all.

This further emphasises the public image of masculinity which is crucial in maintaining face. This means that to be seen as a credible husband, a man ought to ensure that his wife's behaviour is impeccable right from the home. When a man fails to instil discipline in his wife, she is likely to bring dishonour to the image of her husband illustrated by the proverb '*you can't hide and chew crab in the public*'. The public image of a man is an important component of his sense of masculinity.

Governing the home was argued among participants to be the preserve of men (husbands). As such real men are required and should be able to effectively perform this traditional mandate. Putting your house in order was equated to taking various forms of disciplinary actions that can mitigate any potential or real form of destabilising the gender order and contempt of patriarchal manhood. The family serves as an important locus through which men's masculine reputation is measured, no less than in public spaces. In the view of Abdul, "*you are perceived as masculine when you have the power and authority to chastise or discipline others under you. You ensure that things are running well. That makes you the man of the house*". In some of the focus groups, respondents' views on who should discipline children in the home was heavily debated thus far from conclusive. While a large majority of discussants maintained that it is the prerogative of the man as head of the family, there were other discerning views to suggest that women are the ones who are always at home with children hence the need for them to discipline them whenever such

children go wayward. For Chris, “the man is the everything of the house and any shame that the child brings affects his image as a not-up and doing father. He is the breadwinner and must ensure that things work well with the children especially male children”.

Sam agrees:

I totally agree with that. Yes, fathers are responsible for correcting both women and children who are misbehaving. That speaks much about you the man in public. If you the man don't correct women and children, they will betray you out there...everybody asks whose son or wife is misbehaving like that? So I think it is the responsibility of the man to discipline and correct children and their mothers through useful beating.

John, while agreeing with Chris and Sam, added that fathers should know when to take a specific disciplinary action. “That may look okay. I mean yes. But the father knows when to instil that discipline in women and children. You should not unnecessarily be beating them at every little thing...that is also bad of you, John explained.

And for Vii, he shared his personal tale of how his mother could refuse them food in the absence of their father as a form of discipline. “Whenever my father was not around, my mother could beat us or refuse us food. This was not correct us from misbehaving”.

Whether a man should discipline his children or his wife, respondents pointed out that the discipline should be morally reasonable and should remain at the level of correcting a misbehaving child. Being a domestic worker who is always with children gives women some leeway to enforce discipline whenever children are straying. Taking this as a form of common knowledge which women themselves ought to be aware, women WHO are misbehaving should accept in good faith whenever they are corrected by their husbands as would be seen in the next chapter. Discipline and reasonable punishment are had some corrective value that both women and children should know.

Interestingly, we see that it is not just a matter of correcting others in the home for its own sake; it has a wider signification. To be masculine is to get public approval of a deserved masculine niche. Sam further valorised this discourse stating that:

Traditionally, a real man has such uncontrolled power to discipline his wives and children. When you don't do this, they can do certain things that are capable of ruining your masculine position. You need to put your house in check and control. Wherever your wife does something inappropriate in the public, nobody is interested in knowing her natal father, but the first question often asked is 'Whose wife, is she? 'What has the husband been teaching her at home? It is a cultural insult to be confronted with such questions. You see what I'm talking about...A real man is supposed to keep his woman under control.

Maaro casts his mind back to where he grew up and what being man enough is publicly perceived, constructed and graded. In his view, masculinity is nothing than public performances where people's actions and behaviours are critically scrutinised within specific event. Where you know your masculine reputation is at stake, there are necessary steps to take in order to avoid public ridicule. Maaro added, *"As a man, you have a reputation at stake to protect every now and then. Your wife's behaviour matters a lot"*.

Pulling the narratives together, the fear of being shamed publicly is a strong force that encourages men to engage in a range of disciplinary controls in the home. In a typical patriarchal society such as north-western Ghana, masculinities are socially constructed and public performances are deeply rooted in unequal power relation between mostly men and women and to some extent among men themselves (Barker and Ricardo, 2005). Being masculine is commonly associated with ability to command respect from other family members, especially wives, being authoritative, and able to discipline any erring family member (Fredman and Jacobson, 2012; Slegel and Richters, 2012). There is strong evidence in the narratives of men to suggest that being successfully masculine is deeply rooted in one's ability to wield authority that licenses a man's ability to enforce behavioural compliance.

Chapter conclusion

In pulling together men's narratives as contained in the transcripts, we see men's constructions of incipience, transition, fatherhood as ideal and as pedagogy, homosociality as desire, as well as the critical connection between successful masculinity and marriage in their theorization of being men. The theoretical contribution of this chapter is the immense weight of the participants' own knowledge about the various stakes of 'masculinity' and the frequency with which questions of 'disciplining,' 'ordering,' and 'being in control' of one's

environment, including wives arise in all their debates as part and parcel of being recognized as 'doo-menga' (real men).

Based on emerging evidence from men's reflections, this study argues that men's constructions and negotiations of identities, especially gendered identities are spatially implicated. Men bring to these negotiation ideas on both traditional and modern discourses on the male figure. Men are traditionally expected to excel in their traditional capacity as husbands and at the same time fight for recognition as meaningful and capable 'yirdandoo' and fathers. We see men's reflection and constructions of their gendered identities as intimately premised on an iterative process of performance within 'space'. The performance of masculinity is seen as spatial-temporarily determined. 'Space' is thus constructed as socially produced in which contradictory, confusion, and shifting ideas on being a man are articulated and pursued. Social spaces such as the home and public arena are constantly in motion and men always need to rework these spaces to ensure that their masculine identities remain relevant and legitimate. One theme that binds this chapter together is that masculinities are discursive performances which must be routinely rehearsed and pursued. In other words, one does not become masculine by the bare fact of being born a man. Men constantly needed to negotiate context specific ideological frames and discourses that underpin elements of social production and reproduction in a symbolic context of successful masculinity vis-à-vis failed masculinity. In order to personify cultural ideals of 'this is the man' and not that, participants reported that relational social network of peers plays an important role in determining the kinds of actions, behaviours, and representations men deploy in a specific interactional space. Men are not only encouraged by peers to act in congruent to acceptable masculinity, any form of resistance, deviation, and non-conformity are at the centre of social ridicules, mockery, and derogatory labelling. By engaging with dominant notions of credible masculinity, I am able to unravel the complexity, confusion, and heavy policing of ruling masculinities. In view of this, interview transcripts suggested that boys and men were always encouraged by their male peers to act in accordance with accepted scripts on successful masculinity, anything less than this attracts social punishments, either overtly or in subtle form. Boys are taught to value their masculinity as an important cultural property which must be upheld at all cost. In order to appear within culturally accepted realm of successful masculinity, different men are largely seen to be

negotiating a complex, heavily governed, and pressured social spaces where men engage (either consciously or unconsciously) in varying forms of actions that certify and signify the ideological frame of 'this is a man'. Respondents stressed the family institution as an important patriarchal site in which gendered hierarchies and expectations are constructed, re-produced and reinforced over generations. Boys, not girls, are especially trained to follow specific pathways of maintaining traditionally celebrated values. Fathers gained status by virtue of the presence of their male children who are traditionally considered as heirs of cultural practices.

Being frustrated with one inability to fulfil the traditionally required mandates of successful masculinity which are embedded in being a capable patriarchal breadwinner, some men are left with very limited options such that meaningful manhood could be attained. Accordingly, feelings of inadequacy, vulnerability, frustration and sense of alienation take good portion of men who think they cannot practically live up to the onus of successful traditional masculinity personified by financial prowess. As can be seen from the narratives of men throughout this chapter, endemic poverty is one of the terrible obstacles that hinder men from living up to the onus of hegemonic masculinity rooted in successful breadwinner and provider. The majority of participants did not describe their places of origin with any perceptible form of joy. Mostly, their narratives appear to suggest shattered lives largely based on the limiting options available for men to draw upon aside the traditional notions of manhood. Different categories of men needed to negotiate this landscape of unfriendly poverty in a manner to merit recognition as masculine. This was evidenced to be profoundly worrying to men in their performances of masculinity. But some respondents are willing to contest dominant notions of masculinity. Different categories of men had to navigate this complex terrain and there is some evidence of positive effort that seeks to embrace alternative non-hegemonic masculinities.

Chapter 5: REGULATING WIFEHOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDERED HIERARCHISED SPACES

Introduction

The everyday violence that 'people' experience, and in particular the close relationship between intimacy and violence has been a source of troubling discussion among feminist scholars over the past decades. Unfortunately, domestic violence remains one of the most controversial phenomena which is sometimes treated as a normalized, invisible, routinized, complicitized, and legitimate form of everyday behaviour and norm in sub-Saharan Africa as elsewhere in the world (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994). This chapter builds on the arguments of the previous chapter which argues that men's relationship, engagements, and interactions with other men generate potent grounds for the notions of 'discipline' and 'control' which may rarely be understood as 'violent' but which may deeply influence the dynamics of a relationship between a man and his wife.

This chapter concentrates on the representations of marriage and wifehood, before moving to participants' explicit engagements with their understanding of "discipline" within relationships with their wives and on their debates about when and where such "discipline" is involved with "violence". As in the previous chapter, material from both focus groups and interviews is analyzed, with the recognition that interview material tended to offer more detailed narratives about participants' need to "discipline" wives. I attribute this to the more intimate and personal rapport generated within the interviews contexts, where a "man-to-man" dynamic occurred, as discussed in the methodology chapter, between myself and the interviewee. The chapter emphasizes that the normative cultural prescription on the meanings and expectations of good wifehood creates a fertile ground for the regulation and subjectifications of wives. The chapter strives to highlight important moments of contestations, contradictions, consensus, and disagreements in the group context while simultaneously coloring qualitative nuances and depth generated in the individual interviews. The chapter begins with excerpts analyzing stories of 'disciplining' disobedient wives, and men's framing of such disciplinary actions as non-violent and deserved punishment. The chapter further engages with the emerging tensions between discourses and imperatives of representing and regulating wifehood and maintaining a credible masculine face in different spaces. I attempt to marry respondents' reflections around the

question of “regulating wifeness” and “abuse” within the context of culturally justified and legitimate acts which further supports men’s language of ‘discipline’. By this, men’s accounts of what it means to qualify as a ‘proper wife’ and the cultural qualities associated with this image will be given solid analysis in comparison to a ‘bad wife’. After this, the next theme solidly delves into men’s theorizations and constructions of domestic violence. Thereafter, I extend respondents’ reflections on the fundamentals of disciplining by locating them in men’s accounts, discourses, and on explorations meanings of domestic violence. The result of this engagement leads to the last two sub-themes, which explore men’s constructs of ‘corrective beating’ and ‘bad beating’ and the context which informs each of these forms of violence. The chapter concludes with a reflection and summary of the key arguments of the different themes and sub-themes that bind the chapter together.

Modes and processes of regulating wifeness

This section attempts to map out the range of discourses that some respondents draw upon in their attempt to enforce and regulate wifeness across different social spaces. The depth and nuances contained in these narratives are powerful revelations in the individual interviews that were lacking in the group context. The group context is a complex and performative homosocial space in which different men would want to appear in line with the dominant way of speaking as men, lest they are socially embarrassed. As part of the analyses here, I argue, from the participants’ reflections, that the process of regulating wifeness can assume a range of modalities, including both subtle and explicit modes of control. In order to explain this, I work first with three key moments which variously offer discourses on regulating wifeness in the day-to-day interactional spaces of husbands and wives obtained through conversations with participants. These scenarios suggest powerful nuances of perspectives on the question and imperative of regulating respectable married femininity.

Scenario one

Dong: “So we sat down drinking at a bar. My friend’s wife called and she was directed to the place where we were relaxing. We least suspected she was bringing trouble. The two excused us because there are private talks...that were a family matter. Suddenly, the woman was on top of her voice screaming at him...insulting him left and right. That was not

right you know... whatever it is, you both have dignity to protect. A woman is not supposed to talk back, let alone insult her husband in public. If it is between the two of them at home, it is far better and manageable than public. At least you can tolerate that in the house, but to do this outside is something else. But you know how some women can be, very stubborn. Everybody around must know what is going on. This woman went as far as slapping her husband in the public. I was not the one but I felt pained. As at now, we don't still understand or know what might have necessitated that bad behaviour from this woman. I cannot think far in that (expression to suggest frustration). But if you ask me, I tell you that it was an abomination for her to do that... I mean it is wrong and unacceptable. We rushed and separated them. It was too bad...terrible. To as what happened at their home after the public disgrace, nobody can tell. It is only my friend who can tell. We managed to calm tempers down. He listened to my advice not to use violence in retaliation against the misdemeanour of his wife. Society expects that in the event of a threat to a man's position, especially threats from wives, men are supposed to demonstrate their physique by teaching her lesson. Lessons that she will never forget in her life time. She is a woman. If I were this my friend, what I will do is that, I will hold my wife tight and lift her up just to tell her that she is going beyond bounds. I don't necessarily need to use violence. Violence is not the best alternative for me. If I hold her up like that, that is not violence but instilling some fear in her to be careful as a woman. A *pgmenga* (good wife) knows how to talk to her husband in public. That she has been trained to know.

Isaac: Do you not think that holding her tight or instilling fears in her is violence?

Dong: no, that is not...I don't think that is violence... it is not. My intention is to put fears in her to know that she is a woman and I am her husband. I don't want to hurt. Violence hurts. Holding her hands tight so that her blood does not circulate properly will send her a message to be careful next time else..."

This excerpt emerged in the context of my exploration with Dong about issues of domestic violence, and by then we had established a strong rapport. In the scenario he paints, he places the conduct of the friend's wife as entirely disruptive, unanticipated as "trouble" ("we least expected that she was bringing trouble") in a homosocial social public space ("we were relaxing").

The public environment provides Dong with the moral outrage animating his description of the wife's behaviour: "the woman went as far as slapping her husband in public". The extremity of her action ("as far as") is juxtaposed with a moral prescription: "if it is between the two of them at home, it is far better and manageable than public. At least you can tolerate that in the house, but to do this outside is something else". The dichotomy between the domestic heterosexual space and the public homosocial one is marked as a symbolic border, whose violation creates "pain" for the masculine gaze: "I was not the one, but I felt pains". The "abomination" of the public chastisement is not simply to her husband, but to the patriarchal authority of the extra-domestic realm, and as a woman's actions flow into the nature of all women "some women can be very stubborn", one man's slapped face becomes the shame visage of all men: "terrible".

In light of this narrative of disaster ("we rushed and separated them"), Dong moves into telling of his own "lessons" about husbands and violence. He explains that he tutored his friend: "He listened to my advice not to use violence in retaliation" and then goes on to distinguish "violence" from "teaching her (wife) a lesson she will never forget in her life". The educational impulse in Dong's words is instructive and linked to "society expects that", a clear commitment to the responsibilities of masculinity and the imperative of drawing on "physique" to prevent a wife from "going out of bounds". The language, even in translation, is motivated by territorial and disciplinary rigour. There is no expectation that the interlocutor myself, will disagree and no suggestion that the friend's wife may have had just cause for her own anger. The violation of her own "training" ("that she has been trained to know") locates the wife as a disobedient learner, where correction is warranted.

As Dong states in his ongoing imaginary of how he himself would re-educate the wife, "if I hold her up like that that is not violence but instilling some fear in her to be careful as a woman". I pursued this, to allow for clarity, and for Dong, the instillation of fear "does not hurt" any more than cutting off the blood flow to her body: "Holding her hands tight so that her blood does not circulate properly". Threats are lessons and messages "to be careful next time else..." operate within a notion of the future as permanently fixed within prescriptions of gender and authority.

The contradictions here are dramatic as part of a transcript, and yet they do not seem as such for Dong, whose overarching theory involves his desire for the "pogmenga" (good

wife). The scenario thus organizes the shape of regulating wifeness through evocation of shock at “some women’s” communicative and physical assertiveness (even aggression) towards their husband, and through the notion of illegal border-crossing between the domestic and the public, a border all are expected to police through conventional gender norms. “Violence” against wives is explicitly abjured, while simultaneously described in detail as a legitimate, and readily imagined, way of living as the masculine within the gender order.

This is a very interesting excerpt from Dong, although he could not throw more light on what exactly ensued between his male friend and his wife leading to the latter insulting the former. From the narrative, we can see the important role that context plays in the process of regulating wifeness. As part of the behavioural norms of an idealised femininity, a good wife needs to conceal whatever that goes on between a husband and his wife, especially in the public because whatever that goes on between them is considered a family/private matter. We see the process of regulating wifeness as a public performance.

What is fascinating is how the narrator theorizes violence as something that only hurts. In other words, anything that does not seek to hurt is not perceived to be violence. We can suggest that Dong perceives violence to mean anything which physically hurts the victim. Anything that does not hurt amounts to instilling fears in a wife who deviates from her representations of respectable femininity. From the narrative, Dong makes an important reference to a relationship between being a “man” and being a “woman”, a “husband” and a “wife” and most importantly, between public outlook and private. In any of these relationships, there appears to be currency to instil fear, not violence, in a woman who is acting outside the generally acceptable codes of respectable femininity. A *pojmenka* does not know how to talk back or argue with her husband in the public. This is characteristic of a “pojmenka” (bad wife). This is a behavioural code a woman needs to know as part of her training while growing up as a girl. As a result, a woman who fails to abide by this behavioural standard arguably is asking for her husband to teach her lesson that will last in her life time. A good woman is trained to know the boundaries of what she is allowed to do and what not to do and to not know this is deeply frustrating contained in the narrator’s statement, “*I cannot think far in that*”.

Lastly, Dong constructed gender as relational. He positions the man differently from the woman and their various positioning require different behavior from each of them in both private and public spaces. The relationship is not only relational; it is hierarchal in nature. Dong laments how the wife misbehaved and side-stepped on what she appears to be a serious taboo for a woman to pursue. He insists “that was not right you know... A woman is not supposed to talk back, let alone insult her husband in public”. What Dong essentially wants to communicate is that tendency to place the two individuals in their respective positions of dignity. And with a woman, she needs to know what amounts to abominable behaviours and disassociates herself from them. This is part of knowing her position as a woman.

Scenario two

Oper: “We went to one funeral and at the funeral ground, one of my friends’ wife danced to the direction of another man who was also dancing. Her husband was at the funeral ground. Dancing to another man in our tradition means that the woman feels thirsty for a man or she is not satisfied with the services of her husband. Now, everybody at the funeral was looking up to the husband of this stubborn woman. This is the worst disgrace a woman can ever bring on her husband at that moment. If your wife disrespects, you in public or in front of other men and you don’t reprimand her or take actions, you are finished. Bystanders expect you to act like a real man. Your reaction speaks a lot about you to your colleagues there. Your friends will heap praises on you for acting like a real man. Even if you are wrong, your wife can’t afford to insult or show gross disrespect to you publicly. If it is in the home, it is sometime better handled; afterwards nobody is there to see your wife insults you. Being angered by the on-looking crowd of men and women, this friend rushed and grabbed the hands of his wife and gave her a “dirty slap”. Those who were at the scene described his reaction as masculine. That was the best decision to have taken at that particular moment. It is better for a wife to disrespect her husband in the presence of nobody than in public. If this man never reacted by putting her in her rightful position, he would have been the talk of the whole village. He did well. A good wife does not disrespect her husband in public”.

In analyzing the above narrative, one theme holds the scenario together, the imperative of regulating and enforcing respectable femininity especially in the eye of bystanders and at very specific moment. It is clear from the narrative that a wife (not any woman) dancing to

the direction of a man (not her legally married husband) is enough the worst form of disrespect a respected husband should ever experience especially at a funeral ground. Funeral grounds in the context of north-western Ghana are social spaces where men and women gather to display credible masculinity and femininity indirectly. In the spirit of morality and cultural uprightness, a good wife is not supposed to suggest or give any form of clue to the public that her husband is not masculine enough. To do this is to appear “stubborn” and by extension, a bad wife thus not feminine enough. A *pɔgmenga* knows that even if her husband is wrong, it is part of her femininity to still respect him, especially in the public. To show any form of disrespect to a husband is in itself unacceptable, let alone doing it in the public.

Taking the debate further, dancing to another man according to the narrator signals that the woman “thirsts” for a man meanwhile she is legally married. In other words, she is dissatisfied with the services of her husband. The narrator did not make it clear what he means by “a woman thirsting for a man”, but we can reasonably estimate that the woman was having sexual feeling and desire with the opposite sex. The man is unable to perform what he is traditionally required to do as a respected and credible husband. This is a serious indictment on the part of her husband. This suggests that he is not measuring up to the standards of masculinity as a husband. Having danced in the direction of another man, the message was clearly understood by “everybody” at the funeral ground and expected the husband of such a “stubborn” and “bad wife” to demonstrate his credibility as a man illustrated by *“everybody at the funeral was looking at the husband of this stubborn woman”*. To allow one’s wife to go scot free without being corrected by her husband speaks a lot about the position of the man. To act to correct or avert future occurrence is to be praised as a credible masculine man. Praises from bystanders can therefore be theorized as a form of social capital. The process of regulating wifeness is, therefore, a process of masculine joy and gratification. And at the same time, the process is deeply educative and instructive.

But the position of the narrator is undoubtedly clear on this unfolding encounter. He illustrates his support and endorsement of the necessity to regulate wifeness through reprimanding and legitimate acts. That is giving her a “dirty slap” (we are unable to decode what constitute “dirty slap” and which one is a “clean slap”). Whatever shape this “dirty

slap” assumes, I would want to estimate that such slaps hurt and are capable of generating feelings of fulfilment as a credibly masculine man. Rather than condemning his friend giving his wife a “dirty slap”, the narrator concludes by endorsing the necessity and justification to regulate wifeness contained in the statements; *“that was the best decision to have taken at that particular moment...he did well. A good wife does not disrespect her husband in public”*. From this, the process of giving a bad wife a “dirty slap” is a culturally justified, legitimate and reciprocal means and does not constitute “violence”. We see the downward spiral nature of discipline in which a negative behaviour (by a wife) is corrected and countered by a negative action (by her husband). But important questions remain unanswered thus begging for answers. Could a man dancing to the direction of another woman (not his wife) attract same or similar wide attentions and condemnation in the same context? And what actions would the public expect his wife to take against such a husband? How about a wife, who takes unwieldy actions against her husband in similar circumstance, what will the public say about such behaviour in her position as a woman? Probably, these are no-go areas. This is illustrated by the statement; *“even if you (husband) are wrong, your wife can’t afford to insult or show gross disrespect to you publicly”*. A man can afford to give his wife a “dirty slap” in the eye of the public and no question is raised about that whatsoever but the reverse does not hold valid.

Scenario three

Amatus: “When I got married to my wife, she was an embodiment of what respectable femininity entails. I mean she was very respectful, hard working, she listens to me and does not talk back while I am speaking and submissive. But when she went to university, she decided to take on “bad friends”. These friends stood against the progress and growth of our marriage. Nothing was working. She goes out and comes back anytime she so wished. So, I spoke to her on several occasions to minimize the sort of friends she is taking. She will disobey my instructions. One day, I was angry to the extent that I couldn’t control myself... I was boiling. I came back from my business trip expecting to come and see food on the table but to my surprise, there was no food to eat. Gosh, terrible. The children were equally hungry. I patiently waited until she came back from wherever she went to. When I asked her where she was coming from, she asked me back where was I expecting her to be coming from? This is rude (*his bodily composure changed*). She further stated that ‘do I think I

married her to keep her indoors as a toy'? So, I thought to myself since when has she learnt to talk back at me; her husband in that ill manner? Has she lost her sense of respect for a HUSBAND (emphazised) as required of a proper wife? I married her such that there is always food for me to eat. I cannot marry her and be hungry again. No! A good woman knows this... She is not a stranger. At least, she comes from a home. She was paying more attention to her friends than me her husband (yirdandoo). And you want me to sit down and allow this go on in my house? What will others say about me? A man or woman? Who married who here? Who owns who in the family? Oh no, this cannot continue. It must stop... I had to stamp my feet down in order to resurrect my relationship. I had to put her in her rightful position. That makes you a man. So, initially I confiscated her mobile phone in order that she is unable to reach out to her bad, useless friends. I deleted all her phone contacts. On a different occasion, I stopped her from using her motor bike; her only means of transport which enables her to disrespect me. I married you and I see no reason why I should give you orders and you decide either to follow them or not. My wife needs to respect me in the house so that when I go out with her, she does not disgrace me in public. On that fateful day, I did not joke with her. I dealt with her seriously. That bad behaviour must stop and it has stopped since then.

Isaac: After stamping your feet down on many occasions to avoid being disgraced publicly by your wife's behaviour, could you comment on how you felt?

Amatus: You mean me?

Isaac: Yes, please

Amatus: oh, I felt normal. It was not out of nothing I had to do that. There was a good reason for that. You see, if I had not done that she will one day behave the same way in public and everybody will be like 'ah, whose wife is misbehaving this way'? 'Where's the husband?' Will, I hide or what will I do? "It is difficult to straighten a dried stick". You do it while it is still tender. So, me, I think I felt fulfilled because she has changed. That is the desire of every responsible man. Your ability to ensure orderliness...your dignity is assured".

From Amatus' narrative above, he presents regulating wifeness as a process and not just once-off activity. He started by verbally warning his wife to desist from taking on anybody as friends (we are unsure whether he is making reference to male or female friends). Right

from their early days of marriage, he describes his wife as a woman who embodies qualities of a good wife. The narrator made us understand that his wife's representation of qualities of a good wife made his family to grow. These feminine qualities started to tarnish when his wife began taking on bad friends who ended up deceiving her to disobey his instructions. This is a new but bad development compared to her earlier submissive and obedient characters. In fact, this is bad and shocking news to Amatus. The narrator is suggesting that this was the crunch of his marriage as he laments his frustration and outright shock at the pains that his wife's (who suddenly turned into a bad wife) misbehaviours to the extent that he *"couldn't control himself..."*. Traditionally, masculinity is rooted in men being able to control themselves no matter the situation (hook, 2004). From the narration, we can imagine the magnitude of pain that Amatus has gone through as a result of his wife's new trend of behaviour. He painfully struggled to narrate that he *"was boiling"* because his wife's recent trends of behaviours have rendered everything in the family dysfunctional illustrated by *"nothing was working"*. This suggests that his wife had become a bad wife which he cannot understand. At this point, Amatus began to feel that something is terribly wrong and a solution must be found before his relationship is dished out. This is evidenced in his expression of frustration contained in the phrase; *"Gosh, terrible"*. To be disrespected by a wife who has been known by her husband as *"an embodiment of what respectable femininity entails"* is completely shocking and unbelievable.

The frustrations and shocks were expressed both symbolically and explicitly. In one instance, he raised his hands high in the air to suggest a sense of despair and feeling of vulnerability. It is a common convention in the cultures of the Upper West Region that raising one's hands up in the air in certain discussions is to suggest a hopeless and frustrating situation. By this, Amatus thought that his marriage was becoming a hopeless relationship as his wife no longer respects and obeys his instructions as a HUSBAND, but rather listens to the influences of "bad friends". Consequently, this necessitated stamping his feet on the ground to ensure that his relationship starts anew from where his wife messed it up. This is clearly illustrated when he contends that, *"this cannot continue. It must stop... I had to stamp my feet down in order to resurrect my relationship"*. To be able to put his house in order ("putting the wife in her rightful position") is to demonstrate his masculinity through the use of a range of credible means. We see Amatus' expression of authority here. To be able to

control somebody is to exert power and authority which are normative ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Drawing on the different range of credible and culturally legitimate means to ensure that his status as a credible husband is respected is embedded in masculine gratification contained in the comment, *“I felt fulfilled because she has changed. That is the desire of every responsible man. Your ability to ensure orderliness...your dignity is assured”*.

Further, his expectations of a good wife (as he defines his wife as an “embodiment of respectable femininity”) were disillusioned as his wife was not only “stubborn”, but was not very much concerned whether the children are fed or not and whether he being a husband is hungry or not. To not show enough concerns in ensuring that basic cultural narratives of a good wife are adhered to is unacceptable as this particular event made Amatus to feel completely *“shattered”* and *“boiling”*. By the English translation, to be “boiling” is to get angry to the highest level over the most basic thing. From the narrative, we are made to understand that this is something every well-meaning woman would want to avoid illustrated in the statement, *“at least she comes from a home”*. To not know that it is a woman’s cultural duty to ensure that food is put on the table for a husband and the children to eat is to suggest that one does not have a good gender apprenticeship while growing up. This is a serious indictment on the part of a “mother” who is traditionally required to give daughters the requisite trainings to make them good wives as argued by participants in an earlier chapter. The other possible explanation is that, to know what good wifeness entails but failing to live by them is to suggest irresponsible wifely qualities which must be sanctioned. This is what Amatus is talking about when he made reference to the phrase, *“she is not a stranger”*. This means that she is very much aware of the gender norms as a wife. However, failing to perform tasks that are culturally expected of wives such as cooking and caring for the children is considered an important failure to measure up to the proper feminine roles. In a way, this failure invariably suggests and expects that the husband engage in a territorial space which he has been taught to avoid. This leads to status conflict, the consequent of which results in culturally sanctioned acts of ‘discipline’.

We can see the various disciplinary strategies that Amatus deployed in his attempt to regulate the femininity of his wife. All the disciplinary mechanisms that he employed have particular goals; that is *“putting her in her rightful position”*. Putting her in her rightful position means to distinguish between the hierarchies of masculinity and femininity. The

currency of putting her in the rightful position is to make himself seen as a credible man in the gender order.

The long process of regulating wifhood as demonstrated in the extracts of Amatus culminated in what appears to be the biggest sanction which he imposed on the continued display of “arrogant”, “disrespect”, “provocative”, “unfeminine” and “stubborn behaviours” by his wife. Amatus made the following statements as part of his concluding thoughts; “*on that fateful day, I did not joke with her. I dealt with her seriously*”. Although he did not shed light on what these statements could actually mean, nonetheless, we can reasonably speculate that these statements suggest the productivity and efficiency of more robust strategies which generate more utility and weight than verbal warnings which were employed much earlier in the process of regulating and enforcing respectable married femininity (Lloyd and Emery, 2000: 56). According to him, these strategies have generated sense of fulfilment as he has been able to ensure orderliness in his family as a credible man. To ensure orderliness in one’s family is to avoid facing many public questions surrounding the credibility of one’s status as a *yirdandoo*.

Putting all the three scenarios together, at least five main threads are visible: the sorts of behaviours that shape the process of regulating wifhood; the power of private/public borders; the power of “bad wifhood” rooted in the language of abomination, unacceptability, and horror; the process of regulating wifhood as educative, instructive and futuristic; and the process of regulating wifhood is culturally justified and legitimate, although it may not necessarily constitute “violence”.

Despite difference of pace and style, all the three cases share a common and deeply embedded set of principles about the meaning of “wifhood,” and the critical potential of a wife to cause catastrophic harm to credible masculinity. In all the cases, we have observed that wives’ behaviours in the public arena are the central points of concern. We see that the process of enforcing qualities of a good wife is distinctively masculine and territorial in nature; when a wife does not behave herself well thus taking on the image of a “bad learner”, the reputation of the husband is at stake. The process of regulating wifhood, therefore, becomes a “contest for honour” and expression of public space as masculine ownership. The politics of face saving becomes imminent here because all the three events typically involve a spontaneous interplay of provocation, humiliation and rage in an

enduring relationship. I therefore propose that we read men's desire to regulate wifedom not as mere or trivial public incidents, confrontations but should be approached as quintessentially about questions around the credibility and adequacy of husbands' masculine images. A husband's ability to enforce credible 'discipline' is actually part of his image as a competent man in specific context of homosociality. We observed that aggression and the ability to enact specific corrective actions constitute a masculine duty whenever a man feels that his image as a man of the house is (actually or potentially) insulted by the behaviour of a wife. In fact, a failure to do this suggests a man's acceptance of the insults and an indication and/or admission that he is unworthy and undeserving of respect.

We may as well be interested in examining the nature of interaction between provocation, humiliation and rage which is fundamental in all the three cases. The nature of the interaction between rage, humiliation and the tendency to be provoked have some theoretical relevance and useful ideas in understanding the shapes and processes of regulating wifedom in the private and public environments. From the three scenarios, we can reasonably construct the process of regulating wifedom as a "situational transaction". It is a "situational transaction" because each of the cases took place in specific spaces; either in a public homosocial or private heterosexual space. Whichever space that men tend to regulate the wifedom of their wives, the process can be constructed within the context of "audience-actor relationship". The active role of social audiences cannot be underestimated, especially male peers in the process of regulating wifedom. We see the nature of interaction between men as actors, men as observers, and the situational context and their intrinsic integration facilitate appropriate action taking. These actions, symbolically, are theorized as a rational choice and reciprocal, at least, at that material moment because the behaviour of these wives hurts the image of the man. Essentially, men's actions are deeply interlocked in discourses of symbolic interactionism and the theory of rational choice making because men do not seek to harm the victims; a position well-maintained by each of the respondents in these scenarios. At the same time, we can argue that beneath men's situational motivations to enact credibly sanctioned actions is some degree of desire and motives to keep women at bay; drawing on control motive theories (Lloyd and Emery, 2000; Dobash and Dobash, 1984; Eisikovits and Winstok, 2001). This is

evidenced, particularly in the case of Amatus, who had issued a series of prior warnings and threats before actually deploying a more robust mechanism to control his wife, albeit he insists that his actions are disciplinary in nature and not domestic violence.

These scenarios make theoretical contributions to the burgeoning body of knowledge on domestic violence against women by revealing the utility of situational perspectives that are rarely being engaged with (Eisikovits and Winstok, 2001). But as feminist researchers, we need to understand the situational specificities of domestic violence and the individual's motivations and predispositions to engage in such acts. This is an important beginning in our attempts to address what we may describe as violence because the situation within which men enact their behaviour qualifies such actions as 'discipline' and not violence. This further build on the discursive expectations and performative dimensions of violence because in specific circumstances, events, and locations, men are expected to know the dangerousness and consequences of behaviours that are capable of ruining their masculine images as men. The confluence of the dangerousness, consequences, and the intrinsic motivations to measure up to the dominant ideals on being in authority produce clear cases of domestic violence; although in these scenarios respondents did not represent their actions as violence. We see this evidenced in how respondents felt after engaging in such acts, with none of them expressing regret and guilt for their behaviour. This suggests that the occurrence of acts of the same or similar magnitude in similar contexts or events are more likely to be endorsed as a normal and rational behaviour of men.

Significantly, we see participants' theorization of space as gendered and space as a contestation for ownership. Classically, women are supposed to occupy the private space while the public is perceived as a typically masculine domain. This dichotomy further muddies the gendering of space and any attempts which potentially disrupt the stable boundary of space invite the use of credible violence. What is more, both men and women are allowed to move between the public and private spaces, but with caution. The legitimacy and ownership of the public space (such as a funeral ground and the leisure of men) is more referenced to men who perceive it a cultural duty to exercise control of the public space as a typically masculine territory. We see this classically illustrated in all the three scenarios. In a different perspective, women are supposed to act as proxies for masculine credibility.

What is important, I ought to say, is how men constructed the actions their colleagues took and what they are likely to deploy in similar instances in which wives acted outside the borderline of respectable femininity. These actions, although they vary, sum up to one thing; the imperative to use culturally justified and legitimate means to save masculine face. Accordingly, these actions are not theorized as necessarily constitutive of violence against women in the traditional sense, but as disciplinary mechanisms. In all the three cases, respondents theorized and placed such actions within the context of *“teaching bad wives useful lessons”* as a form of discipline. Teaching a bad wife, a lesson is not necessarily violence against women in itself; it is justified and in fact, endorsed by bystanders. Bystanders actually expect a man to act competently in his capacity as a man by knowing the right actions to deploy in specific situations in which his hard-earned status is potentially threatened by the actions and inactions of a wife. To teach bad wives lessons as framed in these narrations is, according to my participants, a productive force that some men implement to enhance efficiency of their public images of credible masculinity while simultaneously policing and ensuring that wives’ behaviours are morally upright. The two are actually interrelated and the outcome of such interconnectedness is the production and reproduction of the patriarchal cultural order. In other words, when a woman is obedient and behaves herself well as part of her representations of credible wifeness, she is actually acting to prevent the questioning of her husband’s masculinity by the public gaze. What is fascinating here is men’s reformulation of the “gender binary”: once a ‘woman’ becomes a ‘wife,’ she is, in fact, reconstructed by the participants, as a constant mirror to her husband’s masculinity – she becomes in wifeness ‘masculine.’

We can as well argue, based on the suggestions among respondents that the flow of unequal power relations between a man and his wife is central in the processes, nature and modes of regulating wifeness through the use of acts of discipline, *“she is a woman and she needs to be taught a lesson”* (Lloyd and Emery, 2000). In other words, a husband can teach his wife who allegedly misbehaves lessons that are educative, instructive and unforgettable, but a wife cannot ensure that a man who misbehaves is disciplined and corrected with same or similar acts. Of course, this is clearer in Dong’s scenario than the others: *“My intention is to put fears in her to know that she is a woman and I am her husband, I am a man and she is a woman”*.

In trying to enforce this supposedly natural flow of hierarchies which determines which behaviours are appropriate for a good wife and which one characterizes the bad one, credible acts of discipline are pursued. By pursuing culturally legitimate disciplinary means, the hierarchies are restored. That is, men's deployment of a range of credible threats of violence is a cultural process which transforms the biological sex into social categories (Ridgeway, 2009). This is variously illustrated by respondents; "A *'pogmenga'* knows how to talk to her husband in public. That she has been trained to know" In the discussions among the three narrators is one fundamental theme; a woman must know who "she" represents in relation to what her husband represents and who should actually do what at which time and space. This theme somehow attempts to marry biological sex and gender in the process of regulating wifedom as part of maintaining credible masculinity. This is an important local knowledge that both men and women ought to know, an argument well-maintained by respondents. Largely, such common knowledge is not only supposed to be known, but should actually be practiced as part of the patriarchal cultural order (Ridgeway, 2007: 315). What is clear from the narratives is that some of these men have depicted their actions in deeply paternalistic and metaphorical descriptions. For instance, take the comment of Dong; "my intention is to put fears in her to know that she is a woman and I am her husband". This metaphorical expression and theorization articulated by this respondent in locating his intention as purely non-violent is deeply problematic as such expression "helps to mask other repressive systems" (Gqola, 2007: 114) and general violence against women in a normalized system. These violences could assume and resonate with a wide range of forms including symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001). I ought to add that beneath the metaphors are issues of patriarchal hegemonies and entitlements that men (in the context of these scenarios) hold over women—who can do what at which time and place and who defines the appropriateness of this doing? Men control and correct wives and not vice versa. The discursive power which respondents portray to hold give them and other men the power to expect and actually demand compliance, respect, decorum, well-thoughtful behaviours and submissiveness from wives, especially in the public arena.

In each of the narratives, we see the image of each of these women juxtaposed to a bad wife— "an unfeminine woman". To not know what behaviours and actions to refrain from especially in public as a woman is to suggest one's lack of basic grasp of femininity. This

image was constructed as a *ɔɔgefaa* (bad wife) which was contrasted to the qualities of a *ɔɔgmenga* (good wife). To be feminine enough is to know what to do, how to behave, how to appear, and how to speak to a HUSBAND (emphasized) in public such that his image as a credible man does not come under public ridicule. To be a *ɔɔgmenga* and not a *ɔɔgefaa* means that a wife's appearance is as important as being submissive in public.

As a result of this, all the narrators appear to endorse and legitimise the actions taken by their fellow men in the event of a perceived threat to their position as men. While Dong seems to embody different ideas on what form of actions to deploy in cases of masculine contempt and also taking on the image of a useful peer educator, his actions ended up suggesting a degree of interest in patriarchal hegemony. That is, the ability to put fears in a woman who does not behave herself in public. Paradoxically, he places his intentions and desire to put fears in a woman in the context of "harmless acts" that only teach her "useful lessons". While Oper also appears to disassociate himself from acts of violence, he concluded by praising his colleague man who gave his wife a 'dirty slap' by saying that "*he did well*". Simply put, he does not like acting violently, but he endorses other men to act violently to correct an erring wife.

What I have attempted to do in this section is to weave a complex tapestry of the complexities of discourses, processes, and modes of regulating wifeness by men across different social environments. Stitching all the discussions together, we understand that men always feel compelled to defend their reputations as credible men sometimes through a range of acts. These men defined and qualified their actions as remarkably different from conventional and policy definitions of "violence". In other words, their actions do not constitute domestic violence. We also understand that some men such as Dong do not support the use of "violence" to maintain credible masculinity. He defines violence as "*anything that hurts*" the victim. This raises important theoretical questions on what exactly is domestic violence in north-western Ghana. Which acts are qualified as legitimate violence and which ones are unacceptable? These questions and others centrally guide the next sections of this thesis which explore respondents' understandings and constructs on discourses of domestic violence.

In analyzing these excerpts, there are moments of tensions about what does and what does not constitute 'violence'. This differentiation, to some degree was influenced by the

homosociality of the interview context which involves a male interviewer interacting with male respondents. The power of the homosociality of all males' interview space, especially within the focus groups allowed my participants to validate and express the collusion of "credible masculinity" and "strong discipline of wives in public" as an essential route to the avoidance of "abomination". In this case, the strong discipline being invoked by respondents becomes a "productive" tool, not "violence" and respondents are repeatedly insisted that their actions should not be described as violence against their wives. Despite evidence that hints of unease and contestation with this, but the force with which the striking division between "good" and "bad" wife is constructed over-rides the unease.

Representations of 'marriage' and 'wifehood'

This section develops the analysis above through further engagement with respondents' overt theorizations of domestic violence. The previous section worked with scenarios of public "discipline" between the interviewee and his wife, in order to highlight the sense in which participants agree on the power of a wife to damage their masculinity, and construct the binary of "good" and "bad" as a route towards appropriate negotiation of "discipline" on a husband's part. In this section, I turn to participants' own definitions of "domestic violence," as a dynamic phenomenon which involves home-space. Throughout my conversations with respondents of similar linguistic backgrounds (Dagaare dialect), different words such as 'wuli nee yeng' (teach somebody a lesson), 'dogrong velaa' (good punishment/good abuse), and 'wuloo' (teaching) were always used rather than explicitly used the language of "domestic violence". These words were framed as part of navigating the daily realities and complexities of 'diezoore' (domestic disagreement) in relationships. Jonas shared his opinion on this in the following words, 'Ka fo wuli nee yeng a daana na e yelfaa kanga, nee za na bang ka fo tong la fo ferbo tuma'. Translated as, 'if someone does something terrible/bad and you correct such a person, everybody will know that you have embarked on a legitimate cause'. In other words, when somebody's behavior stands the potential of causing embarrassment to a significant other, any form of action configured to avoid social stigma amounts to legitimate correction. In the raw words of participants, 'diezoore' becomes domestic violence when 'ka nee dire kpieong o to enga kye ka a daana ba e yelfaa zaa'. By the English translation, a domestic disagreement as participants framed it, becomes domestic violence when 'one unfairly uses his/her position as a powerful

individual to abuse another person without a just cause'. Participants accepted that 'kpankpankpienong' (extreme violence) and 'gandaalong fa' (unacceptable use of force) are perfectly treated as cases of domestic violence. These words are the extreme end of 'diezoore' because they do not merit the accompanying punishments meted out to the victim.

The following excerpts were collated from different moments across the groups and interviews on participants' thoughts and reflections on 'gandaalong fa' (domestic violence). Interviewer: can you share with me some of the "fundamental terrains" of domestic violence as you suggested? This question was asked across contexts.

Joe: So, disagreement may erupt between you and your wife. The disagreement leads you to beat your wife. So, for me, I think violence does not happen out of nothing. "There is no fire without smoke". So, we need to know the source of the smoke... Over here, we are farmers and our everything depends on this...Some of the issue is that; a man asks the wife to assist him on the farm and she refuses and goes her own way, see... You cannot tell what she is up to. She knows that she is supposed to send food and water to her husband in the farm. That she knows... So, if the man returns from the farm, he's already angry. Even if he doesn't beat the wife immediately, unnecessary arguments will begin to set in. That is the beginning of violence; you know what I mean... you see that the woman caused it. She did not fulfil her part of the family bargain.

Badu: domestic violence is common in this community. It is when the man constantly wants to see the wife as his property you know that feeling... I am the man of the house. I brought you from your parents' house. You must obey my rules and orders. So, for me, it becomes violence when you the man impose your feelings on your wife because she is your wife. That certainly is domestic violence. I am also a man but sometimes it is just too bad how some of us treat our wives. We think that women have no interest and whatever we the men are saying, that should be final. It's wrong.

Amu: You see, in the past, women were submissive to their husbands. Today, they're different. This thing of gender equality or whatever you people call it, is what we should be talking about here. That thing of equality is not helpful in our marriages. Many women think and act like children because of equality. Give them little power and they will show you their true selves. Many women are now independent and economically assertive. How does this happen in a man's house and violence should not occur? Today, you see some women

abandoning their husbands' farm work in order to work on theirs. Can you imagine a "property owning another property"? Why won't there be violence...it will definitely occur. Many will not even assist their husbands whereas such women know that things are not going well with their husbands. Many men are overburdened in managing their families well. You struggle to provide for the children, provide "chop money"¹ and the woman still expects you to take care of her. She looks up to you the man to do all. Overburdening the man is a fundamental source of violence.

Amos: Ah me, I think this thing of violence comes as a result of the perception of society about the authority of man. See, society sees a man to have greater 'fanga' (power) over the woman...how do you think a man giving an order and the wife failing to comply? It will result is the abuse of that power in men. That is the source of violence. Yes, that we need to understand this before talking about domestic violence.

Abu: Yes, I agree with Amos... that is the point. You see, we all know that a man and a woman are not equal. That, we all have been trained to know. Women themselves know this. So, if this position of a man and woman are destabilized, what do you think will happen...violence? "You don't touch the lion by the tail and expect no reaction". So basically, it is retaliation that results in the violence because the man would always want to prove his authority over the wife and the wife too attempts to resist being subdued. You know that thing, *'dugebere ayi ba suglo taa'*.

Augustine: You see women; they are just a bunch of people you cannot understand. Some are just stubborn or something... Bros, your wife knows that what she wants to do at a particular time is unacceptable yet she goes ahead to do it. She expects you to react and you will definitely react. This is the fundamental of violence.

Alphon: Domestic violence starts when your wife refuses to do what you expect her to do. You ask her to do this and she went her own way. You beat her when she refuses to do that. In this community, everybody knows what men and women are expected to do. If you are a woman and you refuse to know what is traditionally required of you or you know but refuse to do them, you get beaten for that. If I tell my wife that she should do this and she decides to go contrary, you don't expect me to let it be like that. No. I will not spare her and that may be violence. *'Poge la n buor na zagra o siri nuor'*?

Oper: my brother, you see, this thing of violence does not just happen just like that. I certainly think that this thing of unequal power between a man and his wife is the major cause of domestic violence. You know because many men think that women are unequal beings, such men try to lord it over their wives. But these women too are human beings with emotions and feelings. They will definitely react. The point of convergence of the woman's resistance and the man's insistence of his authority is violence. I hope you get what I'm saying?

¹ "Chop money" refers to money provided for the upkeep of the house. Traditionally, it is the responsibility of the husband to provide "chop money" and it is the duty of the wife to be economical about how to use such money.

Isaac: Yes, I am following. Please go ahead.

Oper: Yes, so men have authority, but men should not impose their power violently on their wives. The man should know that he has authority but not to unnecessarily assault the wife and expects that the woman should remain submissive. That is the problem... it is unacceptable.

In “knowing the fundamentals of terrains of domestic violence”, one theme becomes apparent in all the excerpts; cultural rules, norms, and instructions on how a man and woman should interact and relate to each other in the home. These cultural ethos, underpin men’s framing and use of the language of discipline. To understand the sources and layers of domestic violence is to understand the hegemonic gender beliefs and stereotypes between a man and his wife. The nature of the interactions between a man and his wife largely informs the source of violence. Fundamentally, and indeed, traditionally, respondents pointed out that a man and his wife are not equal and this norm subsequently informs the nature and flow of the interactions between the two (*“we all know that a man and a woman are not equal. That, we all have been trained to know”*).

In pulling together all the narratives, one thread becomes visible; the currency of cultural norms and beliefs around the unequal power relations between a husband and his wife enforces patriarchal hegemonies which subsequently produces violence (Straus, 1999). Such gender hegemonies are expressed by husbands through chains of commands. Such chains of commands were illustrated by statements such as, *“You ask her to do this and she went her own way. You beat her when she refuses to do that”*, *“a man asks the wife to assist him on the farm and she refuses and goes her own way”* and *“Pɔge la n buor na zagra o siri nuor”*? The closest English translation of the statement, *“Pɔge la n buor na zagra o siri nuor?”* is that who is also a woman to disobey and/or challenge the orders and authority of her husband? From the above, we can concretely see the flow of interactions and whenever the flow tends to deviate from the normal and generally acceptable mode, husbands must enforce and take the necessary actions. A woman is asked to do something and without due compliance with the husband’s order, she gets punished and beaten to show a breach of the flow of interaction. So violence emerges as a good alternative in ensuring that men continue to remain on top of the social hierarchy while simultaneously subordinating the position of wives (Ridgeway, 2007: 312).

From the narratives, we can concretely see the nature and flow of gendered division of labors and the gendered expectations between a man and his wife. When a husband is performing his part of the bargain but the wife fails, in his eyes, to complement, that represents a fundamental source of domestic violence. It is evidenced that domestic violence emerges as a result of frustration often from the part of the man. Take for instance, the comment of Joe; *“a man asks the wife to assist him on the farm and she refuses and goes her own way, see... You cannot tell what she is up to. She knows that she is supposed to send food and water to her husband in the farm. That she knows...”* In several parts of this narration, the frustrations of Joe are visible. First, a man has the traditional right (i.e. *“seeing the wife as his property and she must obey the man’s rules and orders”* borrowing the words of Badu, another participant) to demand that his wife accompanies him to the farm, presumably a place that generates food for the family. This, both of them knows, or at least, is supposed to know. To ask (not even demanding) a wife to assist her husband on the farm is represented as a gentle gesture from the husband. Traditionally, a wife is trained to know that she is obliged to send food and water to her hungry husband who is working on the farm. This is a basic requirement of good married femininity illustrated by *“She knows that she is supposed to send food and water to her husband in the farm. That she knows...”* For Joe, for a married woman to know that she is supposed to “do this” (that which is generally accepted) at a particular time, but “doing that” (that which is different from the norm) at the same time is absolutely petrifying, frustrating, and inexcusable. Such frustrations are illustrated by Joe’s lack of words when he struggled but finally said, *“See... You cannot tell what she is up to”* This is gendered roles transgression. To not know what one is up to at a particular time as a wife is perhaps a simple way of telling the husband that “I need to be corrected”; a situation which invites culturally sanctioned actions.

We as well see that participants locate their ideas of “domestic violence” in the context of a hierarchical relationship between a man and his wife. This is what Abu describes as *“dugebere ayi ba suglo taa”* The closest English translation of this proverb is that, “it is not possible to place two pots of equal sizes on top of each other”. Technically and traditionally, the husband figure is constructed here as the “big pot” (duge-kpong) while the woman takes the image of the “small pot” (duge-biele). So, to ensure that there is a proper flow and maintenance of the patriarchal unequal power relations between a husband and his wife in

the family, the latter ought to remind submissive and respectful to the orders of the former as the head of the family (Walby, 1990). Without the wife being submissive and respectful to the position of the man, it means that both are of the same position and size. For a wife to appear to be of the same position as her husband is to challenge the traditional authority and power of the man. This point of convergence was theorized as central in the occurrence of domestic violence. Oper succinctly argues that this *"point of convergence of the woman's resistance and the man's insistence of his authority is violence"*. To avoid being beaten is to remind a faithful and submissive wife who is disinterested in the position of a man.

To have been trained to know that a woman must always obey the instructions of her husband but refusing or failing to live up to this standard is to be inviting 'discipline' in return illustrated by the comments of Alphon, *"If you are a woman and you refuse to know what is traditionally required of you or you know but refuse to do them, you get beaten for that"*. This suggests that domestic violence does not occur out of the blue, but a woman's failure to know and live out what she has been trained to do lies at the very core of violence. Significantly, such modeled incidents of violence are initiated and caused by the women in question because they should have known better and therefore avoid violence illustrated by; *"the woman caused it. She did not fulfil her part of the family bargain"* and *"your wife knows that what she wants to do at a particular time is unacceptable yet she goes ahead to do it"*.

Overwhelmingly, in the process of laying the fundamentals of violence, the majority of participants situated the currency of violence as invariably tied to the necessity to maintain a tenuous masculine foundation. Whenever men's sense and belief of dominance as heads of the households (yirdandɔ) is threatened or in the process of being destabilized, men tended to reconfigure their mode and nature of interaction with their wives. Largely, domestic violence occurs as an imperative to maintain their hegemonic positions as men and not anybody who can be manipulated by women. Some respondents went ahead to suggest that women have an insatiable taste for power and are always looking for the least opportunity to usurp in that; a position traditionally meant for men. To do this is what Abu is drawing our attention to when he argues that *"you don't touch the lion by the tail and expect no reaction"*. Women are very well aware of this danger and yet they stubbornly go around touching the "tail of the lion" as argued by Augustine. Amu contrasted women of

today with their counterparts in the past generations. Although he did not explicitly mention discourses around qualities of the *pɔgmenga* (good wife) vis-à-vis *pɔgefaa* (the bad wife), we can reasonably situate Amu's frames of thought in similar direction. According to him, women of today are materialistic, unsubmitive, and too eager to grab power at the least opportunity. What looms clear from this statement is that, these are qualities that a good wife must not aspire for. To aspire for these qualities is to appear to wear the image of a bad and perhaps, a rebellion wife. He illustrates that, *"give them [women] little power and they will show you their true selves. Many women are now independent and economically assertive"*. Women's desire for power has been argued to be a fundamental source of domestic violence.

But women's gaining economic independence and thus attaining some form of economic power is not the only thing that worries Amu and perhaps other respondents. For Amu, he is deeply enmeshed in discussion around how the resourcefulness of his wife facilitates his own marginalization and vulnerability as man of the house. Indeed, he is not only at pain with women as the sole culprits in such vulnerability, but the evolving socio-economic-legal landscape is part and parcel of the supposed powerlessness of the male figure (gender equality more precisely). He argues, *"Many [women] will not even assist their husbands whereas such women know that things are not going well with their husbands. Many men are overburdened in managing their families well. You struggle to provide for the children, provide "chop money" and the woman still expects you to take care of her. She looks up to you the man to do all. Overburdening the man is fundamental in violence"*. From this, we see the image of a rebellion and unsupportive wife who knows too well that her husband basically struggles to ensure that his sense of manhood rooted in a successful breadwinner is maintained by providing *"chop money"* and *"meeting the needs of his children and wife"*. He subsequently theorized violence fundamentally as a derivative of the supposed overburdening of men. When a man struggles to ensure that his image as a real man is intact and his wife continuously presses on the wrong button by consistently looking up to him to perform miracles, he needs to react violently, thus suggesting a major source of violence.

Theoretically, Amu frame of thought around violence is deeply encoded in questions about his own position as a man and what he is traditionally required to perform as a credible

man. This leads him to thinking of possible emasculation because he virtually struggles to measure up to his colleagues yet his wife is increasingly becoming independent. Dominant masculinity theorists have argued that hegemonic masculinity implies power, but not violence in itself (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 834; Ratele, 2016). In this case, the threat to his position of the man of the house invites him to draw on violence to mitigate his feeling of vulnerability—bolstering his masculine image (Anderson, 2005). This is certainly enlightening and resourceful (theoretically) as the desire to be seen hegemonic as the man of the house facilitates the subordination of women and the currency of domestic violence in maintaining hierarchical gender hegemonies illustrated by *“property owning another property”*. It is within this logic that concepts of “domestic violence” as illegitimate become meaningless for most of the participants since some participants have already argued that *‘poge ba so o menga’*.

Despite this body of evidence, we need to recognise that the acclaimed and shared norms governing the nature and flow of interactions between a man and his wife which fuel what in policy realm can be defined as ‘domestic violence’ were not uncontested. There are some discerning views, although such voices were on the minority. Such views understood domestic violence as an issue centrally rooted in men’s desires to enforce and maintain the subordination of women. Men who opposed the general view that women are the major source of their own abuses argue that it is proper to situate violence in the broader context of gender hegemonies that men purport to enjoy. Accordingly, men’s perpetration of domestic violence is nothing but an attempt to approve and reproduce gender power inequality between the sexes (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004; Correll, Thebaud, and Benard, 2007). As argued by Oper, *“men have authority, but men should not impose their power violently on their wives. The man should...not...unnecessarily assault the wife and expects that the woman should remain submissive”*. For Badu, *“it becomes violence when you the man impose your feelings on your wife because she is your wife. I am also a man but sometimes it is just too bad. It’s wrong”*. We could understand these minority voices as opposing to the hierarchal gender relations and these voices hypothetically argue that women, just like men, have rights, dignity, and emotional feelings that should be respected. As Oper argues, *“women too are human beings with emotions and feelings. They will definitely react”*. Badu

further situates this problematic position of men saying that, “we [men] think that women have no interest and whatever we the men are saying, that should be final. It’s wrong”.

The essence of the above sketch of narratives is to demonstrate what happened at specific times and how specific occurrences are constructed as “legitimate correction”; an argument which builds on my previous section. I have attempted to show in more nuance ways how participants’ representations of the gender norms they live with/through influence their language of discipline. Again, as noted earlier on, the language of respondents is deeply rooted the desire to discipline gender norms transgression. Participants’ own language about ‘discipline’ is deeply interwoven with notions of “masculinity”. The notion of credible masculinity encourages some men to deploy “legitimate forms of discipline”; a position which is in tension with other themes, especially the notion of “violence” among some cohort of respondents as something that is bad and should not happen nor accepted. This stance encourages the configuration of alternative masculinities. We also see that the latter school of thought is in conflict with other participants who argue that the changing gender norms lies at the centre of men’s enactment of a range of disciplinary actions.

Constructions and discourses of violence

This sub-theme builds on the previous ones which highlighted a wide array of powerful nuances, first around the imperative of regulating wifedom and, second around what participants describe as “the fundamental terrain of domestic violence”. This section works overtly with the contestations about the seriousness of the “discipline” predicted within the generation of “domestic violence” through the gender hierarchies spelled out by participants as essential to their own credibility as adult men. In both the sections above, despite the consensus on the need to “discipline” wives, there is unease about the extent and impact of this, and on whether such “discipline” constitutes actual, and dangerous, “violence” – something over which the law may legitimately act. This section explores these tensions further, arguing that despite the earlier homogeneous expressions of some “beatings” as “productive” and “not violent,” participants are well aware (often through the experience of childhood bullying or parental abuse) of the damage caused by physical assault, and are frequently willing to abjure this, in the name of a “changing world.” The contradictions between these debates and the need to eradicate the “abominations” which can be caused by “unruly wives” are poignant. Overwhelmingly, all the participants in this

study had rich stock of narratives on very specific experiences of acts of violence while growing up across different contexts. It was common to note mainly three specific scenarios and events in which participants experienced and witnessed violence: being bullied by peers in the playing fields/school/home/wider community; having first-hand witness of violence against a parent (either from a man toward his wife or the vice versa) or against an extended relative; and parents using acts of violence or corporal punishments to correct and discipline children.

Interviewer: What does domestic violence mean to you?

Abdul: Ah! Violence? We all have seen violence happened here this time or the other. I have been hearing about it since childhood... I saw my dad beats my mother few times when I was small.

Dong: Growing up as a child, I witnessed my father physically abused my mother. It is like tug-of-war. Two people are involved and the outcome is violence in the family. If you ask me about violence, violence injures...it hurts. You can see your father engages in violence against your mother cos she is less powerful and cannot retaliate unlike man to man.

Abdul: Domestic violence is a complex thing. I mean it is about conflict between a man and his wife. I think it is about making your partner unhappy or uneasy in the relationship. Whenever your spouse does something trivial and you slap her that is violence. 'Fo wulo la a fo poge kpankpankienong'. The situation does not merit the use of physical force but you apply force to get things moving in your favour. I think that amounts to domestic violence.

Amatus: Domestic violence is about infringing on the rights of the spouse in an intimate relationship. When you make anybody in the family hurt, that is violence to me. The end result is to show "who is who" in the family. But as a man, you only need to put fears in a woman or children. Violence is not good you know.

Aaron: Oh, me, when I was small, I witnessed my father on many occasions would beat my mother. Sometimes, I remember he used a big cane on my mother until the cane broke into pieces and my father even continued with his bare hands. That was the power of men those days. My mother was comfortable... She never complained... She never sent that out, not even to her parents. That was betrayal of family issues. To her, she deserved that treatment

especially when she knows that it is her fault. But what is not happening today, things are getting out of hand. The little thing, the woman wants everybody to know that she is going through hell. Her husband is maltreating her. Everything is being seen as violence today. We are losing our cultural values and norms.

Vii: I can remember my father one day used an axe to hit my mother. She was comfortable with that. You the child will feel the pains your mother is going through but you can't do otherwise. That is what she is trained to be. It is natural. She would cry in the bed room. That is where it ends.

From the above narratives, there is a rich stock of narratives on 'diezoore' (domestic disagreement) and 'kpankpankpienong' (extreme form of diezoore) ranging from personal and first-hand experience and stories of domestic violence against mothers. Many of the accounts of participants suggested a strong connection and normalization between cultural narratives on some forms of masculinity and different degrees of domestic violence. At least, out of all the cases which involved acts of violence, one can see that feeling of a threatened masculine identity was cited as a good candidate in the domestic violence causal chain. And since masculinity was expressed to be dear to men generally, most cases of 'diezoore' were perceived to be normalized, reasonable, and natural. Even though these respondents witnessed the damage caused by their fathers' engagement in 'kpankpankpienong' (domestic violence), one could see a sense of deep tolerance of acts of violence. This normalization, endorsement, and deep acceptance of violence were vividly illustrated by statements such as, "...*That is what she is trained to be. It is natural*" and "*That was the power of men those days. My mother was comfortable... She never complained... She never sent that out, not even to her parents.*" This is further supported by the arguments that point to how too common and frequent domestic violence against wives is over a broad span of time and across different communities.

In most of the narratives demonstrated above, women (mothers) who experienced violence at the hands of their husbands were perceived to be comfortable with their predicament because they caused it. That is, they deserved to be beaten. And when a wife deserves the beating that she receives from her husband, it is expected that such violence should dye a natural death. This evidence supports respondents' earlier theorization and logic that '*pɔge ba so o menga*' (a woman does not own herself) hence they must be controlled by their

husbands. This suggests the general normalization of violence in a broader culture which supports the enactment of violent masculinities which further deploys the logic of unequal power relation between men and women. Violence is thus theorized as a culturally normal male behaviour rooted in men's position as heads of the family who need to control and dominate wives. Violence is not only a normal male behavior, it becomes part of credible femininity since women are traditionally supposed to know that they are only proper women when they are controlled and dominated by husbands. By the same stroke of logic, women are expected to be submissive and acquiesce to their husbands' instructions. This is clearly illustrated by Vii in the following statement, *"that is what she is trained to be. It is natural. She would cry in the bed room. That is where it ends"*. We see the inseparability of violence and credible femininity in Vii's extract. Suggestively, a good wife is one who is able to manage to tolerate violence from her husband and not always willing to betray private secrets to the outside world; a practice which was alleged to be characteristics of women of today. The language of discipline becomes instrumental in respondents' deep tolerance of acts of violence perpetrated by their fathers whenever women begin to assert power with their husbands by not being submissive.

Again, we need to problematize the position of some respondents as their narratives suggest interest in re-entrenching traditionally dominant, culturally admired and historically valued ways and patterns of demonstrating masculinity and femininity. To be sure, the world would be a better space (and presumably, violence free) if women of contemporary generation are as submissive, obedient, and are able to keep what happens in the family—a private space—to themselves as women of some decades ago used to do. Some respondents in this study alleged that women of today are completely different from their colleagues in past generations. Accordingly, women of today can hardly keep 'little' family secrets such as violence; a quality which used to be celebrated as part of credible married femininity. For instance, Aaron framed the current generation of women as a generation of declined moral order which is misleading women to construe that the behavior of husbands should be treated as cases of ordinary 'diezoore'. Dakurah clarifies that *"those days, women were generally very submissive, respectful and very loyal to their husbands. Nowadays, women are mostly the rebellion type. They are the direct opposite. Afterwards gender equality"*. In a separate group discussion, Seth's comments agree with Dakurah. He argues that *"now*

modernization has made the woman to be different. They are not the women we used to know. They're misled by this thing of gender equality. If a man tries to control her as it used to be in the days of old, the woman might not agree and hence violence erupts in the family". To these participants, controlling a wife is a normal function of every relationship in the days of their fathers. The acceptance of 'controlling behavior' as non-violence practice encourages some respondents to believe that society is experiencing moral panic which is birthed by the discourse of gender equality. This feeling of moral panic is clarified in the narratives of Aaron who opines that *"things are getting out of hand."* Due to the discourse of gender equality brought by modernization, some women are refusing to be women enough by demonstrating little competence in concealing the least pains. This is what Aaron draws attention to, *"...what is not happening today, things are getting out of hand. The little thing, the woman wants everybody to know that she is going through hell. Her husband is maltreating her. Everything is being seen as violence today. We are losing our cultural values and norms"*. Arguably, gender equality is causing moral panic that generates feelings that cultural norms and values are disappearing and contemporary women are becoming unwifely enough in the traditional sense. We see some degree of tension and conflict in participants' imagination of discourses of gender equality and men's losing their grips of traditional notions of being men. The feeling of moral panic, or social disorder has been centrally foregrounded in the work of Kopano Ratele on *Liberating Masculinities*. Ratele (2016) argues that the traditionally hegemonic patterning of real masculinity has consistently proved to be unsustainable and elusive hence men are tempted to evaluate their masculinity mostly within the context of crisis. Inability to control a wife is a serious insult on the masculine image and self-worth of men as contained in the narratives above. This creates a potent ground for some men to scapegoat women and feminism.

Interestingly, some of the narratives contained in these excerpts expressed negative and condemning attitudes about violence as unacceptable. Some respondents framed their thoughts on violence around questions of hatred. To enact acts of violence on another person is to express hatred for that person described by Augustine as, *"putting what you don't like in the pockets of others"*. Importantly, we notice the lasting repercussions and damage of acts of violence on the victim which some respondents acknowledged. The emotional scars on the victims are undeletable. We equally see expression of pains and

trauma implicit in the narrations of some respondents. We see this pain and trauma experienced by Vii who witnessed his father violently abused his mother illustrated that, *“you the child will feel the pains your mother is going through but you can’t do otherwise”*.

John shared similar trauma and pains that he and his mother had to undergo when his father was a drunk and violent. He describes acts of violence as unacceptable. He added, *“I remember those bad days when my dad was very violent, physically and psychologically. My dad was a real bully. He abused everybody in the family, especially my mother. My mother was going down every blessed day. He drinks “pito” a lot and caused problems for everybody. He beats my mother almost every day. One day, I ambushed him in the night and dealt with him while he was returning from his drinking expedition”*.

In a previous discussion on the processes and shapes of regulating wifehood, Amatus made a very strong argument to support the deep acceptability and excusability of acts of violence against wives which were framed as *“teaching wives useful lessons”*. The same participant now defines violence as unacceptable illustrated by, *“but as a man, you only need to put fears in her. Violence is not good you know”*. In this case, Amatus is trying to minimize his role and image as a perpetrator, although he did not identify himself as such. By expressing his thoughts here on violence as unacceptable, he simultaneously distances himself from the image of a perpetrator, thus dismissing violence as bad. Rather than violence, he prefers to just instil fear in his wife as important warning signs to control and correct his wife’s behaviour. Accordingly, the process of instilling fears in a wife is readily expressed and dismissed as unimportant event, non-violence, and not hurtful. Instilling fears endorses other participants’ framing of ‘controlling behavior’ as normalized practices of ‘diezoore’ which are inevitable.

One theoretical contribution of my findings is challenging earlier theorizations and assumptions on domestic violence as a dichotomized phenomenon between men, masculinity and violence on one hand, and women, femininity, and passivity on another (Hearn and Whitehead, 2006: 41). From the narratives, respondents constructed domestic violence as a conflict and confrontation, infringement on the rights of people which involves both the man and woman. It is not solely done by men, but men engage in violence with their wives. But the complication about such theorization among the majority of respondents is that it masks or clouds efforts aim at identifying, naming, and addressing acts

of violence more rapidly and comprehensively. To talk about violence is to talk about both men and women because barely do men mention in any part of their responses that their fathers solely abused their mothers, described as “tug-of-war”. One party does not engage in a “tug-of-war”. So, to call men the violent subjects and women as solely victimized in the case of this study is perhaps erroneous. What we must note considering the discussions among participants is that men are only able to overpower women in the process of fighting, drawing on their already privileged position over *“less powerful other cannot retaliate unlike man to man”*.

What we also need to be careful with are the implications of such assertions among the majority of respondents. These assertions and assumptions can be problematic as they deproblematize the discursive interconnectedness of violence and masculinity. They leave untouched how the majority of men in this study seek to suggest mastery and controlling of their immediate environments as men, sometimes through unfair use and abuse of gendered power. To position both men and women as violent subjects is to suggest that men’s violence is not any serious issue because women are part of it. This is central in the assertion of Hearn and McKie (2010: 140) when they argue that “men are supposed to know when and where and to whom they may be violent”.

So far, I have tried to map out how different respondents shared remarkable instances of domestic violence some of which they personally witnessed, experienced or heard about. Most of these narratives draw on cultural prototypes, language and power to discipline others to define and illustrate violence in different communities. Even across communities, there is a common description and understanding on how intimate violence is enacted as part of the broader spectrum of cultural narratives on the relationship between men and women. These cultural narratives produced a context in which complex definitions and identifications of violence are constrained, over-simplified and normalized. For the majority of participants, domestic violence is largely tied to the use of physical force against a partner, but others also acknowledge violence ‘as putting something which one does not like into the pockets of another’. For former camp of respondents, violence is about beating one’s wife or wife beating her husband of which the latter was rarely reported under few circumstances. For the other camp of respondents, domestic violence can assume a range of forms and dimensions and not only limited to physical assaults.

Throughout the discussions so far, it is important to note how respondents expressed a sense of shared belief in the idealization, deep tolerance, and interpretation of acts of violence in a normalized patriarchal context. Violence is a normalized practice common in every dynamic relationship. While respondents who stressed strong acceptability of violence situated their normalization in rich language of discipline (often confining it to acceptable masculine identity), the dynamics, contestations, and limits of the acceptability of violence among other respondents are worthy of attention.

Despite this body of evidence, the contestations become nuanced when other participants expressed the views that real men should not be motivated to abuse their wives no matter how enticing the circumstance may be. This is what Dakurah is saying, *"No matter the circumstance...how compelling it is once you raise your hand or use a physical object to hit/beat your wife, then you are unmasculine"*. For such men, they are of the opinion that real men use their brains and not their physique. That is, real men think, act slowly and patiently.

Putting the discussions together and irrespective of participants' background, there is a common understanding of specific circumstances in which the use of violence is perceived to be culturally justified thus taking the image of good and corrective beating. However, it is important to recognise that under various circumstances, different participants would challenge what constitute good beating and what does not. So, as a matter of clarity and for the purposes of qualitative nuances, we must set the boundaries between good beatings versus bad beating clear. This merit asking the question, what qualifies as 'good beating'? And what is 'bad beating' which is the opposite? This is the major burden of the next theme.

Violence as discipline—corrective violence

'Corrective' or 'non-problematic' domestic violence was conceptualized as violence which are generally perceived to be reasonable, acceptable and socially endorsed. These sorts of violence are part of the cultural facts and narratives which everybody knows in a community. In the perspectives of respondents, such violence serves as crucial measures in correcting wives and children who go astray—deviating from the generally acceptable norms. Such violence was theorized to be a corrective and effective measure in a context in which they produce lessons. Abu describes the reasonableness of such violence saying, *"if I beat*

her, she will learn her lessons and not repeat that next time". Intimate violence thus becomes good beating when it serves an important purpose which is capable of preventing future occurrence. Amatus frames domestic violence as a preventive and communicative tool which is more appropriate in certain circumstances. He adds that "some women only understand the language of violence. When you beat them, they will not repeat what they do".

According to some participants, occasional domestic violence is a "necessary evil" and a forgivable sin in every relationship and men who really aspire to be recognised as proper yirdandoo need to see this type of violence as importantly masculine. However, such violence needs to be enacted with caution in order that one does not exceed the reasonability and signification of its use. It is important to the majority of men in this study because as part of their masculinity, men have an image to protect. Since the ability to discipline is a critical function of good parenting (because husbands assume the position of fathers of their wives after paying the bride price), violent discipline was theorized as an acceptable and normalized practice. Acts such as moderate and lesser beating, caning, and even shouting at a wife were perceived to be necessary and corrective. Badu relates such violence to this scenario: *"when you go astray as a child, your father will deny you food for the whole night or even punish you. You sleep on empty stomach. The next day, you will not like to even go close to what made him deny you food. You're afraid that when you repeat the same thing, worst things can happen to you. The same thing went for women. You know women, they are grown up children. Sometimes, such violences are necessary".* And for Dakurah, when a woman is going astray, a man has the duty to correct her, *"a woman is like a child and traditionally a man is allowed to use a small cane to whip her as a form of correction. This should not be beyond the point of correction".* But Andy disagrees with this, *"To use a cane on your wife "paa" and say that it is corrective violence, I will not buy that idea. See, you can correct her without necessarily using a cane. I like your statement that women are like children. You can talk to your child to know that what he/she has done is wrong without using a cane. When I was growing up as a child, whenever my mother went wrong, my father would refuse her certain important things such as food, 'chop money' and other basic necessities which she needed. He never used physical violence. Even in his*

moment of silence, you are able to know whether he is happy with your behaviour or not. This really worked for him”.

Arguably, it is for a woman’s own good that is why she has been beaten or denied food, just like a misbehaving child who has to be called to order by his father through acts of discipline. By this, there is always a good reason for violent discipline against a wife who is going astray. The arguments have been that, parents punish their children through corrective beatings and other legitimate means because the former loves the latter and would not be happy to see children develop bad habits. In a similar vein, and considering that women were referenced as grown up children throughout the interviews, it is appropriate that husbands take special interest in correcting their wives from going wayward. Going wayward has its own set of implications on the masculine image of men as husbands. Overwhelmingly, the language “discipline” (*wuli nee yeng*) was commonly used among participants to differentiate between corrective domestic violence and excessive/unacceptable domestic violence. The language of discipline is a moral and masculine ideal which men are supposed to embody as part of their credible masculinity. To be able to instill and ensure that wives (who were predominantly likened to children) comply with the cultural order is to appear to be a real man. To this extent, corrective violence rooted in the language of discipline is a critical and necessary parenting function.

In most cases, men’s narratives suggest that some corrective violences occur when men want to demonstrate what they have been trained to exhibit as credibly masculine are constrained. Such constraints emanate from multiple sources. They could emanate from wives serving as stumbling blocks in men’s efforts to represent credible masculinity. According to Dong, *“violence becomes corrective when your wife will not allow you function as a proper man. Whenever you want to function as a man among men, a stubborn woman will like to prevent you from doing that. So, if I want to do what society defines me to represent and you stand on my way to prevent me from accomplishing that, I will deal with you and that is acceptable. That is not extreme violence”.* Dong further volunteered to share how he inadvertently slapped his wife who wanted to prevent him from performing his functions as a proper man. He narrated,

“I don’t really know what happened, but I still remember last two years ago, I slapped my wife. I didn’t really know that I slapped her. You know I don’t like using violence. My younger

brother who is in the university came to me during vacation. As man of the house, I needed to give him his school fees and pocket money. I don't expect my aged father to be paying my younger brother's school fees when I am able and capable. My wife said she wouldn't understand why I wanted to waste the family resources on him. Can you imagine that? Who is she to determine what is a waste in my own house? Where does she get that audacity from? What annoyed me is that she went into our bedroom, picked my cheque book and hid it just to make sure that I don't do what she was against. That which is traditionally required of me as a man. When I asked her to return the cheque book, she told me she did not pick it. I did not spare her that day. I gave it to her very well. I beat her because she was going beyond the acceptable boundary. When I gave her some slaps, she cried, went and brought me the cheque book. This was a corrective violence. Later, I felt sorry and I apologised".

The general bodily language displayed among other discussants was nothing than an agreement. This was manifestly evidenced in how discussants laughed loudly and nodded their heads in generally agreeing to Dong's reaction and behaviour in that incident as appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Jonas further stressed the actions of Dong, saying, *"you did well. You really demonstrated what an ideal man supposed to do. You were the man of the house. Next time, she would not repeat it"*.

From the narrative, we see the shift from taking on the image of a perpetrator to attributing the occurrence of intimate violence on the insolent behaviour of his wife. The narrative clearly places Dong as blameless while suggesting that the woman is supposed to be corrected because she acted or failed to comply with cultural codes policing the representations of good wifehood (Ridgeway, 2007: 315). Enacting such violence is appropriate and culturally justified since a wife is supposed to know which button to press on at a specific time, resistance of which produces justified and corrective violence (Anderson, 2009: 1447).

What should be of key interest to us is how Dong's feeling of credible manhood is interconnected to his violence. He equates his masculinity to a bigger cultural narrative which requires him (as the man of the house) to demonstrate ability to fiscally support his relatives. We see Dong's theorization of his masculinity as a cultural duty which is dawning on him. In light of this cultural duty, he sees it his responsibility and not the duty of his already aged father to be performing what he should ideally be doing. This supports earlier argument among participants which point to the masculinization of boys as a form of social investment for parents. This cultural obligation he illustrates in the statement, *"I don't expect my aged father to be paying my younger brother's school fees when I am able and*

capable". Dong places the actions of his wife to the extreme end of the gendered expectations which invited him to correct her. The general response from other discussants points to the existence of a cultural narrative in which Dong's actions are perceived to be justified and ideal. Largely, we see the interconnectedness of being a man and ability to enact credible violence. Enacting violence is actually doing gender in his position as the head of the house. It is not only doing gender; it is about effecting gendered behaviours in a subtle manner. By demonstrating his ability to enact good beating at that crucial moment (which was endorsed as the ideal behaviour at that time), he is attempting to maintain his masculinity. Consequently, he reinforces the subordination and submissiveness of his wife who obliged to bring the cheque book after she has been taught useful lessons.

By sharing his own experience, Dong locates his violent actions as moderate and lesser violence which was contrasted with extreme violence. For him, extreme violence is bad but lesser violence is a normal sin in a circumstance that characterizes the behaviour of a stubborn wife. He perpetrated violence because the situation made violence unavoidable. But he places his actions in the context of isolated violence, too. We see his normalization and excusability of his own violence as normal male behaviour in a patrilineal society. This is further buttressed by the general endorsement that such violence received from other discussants in the group. It was not only Dong who could not have avoided the tendency to use corrective beating, but other men readily imagined it as the best option in a situation in which a wife stands against the progress of her husband. It is reasonable to estimate, based on the reactions from other discussants that good beating is sort of commonplace practice and every responsible wife knows that pressing on specific buttons generates violence which she must take in good faith. Other respondents argue that some women understand the language of violence better than words of mouth. *"Sometimes, violence is the language women understand. Women who are (stubborn) need to accept and keep silent about the maltreatments that their husbees give them"* (Sam, IDI).

Adding to the marked differences in men's understandings of domestic violence, their accounts on the sensitivity, frequency, severity, and acceptability of violence also vary quite remarkably. Largely, the majority of respondents engaged in relativisation and general disidentification with domestic violence. For instance, throughout the interview, Sam's narratives contained cases of violence but he does not describe them as serious violence

and therefore bad to attract much attention. In fact, his violence is not part of the chronic violence that many women face on daily basis. He argues, *“In this community, some men find meanings in using violence but I don’t. I use violence strategically. When you want to take away my rights...if you forcefully want to deny me access to what belongs to me, I have to defend it at all cost. This good and progressive violence you know”*. Sam and other respondents describe their violence as non-serious, gentle, moderate, and occasional. Since men within this category generally want to paint themselves as good and largely non-violent, their narratives suggest that they are not qualified to be called domestic violence perpetrators. *“If you make a mistake and laid your hands on your wife...you later apologise. That is fine to me. It becomes worrying when you make it your habit in beating your wife all the time. That is unacceptable”* (field note). They only occasionally and infrequently use acts of violence which should not be deserving of critical mention compared to those violences which are chronic and occur on daily basis (Anderson and Umberson, 2001; Mullaney, 2007: 204). As such, such participants often attempt to compare and normalize the occurrence of such occasional violence with more common and severe forms of violence. By making such comparison, such men are able to limit responsibility and diminish their actions as less serious.

When a woman knows the type of button to press on at specific times and space, but refuses to heed to this, she deserves to be beaten to remind her that next time, she does not press the wrong button again. For context, an unmarried woman has the right to visit friends and other extended family members both near and far without needing to ask for permission before, but upon marriage, this right is taken away under the new guardianship of her husband. She now needs the explicit permission of her husband before she can embark on any visitation, violation of which invites corrective violence. Without asking for permission prior to travelling (pressing on the wrong button), a husband has the patriarchal entitlement to discipline such a wife to bring her back in line with the norms of femininity which require good wives to be dependent on the authority of husbands. Abu throws more light on this,

“It is traditionally appropriate for a wife to seek for approval or permission from her husband before she can vacate the house to visit anybody. Violence becomes acceptable when a woman refuses to ask for that permission before embarking on a journey. Even if this involves seeing or visiting her natal family. When she does that, it means that she does not

respect her husband. The man is the head of the family and in case there is any problem in connection with her visitation, it is the husband who will shoulder that problem. So it is important that she gets permission from the man before. Without this, it is acceptable to correct her through violence”.

From Abu’s narration, we see a shared cultural knowledge which locates husbands as paternalistic guardians of their wives and this guardianship gives men the privilege to control and regulate the movement of their wives. To know this and not complying with it as a wife suggests an insolent behaviour (“*by refusing to ask for permission*”) toward the man. What is important is that this narrative place the acceptability of violence on the insolence of a wife while leaving the violent man blameless. That is, the beating has emanated from the wife’s failure to comply with cultural narratives and gendered expectations on good wifehood. It appears that these cultural narratives have gained wide purchase and naturalized in the context of this study because respondents argued that people expect a husband to know the whereabouts of his wife and in case of any danger, he should be ready to provide appropriate answers on that. Domestic violence as a normalized practice looms clear in this context in which a husband is supposed to monitor, control and perhaps order the movement of his wife.

Men accounting for their violence

Men commit varying acts of violence, but the majority of men in this study are not ready to shoulder the blame for the same acts of violence they caused. The majority of participants expressed the opinion that their violence was influenced by something else and not they themselves. For instance, frustrations, depression, quick temperament, stress, poverty, feelings of inadequately, alcohol use among others were commonly cited as dominant causes of men’s acts of violence against their wives. Such constraints arise when economic realities do not allow men to function in their capacity as ‘men’. When men are constrained from acting as sufficiently manly, it is estimated that acts of violence, controlling behaviours, and domineering acts become the closest substitutes. This is certainly what Sam draws out attention to in the following comment;

I think the major things are poverty and unemployment... Poverty is just wicked...it does not know that we men need to impress society. The root cause of most marital conflicts is that thing...poverty. You are supposed to function as a man and you don’t have the means to do that... A hungry man is an angry man. That thing call poverty

provokes everything. The last time, I don't remember what my wife did but I know she hurts me and a beat her small.

Abu provides further nuances to this,

My brother, you see, it is not our fault. It is never ours. When you're under pressure to perform that thing, which makes you a man, you don't know how, you may explode in some circumstances especially when your wife is the nagging woman. All your mates are performing fairly well in life and you are just struggling to match up...Gosh, you feel like you are not part of the system... Immediately frustrations set in, you begin to see violence as legitimate. The least mistake your wife makes, you think she is responsible for your troubles. Frustration is an enemy... It is wicked. Poverty is common over here. You look right, you look left, and you see that poverty is there. So, I returned home and my wife asked me what I brought for the family. I didn't bring anything. Then she said something which I could not hear but it sounded like she insulted me. So, I gave her a small knock on the head and she cried.

Significantly, what emerges as a dominant narrative surrounding the acceptability of domestic violence pivoted around engaging in a usual politics of blame game and superficial accusations as well as a sense of rationalization? It emerged those men who knew that their behaviours were actually violence attempt to rationalize and exonerate their violent behaviors drawing on a range of discourses. What should be of interest here is how such discourses somehow motivate men to rationalize their violent actions. In most of the cases, we clearly see that the feeling of failed masculinity is central in expressing and use of violence in the pretense of superficial excuses.

These two scenarios demonstrate some specific pathways that led to them beating their wives. Both acknowledge that they have effected some actions; "*I beat her small*" and "*I gave her a small knock on the head and she cried*". We see the interconnectedness of frustration, poverty, anger, masculinity and domestic violence. The integration of these forces produces a cultural acceptance of domestic violence as a normal masculine behaviour. Both scenarios suggest that these men's image as men were insulted and they needed to react and by reacting, acts of violence became necessary and justified. At the same time, we see that both narrators distance themselves from their own violent behaviors. They were not only affected by issues of unemployment, poverty, and frustration rooted in their inability to function properly as heads of the family, they enacted lesser and perhaps negligible violence characterized as "*small knock on the head and small beating*". Because such actions were not perceived to be anything too serious, these men described

and labelled their actions within the confines of normal male masculine behavioural prototype.

Although the above evidence is consistent with other studies (e.g., Wilkinson, 2003; Fagan, 1993; Greenfield and co, 1998; Leonard, 1999), it is important to go beyond these usual narratives. When the cards of blame game are played out, violent men appear to be right and should be sympathised with since technically they didn't and could not control the situation leading to they acting violently. Such men appear to minimize their agency. But I want to believe that no matter the circumstance, the feelings, and pains that men allegedly face on a daily basis some of which lead to acts of violence, violence is generative, purposeful, well-calculated, and specific irrespective of the context in which its' occurrence takes place. Acts of violence have well-calculated aims and violence is enacted because it is perceived to be capable of maintaining symbolic boundaries and understandings of dominance and authority in a hetero-patriarchal social system. In the narratives presented above, domestic violence is not just an uncontrolled behavior, but a strategic and well-calculated means of gaining authority and control over the bodies of women—reinforcing the patriarchal subordination of women. According to dominant theorists such as Mullaney (2007: 239), Anderson (2009) and Hearn (1998b), domestic violence occurs because it is important in silencing, punishing, and correcting women who fail to abide by the scripts of good wifehood.

Despite the existence of a shared understanding and acceptability of some forms of violence as justified and unavoidable, such views were not uncontested. Vii shares a very interesting experience,

I don't like violence against my wife. It is not good. The last time I beat her, she was not right but I was not right too. I realised it was wrong for me to have done that. So I got up and apologised to my wife. I felt sorry for my action. Most violence cases are triggered by the women but men act. I have been telling my friends that I need to take responsibility for my own actions. I tell them to stop violence. Violence does not help".

From this excerpt, we see a sharp switch of the position of Vii from a violent perpetrator to a non-violent peer educator and broadcaster. His narrative somehow differs significantly from the dominant cultural narratives that have been displayed by the majority of respondents who rarely express any sense of regret for their violent behaviors. Like Vii,

many respondents did not see their actions as domestic violence, but as an expression of a normal masculine prototype which requires a man to correct his wife whenever she deviates from the general norms. Vii extends beyond the dominant narratives by locating his actions as violence and further introduces a gender element into his theorization (“*most violence cases are triggered by the women but men act*”) (see Scully, 2010). Vii’s comments are in total condemnation of violence, “*I don’t like violence against my wife. It is not good*” and he further encourages other men to be responsible for their own violent actions. Although Vii did not explain what necessitated his cessation from the position of a violent man to a non-violent other, such narratives are not common in this thesis. What looks encouraging and different from the dominant narratives among the majority of men in this study is Vii’s argument that “*you don’t use wrong to pay wrong or two wrongs do not make a single correct*”.

Overall, domestic violence was reported to be ‘good beating’ and acceptable as long as such violence does not result in maiming, physical injuries, and losing of victim’s life. As much as acts of violence remain at the level of correction, it is not a very big sin worthy of large-scale condemnation, but a legitimate sin which is necessitated by the situation. For participants, such violence is legitimate because not even the least violent man can resist the temptation to act violently.

Extreme or unacceptable violence

Despite the generally tolerated nature of violence as demonstrated above, it is important to note some moments of contestations, tension, and contradictions. However, some respondents are deeply careful on how to delineate between the exact boundaries of acceptable violence and unacceptable violence. Various caveats were offered around the frequency, severity, and the necessity to exert violence against wives. Some participants were emphatic and sensitive to situations in which the violent discipline is not proportional to the nature of the perceived gender norms transgression, such violences are wrong and undeserved. For instance, Vii in one of the group discussions reminded the interviewer to document well their narratives, especially on the acceptability or unacceptability of domestic violence. He added,

“You see, what counts as violence depends on the context in which you find yourself. In one context, the use of violence could be appropriate and acceptable, in another, it is may not. I

want you to write this well. Don't go and write that we said violence is acceptable all the time. No, that is not what we are saying. Some violences are unacceptable and must be condemned. Unnecessarily abusing your partner without any just cause is unacceptable. Some of you researchers will go and write the wrong thing". Jonas agrees and added that "you don't get up on the basis of a single wrong doing by your wife and pound on her. It is wrong to beat your wife at the least provocation. When she continuously trespasses the appropriate boundary, then you need to put your feet down and act like a man. You are the man of the house".

In contrast to corrective violence is what respondents conceptualized as excessive, dangerous violence. To be conceptualized as excessive or dangerous violence means that such violences are largely injurious, unacceptable, unfair, life threatening and can occur in the home or in the public. Unequivocally, such violences were understood as physical violence that either a husband uses against his wife or a wife using it against her husband largely based on unequal power relations. One main difference between the two categories of violence is that non-problematic violence is premised on correcting while unacceptable violence capitalizes on an unequal power relation between the genders in the home. According to Dong, "there are some acts of violence which society itself condemns. Such violence is unwarranted and unacceptable. The extreme forms of violence. So, we have violence which are corrective and violence which are wrong". Jonas added that, "domestic violence is not acceptable especially those that are too harsh and devastating". While agreeing with the above views, Vii narrated how he witnessed a man brutally assaulted his wife which in his view was unacceptable, "so, there is a disagreement between this man and his wife. I don't know what happened and this man slapped the wife and she fainted. That was terrible. The slap was heavy and that rendered her rolling on the ground. They were bruises and blood oozing out from the woman's ears. You see that this was not corrective...it was unacceptable". According to Dakurah, "violence becomes unacceptable when the victim is injured. You beat your wife to the extent that you parallelized her. This is unacceptable". While agreeing to the argument that some violences are in actual sense necessary evil, Dakurah bemoans that "too much use of violence is also bad. You know, too much of everything, they say is bad". The arbitrary use of force, authority and power over the dignity of others without any concrete reasons is qualified as bad beating hence must be condemned. In other words, acts of violence whose effect far exceeds the magnitude of the crime is unacceptable, unjustified, and therefore constitutes bad beating.

Vii expressed the view that marriage should be seen as a useful partnership in which *“the left hand washes the right hand and vice versa”*. To him, allowing one’s wife to be overburdened with work in the domestic arena which may result in her inability to perform her feminine roles is in itself violence and unacceptable. Domestic violence becomes unacceptable when a man refuses to assist his wife who is burdened with work in the home. Simo argues that *“when your wife returns from farm very late and she is unable to cook food for you in good time and you begin to abuse her, it is wrong. If you were to assist her, she would have cooked early enough*. While expressing similar position, Oper went further to argue that,

“You see; men have their duties different from women. That we all know, but don’t allow your wife to be over-burden while you’re free. You are busy drinking while she is suffering in the kitchen that is not fair. Over here, it is known that the woman belongs to the kitchen. But when you notice that she is over-burdened with work, nothing prevents you from offering a helping hand. That lessens her load of work. When you the man sits down and waits for the woman to do all the many tasks and still cooks, the food might be served late. They children may and up sleeping without eating. When you beat her in this case, you’re just not right...you’re just wicked. That is punishment and undeserved beating”.

Abu: *“yes, yes, yes...That I agree with you. Sometimes, we men need to assist our wives, especially when the children are still small”*.

Chapter conclusion

Since both men and women are aware of the social importance of appearing and performing adequately, norms, qualities, and behaviors expected of them, at least from the transcript narratives, the use of domestic violence in specific circumstances and at specific times is justifiably accepted as “discipline” and not “abuse”. Men are aware that they need to draw on credible threats to their own status in order to save face and gain social validation as sufficiently masculine. But men need to be careful and diligent as and when to use acts of violence in order to qualify as acceptable. And for women who would not want to be beaten (those who want to be recognized as *pogmenga*), they must “self-police” themselves, appear and perform qualities perceived to be wifely (Anderson, 2009: 1447). Otherwise, a man, traditionally, has the patriarchal prerogative to enforce wives’ compliance and accountability through acts of violence and other controlling behaviors which are expressions of hegemonic masculine ideals, in which such women are classified as *pogefaa*.

Although men in this study appear to be knowledgeable, shared a range of stories around violence and are aware that some of their behaviours may be violence against their wives, they did not define and qualify their actions as such. That is, even when men's narratives highlight violence, they do not identify themselves as 'dɔɔ nimiteerong', 'dɔɔ potuosoba', 'dɔɔ-faa' ("perpetrators"). Rather, the blame game is always invoked to explain the necessity of their violence with the majority of men framing the occurrence of their violence as triggered by women. *"So, when I see a man and his wife fighting, it is largely the fault of the woman. Men don't beat their wives on empty grounds. There is always a reason. So, for me, it becomes okay to correct a nagging or disobedient woman"* (Amatus, IDI). The majority of participants engage in what dominant feminist theorists (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Cavanagh et al., 2001) described as the "minimisation tactics" in which violence perpetrators attempt to shield their reputation from being described as women's batterers. We see the difficulty that looms in men's accepting the identity of violence perpetrators.

Various narratives of different respondents suggest how violence occurs in deeply masked power relations in different contexts and this subsequently gives rise to how the definitions and qualifications of certain forms of behaviours, acts and conducts come to be perceived as problematic. The process of defining and labeling the boundaries of corrective and unacceptable violence is problematic as it seeks to normalize and naturalize the social belief that specific forms of violence are generally acceptable and others as not. To qualify as a corrective or unacceptable form of violence largely depends on whose image is at stake in a particular situation and how proportional the actions are in relations to the crime. This means that domestic violence is profoundly problematic and the specificities of violence actually depend on the social context (Stanko, 2003: 3). In short, what respondents' narratives appear to suggest is that the process of defining, qualifying, and labeling violence as either corrective or unacceptable is significantly a "social, not a natural, process" (Hearn, 1996: 29).

But we need to read men's narratives with caution—we should as well take good note of the contestations. Depending on the social context and the urgency of the call to act violently, one's ability to resist from violence as an appropriate and legitimate response to cases of contempt of masculinity is rather masculine. In other words, depending on the situation and one's resistance from retaliating or correcting gender transgression with violence is actually

emphasized as proper masculinity. Abdul thinks that violence is embarrassing especially in a technologically driven economy, *“when you are fighting your wife, you see people gather to take video and start circulating it on ‘WhatsApp’.* *What do you think you are? You are just a fool and source of entertainment. That is why men being the landlords need to always control and manage their anger and emotions. Whatever you do has implications on your status as a man”.* This is a useful insight which motivates some men’s resistance to draw on the efficacy of intimate violence in resolving disagreements in their families. From this, we see that violence affects the identity and image of the relationship. It exposes the couples to public knowledge as violent people and this can seriously jeopardize the relationship.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Chapter 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Focus group discussions and interviews with men across six rural communities in Ghana's Upper West Region have revealed that large-scale cultural norms and ideologies on femininity and masculinity were relatively similar to what dominant masculinity writers have been grappling with in a very wide range of contexts. In this study, I am interested in unpacking men's everyday talks and discourses around the meanings domestic violence in relation to their sense of being men in a deep-seated context of patriarchy. By this, I sought to map out the complex intersections of modern discourses on gender and men's tendency to be accepting of violence. My engagement with these discourses revealed the enmeshment of domestic violence in specific organizing ideologies, including patriarchy, marriage, and other pervasive structures of power. The meanings and interpretations of these complex structures demand critical reflection and theorization on men's own engagement and negotiation of the complexity, confusion, and meanings of being proper men in contemporary Ghanaian society. Within the overarching aims of the thesis, I wanted to engage with how men themselves define 'domestic violence' and how they are working and negotiating with the meanings of domestic violence in their representation of masculinities. How do men's own understandings and knowledge of 'domestic violence' add to feminists and policy framing of domestic violence? How do men's own knowledge on the meanings of masculinity and femininity influence their tolerance of domestic violence against wives?

This chapter draws together the central theoretical arguments of the previous analytical chapters in order to discuss how my own research speaks to contemporary research on masculinities, which simultaneously stresses the importance of recognizing gender processes as fluid, variable, and subtle and the (less subtle) question of understanding links between violence and masculinity-formation. In trying to integrate the various chapters forming the core arguments of this thesis, I seek to reflect on how findings answer the overarching research questions and how my respondents' reflections corroborate and interact with arguments derived from previous scholarship. My overall aim remains the elucidation of a life-long dialogue between the project of masculinity and men's varied understandings of, and attitudes towards, domestic violence against their wives, a topic that

has not been taken up seriously among many scholars in Ghana. One of the dominant contextual arguments in this thesis is that marriage as a patriarchal template creates a politically potent zone for the enactment of multiple behaviors and expectations which re-entrench the patriarchal gender order.

Engaging with dominant arguments in the literature

My analyses of dominant arguments among men in this study do contribute to a set of globally well-established ideas and theorizations linking domestic violence, masculinity and systems of patriarchy through revealing astonishing similarities despite contexts. As I have detailed in Chapter 2, many dominant African-based theorists have grappled with a wide range of constructions and theorizations on knowledges of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and gender-based violence (e.g., Ratele, 2007; Ampofo and Boateng, 2007; Morrell, 2001; Bennett, 2017). The vibrancy and multi-disciplinarity of African-based research in the field of gender has been accurately articulated by Bennett (2017: 2), who argues that “within the twenty-first century, there is a very rich array of African-based intellectual engagements with the dynamics of gender in diverse contexts and a vibrant, even occasionally ferocious, networks of debates”. Specifically, scholars such as Tamale and Bennett (2011) have critically engaged with discourses on gender identity, especially sexuality and the operationalization of law in post-colonial context. Other scholars have also engaged with the politics of heteronormativity, the battle of nationalism, HIV/AIDS, policy change and popular discourses on gender (e.g., Posel, 2011; Epprecht, 2010). From these studies, the battle between nationalism and gender identity has been problematized, especially in post independent Africa through multiple lenses of theorization. Bennett (2017) points out that discussions on the imperatives of revolutionizing gendered norms within the academic landscape of the continent have not always been given the needed attention. She argues that, despite the possibility of some institutional resistance and intellectual rejection, we ought to take gender more seriously beyond and above the politics of ‘tokenization’ and ‘fashionalization’. While the value of these studies cannot easily be ignored considering the complexities of debates, I endeavor to present my own engagement and theorization on men’s discursive constructions of masculinity and domestic violence in the context of rural north-western Ghana. I am interested in engaging with the talks and discourses that these rural men deploy in their representations of masculinity and how such discourses and talks

connect to the possibility of domestic violence. As I listened to these men reflect on their everyday negotiation of dominant talks and discourses, I was interested in areas of commonality and divergence in multiple perspectives and what these multiple perspectives portend for post-colonial discussion on questions of gender, masculinity, femininity, and gender-based violence. My own research suggests among others the following: (1) the revelation of 'marriage' as a difficult zone through which to negotiate masculinity; (2) the importance of the division between 'public' and 'private' space for men's homosocial status; (3) the power of anger and shame in driving husbands to protect their 'masculinity' from the threat posed by wives' seeming insubordination. These salient findings despite radically different contexts, they complement and support the theoretical work of other scholarship as detailed in Chapter 2. I should also add that the arguments contained in men's narratives have added some new values and nuances to the existing body of literature.

'Women of today are spoiled': Engaging with the discourse of time

This theme revealed enormous tensions and men's overwhelming confusion when the discourse of time was called upon. Men drew on the discourse of time to label the behaviors of contemporary women as 'stubborn', 'unacceptable', and 'disrespectful'. In listening to my respondents, time was a vital discourse in their theorization of the meanings of domestic violence. The 'then' and 'now' women were always in conflict. This discourse has been richly articulated in the previous analytical chapters when men's feeling of nostalgia was always invoked. Men in this study consistently used this discourse in their negotiation of masculinity and the meanings of violence in contemporary era. While revealing some form of nostalgia in men, I would argue that it is not just enough to rehearse these feelings, but that we need to unpack their narratives beyond simplistic feelings of nostalgia of the 'then'. In fact, we cannot discuss meaningfully such feelings of the past without factoring in men's feelings of the tensions and confusion that they need to negotiate in the periodization of 'now'. Their narratives are powerfully embedded in illuminative ways, their own struggles and confusion of maintaining traditionally gendered notions of masculinity and femininity. We see the contestation of knowledge and discourse about ideas and meanings of domestic violence over time. This is what Foucault's (1972) theorizes when he argues that "social meanings are continuously negotiated and contested through language and discourse" over time and space. The changing nature of time and the internationalization of gender

discourses means that men take and/or rethink gender seriously because the hegemony that men used to enjoy is being contested by women by the day. What should be of interest to us here is the value that men always attach to the 'then' compared to 'now'. This revealed powerful nuances to suggest that the advent of modernity has largely thwarted certain behaviors which were considered non-violence. Most men lamented women of today are the very opposite of their folks in the olden days who could comfortably contain specific actions from a husband without complaining to any external audience, not even to her natal parents. The statement that 'everything these days is seen as domestic violence' was a significant component of men's articulation and comparison of the 'then' and 'now' discourse. Men argued that the 'then' is far better than 'now' simply because of escalating rates of poverty which is rendering many men mere figure heads, complex theorizations of domestic violence both in the quarters of feminism and policy documents which invalidate certain masculine behaviors. By this, we see the conflict between traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity versus modern gender discourses. None of the men in this study could argue in favor that contemporary discourses on gender were better than the past generations. Due to this, men always frame their actions and behaviors as something that women should take responsibility for. If domestic violence occurs between a man and his wife, it means that a woman and wife has faulted in her position and responsibility as a wife towards her husband. This viewpoint was firmly expressed throughout chapter 5.

The changing realities, and in particular contemporary discourses on gender created a zone for men's discursive deployment of metaphors which shield men in a post-colonial state from recognizing their violence against women. The metaphor of loss of respect as a valued feminine quality was mentioned in several parts of men's understandings of gendered norms regulating masculinity and femininity. When wives fail to abide by gendered norms and discourses, men lose their worth of salt as heads of households.

"The good wife" as a tool of masculinity

The discourse of credible wifedom has become an important topic in contemporary conversation in which an understanding of the cultural framing of heterosexual femininity is core. This discourse continues to play central role in shaping the contours of domestic violence against wives. It would probably be safe to argue that the discourse of good wifedom (locally framed as 'pogmenga'), has succeeded in assuming a naturalized and

unquestioned norm. This became overwhelmingly clear as part and parcel of men's narratives in this study. Men in this study have consistently deployed some kind of micro politics to argue that any wife who deviates from the dominant norms and frames of knowledge on credible married wifeness is putatively punished through the use of violence. In other words, through reflexive engagement with respondents' narratives, it is observed that dominant ideas and discourses on good wifeness produce a powerful regulatory framework which volarizes violence as a legitimate means to control the mobility of wives. This is very important in questions in which an understanding of nation-gender battle is central. While constitutionally men and women alike have the legal right and freedom to navigate the realities of life, toxic micro-politics which are pervasive deprive women this right because they have given out their right of mobility in marriage. Based on emerging evidence from this study, I would argue that domestic violence is a critical cultural and political tool that some men use to stigmatize women who do not fit well within normative standards and ideals on credible married wifeness. Thus, violence becomes an important political tool that communicates to other people that the actions, behaviors, attitudes, and appearance of a wife at a specific event are inappropriate and unacceptable hence deserving of correction through violence.

This stigmatization against women who fail to abide by the normative standards and codes of credible married wifeness is reinforced by a politically volatile cultural system in which people always expect specific actions and behaviors in a legitimate relationship between men and women. Such cultural expectations almost always normalize violence against women whenever people vilify the behavior and actions of a woman, and not the man. Consistent with the broader literature on the interconnectedness and interaction of credible femininity and the possibility of violence, evidence from this study converges with the work of Foucault (1984). While drawing on Foucault's ideas, Smart (1996: 47) argues that the prevailing notions of femininity produce normalized discourses in which norms on appropriate qualities on wifeness are internalized and conformity is expected and safeguarded by the threat of violence.

The twenty-first century has witnessed an increasing and positive development of some kind of blurring relationship between the domestic and public arenas in Ghana. This blurring relationship has revealed that both men and women are seeking for meaningful livelihood in

public spaces which is different from the previously clear and automatic split between men as public occupants and women as domestic workers. In contemporary Ghanaian society, more and more women are becoming economically assertive and getting involved in a range of extra-localities, including higher education, businesses, management, politics, the market, rights, and wage careers. The rise of capitalism and feminists' consistent demand for equal share of the public goods between women and men which hitherto excluded the latter from public discourses have been noted in this study to generate enormous discomfort in the circles of men in their imagination of themselves as proper men and husbands. Defining the public space as organized through a gender order which previously excluded women in their position as women is becoming fiercely contestable. But the culminations of these gender dynamics have largely been interpreted as problematic by most men as revealed in the analytical chapters. The new era in which more and more women seek public career and engage in competitive politics and managerial portfolios with male counterparts has also witnessed men's appropriation of the same gains of feminism, thus simultaneously changing the social relations between men and women on one hand, and between men and other men on another. But of course, while many women, especially middle-class women are becoming economically assertive, many others, especially working-class women continue to remain vulnerable and marginalized within the particularities a neo-liberal economy. Most women's lives are still dictated and restricted within very strict neo-liberal and precarious environments, including the home space. Being restricted within the precarities of the home and domesticity where women's lives and livelihood are situated and dictated characterizes the position of a good wife.

One recurring reference which featured significantly in this gender landscape was the place of discourse in the social organization between men and women. One of such discourses was the existence of a huge local industry in which parents (fathers) teach their male children norms of gender and insist that male children abide by their teaching without question. Such teaching further problematizes what Smith (2004) terms as 'ruling relations' in which men always want maximum corporation and respect from their wives. Women in their position as wives and mothers are culturally supposed to mediate and ensure the welfare and positive standing of husbands at many different levels. Throughout the discussion, men were not keen and enthusiastic to relax this expectation. For instance,

women are to provide food, clean clothes and surrounding, provide childcare and care of the elderly ones and also ensure that husbands are respected and recognized in the public space by virtue of a wife's behavior and representation of credible married femininity. This bifurcation of the relation between a man and his wife becomes part and parcel of a broader micro-politics or what could be termed as public discourse which forms the core of women's consciousness of themselves. Part of this self-consciousness is that women should know when, and when not, to interfere with the public image and reputation of their husbands. This bifurcation of self-consciousness theoretically helps us to articulate and reflect on some understanding of how domestic violence against wives occur in specific scenarios. Very specific cases in this study revealed that men used acts of violence as a politically correctness tool to effort women's compliance with patriarchal notions of femininity.

Participants across both interviews and group discussions often conveyed their masculinity against the discourse of the good wife (pɔgmenga) and that of a bad wife (pɔgfaa), the sanction of the latter identity appeared to be hugely punitive and culturally endorsed. For example, the majority of men argue that the level of sanctions against a woman who exhibited characteristics of a bad wife were more likely to be punitive compared to the good wife, although she herself is not spared. This distinct delineation of the identities of women revealed the sorts of actions which were perceived to acceptable and those which were not. This argument featured quite prominently among participants which suggests that men's acceptability and deep tolerance of violence against wives was normal and acceptable if the woman fails to conform to the archetype of a good daughter, wife, mother, and caregiver.

Findings from this study have attempted to highlight the problematic of gender norms and the continuous marginalization of women at the very core space regulating women's life-family level. Although some men were very slow to recognize their actions and behaviors as oppressive and violent, a critical engagement with the multiple perspectives of men locate such behaviors as violence which are operationalized through the male body, patriarchy, the sexualization and expectations of labor, public discourse, and the cultural production and reproduction of masculinities. Men in this study articulated that, as household heads (yirdandɔɔ), their social standing and manhood depended significantly on their roles and images within and outside the home.

Gender identities across contexts are fluid, socially and situationally constructed. Due to the fluidity of gender identities, they operate at multiple levels (micro and macro) and each of these levels interpenetrates the other and identities are open to different forms of manipulation, resilience, and resistances. Some of these manipulations are couched in modern discourse of nationalism and citizenship which is part and parcel of the wider debate of nation-building-gender battle. The politics of nation building and ensuring patronage of citizenship further fuels perverse tensions among men and women in their quests to demonstrate loyalty. But the process is deeply rooted in politics of inclusion and exclusion in which principle of inclusive and equal rights, voice, and dignity common to constituents are paradoxically instrumentalized as part of national machineries. Ironically, the reality remains, as demonstrated in this study, that citizenship as similar to any other social construct, is bound up in complex constellations of state-sanctioned exclusion, especially against 'persons' perceived to be social deviants and disloyal. Women who fail to abide by the codes of credible citizenship in the form of marriage which subsequently credits one the status of a mother, wife, and daughter are more likely to be treated as less deserving of the public goods of state protection.

Tensions and contradictions about meanings of 'domestic violence'

Men in this study recognized the damaging and traumatic consequences of multiple dimensions of domestic violence against wives. Men are aware of the damage of men's violence and acknowledged that intimate violence was overwhelmingly unacceptable but could be celebrated under very specific conditions. I must stress that one important contribution of my findings among these cohorts of men is that domestic violence were generally disapproved and unanimously condemned. But with a critical interrogation of men's own thoughts using very specific cases, it became clear that exceptional cases of violence could be tolerated and endorsed when women's transgressions of what they ought to know or provocation beyond the acceptable limits could warrant moderate punishments and discipline. The language of discipline was heavily deployed throughout my conversation with men. Men always deployed the language of discipline to rationalize their actions to the extent that such actions no matter their intrinsic harm were perceived non-serious, unimportant, and non-violence. In the raw words of men in their imagination of the meanings of domestic violence, when there is no visible hurt and physical harm on the

victim as judged by the perpetrator, a man has the cultural right to claim his actions as permissible and non-violent. But the framing of men's thoughts was hugely problematic as there were cases of critical loopholes and caveats which facilitate men's avoidance of their violence against women. Interestingly, men were found to deploy well-calculated injunctive norms and discourses which allowed men's violence in situations that attract countless interpretations depending on who are the parties involved and who is most affected. While women were noted to be at the receiving end of men's violence, men were in charge of interpreting whether their behaviors and actions were harmful enough to be qualified as violence or not. Men's interpretations of their own behaviors and the utility of such behaviors towards their wives could be considered normal when all members of the community understand and know that particular behaviors and displays at specific events are not welcomed ('tabooed behaviors') hence must be avoided. Anybody who refuses to abide by these requirements is indirectly asking to be corrected, in which case violence against a wife is permissible.

Tackling domestic violence: whose definition and whose intervention?

Domestic violence has become a thorny issue in global discussion over the past many years. Debates and discussions on the meanings of domestic violence have travelled very widely since the 1970s and many world interventions, including the Millennium Development Goals and now Sustainable Development Goals. One aim of the Sustainable Development Goals and CEDAW which many countries across the globe have subscribed to is to reduce violence to a significant level throughout the world. Different theoreticians and policy makers, over the years have grappled with the increasingly complex nature of domestic violence and the threats it poses to fundamental human freedom and dignity. Despite impressive body of literature among international, national and local actors as detailed in the literature review section, it is probably safe to argue that there are still multiple tensions among feminist writers and programmatic intervention bodies to challenge the vocabulary of domestic violence as a privatized violence. This vocabulary has always been of core concern in feminist theorization of domestic violence as a politically motivated tool. This section seeks to engage with such tensions among men in this study. I aim among other things in this section to challenge the state capacity to combat gender-based violence in contemporary Ghanaian society. I should add that Ghana is among many African states that have instituted

policy priorities and legislative documents that seek to prevent gender-based violence. For context, Ghana instituted the Domestic Violence Act in the year 2007 after a long and fierce battle between the state and feminist movement. Domestic violence does not occur in a vacuum, but takes place within a socio-cultural space. Within this political space are vernacular understandings, grammatical constructions, and interpretations of local people (individually and collectively) toward violence in their articulations of interlocutor's social worlds.

The literature revealed that domestic violence by its very nature is undergirded by powerful assumptions. At the same time, domestic violence is a powerful political tool and as a form of social action which, arguably, the state has failed to effectively fight beyond policy level. One major contribution of my own research is the revelation of a dissonance between what men in this study conceptualized as domestic violence against legal and policy definitions of the same phenomenon. Men's understandings of domestic violence have problematized a supposedly linear legal definition of domestic violence. As can be glanced from the analytical chapters, men's narratives pointed to very specific but dynamic nature of domestic violence. It is intricately intertwined with political power, ruling relations, patriarchally induced inequality, and domination between men and women in intimate relationships. While there are cases in which men's perspective resonate with legal definitions of domestic violence as contained in the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana, many violence scenarios added unusual qualitative nuances to the dynamics of domestic violence which should be seen beyond a linear and narrow occurrence. Domestic violence occurs when men perceive that the utility of being non-violent is less attractive than being violent in specific scenarios. Domestic violence was seen as a situational performance in which the perpetrator (although participants strongly refused this identity) deploys smart and culturally available acts to the satisfaction of audiences. Domestic violence becomes hugely enticing when it touches on the moral economy of power, assertion of social hierarchies, and social conflicts in which the identity and reputation of a man is likely to be questioned as a result of the a wife's behavior.

Key to men's understanding around the question of violence is that violence as a form of social action involves acts that are harmful to the victim. For the majority of men in this study, their conceptualizations of domestic violence have largely been conflated with

discursive notions of moral virtues, values, discourses, harm, honor, and social respectability. When men's public authority as husbands and *yirdandoo* is contested by women, then, their actions are couched within the vocabulary of discipline, not violence. This has significant implications to development practitioners, policy makers, and more importantly, vulnerable and poor rural women survivors. It has serious implication for meaningful policy engagement and dialogue as far as the gender-nation building battle is concerned, as well as feminists' quest to reduce gender-based violence.

Piecing together men's narratives in this study, it is apparent that a better and critical understanding is urgently needed on the question in which how violence 'works' and 'for whom' is of core concern. We need to critically engage with both general and specific forms and patterns of violence. Such understanding has some potentials in unpacking in detail the intricate enmeshments of violence, power, and dominant social narratives and imaginaries. The theoretical relevance of this engagement cannot easily be ignored as how domestic violences are readily imagined, represented, and communicated among men and women in enduring and politically volatile zones such as marriage relationships.

Rethinking domestic violence: the place of vernacular

The phenomenon of domestic violence has attracted critical debates from many quarters throughout the world. Many theoreticians and policy makers have engaged themselves at multiple levels, discussions on the possibility of combating what has become a world-leading problem. Despite the inroads made in several circles, including the gains of feminism on domestic violence, it remains a major threat to human life. While we celebrate the many positive outcomes of both international and local-level engagements and dialogues, it is not simply enough to stop there. Rather, we need to tackle domestic violence continuously by looking at the very vocabulary and vernacular understandings of men who remain overwhelmingly the perpetrators of such violence. The vocabulary or local vernacular of local people must be foregrounded as domestic violence occurs within a specific socio-cultural context. Local people, especially men who constantly need to negotiate the complexity and meanings of violence in relation to dominant constructs of manhood are the true experts in defining domestic violence as noted in Chapter 5.

Domestic violence in the vernacular understandings of men stress that acts that are interpreted to be unjustifiable and harmful enough to the victim. Any act or action that is not interpreted as harmful amounts to non-violent and such actions and behaviors are firmly articulated in this study to constitute cultural discipline. The vernaculars that men in this study deployed in their articulation of domestic violence differ radically from the dominant national narrative contained in the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana, as well as the universally accepted definitions contained in United Nations and World Health Organization. In the theorization of men in this study, when a woman knows and accepts that she has over stepped on the gender order, she is liable for her own predicament. Such suffering, irrespective of the degree, are classified within the language of discipline and men saw this to be important to them in their representation of manhood as husbands and fathers. Men did not view their behaviors as problem enough and thus amounting to domestic violence against their wives. Against this, I would argue that we ought to pay close attention to the language and discourse rooted in multiple ruling relations. Among men in this study, the words 'diezoore', translated as domestic disagreement between a wife and her husband does not amount to domestic violence. Participants expressed firm knowledge that words such as 'kpankpankienong' and 'gandaalong fa' are perfectly treated as domestic violence. These words, according to men, are unacceptable and extreme forms of common and everyday 'diezoore'. A man is thus considered a proper man when he is able to ensure that he controls the 'die' (house) such that whatever happens in there does not come to the public gaze. A domestic violence perpetrator, in the words of participants, is variously known as 'dɔɔ nimiteerong', 'dɔɔ potuosoba', 'dɔɔ-faa'. These identities were always contrasted with 'dɔɔ-vela' (a good man) and by extension, non-violent men. So, effectively, if the Domestic Violence Act, spearheaded by the Ghana Police Service are looking for domestic violence perpetrators in these rural communities, certainly, none of my respondents was qualified in their own interpretations of the meanings of violence perpetrator. This is because they are just doing enough of what is culturally required of them in their position as husbands, fathers, and men who should ensure that behavioural representations of dependents, especially wives are impeccable and free from public ridicule. I propose that any form of discussion, be it at the policy or intervention level about the question of domestic violence should be interested in uncovering, incorporating, and

analyzing hidden transcripts of the 'ordinary citizen' and how such people grasp violence. I would argue that ignoring the hidden narratives of people who should be of central focus in policy discussion on the array of ways and manners in which to combat domestic violence leads to generating decontextualized, biased, and questionable analyses. As can be glanced from findings from this study, local knowledge should be given core attention in unpacking the complexity of domestic violence. Ignoring local vernaculars and knowledges on the meanings of domestic violence in the realm of policy documentation comes at a huge risk in generating what Autesserre (2012) terms 'dangerous narratives'. Part of the risk is that irrespective of the quality of content of policy document both at the national and international levels, such documents may not be able to activate the needed responsiveness (collectively and individually) among local level actors such as men. Issues of local ownership of policy and programmatic intervention are often not prioritized and without sound and absolute understandings of the contexts in which policy document such as the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana are to be implemented, their very existence create tales of conflict between local values and norms and national narratives on the same phenomenon. By this position, I do not seek to discredit the importance of national and international narratives on domestic violence, rather I propose the incorporation of narratives at different levels. Against this backdrop, interrogating the political economy of domestic violence is essential in future research.

Feminist conceptualization of 'domestic violence' as a worrying problem that can and should be tackled effectively by the state through legal policy and prosecution of perpetrators in the criminal justice system has emerged to be in serious conflict with the viewpoints of men in this study. While feminist organization and reconceptualization of domestic violence as a public issue that needs important political investment, energy, and resources by the state, I would argue that such thinking and process have unintended consequences which feminist thinkers need to rethink. It is observed throughout men's reflections on domestic violence in relation to the logic of masculinity that one of such consequences is the tendency to subsume men's violence against wives into the relations of ruling as an unimportant phenomenon, men's desire for homosociality, and the gendering of space. We observed that men's responses to cases of domestic violence are effectively shaped by well-known ideological methods of reasoning and such reasoning determines what constitutes violence

and what does not. This creates various misunderstandings and misinterpretation, confusions, and conflicts at different institutional levels as visibly noted in chapter 5. Many men clearly demonstrated and verbalized their frustration at the growing levels of institutional conflict between the credibility of domestic violence at the local level and those shaped by national policy documents, and even international frameworks. Many men did not believe in anything positive about the reconceptualization of domestic violence which is guided by feminism codes. They argued that such re-theorizing has taken away their cultural rights as husbands and fathers who used to exert authority and power over wives who used to remain submissive to their husbands. As such, many men expressed negative feelings, opposition, and resistance about the real impact of concepts such as gender equality, modernization, democracy, Domestic Violence Act and many others.

It has emerged that men exercise their social power through their desire to be with other men in homosocial spaces. This, in and of itself, is not problematic. It becomes problematic as noted in chapter 5, when men mask themselves under the guise and language of unprogressive homosocial affiliation to perpetuate problematic acts against women. Due to the perceived social reward of homosociality in the form of hegemonic masculinity, some men were caught up in the complexities of homosociality and their own personalized interests. Such men were found to be practicing various shades and forms of masking, in which men tried to hide, subsume their own desires, interests, and feelings in order to fulfil the standards and the politics of belonging inherent in specific male groups. At various levels, this was noted to feed into the wider social climate of hostility, opposition, and resistance towards emerging and progressive masculinities. One of the problematics of men engagement in homosocial bonding is the caricaturing and de-valuing of women in relation to men as a social category. Homosocial spaces provide men with an attractive opportunity to objectify, essentialize women and de-value them through the deployment of a range of violent tactics and misogynistic talks. The loose essentialization of men and women further facilitates and distances men from taking full responsibility for their violent acts towards women. This enables men to feel normal and unperturbed even when their actions clearly resonate and should be treated as domestic violence.

Chapter conclusion

Over the years, feminist politics have created new meanings and equally widened the social understandings and materiality of domestic violence as a derivative of patriarchy. The conceptualization of 'domestic violence' has shifted considerably mainly tilting towards a human rights, health, and criminal justice approach. Despite the considerable shift as detailed in chapter 2, the local realities, reasoning, and conceptual understandings of domestic violence differs between men in this study and that of legal and policy framing. There is a clash of conceptual and ideological understandings of domestic violence from legal and policy perspective and the everyday activities and vernacular understandings of violence among local people. With this observation, I would argue that irrespective of the ideological methods of reasoning and how well-designed policy and interventions are towards combating social problems such as domestic violence, excluding the voices, language and vernacular understandings of local-level actors, especially men, are likely to be unsuccessful. Local customary beliefs, norms, taboos, and vernaculars in north-western Ghana are noted to be overwhelmingly powerful than the Domestic Violence law regulating the enactment of gender between men and women. When crucial policy document such as the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana minimally includes and/or omits altogether local level actors such as men, the tendency is that such document remains valid and effective only at the policy and national level. Evidence emerging from this study, coupled with my own knowledge of the field of gender in northern Ghana, social relations are institutionally mediated through ruling relations such as marriages and other cultural practices. Findings from this study suggest that male dominance, deeply rooted in patriarchal systems and gendered spaces remain the overarching order and structure that determines contemporary masculinity and femininity. These patriarchal structures remain significant factors that give set of privileges and voices in the form of social power to men to speak and expect to be listened by wives. The idea of marriage as a key source of local level political power to men has been observed throughout chapter 4 and 5. This means that men have a major role to play when it comes to discussion and thinking about the possibility of reducing domestic violence and without the political will of men, domestic violence is likely to remain one of the most discussed and yet undiscussed.

But the role of men in reducing domestic violence should be interpreted with care not to mean men's further appropriation of feminist gains. With discerning minority voices in this study, it is important to highlight here that there exists real value and possibility for a new reconceptualization of domestic violence. Few committed men who are powerful in the area of 'domestic violence' remain interested in a better and violence-free society. Such men, I would term them 'profeminists', have the capacity to champion and promote their own non-violent interests in the context of 'domestic violence' through local level campaigns with messages targeting the violence of other men within a wider gender system.

Of course, there is some risk and high degree skepticism in attempting to involve men in the process of reducing domestic violence (Pease, 2000; 2008). Already, men's voices have penetrated and dominated literature on a wide range of social topics, including maintaining the patriarchal order. I should add that men's voices are still the dominant and privileged over women's voices and it will be important to utilize such dominance appropriately and innovatively in keeping domestic violence to the barest minimum. Men have social dominance, power, authority, and status over women and getting more men involve may further bolster their reconfiguration of their already dominant and supremacist position. While acknowledging that men have important roles to play (individually and collectively) in reducing domestic violence, I would emphasize, based on evidence from this study, that the real extent and impact of men's influence will hugely depend on many important intersectoral factors, including men's own identity politics, the politics of shame and belonging, cultural, religious interests, and ethnicity, as well as an awareness of, and believe in, contemporary gender discourses and feminist politics.

It is overwhelmingly observed among men in this study that transgressing and over-stepping on an area of public taboo such as challenging husbands in homosocial spaces warrants the enactment of acts of discipline and not violence. Any deviation from the orthodox symbolic order between men and women generates troubling and challenging concerns in which the politics of face-saving becomes intensified. But men whose voices give some sense of progress can actually stand up to challenge the normative gender patterns.

It has emerged from this study that the social construction of masculinity as contained in men's reflections is practiced on what appears to be a "double distinction". The notion of

'double distinction' has been centrally foregrounded in the work of Meuser (2007: 44) who defines "double distinction" as "distinction in relation to women and in relation to other men" within specific homosocial space. Theorists such as Kimmel (1996:7) takes the discussion further by underscoring the homosociality of masculinity. Kimmel (1996: 7) argues that "masculinity is largely a homosocial enactment". It should also be added that homosocial spaces constitute critical zones for constructing, discussing, re-imagining, and maintaining multiple masculine identities. In other words, the very reasoning that men and women are distinctly segregated feeds into the wider gender logic of social division with its attendant complexities.

The discourse of credible wifehood represents another powerful tool that generates important theoretical nuances for understanding and imagining discursive meanings of domestic violence. In this chapter, I also bring to light the connection between notions of masculinity/femininity and nationalism. In other words, I identify that dominant ideas and notions on masculinity and femininity are entangled in a nation-gender battle which need to be properly acknowledged in theorization of gendered violence. In order to understand adequately the complexity of domestic violence against wives, I suggest we engage with this battle which emerged very strongly throughout the previous analytical chapters. Men are very much aware of this powerful nation-gender nexus and their stories relay that both men and women always need to rehearse and demonstrate competence in dominant discourses on masculinity and femininity as contained in the preceding chapters.

Reflections and limitations of the study

This section of the concluding chapter attempts to reflect on the ways and manners in which this whole thesis unfolded while simultaneously outlining some of the limitations as well as areas that need further scholarly attention. Throughout this thesis, I have made attempts to engage with a range of complex social theories and narratives, especially those rooted in post-colonial discussion on the questions of masculinity and gender-based violence in Africa. I have deployed in this research, feminist theorization of epistemology as a useful and primary analytical lens through which multiple perspectives of men can be conveyed to readers on the discursiveness of masculinities and the materiality of domestic violence against wives. By using feminist epistemological framework as a useful analytical flag, I effectively excavate and identify how 'domestic violence' has been variously conceptualized

in men's own local vocabularies in similar local dialects in a manner to uncover some degree of clash with national and legal narratives on violence. I take as an entry point, men's vernacular understandings of domestic violence and how that feeds into the broader politics and ideological methods of reasoning regarding masculinity in contemporary Ghanaian society. I argue that taking men's own understandings and conceptualizations of domestic violence as an entry point is crucial in attempt to combat the menace of violence.

Of course, there are many eclectic ways of researching the phenomenon of domestic violence, but space and time cannot permit detailed analysis of every component of domestic violence. I chose to explore only men's own reflections and understandings of domestic violence in order to gain some better and contextual insights on the pervasiveness of violence despite many national and international policy frameworks such as CEDAW. As such, findings in this thesis speak to the nuances of domestic violence and masculinities among Dagaaba speaking people. This in and of itself, is a major limitation in this study which does not make it statistically logical to make generalization. My findings should thus be read with this limitation in mind, coupled with a somewhat small and men only sample size. In any case, I am vastly convinced that the richness and depth of findings from these men uncover some important and pertinent aspects of domestic violence linking to men's discursive representations of masculinity. One of such pertinent areas, which I certainly think has been well-covered is an awareness of the range of complex concepts, discourses, and language and their organizing power to influence men's deep tolerance of violence.

Patriarchy and the volatility of marriage emerged as critical systems and structures that sit centrally in the pervasiveness of domestic violence. Probably, if I had engaged with different ethnic groups within the same region such as the Sissala speaking people, or Akans of southern Ghana which have different cultural and historical backgrounds on the same topics, different vocabularies, ideas, and qualitative nuances on violence and masculinity could have emerged. It is important that future research could consider ethnic and gender variation as a way of enriching nuances in responses among participants. Even among men of the same Dagaaba speaking extraction, domestic violence was conceptualized differently and different men interpreted it differently deploying vernaculars as seen in chapter 5. Of course, I do not envisage a completely different articulation among men of similar age cohorts in different regions of Ghana as some of my themes speak to

what has been found elsewhere in the literature across Africa. By this very corroboration, I wish to propose stronger collaboration among scholars in different jurisdictions on similar social problems.

Methodologically, there are some limitations worthy of mention here. First and foremost, researching domestic violence and masculinity has not always been that easy because they are traditionally considered 'tabooed' topics in the cultures of the Dagaaba speaking people. Because of their tabooed nature, there are some difficulties in getting the exact and/or close equivalent of some important concepts during the fieldwork. The term 'domestic violence' at first mention generated linguistic confusion. Many participants first referred to domestic violence as 'diezoore' as the closest Dagaare word. But upon thorough probes, I realized that domestic violence meant a different thing to different respondents across the interviews and group contexts. Sometimes, due to the lack of local equivalents, specific scenarios, proverbs, and stories were used to illustrate cases of domestic violence. In some extreme cases, I got fragmented in what exactly to write and what the English translations and equivalents would be. This proved to be a major challenge for me to overcome. But when participants noticed the difficulty I was likely to face in transcribing the interviews and conveying undiluted meanings to readers, some encouraged me to write what I could write and that I should not be worried if I am unable to grasp the totality to what they were speaking about. One interesting observation which must be underscored here is the openness and willingness of some respondents on topics such as domestic violence and masculinity which are largely perceived as 'tabooed topics'. Throughout the fieldwork, I kept asking myself several questions around the very tabooed nature of domestic violence and masculinity. What is so taboo about these topics when some respondents would spend their break sections bombarding me with important insights? Was it because I am a male interviewing my fellow males? I want to estimate the latter question was an influential factor in the openness and willingness of the majority of my respondents. Some respondents went ahead to argue that 'men' have been left out of the gender discussion for far too long as observed in chapter 4 and that it was time to bring on board the perspectives of men. But these same participants were noted to implicitly reconfigure dominant notions of masculinity which largely de-value and essentialize women. Overall, the depth of discussion between the interviewer and interviewees gave important voices to areas that

have hugely be neglected due to their supposedly tabooed nature. Such discussions open up space for further dialogues which are essential in deconstructing and opening up the silences on domestic violence, in particular as a privatized phenomenon in post-colonial Ghana.

Reflecting on the challenges cannot be complete without factoring in the difficulty inherent in working across distinct languages (Dagaare and English). While I would argue that recording interviews in the local dialect (Dagaare) is an asset because I am a native speaker, I must add that the back and forth movement between English and Dagaare complicated my writing process.

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