J Fam Viol (2016) 31:411–422
DOI 10.1007/s10896-015-9781-z

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Masculinity and Spousal Violence: Discursive Accounts of Husbands Who Abuse Their Wives in Ghana

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Published online: 22 September 2015

Abstract This study investigated the influence of cultural notions of masculinity and its enactments on husband-to-wife abuse in Ghana from a discursive psychological perspective. Two focus group discussions and four in-depth personal interviews were conducted with 16 perpetrators (husbands) from rural and urban Ghana. Participants' discursive accounts revealed that social anxieties of husbands, their fear of being perceived by others as weak or emasculated, and their disappointment with unfulfilled notions of masculine sovereignty influence conjugal violence. Perpetrators constructed a wife's expression of dissent to her husband's wishes and commands as an encroachment on masculine spaces, a gender-norm violation, or as providing a public challenge to male identity and thus violence could be used as an obligatory passage to manhood. Perpetrators also mobilized shifting and ambivalent discourses that draw upon culturally familiar notions of maleness to both resist and authorize a patriarchal privilege in marriage.

Keywords Maleness · Intimate partner violence · Sociocultural · Communal self · Identity · Discourse analysis · Africa

Spousal violence is a global health threat which resonates in many societies. It is estimated that 38.6 % of all femicidal killings worldwide occur in intimate relationships (Stöckl et al. 2013). In Africa, violence against intimate partners is very pervasive with between 20 and 71 % of women reporting abuse by their spouses (Antai and Antai 2008; Jewkes et al. 2002). Wife-beating is quite a common form of punishing women in many societies in Ghana (Nukunya, 2003) and may occur in the event of a woman's failure to ask for her husband's permission before engaging in certain activities (Adomako-Ampofo and Boateng 2007). Official police reports over the past decade suggest increasing rates of violence against women and girls in Ghana (Appiahene-Gyamfi 2009). A recent report by the domestic violence and victim support unit (DOVVSU) of Ghana disclosed 15, 495 cases of battered women in 2011 (International Federation of Women Lawyers-FIDA Ghana 2013).

Although the education and financial independence of women have been suggested as key protective factors for spousal violence in Ghana (Mann and Tayi 2009), the eradication of spousal abuse in Ghana may require more than these initiatives. For example, out of 50 educated women interviewed, Amoakohene (2004) reported that about 70 % of them had experienced partner abuse, particularly physical violence at the hands of their husbands, a situation they attributed to women's subservient status to men in Ghana. Spousal killings are sometimes portrayed as justified by the Ghanaian media, given the culture's perception of men's privileges and roles as family heads and primary providers (Adomako-Ampofo and Boateng 2007). Despite growing changes in attitudes and practices due to the influences of formal education and globalization, the archetypal Ghanaian family continues to be a highly patriarchal institution (Adinkrah 2014).

There is a burgeoning body of research that links masculinity with intimate partner violence (IPV). Many of these studies indicate that IPV occurs when men are unable to measure up to socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a 'successful' man (e.g., Gelles 1974; Jewkes 2002; Jewkes et al. 2014). Violence has been proposed as a "resource for demonstrating and showing [that] a person is a man" (Hearn

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1998, p. 37). Physical punishment of women may be tolerated in societies where there are rigidly defined and enforced gender roles; where masculinity is conceptualized as toughness, dominance, and male honour (Ellsberg and Heise 2005). Gelles (1974) further argues that when a man's identity is challenged, he is more likely to lash out at his wife in order to maintain some semblance of male power. Men who are unable to fulfill socially assigned instrumental roles (e.g., breadwinner) feel less secure or feel that their position is threatened. Their perceived marginality and insecurities increase their propensity to abuse as a mechanism to maintain their male identity (Mann and Tayi 2009). The major stereotype that arguably forms the basis of spousal abuse is one in which male individuals dominate, control, and use power whereas women do the opposite (Roger 2001). This body of research demonstrates that masculine identities are constructed through the ability of men to control their partners by acts of violence.

Despite a few research studies that link masculinity with partner violence in Africa, particularly in South Africa (e.g., Jewkes 2002; Jewkes et al. 2014), research on masculinity-induced spousal violence is generally lacking in West Africa and Ghana in particular. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of masculine notions and enactments on husband-to-wife abuse in Ghana. It investigates husbands' (perpetrators) discursive constructions of masculinity and male authority and how these practices influence the use of violence against women in Ghana.

Understanding Masculinity as a Homosocial Enactment

The concept of masculinity is sometimes used to synonymously refer to male, man, manhood as well as used to mean the direct opposite of femininity (Connell 2005; Kimmel 2001). Masculinity, as a gender identity, is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals; neither does it exist in absolute terms which one either has or does not have. It is a relational concept which changes over time and space and is constructed in discursive fields. Masculinity is not a manifestation of an inner biological essence but rather, it is socially constructed and is a creature of culture (Kimmel and Ferber 2003). Connell (2005) defines masculinity as a simultaneous place or *position* in gender relations and practices through which men and women engage. Masculinity can be distinguished from gender *role* (i.e., behavioural expectations related to more or less static social positions) in terms of the former's processual and dynamic nature where meanings are attributed by and to individuals through social interactions over time (Bird 1996). An almost universal feature of manhood is that it must be achieved—it requires behaving and acting in specific ways before one's social group (Connell 1995, 2005; Gilmore 1990). Achieving manhood is in effect socially evaluated or judged by other men and women in a given sociocultural context. A reputation for toughness and strength is somewhat valued as a core component of masculinity (Gilmore 1990).

According to Connell (1995), men aspire to a form of masculinity called "hegemonic masculinity;" that is, a culturally dominant ideal of masculinity centered on authority, physical toughness, and strength. However, rather than an already known fixed set of dominant ruling ideas, a particular content or set of representation, Wetherell and Edley (1999) view hegemonic masculinity as a relative position in a discursive field. Thus, masculine hegemony is a version of the world, plural, inconsistent, and effected through discursive practices, constantly needing to be brought into being over and over again in space and time. There are many different ways of being a man (multiple masculinities) within a given society but dominance and control over women are frequently part of the set of male attributes and behaviours (masculinity) that is recognized as a shared social ideal (Connell 2005). The fact is that not all men are violent and some actively oppose violence. Nonetheless, most men remain complicit with the norms of hegemonic masculinity due to patriarchal privileges or 'hegemonic dividends' (Connell 2005). Connell (2005) further observes that patriarchal dynamics secure a general lead position for men over women, as well as marginalizing all men that do not fulfil normative male attributes. As Gilmore (1990) argues, to be socially meaningful, the decision of manhood must be characterized by enthusiasm combined with stoic resolve. It must show a public demonstration of positive choice, of jubilation even in pain because manliness represents a moral commitment to defend the society and its core values against all odds.

Masculine enactment and the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity have been linked with homosociality. Homosociality refers to same-sex social relationships that are not based on sexual or romantic interest (Lipman-Bluman 1976). Although homosociality is by definition not masculinity, it has been emphasized that masculinity is a *homosocial enactment*; that is, men test their masculine identity, perform heroic feats and take enormous risks all because of the need for masculine identity approval from other men or to be accepted into the realm of manhood (Kimmel 2001). Homosocial interactions among heterosexual men are believed to contribute to the maintenance of norms of hegemonic masculinity by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with non-hegemonic masculine identities (Bird 1996). Homosociality can also be *performed* discursively by individual men through discursive constructions that orient toward preferred and dominant ruling ideals of masculinity embedded in a given sociocultural environment.

Communalist Ontology of Personhood in Ghana

The concept of communalism, used to describe a general worldview of Ghanaians, has been defined as "the doctrine or theory that the community (or, group) is the focus of the activities of the individual members of society" (Gyekye 1996, p. 36). The doctrine of communalism provides insight into the Ghanaian view of personhood (the fact of being a person, having those qualities that confer distinct individuality) as basically social and normative. Adams and Dzokoto (2003) describe West African personhood as relational, connected to pre-existing social forces by default of existence. The communalist view of personhood in Ghana is based on the idea that the identity of the individual is never separable from the sociocultural environment. Thus, identity, in this context, is not some Cartesian abstraction grounded in a solipsistic self-consciousness; rather, it is constructed in and at least partially by a set of intersubjectively shared beliefs, patterns of behaviour, and expectations (Hord and Lee 1995). In the communalist ontology of self, individuals exist as persons, as members of a group, and as members of a community; all of which are constantly interacting and inter-penetrating one another. The community and social norms play a significant role in the *processual* nature of being in Ghana and Africa in general— one becomes a person only after a *process* of incorporation into a community (Menkiti 1984). Personhood is thus a *becoming* rather than being (existence); something which must be attained, and not granted simply because one is born human.

Although not in the sense of being less valued, connection to relational others is framed as a secondary product in Western contexts, rather than as a default fact of existence or being (becoming) in Ghana (Adams and Dzokoto 2003). The Western individualistic conception of personhood views and identifies a person descriptively as a metaphysically isolated individual who has personhood "outside and irrespective of the normative and cultural structures of the community and the human relationships that define and sustain a community" (Ikuenobe 2006, p. 56). Thus, the saliency and influence of the community dissolves because the individual is regarded as autonomous being with the freedom to decide whether or not to accept the norms of a community and how he or she uses them to guide thoughts and actions.

Although one can find traces of individual autonomy in the African context, the notion of an individual as not normatively shaped by the community to which he belongs, but viewed as an abstract dangling personality, does not make sense in many African cultures including Ghana (Menkiti 1984). Communalist oriented people see and identify themselves in terms of how their community trains, shapes, and morally educates them to acquire personhood, and how their moral thinking is shaped by the context of the community in relation to their action and behaviour (Ikuenobe 2006). Identity, in these contexts, is typically defined in terms of how others, be they individuals or groups, influence the person (Markus and Kitayama 2010). People in these contexts tend be more concerned about others' approval because of the logic that a person's identity and self-worth is socially conferred or denied. In this view, men's communal sense of self as ontologically connected to and socially evaluated by other men, women, and children in society may heighten their awareness of their masculine identity. For example, Adams (2005) observes that the tendency for individuals to feel that they are under intense social evaluative scrutiny by others (participants' relational sense of self or objective self-awareness) has considerable negative implications for interpersonal relationships in Ghana. It is important to mention that this study does not assume that the communalist orientation or Western conceptions of personhood are monolithic, fixed, and static worldviews. The fact is that people in Ghana and elsewhere participate in and construct practices common to their environment differently; however, they do so through culturally resonant social discourses. Thus, notions of maleness in Ghana may be conveyed and made effective in men's psyche through discourses of their *relationality* and public self-consciousness.

Constructing Masculinity in Ghana

The phenomenon of masculinity, its social constructions, and embodied cultural notions is not new to research in Ghana. Constructions of masculinity in Ghana are not homogenous, as different ethnic and social groups chose different points of orientation and the ways by which men enact and view masculinity. For example, among pre-colonial Asantes (an Akan ethnic group) of Ghana, cultural notions of masculinity emphasized men's ability to exercise authority and control over women and junior males, capacity to amass wealth, and their demonstration of personal courage and bravery through heroic military actions or valiant deeds (Obeng 2003). Multiple forms of masculinities such as adult, senior, and "Presbyterian" masculinities also existed among the Kwahus (Akans) of Ghana during the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries (Miescher 2005). Presbyterian masculinity, promoted by the Basel missionaries to scorn local notions of masculinity, embodied such ideals as hardwork, moderation, law-abiding behaviour, monogamous marriage, primary allegiance to wife, church, and children, and only subordinate to the *abusua* (lineage) (Adinkrah 2012; Miescher 2005).

Normative understanding of masculinity and femininity in contemporary Ghanaian society includes a belief in fundamental biological differences between male and female human nature with corresponding behavioural prescriptions (Adinkrah 2012). Behaviourally, men in Ghana are expected to be active, assertive, daring, tough, and dominant while women must be gentle, passive, submissive, and nurturing

(Adinkrah 2004). The daring, fortitude, and invincibility of men in Ghana is so rooted in cultural expectations that signs of indecision or cowardice are associated with femininity and become the basis for social stigmatization and mockery of men (Adinkrah 2012; Miescher 2005). For a married man, successful masculinity is measured by his ability to exercise authority and control over his wife and to provide economic and material needs for his wife and children even if a wife earns more than her husband (Adinkrah 2012; Nukunya, 2003). Men who are unable to fulfill their primary breadwinner roles are socially stigmatized and regarded as *mmarima hunu* (useless men) (Adinkrah 2012). Furthermore, a 'real man' is equated with the virility of a patriarch who begets children, particularly sons. Male sexual dysfunction in Ghana is acutely emasculating and embarrassing to men because it challenges traditional notions of manhood. Male pre-marital and post-marital sexual double standardness is a permitted cultural practice among all ethnic groups in Ghana (Adinkrah 2012) and male sexual prowess and virility is sometimes demonstrated by having multiple partners (Minkah-Premo 2001), procreation (Adinkrah 2012), and sexual satisfaction of a partner (Nukunya, 2003).

Masculinity in Ghana, like personhood, is believed to be achieved or a place to be arrived at in stages and over time and that it must be won and defended (Adomako-Ampofo and Boateng 2007). Being a 'man' in Ghana is something that one could fail to become or be incompetent at, and thus must be attained through incorporation and the learning of gendered or social rules. One of the principal social requirements for being incorporated into the realm of manhood in Ghana is marriage. The traditional position in many Ghanaian societies is that a woman is never wholly independent; she must always be under the guardianship of a man, a father or a lineage head. When a woman marries, her original guardian hands over all or some of his responsibilities and rights to which he (the father or lineage head) is entitled to the husband, who in return, makes some form of marriage payment (bride price) (Nukunya, 2003). Thus, while marriage enhances a man's status from boyhood to manhood, free from the mundane responsibilities of household management as well as granting him the authority over the conjugal family, marriage for women in Ghana means a transfer of an authority figure or set of authority figures (father/parents or lineage head) for another (husband) (Adomako-Ampofo and Boateng 2007).

There is a general cultural expectation in Ghana that women must acquiesce to men's authority, especially with regard to husbands' wishes and commands (Adinkrah 2012). A wife is expected to show maximum respect, kindness, and obedience to her husband. In almost all Ghanaian societies, a wife is not expected to call or address her husband by his personal or first name but instead, she is supposed to use a term (such as "*mewura*" [my lord] among the Asantes) which refers to him as her master (Nukunya, 2003). These culturally defined gender expectations are adhered to in varying degrees among individual men in Ghana. As indicated earlier, the object of this paper is to explore the extent to which masculine discourses and enactments explain husband-to-wife abuse in contemporary Ghana.

Method

Discursive Psychology

The present study draws insights from the theory and methods of discursive psychology (Potter 2003; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wood and Kroger 2000). Discursive psychology involves the application of ideas from discourse analysis to the study of social phenomena in psychology (Potter 2003). Discourse analysis is both a method of conceptualizing and analyzing language (McMullen 2011). Discursive psychology provides a systematic framework for the analysis of interviews and interactional data (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002). It generally studies the flow of meaning making and how this flow is patterned, what shapes it, and how it is organized as mundane culture and a recognizable intersubjective communication (Hodge and Kress 1988; Wetherell 2003). Discursive psychology pays attention to *action orientation* of talk; that is, how participants in social interactions use discursive resources to achieve a certain effect (Wetherell and Potter 1992; Willig 2013). The way people speak about the world cannot be separated from their understanding of the world (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Thus, the emphasis is not on whether or not what people say is 'true' but rather on understanding how certain 'realities' are produced and presented as 'true' (Wetherell 1998). The 'truth' about a given psychological phenomenon is not given by individual participants in a social discourse but effected through the lenses of their given context because participants in a social interaction are both producers and products of culture within their social environment (Adjei 2013). Culture, in this view, is not fixed but considered as patterns of representations or actions that are distributed by and constructed through social interactions (see Kitayama and Cohen 2007). Discursive psychologists pay attention to *interpretative repertoire*, that is, terminologies, stylistics, and grammatical features, preferred metaphors and figures of speech, and general commonsensical ways used by members of a given community to characterize and evaluate actions (Potter and Wetherell 1987). The construction of self is deeply embedded in social discourses and discursive analysis is very relevant for the study of identity as constructed in discourse, negotiated among speaking subjects in a given social context, and as emerging subjectivity and sense of self (Bamberg et al. 2011). Discursive psychology also emphasizes the dialectic relationship in which social realities and subjectivities are

constituted historically, politically, and socially at a macro level, whilst being drawn upon and produced in here-and-now dynamic constitutive interactions (Wetherell and Potter 1992). Structure and culture condition our understanding and social construction of gender and thus essential to locate gender relations in a broader socio-historical context. *Talk* about a social issue such as masculinity is organized as social action in its immediate context, and also around culturally resonant interpretive resources that reveal the shared sense-making discourses of participants within a given broader social and historical context (Edley and Wetherell 2001). The signature feature of discourse analysis is its flexibility and reflexivity, where historical and sociocultural experiences of both researchers and participants shape and direct data interpretation and analysis (Adjei 2013).

Participants and Study Location

The sample consisted of 16 perpetrators of husband-to-wife abuse from rural and urban Ghana between the ages of 24 and 55 with an average of four to 20 years of marriage. The majority of participants (n=14) were Akans (the largest ethnic group in Ghana), while the remaining were Ewe (n=1), and unknown (n=1). They were mostly commercial drivers (n=6), farmers (n=5), teachers (n=4), and a petty trader (n=1). The rural sites were in the Ashanti region while the urban sites were suburbs in Kumasi (Ashanti) and Accra (the Greater Accra region) of Ghana.

Design and Procedure

The present study analyzed empirical material obtained through semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth individual interviews conducted with 16 male perpetrators of spousal violence in Ghana for a period of 7 months, beginning from January to July 2014. Participants were sampled through home and community visits, contact with a Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), and other snowballing contacts. The purpose of the study was introduced to DOVVSU and community/opinion leaders who usually settle cases of spousal abuse. They in turn assisted in identifying potential participants. Additional recruitments were made through snowballing contacts provided by recruited participants. The DOVVSU is a specialized unit of Ghana Police Service responsible for preventing crimes against women and children and to particularly provide them with protection from domestic violence. The unit was created by an Act of Parliament, Act 732, in 2007. It was formerly the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) established in 1998 (Amoakohene 2004). Contact with the DOVVSU and community leaders who settle cases of marital abuse ensured the recruitment of participants with richer knowledge and insights into the phenomenon of spousal violence.

The purpose of the study was explained to all prospective participants prior to selection and each interview. They were also informed that participation and/or answering of questions were voluntary. The inclusion criterion was inflicting of physical and/or sexual abuse (self-reported) on a current or past partner. This selection is appropriate for the study because no one knows more about abuse than those who experience it (DeKeresdy and Dragiewicz 2007) and regardless of how one explains violence in intimate relationships, the perspectives one offers may remain irrelevant to those who actually experience it (DeKeresdy and MacLeod 1997). Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, one each for rural and urban perpetrators. Each FGD was composed of six participants. Additional in-depth personal interviews were conducted with four perpetrators (different from FGD participants), two each from rural and urban settings. For purposes of confidentiality, analysis, and reporting, the researcher adopted codes for FGD participants to reflect their status, interview site, and ordinal position. For example, RP1 and UP1 represented rural perpetrator number one and urban perpetrator number one respectively.

All interviews and discussions were conducted in *Twi*, the most widely spoken Ghanaian language belonging to the Akan ethnic group. The use of *Twi* enabled participants to flexibly express themselves and created a relative power balance between the researcher (a native speaker of Twi) and the participants on one hand, and among participants on another. There is a relationship between language and power in Ghana; people who speak English, particularly in the rural areas, are generally considered more powerful because they are regarded as belonging to the elite class in the Ghanaian society. The FGD lasted between 45 and 60 min while individual interviews lasted between 25 and 35 min. The interviews were held at convenient locations selected by participants. Informed consent was obtained from participants to indicate their voluntary participation. All the FGDs and individual interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants and later transcribed by the researcher. Additional non-participatory observation of customary and church/ordinance marriage and marital dispute arbitration were conducted, as well as field notes taken by the researcher to augment the interview data.

Method of Analysis

The overall analysis of the data reflected my primary concern; that is, exploring husbands' (perpetrators) discursive constructions of masculinity and male authority in marriage and whether these masculine enactments induce spousal abuse in Ghana. The researcher carefully listened to recordings (in Twi) with intermittent back and forth movement in order to check and recheck for data accuracy. The researcher then

translated and transcribed a greater part of the interviews from Twi into English for purposes of conceptual formulations and reporting. The researcher iteratively read the transcribed data to have an intimate and interpretive familiarity with the data set. Transcripts were then imported into NVivo 10 for inclusive coding; that is, searching and grouping of extracts related to constructions of masculinity and spousal violence (Potter 2003). Different words or phrases that were repeatedly used and pointed to the regularity and patterns of participants' discourses were assigned to data corpus. For example, participants' discursive accounts of masculinity, relative to their personal and communal sense of embeddedness, were identified, coded, and mapped for further analysis and formulations.

Selection of extracts for analysis then became focused based on the context of what was said, how participants said it and why they may have said it. Particular attention was paid to what was being said by participants, their choice of words and expressions, voice tone, as well as facial and other bodily gestures—they all reflect discursive practices embedded in participants' cultural milieu (Potter and Wetherell 2001). The assembled discursive patterns were further pruned down and/or merged. Instances of masculinity related discourses from the data crystallized into different categorizations and naturally emerged patterns and concepts were formulated and interpreted in view of contextual features such as history, values, beliefs, and culture. Beyond the linguistic flexibility of discursive practices and negotiation of meaning in here-and-now interactions, the analysis also attended to the broader social and institutional contexts of Ghana as well as social consequences and background normative conceptions that shape participants' deployment of discursive resources to construct masculinity (Wetherell 1998; McMullen 2011). Extracts from interview transcripts alongside interpretations that have been made of them are presented below.

Findings

Three main discursive patterns were identified in participants' accounts as linking cultural notions of masculinity to the perpetration of spousal violence in Ghana: (1) Discourses of masculine anxiety and disappointment; (2) spousal abuse as a punishment for encroachment on masculine space and gender norm violation; and (3) authorizing dominant cultural discourses of male dominance through complicit and ambivalent positioning.

Discourses of Masculine Anxiety and Disappointment

As can be inferred from the excerpt below, participants constructed husband-to-wife abuse in Ghana in terms of husbands' gendered anxieties, their fear of being seen by others as weak and controlled by their wives.

> A man has to always stamp his authority in his home. If a wife challenges or disrespects your views as a man, people will equally not respect you because they will think that you cannot even control a woman. A man loses his title as the head of the family if your wife disrespects you or controls you. Your own children may not give you maximum respect because of what the wife does (Urban perpetrator, personal interview).

This construction resonates with cultural discourses of manhood and highlights the perpetrators' discursive 'performance' of homosocial connections with other men and the dominant ruling ideals of masculinity in Ghana. The perpetrator's repeated reference to the collective identity "man" instead of himself, illustrates *homosocial performance*— that is, discursive orientation toward preferred and embedded ideals of maleness. The rhetorical strategy of referencing the collective male identity ("man") allows the perpetrator to distance himself from his violent act while diffusing his personal agentive role in collective gender notions. The discursive alignment with other men reflects the participant's intersubjectivity and shared forms of sense-making from a commonly understood experience of masculinity, which regulates and maintains a taken-for-granted and largely invested patriarchal privilege in marriage. It is suggested in the quote that the authority of husbands becomes threatened by a perceived "challenge" or "disrespect" of wives, and may thus it be appropriate for a man to "stamp his authority in his home."

Again, the perpetrator constructs spousal violence as a mechanism employed by husbands to safeguard their (headship) "title" in marriage. The interpretive repertoire of "losing a title" illustrates deep-seated beliefs about masculine entitlements and authority in marriage. The obviousness of the argument in the quote is that, in the eyes of other "people" (onlookers), men risk social derision if they are not seen as defending their historically given "titles as heads of the family." By justifying his violent attack on the altar of social expectations of culturally appropriate masculine behaviour, the perpetrator *enacts* and promotes masculine hegemony. He constructs a man's strong and permanent influence ("always stamping his authority") on his wife as an obligatory passage to realms of manhood. He appears to be intuitively aware of (unseen) relational gazes and evaluative scrutiny of other men, women, and children, whom he perceives as assessing him on a masculine scale. The apparent anxiety of the perpetrator about third-party beliefs resonates with the cultural affordances of embedded interdependence in Ghana, and an interdependent sense of personhood as an object of other people's attention. Perceived opposing behaviour of wives challenges a-taken-for-granted masculine image that men wish to maintain in marriage and causes them social pain. Thus, violence is constructed as a demonstrative response to

repair a perceived *social injury* caused or likely to be caused to men's pride system and masculine ego.

Perpetrators justified husband-to-wife abuse by drawing on discourses associated with social sanctions and gender-norm transgressions in Ghana:

> Any man will feel hurt if your wife, at the least thing, argues and refuses to accept you as the head of the family. How will people think of me; that I am weak and allow my wife to control me? […] sometimes a man has to act to show that he is in control; that I'm not "obaafadie" [sissy] (Rural perpetrator 4, FGD).

As implied in the quote, masculinity is constructed as a difference from femininity ("obaafadie"). A wife's open expression of dissent to her husband's commands is constructed as offensive to masculine ethos in Ghana and appears both personally and *socially hurtful* as it threatens culturally familiar discourses of male sovereignty in conjugal relationships. Spousal violence is thus positioned as an *act* born out of husbands' heightened masculine identity awareness— their fear of being regarded as "obaafadie" (sissy) by other men and women in society. The "obaafadie" repertoire suggests an *embodied* account denoting effeminate qualities of a man or the height of a man's timidity, which is a huge source of psychosocial pain to men in Ghana, particularly in the eyes of other men in society. As a result, the perceived lack of masculine control and power may engender in men *masculine identity disappointment;* which I define as a feeling of dissatisfaction in men that results from unrealized cultural notions and expectations of masculinity. As suggested in the quote, if a husband is unable "to act to show that he is in control" of his conjugal home, he feels disappointed and threatened. The apparent threat of wifely disrespect unsettles assumed positions and deflates a husband's culturally given identity. Such threats evoke a sense of fear in men— the fear of masculine failure— the fear of being ridiculed and/or emasculated, of being regarded as "obaafadie" by other men, women, and children in society. To fend off negative social appraisals and to restore a masculine sense of adequacy, a husband may have to occasionally "act" violently toward the perceived source of threat to demonstrate that "he is in control."

As evident in the above extracts, masculinity does not in itself cause spousal violence. Rather, it is the complex relationship between perceived threat to normative masculine ideals and perpetrators' imagined social evaluations by others that influence conjugal violence in Ghana. The feeling of masculine disappointment and the accompanying sense of fear is not only induced by men's perceived identity failure, but also, it arises from heightened public self-consciousness of men and their anxiety about others' social evaluations. In other words, conjugal violence in Ghana could be understood as an outcome of a complex and dynamic relationship between cultural/social constructions of masculinity and men's relational sense of personhood.

Spousal Abuse as a Punishment for Encroachment on Masculine Space and Gender Norm Violation

In relation to masculine anxiety discourses of men, participants also constructed wife abuse as a punishment for gender-norm violations or as an infringement on a masculine space. For example:

> She talked back at me in a commanding tone and her voice could be heard everywhere in the community. This is not how women behave in our society and as a man in the house I had to teach her a lesson […] I had to let her and everybody know that I am the husband […] I married her (Rural perpetrator, Personal interview).

In this quote, the perpetrator portrays spousal violence as a way of creating, demonstrating, and affirming assumed masculine authority in marriage. While, "as a man in the house", he is entitled to command his wife into unquestioned obedience, the wife does not enjoy the same privilege as she is not expected to "talk back to her husband" much less talk "in a commanding tone." Such a conduct is positioned by the perpetrator as a contrast to "how women behave" toward men in society and thus amounts to a gender-norm violation or annexing male authority in marriage. Thus, wifely opposition to a husband's command is constructed as a disruption of the binary discourse around masculinity/femininity and around traditionally assumed husband-head/wife-subordinate power relations among conjugal partners in Ghana. In this view, marital relationship is positioned as involving a cluster of rights and duties as well as prohibitions or denials of certain conducts considered as culturally inappropriate (see Harré and Moghgaddam 2003). The perceived turn of power relations in marriage could emasculate a man and provoke the use of violence to "teach [the wife] a lesson" or to reestablish male status as "the husband," the one who "marries" rather than "being married."

A similar kind of reading can be made of the following quote; "It was not my fault to slap her. She argued with me as if she was in charge of the house. A woman must be submissive to her husband and not challenge him" (Urban perpetrator, FGD). Rather than accepting responsibility, the perpetrator locates the cause of his action externally, constructing it as a legitimate punishment for gender norm transgressions. He discursively unpacks notions of masculine entitlements by distancing his personal agentive role while positioning non-submissive behaviour of wives as a violation of gender norm and/or a subversion of social order. By constructing wifely

argument as publicly undermining male authority and gender ethos of the community, he could be seen as managing personal accountability for violence. The wife is thus constructed as a 'gendered' power usurper and culturally illegitimate claimant to conjugal authority. It can be seen from these discourses that spousal violence is positioned as a 'performance'— as a simultaneous performance of masculinity and femininity— as a means for husbands to live up to contextualized versions of manliness, while 'teaching' perceived erring wives how to successfully 'perform' or live up to an expected feminine standard of behaviour in marriage. Participants' discursive practices clearly evince the fact that spousal abuse in Ghana could be understood as masculine 'enactments'; as *social masks* worn by husbands to achieve traditional definitions of maleness and masculine confirmation in Ghana. Abusive tendencies of husbands appear to be a fulfilment of a given masculine sense of entitlement, enforced by unspecified and/or unseen relational and evaluative gazes of bystanders or "everybody" (men, women and children) in the Ghanaian society.

Authorizing Dominant Cultural Discourses of Male Dominance Through Complicit and Ambivalent Positioning

Another pervasive pattern of participants' discourses was multiple positioning of (hegemonic) masculinity. These positions are ordered by and situated within dominant cultural discourses that frame women as subordinate to men in marriage.

> I don't think my wife's disagreement or argument with me makes me feel less masculine. As a man, I don't have to depend on my wife. I have to work hard to take care of my family and I have to be strong and responsible; I think that makes a man […] I am not the type of husband who think that a woman should not have a say in anything in the house; yes you can talk but as a man I make the final decision and my wife knows it (Rural perpetrator, personal interview).

The perpetrator in the quote appears to reframe and distance himself from familiar notions of masculinity that emphasize women's unquestioned obedience to their husbands' wishes. It appears that in order to create a male identity along the lines of embedded masculine discourses in Ghana, a husband must not be seen as "dependent on [his] wife," but instead, he must "work hard and be strong and responsible." The quote shows a shifting construction of masculinity and dominance as the perpetrator moves between conflicting ideologies of masculine authority in marriage in ways that reduce his masculine complicity and dominance. He positions the self as both participating in and denying 'hegemonic' forms of masculine authority. In constructing his masculine identity as willing and accommodating, while distancing himself from familiar discourses of maleness in Ghana, he appears to be aware of and resistant to certain extreme forms of male control that denies women their agency and individuality in marriage. The perpetrator disclaims and separates his version of masculine belief from certain assumed notions of maleness that measure its ideals and worth according to strict and imposed rules on women.

By his discursive denial of connection with hegemonic forms of masculinity, the perpetrator provides an effective warrant for his masculine 'otherness' and simultaneously *authorizes* a benign version of masculine dominance in marriage. Although he denies personal association with the taken-for-granted discourses of masculinity in Ghana— "I am not the type of husband who thinks that a woman should not have a say in anything in the house"— he nonetheless draws on similar gendered discourses to emphasize alternative forms of masculine control and dominance; "…as a man I make the final decision and my wife knows it." His reaffirmed positioning of the self as a "man" that follows his disclaimer betrays his prior construction of the self as unaffected by stereotypical notions of masculinity, and thus exposes him to charges of complicit masculinity. Despite his attempt at positioning himself as an ordinary, normal, and accommodating husband, in the light of the discourse; "as a man I make the final decision," he equally comes across as enmeshed, subjectified, and ordered by embedded notions of maleness in Ghana. Thus, his alternative masculine 'otherness' is complicit in normative ideals of masculine dominance in marriage because he draws on culturally resonant discursive repertoire of gender practices in Ghana. For example, the claim by the above rural perpetrator to "final decision" echoes the repertoire of defending a masculine authority and title stated earlier by an urban perpetrator; "A man has to always stamp his authority in his home… a man loses his title as the head of the family if your wife disrespects you or controls you" (see urban perpetrator, personal interview, in the section on masculine anxiety).

In both instances, masculinity appears to be constructed as centered on authority over women and as an already known, timeless, and fixed set of ruling ideology rooted in patriarchy. The rhetorical robustness of the resistant positioning lies in the fact that it allows the perpetrator to bolster his masculine otherness as a model of male authority. The apparent resistant position could be a discursive strategy mobilized flexibly in specific time and space to contest, reframe, and sanction new forms of masculine dominance in marriage. He suggests, by this discursive device, that men in Ghana are not passive receptors of socioculturally given notions of masculinity, but instead are active agents, who through constructive internalization of the collective culture, construct and reproduce embedded gendered behavioural prescriptions.

Discussion

This study has examined the ways in which husbands enact masculine notions through *talk* and how these enactments influence wife abuse in Ghana. Discursive accounts of participants revealed that husbands' anxiety over masculine image, relative to their objective sense of personhood, influences the use of violence against their wives. Men construct wifely argument or disagreement both as a *personal* threat to their masculine identity and self-ego and a subversion of the *social* and moral ethos of the Ghanaian society. They become unsettled by the perceived threat and experience *masculine identity disappointment,* as they dread social derision or being emasculated by other men, women, and children in society. As Adjei (2015b) points out, most men in Ghana, in relation to their communal sense of identity, generally risk public scorn when they are not seen as publicly demonstrating prototypical behaviours consistent with cultural notions of masculinity. Perpetrators in this study also constructed husband-to-wife abuse as a justified and just punishment for women for violating culturally assumed gender norms or encroaching on masculine spaces. They further managed their accountability for acts of violence by blaming their wives for usurping masculine authority in the conjugal home. Previous studies have shown that intimate partner violent men draw on cultural discourses to perform "masculine" behaviors, reproduce a binary framework of gender, and blame female partners as responsible for violence in their relationships (Anderson and Umberson 2001). It is said that men usually construct masculinity in the plural rather than in the singular (Connell 1995) and as different from femininity (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Apparently, husbands in this study draw upon cultural notions as central resources to construct spousal violence as a *performance* of masculinity and femininity; as a means for husbands to live up to an idealized identity of maleness while 'teaching' their wives how they ought to 'perform' expected feminine behaviour.

The fear of diminished masculine reputation, in the eyes of social observers, provokes husbands to *act* violently towards their wives in order to reestablish masculine status, reassert male control and power, or to gain masculine confirmation. Men's fears and feelings of masculine inadequacy result from their heightened (psychological) need for social endorsements from other men in society. Clearly, the view of oneself (personhood), in relation to embedded social others, shape the degree to which men in Ghana become conscious of norms of masculinity in their self-constructions. Their preoccupation with maintaining a certain public/masculine image is often propelled by a hypersensitive concern over what others might think of them as *men.* The recognition that the head of the conjugal family is not as powerful as beyond a wifely 'challenge' or disagreement results in identity disappointment and social pain. Perpetrators' sense of masculine identities do not make sense of or directly lead to violence except by reference to the collective notions of maleness and the attendant social expectations. Thus, sociocultural notions of maleness (social constructions of gender) and men's communal sense of self, (psychological understanding of personhood) in Ghana appear mutually constituted in dynamic and interactional complexities.

The view of ourselves is to some extent manifested in the social roles we perform because social roles help to elaborate and shape our intuitions about personal identity (Adeofe 2004). Men's identity disappointment and the resultant social anxieties become prominent and socially stressful when men attempt to make sense of the cultural environment in which they are embedded. Some men embark on role-playing masculinity and in so doing neglect their own personal feelings which would otherwise undermine their "male image." They thus easily lose touch with, or run away from, their feelings and awareness of themselves as individual persons and unwittingly wear *a social mask fulfilling the traditional definition* of "masculine-appropriate behaviour" (Goldberg, 1991). As Anderson and Umberson (2001) point out, violence is an effective means by which batterers reconstruct men as masculine and women as feminine. In their recent comprehensive study in India, Nanda et al. (2014) emphasized that masculinity, that is, men's controlling behaviour and gender equitable attitudes in relationships, strongly determines men's preference for sons over daughters as well as their proclivity for violence towards an intimate partner.

Evidently, beliefs and expectations of third-party social evaluations and enforcement of appropriate masculine behaviour appear to represent one of the elaborate cultural and psychosocial mechanisms by which men maintain their lead role and perpetrate violence in marriage, even in the face of their own reluctance to masculinity-induced violence. As Reed (1972) has noted, sometimes people are violent, even when they don't want to be, because there will be penalties such as disgrace— because they fear being disgraced for not being violent. This is a male harness that most men live in, which some have little awareness that it is choking them until their personal life crumbles and falls apart (Goldberg, 1991). The dialectic and complex relationship between normative constructions of masculinity and men's self-perception as targets of social others' evaluative scrutiny provides a significant basis for understanding the relationship between husbands' enactments of masculinity and male authority in marriage in Ghana. When this complex relationship between the social and the psychological; between cultural notions of masculinity and individual men's psychological sense of self is made visible, behavioural variations among men/husbands in Ghana in terms of their use and non-use of masculinity-induced violence will be understood too.

This study also contributes to the understanding that men do not internalize norms of masculinity and violence to the

extent to which collective culture and social expectations prescribe. As the analysis revealed, husbands in Ghana are not only positioned by a ready-made or historically given set of masculine discourses, but they also construct and appropriate these cultural repertoires individually within their given social and political context. Some perpetrators offered shifting and contradictory positions of self and masculine dominance within their accounts. They seemed not to aspire to extreme (hegemonic) forms of masculine ideals by either associating with a less extreme form of masculinity or by distancing themselves from masculine ideals that do not allow women to express their individuality in marriage. However, rather than willing and innocent men who disapprove of masculine hegemony and control over women, these men remain complicit with hegemonic forms of masculinity insofar as they all draw on familiar gender dichotomization discourses embedded in society to (re)construct alternative forms of male dominance in marriage. This is consistent with the view that ideological drive of discourse depends on contradictions, dilemma, and complex multi-faceted positioning of self and other, mobilized in multiple rhetorical directions with varying effects for social relations (Edley and Wetherell 2001). It has been recently reported that young men deploy *paternalistic ambiguous discourses* to justify physical IPV and traditional gender relations that emphasize men's power and status in the gender order (Salazar and Öhman 2015). Clearly, one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic, or being a 'man', may be to demonstrate one's distance from hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell and Edley 1999). The paradox of hegemony is that, sometimes what is most hegemonic is to appear non-hegemonic; that is, an independent man who comes across as in control of his own mind and who can see through social expectations.

Discourses of participants in this study are not arbitrary connections that license men's exercise of control and use of violence against their wives. Rather, they are purposive and *action-oriented* dominant cultural discourses (Potter and Wetherell 1987) which draw on and are *effected through* familiar interpretive notions of gender practices in Ghana. A person is not free to adopt any gender position in social interaction simply as a discursive or reflexive move without reflecting on an embodied set of rights and duties that limit the possibilities of realizing actions in a given context (see Harré and Moghgaddam 2003). Adjei (2015a) has observed that collective identity interacts and operates with personal meaning systems in Ghana, and gender relations are personally constructed through human creativity and patterns of social organizations in society. Discursive constructions of masculine authority in marriage and its relationship to spousal violence in Ghana should be understood both as reflecting participants' interactional needs in here-and-now social discourse and as *embodied* historical and sociocultural non-discursive dimensions of gender relations. Discursive possibilities about gender relations are largely constrained by embodiment, by institutional histories, by economic forces, and by personal and family relationships. As Rubin (2003) observes, discursive constructions sometimes embody actions because of the unshakeable convictions of being a *man*. Thus, the discussion of spousal abuse would be incomplete without putting perpetrators and victims, values and practices, and male and female roles in relationships in an institutional and historical context.

Conclusion

As accounts of husbands in this study suggest, the sturdy moral core— the central organizing feature of maleness in Ghana is structured according to the logic that a man's worth and dignity is socially conferred. Discourses of masculinity and how they influence spousal abuse in Ghana are not held in any sense by individual men; but rather, they emerge and take shape in a collectivity, as a gestalt, in the coming together of group ideals, perceptions, and expectations where no individual man holds the entire representation on his own. Thus, masculinity-motivated wife abuse in Ghana reflects the embodied convergence of men's subjective perceptions of their masculine image and the objective sense of personhood as an object of third-party evaluations, enforced by institutional histories. To better understand *masculinity-induced* wife abuse in Ghana, it may be important to take into account the dynamic interactional complexities between contextualized and constituted discourses of maleness and individual men's communal sense of personhood in society. A more comprehensive answer to the complex and dynamic nature of spousal violence in Ghana requires an understanding of the association between violence and masculinity. It may be a missed opportunity to discuss widespread violence by married men without a careful analysis of the complex gender relations and the contextualized discourses of identities of both men and women in Ghana.

Acknowledgments I would like to thank all participants who spent their time to talk about their personal and difficult experiences of spousal abuse.

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