Situated Meanings: Understanding Gender Work in Ghanaian NGOs

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Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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SUMMARY

This thesis investigates the ways in which 'gender issues' are incorporated into, and understood within, two Ghanaian NGOs. It contributes to an extensive body of literature which examines the take up and implementation of gender issues by development institutions. It argues that much of this literature tends to evaluate the gender work of development institutions against normative criteria; assessing whether 'gender issues' and/or a 'gendered approach' are 'successfully' and 'correctly' understood, incorporated into, and implemented by such institutions. This often concludes there is a disjuncture between what *should* and what *does* take place.

I focus instead on providing an emic account of the gender work of these two organisations. Based on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork, and focusing specifically on the theme of gender violence, I explore the particular ways in which staff understand, and therefore implement, their 'gender work'. What emerges might be viewed by some, specifically from an outside ('Western') perspective as at odds with a perceived 'correct' meaning and intent of 'transnational' and 'feminist' gender goals. However, I argue that, when viewed from an emic perspective, what takes place in this particular instance, is not a 'conscious' translation of transnational gender ideas into 'something else', or a rejection of such ideas. Nor is it necessarily a 'mediation' between two sets of conflicting ideas – the 'local' and 'transnational'. Rather, what occurs is a specific understanding of 'gender' ideas and concepts in ways that make sense to those involved; in relation to the broader context in which they live and work, the ideas that they hold, and their ways of seeing the world. I suggest that this is fundamentally shaped by, and must be understood in relation to, the normative assumptions and hegemonic discourses which pertain within a particular context, and the everyday lived gendered experiences of the staff involved. In this case, particular ideas and practices regarding marriage and the everyday usage of certain words are of central importance.

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AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASCW	Action on Social Change for Women
AWID	Association For Women's Rights in Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CFP	Call for Proposals
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CPP	Convention People's Party
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (of the Ghana Police Service)
DV	Domestic Violence
DV Bill	Domestic Violence Bill
DV Coalition	The National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation (Domestic Violence Coalition)
DV Law	Domestic Violence Law
DWM	31st December Women's Movement
EOI	Expression of Interest
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIDA	Federación Internacional de Abogadas (International Federation of Lawyers)
GAD	Gender and Development
GAF	Gender Awareness Foundation
Gender Centre	Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (also known as GSHRDC)
GWL	Ghana Women's League
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation

INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LHI	Life History Interview
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NCGW	National Council of Ghana Women
NCWD	The National Council on Women and Development
NETRIGHT	The Network for Women's Rights in Ghana
NFF	National Feminist Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDP	People's Development Partners
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SHO	Self-Help Organisation
SNGO	Southern Non-Governmental Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAW	Violence Against Women
WAJU	Women and Juvenile Unit (of the Ghana Police Service)
WID	Women in Development
WiLDAF	Women in Law in Africa
WMC	The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana (Women's Manifesto Coalition)
WROs	Women's Rights Organisations

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It is ironic that many of the people that played a central and indispensable role in this research must, for reasons of anonymity, remain 'unnamed'. However, using the pseudonyms adopted throughout this thesis, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all in ASCW, PDP and GAF. It was a real pleasure working with you all and learning about your work. I am indebted to you for your time, openness and kindness, for welcoming me into your work, lives and homes, and for putting up with my many questions. Thanks also go to the many other NGOs and their staff, who participated in my research at various points, letting me observe their work and/or granting me interviews. In addition, I am grateful to the various networking organisations, academics, and government officials in Ghana who gave me their time.

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Chapter 1 – Interrogating Gender Work in Development Organisations

Introduction

Over a decade ago I spent two years living in Ghana, when I worked in two Ghanaian non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It was during this time that the sorts of issues examined in this thesis first began to emerge for me. Although my work in these NGOs was varied, a large proportion involved working on 'gender and development' issues. Working with my Ghanaian colleagues on a daily basis I was in no doubt that they were as dedicated as I was to our work objectives around gender. We were all committed to the idea of gender equality in all aspects of life, to promoting the empowerment of women and addressing inequalities between men and women.

However, it also became clear to me on a number of occasions that we potentially had different understandings of the fundamental concepts and ideas that we utilised within our work. Differences, for example, in what equality between men and women might actually look like. Along with this, and indeed in many ways affecting it, we also came to our work with different normative assumptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women, for instance in relation to how marriages and partnerships should be conducted. On one occasion, for example, attending the wedding of a colleague I was surprised when the pastor conducting the marriage ceremony quoted Genesis and proceeded to offer relationship counselling; instructing the women present that God had created them to serve men and they should remain faithful, subordinate and subservient to their husbands. However, I was even more taken aback by the seeming lack of concern about, and response to, such views amongst my other colleagues who were present. While I was incredulous about these wedding statements, the pastor's marriage advice did not overtly seem to bother my colleagues, or at least didn't seem, to them, worth getting agitated about. On another occasion, during a gender training course, I was surprised about the general response (or lack of) to the issue of rape in marriage, which was brought up by one of the participants. While some of the other participants argued that this was a Western idea

and not an issue for Ghanaian women,[1] the session moved on without a more detailed discussion of the issues and the dynamics involved.

Working on 'gender and development' in these two Ghanaian NGOs, and then subsequently in the UK, I became interested in, and aware of, the potential variety of understandings of 'gender and development' concepts and objectives amongst different individuals and within different contexts. This, it seemed, had the potential to affect the ways in which gender work was understood and conducted, and the specific issues which were focused on.

However, in looking at the broad body of 'gender and development' literature which examines the gender work of development organisations (and to some extent women's rights organisations[2] (WROs) as well) it appears that much of this evaluates such work against a normative criteria; assessing whether 'gender issues' and/or a 'gendered approach' are 'successfully' and 'correctly' understood, incorporated into and implemented by such institutions. Such literature often concludes that there is a disjuncture between what *should* and what *does* take place, and that policy objectives are often subverted, watered down or simply evaporate in practice.

However my experiences in Ghana suggested that there might be alternative explanations of what might be going on in some such situations, and that what might look like disjuncture may actually rather simply represent an alternative way of understanding such ideas. As such, these experiences suggested the need to investigate the specific ways in which individuals understand their work and the influences on this.

Exploring these issues, this thesis investigates the ways in which gender is incorporated into, and understood within two Ghanaian NGOs. I explore the particular

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[1] At the time rape in marriage was not legally recognised in Ghanaian law. However this has subsequently changed as a result of the repeal of Section 42 (g) of the Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29), which 'accept(ed) the use of force in marriage on the basis of the supposed consent given upon marriage' (Adomako Ampofo, 2008:404). While the Domestic Violence Bill proposed the repeal of Section 42 (g) of the Criminal Code, the Domestic Violence Act (Act 732) was passed, in 2007, without this provision, which had become a sticking point and significant area of contestation between women's rights organisations (WROs) and the government. However, Section 42 (g) was repealed 'a few months later at the instance of the Commissioner of the Statute Law Revision project, Justice Vincent C.R.A.C. Crabbe. Acting under the authority of the Laws of Ghana Revised Edition of Act 1998 (Act 562), the project could simplify, revise or delete laws that do not conform to the 1992 Constitution' (Adomako Ampofo, 2008:416).

[2] I discuss later in this chapter the potential distinction between 'development organisations' and 'women's rights organisations' (WROs).

ways in which staff understand and therefore implement their 'gender work',[3] and examine the relationship of such understandings to the broader normative assumptions and hegemonic discourses which pertain within the particular context in which staff live and work.

Before going on to examine these issues in the rest of the thesis, this chapter provides an overview of various literatures. This includes, the 'gender and development' literature mentioned above. I highlight some of the common arguments put forward, the potential limitations of such literature, in particular in assessing gender work against a normative criteria, and the concomitant value of a different approach, particularly a more emic perspective, in exploring the gender work of organisations. I also look at literature which more specifically explores the ways in which transnational feminist and human rights concepts move between and are taken up and understood in various locations. Although I argue for a situated and emic approach when focusing on gender work, I also discuss in this chapter the potential pitfalls of taking such an approach to its extreme. Indeed, as I outline, there are certain tensions which exist both in taking a situated or a more normative approach when analysing the gender work of organisations, particularly cross-culturally.

Following this overview of literature, I also provide details of the specific focus of this research in terms of the location of study, the organisations examined, the questions guiding the research, and the methodological approach adopted.

Assessing gender work and explaining 'success' and 'failure'

Since the 1970s gender issues have moved from the margins of development work to a central focus, in rhetoric at least. In the process they have become a '*lingua franca* in which so many actors appear to be fluent' (Smyth, 2007:583). Indeed, these days, one

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[3] The term 'gender work' is used throughout this thesis as a generic term, to refer to all work with women/ on gender issues – regardless of the specific approach taken. Such work can encompass a range of theoretical and practical approaches – including for example work (policies, practices and interventions) that focuses on women, women's rights, women's empowerment, gender relations, 'women in development', and 'gender and development'. My aim here is not to decide whether something should be defined as 'gender work' or not, but to provide an overview of the diversity of work undertaken that might be defined as such.

would be hard pushed to find development organisations[4] that do not have some form of focus on gender issues and/or women within their remit and work.

Along with the diversity of actors, the gender goals of development work also vary quite significantly, not only between, but also within different organisations. The objectives of some are principally about improving women's economic status, for others they are about achieving 'gender equality' more broadly, and for yet others they are described in terms of 'women's empowerment'. Partly in light of this diversity, several categorisations have been developed to provide clarity and distinguish between different approaches.[5]

Although they have theoretical uses, such models have a somewhat limited applicability in relation to the complex and messy reality of practice. As Brown notes: 'identifying many development projects and programs as either WID [Women in Development] or GAD [Gender and Development][6] is far more complicated than it would appear from the literature' (2006:58). In addition, the several terms used to discriminate between various approaches are interpreted differently by different actors – and these carefully distinguished labels are often used interchangeably as shorthand to refer to a range of different types of gender practice. This is partly due to the fact that the distinctions are difficult to put into words; it requires, as Smyth notes, 'using language that has become densely layered with contradictory meanings and interpretations' (2007:582). However, despite the challenges of being able to clearly distinguish and label the approach being used, the field is characterised by diversity in approach and objectives, however they might be defined.

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[4] Such institutions range from large multilateral and bilateral organisations such as the World Bank and UN agencies, to Southern NGOs (SNGOs), and even some community-based organisations (CBOs).

[5] This includes for example: distinctions made between women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), and gender and development (GAD) approaches (see for example Moser, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Razavi & Miller, 1995a); the identification of different policy approaches ranging from 'welfare' to 'empowerment' (see Moser, 1993); distinctions between 'practical gender needs/interests' (PGNs) and 'strategic gender needs/interests' (SGNs) (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989; 1993); and a distinction between 'agenda-setting' and 'integrationist' approaches to 'gender mainstreaming' (see Jahan, 1995).

[6] It is generally argued that 'The WID (or Women in Development) approach calls for greater attention to women in development policy and practice, and emphasises the need to integrate them into the development process' and 'In contrast, the GAD (or Gender and Development) approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasises the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations' (Reeves & Baden, 2000:3, for further details regarding the WID and GAD approaches and the differences between the two see Brown, 2006; Moser, 1993; Razavi & Miller, 1995a).

Accompanying this growth in gender rhetoric and practice has been a broad body of 'gender and development' research. Within this there has emerged a significant literature that focuses specifically on development organisations' gender objectives and how they attempt to achieve these. These critical analyses of development organisations mainly began during the 1990s (e.g. Goetz, 1995; 1996; 1997a; Jahan, 1995; Kardam, 1991; 1993; Razavi & Miller, 1995b; Staudt, 1990) and since then have continued to proliferate. Indeed, a couple of very recent events and publications are evidence of the continued attention paid to such issues. These include, for example, a one day seminar hosted by the UK Development Studies Association (DSA) Women in Development and Gender Policy and Practice Study Groups in February 2013, which concentrated on the work and approaches of the 'gender and development industry'. Concerned about the seeming lack of progress in women's lives and the restriction of much of this work to 'discrete funding of projects for women' it invited 'those who teach, research and practice in this area to explain and defend and critique their continuing activities' (event call for papers). Another recent initiative was the 2011-12 'Beyond Gender Mainstreaming' Learning Project organised by the Oxfam journal 'Gender and Development' in partnership with the UK Gender and Development Network,[7] which included the publication of a special edition of the journal (Sweetman, 2012).

Although there is a certain amount of variation between such studies, in general this literature starts from concerns with the relatively slow progress in achieving gender goals on the ground and with widely reported disquiet from within organisations at the difficulty of getting whole-hearted support for its gender work. Some initial questions are: What gender concerns are taken up by these organisations, and how? What happens to gender theory and policies in development practice? And, what factors affect and influence the gender approaches of these organisations? Studies often provide an assessment/evaluation of the incorporation of gender concerns into/by the organisations and their work, and/or the progress made in achieving gender goals, aiming to identify reasons for 'success' or 'failure'.[8] In excavating what has gone on, they often describe what has 'gone wrong' in the adoption of gender issues by development organisations.

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[7] (Gender and Development, n.d.) (see http://www.genderanddevelopment.org/page/beyond-gender-mainstreaming-learning-event).

[8] This literature includes a wide diversity of types; while some are reflexive accounts produced by practitioners within the organisations concerned (see for example Porter et al., 1999a), others are specific reviews/audits carried out either externally or internally (for example the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) gender audits, detailed by Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006:66), and others are academic studies (e.g. Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Ferguson, 2010).

Arguably, a principal issue within, and spurring on, much of this literature is a number of perceived failings in relation to gender and development activities and outcomes. There are also concerns expressed about accountability, how (and if) progress is evaluated and the need for organisational learning regarding what is often perceived as a challenging area of work. Several different types of often overlapping failures are highlighted. Projects are often found to have failed to achieve their specific goals, or not to have been implemented according to the specific gender policy and plans set out. Many studies identify failure in outcomes in terms of a lack of progress made in relation to desired changes to women's lives. One common shortcoming is the failure to get gender issues sufficiently on the agenda of organisations, in terms of for example understanding, commitment, budgetary support, and programming, despite the formal adoption of gender objectives.

This literature and debate, often focused on 'mainstreaming' gender in development organisations, covers a variety of types of organisations, from large international development organisations (such as the World Bank) to Southern NGOs (SNGOs).[9] In this initial section I discuss some of the common findings of such literature in more detail, focusing on a selection of studies. While my focus within this thesis is on SNGOs, I examine here, in turn, literature focused on a variety of different types of organisations.[10] I begin with large international development organisations, followed by INGOs (on both of which types of organisation there is much focus within the literature). I then examine literature which focuses on SNGOs, including WROs (along with other 'Southern' based organisations).[11]

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[9] I rely here partially on the typology set out by Wallace et al (2007). They distinguish between 'INGOs' who are generally based in the global north (although some have moved their headquarters to Africa) and 'work in several countries of the south' (2007:12) (these are also termed northern NGOs), and 'SNGOs' who are based in the particular country in which they work, and 'run locally by national staff or volunteers' (2007:12). SNGOs are also referred to as 'indigenous NGOs' (Fowler, 2000; Wallace et al., 2007), 'domestic NGOs' (Fowler, 2000), and/or national NGOs. I use the term 'large international development organisations' to refer to multilateral institutions – such as the World Bank, United Nations (UN) agencies, and the ILO – and bilateral donors, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

[10] Although many studies focus on one specific type of organisation, there are however inevitably overlaps as development interventions often concurrently involve many actors at different levels of the 'aid chain' (Wallace et al., 2007).

[11] Although the larger development organisations (including large international development organisations and INGOs), along with some of the larger SNGOs covered here, are potentially quite different from the types of organisations I focus on within this thesis, it is nevertheless useful to examine literature which covers a broad array of institutions. This enables me to

Large international development organisations

There is a vast body of literature which focuses on the adoption of gender issues and 'gender mainstreaming' within large international development organisations, often outlining constraints experienced and/or a lack of progress. An early study of this nature is the analysis by Razavi and Miller (1995b) of the efforts to 'institutionalise gender issues' into the World Bank, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This research was undertaken by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) as part of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, amidst concerns regarding 'insufficient institutional mechanisms to promote the advancement of women' (1995b:i). It aimed to investigate efforts to mainstream gender within these organisations, and identify specific obstacles and opportunities.

Although identifying different issues within each organisation, overall these authors concluded that progress had been made, for example in broadening the 'conceptualisations of women's roles' (1995b:vi), but that there were various challenges, for example in the actual implementation of the planned gender work. Integration was a particular problem. Fitting gender concerns within the organisations' existing mandates and ideologies was very challenging. These were found to have considerable influence on the substantive approaches taken to gender work. Razavi and Miller for example, identified the need to 'bring out the economic and efficiency dimension of gender, so as to "fit" the subject with the [World Bank's] mandate' (1995b:vii). Problems of insufficient capacity and expertise were also identified, both generally and even amongst those individuals specifically mandated to promote gender issues, who also often lacked 'authority [and] seniority' (1995b:vii). Other problems were a 'lack of adequate budgeting' (1995b:vi) and a 'lack of political commitment' (1995b:vii). Razavi and Miller conclude that the 'challenge remains in ensuring that paper commitments are translated into concrete practice' (1995b:vi).

Many studies have highlighted fairly similar types of issues amongst the same or comparable organisations, with several suggesting clear limitations on what has been achieved. For example, a more recent article by Prügl and Lustgarten (2006), focusing

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identify and examine more broadly the themes that often dominate in certain discussions regarding gender work and how it is incorporated into and understood within development organisations. It also enables me to examine the potential relevance, and highlight similarities and differences, of such findings and debates to SNGOs.

on the same three organisations, noted specific constraints that continued to hamper progress in incorporating gender analysis in their work, particularly in UNDP. The authors did, however, note that many measures had been put in place over the years, for example in terms of budgetary support, prioritisation, and capacity building, and that progress had been made in 'mainstreaming gender' in these organisations.

While identifying apparent progress, Prügl and Lustgarten look particularly at the kind of gender approaches the organisations have adopted. They argue that they have 'incorporated mainstreaming into their practices... on their own terms, fitting feminist demands to organisational purposes in different ways' (2006:68). As such they claim that, 'feminist agendas have been subsumed [and co-opted] under organisational agendas in all three organisations' (2006:69). They warn of the potential of such co-option to 'undermine the goal of gender equality' (2006:68), and thus to affect outcomes. In this they echo points made by Razavi and Miller (1995b) a decade earlier, by pointing out the ways in which 'the [World] Bank has adjusted feminist arguments to the logics of liberal economics, isolating gender analysis from financial and macroeconomic interventions' (Prügl & Lustgarten, 2006:64).

A study by Hirschman (2006) points to similar, but slightly different, processes at play, this time in relation to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In a historic review of the organisation, he sought to explain why 'implementation lags far behind rhetoric' (2006:72). Noting that gender has become widely accepted and espoused, he contends that various forms of 'bureaucratic resistance' have marginalised such concerns, limiting progress in outcomes. He suggests that while many reasons are often proffered to explain this lack of progress, such as a shortage of resources and alternative priorities, the problem is actually that:

> *"Gender" appears to have been widely but not deeply accepted... It is supported when it is limited in scope and ambition, has its own resources to support it, does not wander too far or fast beyond its accepted confines, and does not complicate or burden life too much for busy professionals. The result is a quiet undermining of the effectiveness of gender analysis and commitment to women through chronically delayed or unimplemented mandates.* (Hirschmann, 2006:83).

Yet another case study is that by Crewe and Harrison (1998), of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the INGO, Intermediate Technology (see also Harrison, 1997). They outline various ways in which the gender agenda becomes

'depoliticised' and marginalised, and often reduced to a focus on women. The 'kaleidoscope of influences' (Crewe & Harrison, 1998:64) that lead to this includes for example the simplification of gender analysis through the adoption of various technical 'tools'; concerns about the applicability of 'transformational' agendas to the organisation's core objectives; and worries expressed about 'imposing' gender objectives on other cultures; as well as the specific understandings, and at times resistance, of individual staff.

These studies, along with many others, identify a fairly similar range of interlinking factors that negatively affect the institutionalisation of gender issues and the capacity of organisations to achieve specific gender outcomes. While these include institutional constraints, such as lack of budgetary support and prioritisation, insufficient capacity and expertise, and resistance to feminist agendas, these limitations are seen as integral to (and partially an outcome of) one of the main identified problems, that of the 'co-option', 'simplification' and 'transformation' of feminist agendas. Claims that the 'gender agenda' is co-opted by such organisations, and 'blunted' (Cornwall et al., 2007a:7) in the process, along with concerns about the ways in which it is 'depoliticised' of its 'feminist intent' through simplifications during implementation, are fairly widespread. Cornwall et al. (2007a) suggest that this has been a critical element of the sustained critique of 'gender mainstreaming' as well as of accounts of and explanations for the failure of development organisations to achieve gender objectives.

One key distinction in these discussions is that between what is termed 'instrumental feminism' – a process by which feminist agendas are 'instrumentalised' for goals other than 'gender equality', such as to promote economic growth (often claimed for the World Bank: Bessis, 2001, see also references cited above) – and gender work which 'values equality for intrinsic... reasons' (Razavi, 1997:1113). Several authors have pointed out that this kind of key difference, together with many other kinds of diversity of approach, are enabled, as well as concealed, by a 'consensus discourse' (Longwe, 1997) and the use of 'buzzwords' (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Such buzzwords – 'terms that combine general agreement on the abstract notion they represent with endless disagreement about what they mean in practice' (Cornwall, 2007:472) – are argued to enable organisations, as well as individuals, to hide their resistance to feminist agendas, while ostensibly embracing such approaches. Longwe (1997) gives a detailed account of how this takes place, using a hypothetical example of a bilateral donor organisation. Indeed, concerned about what is done under the name of these buzzwords, Cornwall and Brock (2005:1044) suggest that such terms are often used as

'fuzzwords' by certain actors and organisations, in order to 'conceal ideological differences' and 'shelter multiple agendas' (Cornwall, 2007:481, 494).

There is a suggestion here that such terms are knowingly misused as they 'lend the legitimacy that development actors need to justify their interventions' (Cornwall & Brock, 2005:1044; see also Batliwala, 2007). It is argued for instance that 'gender' is used in a 'depoliticised' way and subverted from its original feminist intent – and the adoption of gender policies and gender work therefore does not necessarily signify any real change in approaches or outcomes (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Cornwall, 2007). Even where there is no such explicit intent, it is pointed out that, a 'common professional language cloaks a very wide range of ideological standpoints. Radical messages about gender equity have been 'translated' into policies with more conservative rationales and goals' (Sweetman, 1997:3).

International NGOs

Many similar critical assessments have been made of the gender work of INGOs. Various research, practitioner reflections, and evaluations highlight: little change in women's lives; the depoliticisation and simplification of gender issues during implementation and in the process of policy making; disparities between specific policies and objectives and what happens during implementation; and, difficulties getting gender issues sufficiently on the agenda (see for example Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Derbyshire, 2012; House, 2005; various in Porter et al., 1999a; Smyth, 2007; Wallace & Wilson, 2005).

The research on the take up and operationalistion of gender issues in INGOs mirrors that on the larger international development organisations, particularly in its emphasis on constraints, although the specific dynamics at play may be slightly different. There is also variation between organisations, which might be due to their specific organisational remits, their institutional processes, their history and experience of working on gender issues, as well as perhaps differences in the potential commitment and expertise of staff. In order to illustrate some of these points I focus here on literature relating to two INGOs in particular – Oxfam GB and WaterAid – which have very different histories of incorporating gender issues into their work.

Oxfam GB is one INGO, amongst several others, that has taken its commitment to gender issues particularly seriously since the mid-1980s. It is one of the earliest INGOs to adopt a gender policy initiating many organisational changes, including initially the

creation of specific points of responsibility for implementing the policy. Recognising some of the same limitations as identified above and in a strive to get 'Oxfam 'right' for women' (Porter et al., 1999b:5), it has embarked on much soul searching and reflection, including for example the 1999 publication 'Gender Works: Oxfam Experience in Policy and Practice' (Porter et al., 1999a).[12] Claiming that while 'the principles of equality between women and men, and working with women to promote their rights, have largely been accepted: attention [was] moved to putting such principles into practice' (Porter et al., 1999b:7), and addressing the challenges of implementing their gender policy.

As such, the publication brought together the reflections of 36 individuals, who in a process of stock taking, charted successes and failures and organisational learning. The diverse case studies show how specific circumstances often vary quite significantly between different projects and countries. As the introduction (Porter et al., 1999b) highlights, while there are many opportunities for success, there are also a number of specific challenges, including those of structural changes, resource cuts, and resistance. Specifically noted is the need for not only 'consistent and coherent systems and procedures', but also a personal commitment of staff at all levels to what is referred to as 'the spirit as well as the letter of gender equality' (Porter et al., 1999b:9).

In order to look in more detail at some of the specific types of problems noted, I focus here on one particular contribution to the volume, by Alice Iddi (1999). Iddi specifically details the lack of progress made in integrating a focus on changing gender relations within a soil and water conservation project in Burkina Faso. Despite conceding that progress in this regard was perhaps limited by the lack of explicit initial aims to address gender concerns,[13] Iddi contends that a major constraint was a lack of skills in gender analysis and knowledge of what a 'gender perspective' might mean amongst staff and partner organisations. This was despite potential illusions to the contrary as a result of 'proclamations and rhetoric... in their project proposals' (Iddi, 1999:81). As such she maintains that women were simply tagged on, and 'although the language of Oxfam has changed, the actual work in West Africa has remained in the WID mode' (Iddi, 1999:81). However, Iddi also suggests a further complication – the need to look at

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[12] There is of course a much larger body of literature which focuses on the incorporation of gender into Oxfam (see for example: Dawson, 2005; various in MacDonald, 1994; Pialek, 2007; 2010; Smyth, 1999; 2007; various in Wallace & March, 1991; Wong, 2012; 2013).

[13] Although perhaps in itself conceived of as a 'failure' within an organisation which aims to 'promote equity in projects and institutionalise gender analysis in its procedures' (Iddi, 1999:78).

gender relations and what equality means in different cultural contexts. She notes: 'Although the rhetoric of gender analysis gives the illusion of universality, when applied to complex local situations, it can lead to inaccurate understanding and inadequate (or even counter-productive) interventions' (Iddi, 1999:83).

Although on the one hand accepting the diversity of ideas and positions on gender equality (e.g. Iddi, 1999; Porter et al., 1999b) those writing on, and from within, Oxfam[14] also raise concerns, as with large development organisations, regarding problems stemming from the 'lack of clarity and precision' (Smyth, 1999:20) in gender terminology. Smyth points out that the 'lack of clarity in language and concepts... 'impedes achievement of the goals of equality between women and men'' (Smyth, 2007:583; also quoting Freeman, 2002:7). She argues that in the process of institutionalisation and implementation various gender terminologies, such as 'empowerment', 'gender' and 'gender mainstreaming', and gender goals have lost their feminist 'moorings and become depoliticised' (Smyth, 2007:582).

Analyses of other INGOs have noted many similar issues at play, although with some differences, reflecting the different levels and histories of the incorporation of gender concerns. Literature on WaterAid for example details particular issues faced by an INGO that has more recently incorporated a gender analysis, and historically has a predominately technical focus. According to Wallace and Wilson (2005) discussions about gender began in WaterAid in 1994, in response to both internal as well as external influences. They detail certain areas of progress, in terms of commitment from particular staff (often middle managers or gender 'champions'), organisational learning and increased internal debate. Progress has been made over time, as 'gender' has gained prominence, and been taken forward by specific country offices. Constraints that impede progress have included conflicts with other organisational goals; staff resistance, along with concerns that gender equality is beyond the organisation's remit and 'interferes with local cultures' (Wallace & Wilson, 2005:130); lack of adequate investment in terms of time and resources; a lack of senior management commitment; lack of guidance and support for staff; the demand for simplified tools and quick-fixes; and, wide variations in the 'understanding and application of gender concepts... across the agency' (Wallace & Wilson, 2005:124). While not focusing specifically on evaluating progress in outcomes, Wallace and Wilson (2005) noted however that much of the

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[14] For example Smyth (1999; 2007).

gender work that does take place follows a WID rather than GAD approach, and suggested a need to move towards changing this.

House (2005), providing a consultant's reflection on the efforts to incorporate gender into one of WaterAid Tanzania's programmes between 1999-2002, noted many of the same barriers which impeded progress and contributed to a 'gap between international policy [on gender in water projects] and organisational policy and practice' (2005:209). She specifically documented limitations stemming from: the lack of an overall policy; the diversity of views and understandings of gender issues; concerns regarding imposing unsuitable agendas on other cultures; time limitations; lack of interest, responsibility and commitment; a lack of staff skills and organisational guidance; and interestingly, unlike others, the need to 'help... [technical] practitioners to identify more practical ways of responding on a daily basis' (2005:223). She did, however, note significant progress made, specifically in terms of women's participation, and associated shifts in gender ideologies and practices; progress which often depended on 'the interest and commitment of individuals' (2005:211).

What such literature, along with others (e.g. Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Derbyshire, 2012), outlines are various challenges that affect the incorporation of gender issues into the work of INGOs, and the achievement of gender related goals. Although differing in their particulars, these are generally fairly similar types of factors to those noted in relation to large international development organisations, including both a range of institutional barriers, as well as individual resistance and lack of knowledge and expertise, and an overall concern about the simplification and transformation of 'feminist' agendas.

Southern NGOs

The incorporation, and implementation, of gender issues into/by development organisations at another level of the 'aid chain', that of SNGOs, as well as other Southern institutions, such as state bureaucracies,[15] has also been examined. While similar factors are highlighted, additional issues linked to the power dynamics that accompany funding regimes, as well as the significance of different 'cultural' views and practices are found to be important.

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[15] Specifically on state bureaucracies see for example Madsen (2011) and Standing (2004).

An early study of the gender work of Southern development organisations is that of Goetz (1996; 1997b; 2001). Identifying the 'persistent re-routing of gender-redistributive goals into measures which pathologise women's needs into matters for welfare provision' (1996:2), Goetz aimed to investigate the implementation and interpretation of such policies in two gender-focused credit and income generation programmes in Bangladesh. One of these was implemented by an NGO (BRAC) and the other was a state-run programme. She argued specifically for the need to focus, in addition to structural factors, on 'the everyday practices of the actual implementers of policy: the lower-level bureaucrats or field workers in development agencies who engineer the 'fit' between... policies and local realities' (1996:1). She suggested this was frequently neglected, despite being 'one of the most critical' factors affecting the implementation of gender policies (1996:1). She aimed in particular to focus on the ways in which 'unpopular goals' might be 'subverted' through more 'subtle practices and personal understandings' (1996:4) and the 'discretion' (1996:9) of such individuals.

Goetz found that: 'most often, field workers' own biases undermine the more progressive aspects of [gender] policies and reinforce dominant and conservative interpretations of women's needs in development' (1996:i), thus affecting the ways in which work is implemented.[16] She argued that an overall lack of clarity of progressive goals allowed a range of factors to come into play. These included scope for field workers to 'act on their own interpretations and preferences' (1996:11), their perspectives regarding the legitimacy of such policies, flexibility in the ways in which they carry out their work (for example deciding on loan eligibility), and their perception of what their role should be in terms of altering gender dynamics. As such a particular element of what Goetz highlights is the potential derailing of 'transformative agendas' as a result of a lack of clarity of gender goals and forms of staff resistance, arguably compounded by a lack of understanding and skills.[17]

Another piece of literature focused on BRAC is a chapter by Rao and Kelleher (1997), which analyses and reflects on the start-up phase of a gender related organisational change process that the authors were involved in facilitating. The chapter, which discusses the participatory processes followed, and the authors' thinking regarding the

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[16] Although she did note certain variations; for example, while by no means a clear-cut divide, she claims that women fieldworkers were more likely than their male counterparts to interpret and enact policies in ways that helped to potentially challenge, as opposed to reinforce, existing gender structures.

[17] Although as outlined in the next section Goetz (1996) also questioned the extent to which such programmes were formally about such 'transformative' agendas.

concepts and approaches adopted, highlights some of the specific findings of the needs assessment; various issues potentially affecting how gender issues might be approached, which in many ways reflect some of Goetz's (1996; 1997b; 2001) findings. One such issue identified was that although there was a general agreement amongst staff at all levels about the organisational goals of women's empowerment, there was a lack of clarity on what this meant and 'uncertainties and disagreements on programming strategies, particularly in the areas of women's mobility, intra-household decision-making and conflict, and ensuring freedom from violence' (Rao & Kelleher, 1997:132-133). There was also found to be a leaning towards 'harmonious solutions' as opposed to confrontation, and empowerment goals were often 'eclipsed' by other organisational goals and targets, such as credit delivery.

Yet another study focused on the credit programmes of Bangladeshi based organisations is that by Ackerly (1997). Concentrating on the work of four organisations,[18] Akerley focused on the ways in which their credit programmes affect borrowers and promote women's empowerment (or not) through their specific design. She found that while some programmes work within and thus reinforce the existing gender hierarchy, others, challenge this. According to Akerley this was affected by a number of factors, including: the priority of the organisation; the way work is structured; the main priority and design of programmes and completing goals; and, how programmes are implemented.

Although focused principally on organisational and programme priorities and procedures, Ackerly highlights the ways in which these factors affect staff's approach to their work; arguing that: 'the management of credit programmes must choose to promote women's empowerment and structure incentives that encourage workers to choose empowerment of women as their goal too' (1997:148). She found, for example, that within Grameen and BRAC the competing demands of other goals, related specifically to loan repayment, had a negative effect on women's empowerment. Shakti, on the other hand, made 'credit a means to empowerment rather than women as a means to credit' (1997:152) through specific programme design and models of loaning.

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[18] 'The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a Bangladeshi NGO operating nationally; Grameen Bank, a Bangladeshi development bank operating nationally; Save the Children, USA/Bangladesh Field Office (SCB), an international NGO operating in a few regions in Bangladesh; and, Shakti Foundation, a young local NGO operating in the urban slums of Dhaka' (Ackerly, 1997:141).

Although looking at a very different range of activities and a very different cohort of staff, these findings are similar in several respects to the research on large international development organisations and INGOs. Indeed they highlight some fairly similar types of issues affecting how gender is taken up and approached by these types of development organisations. This includes for example: the challenge of competing priorities, the need for clear agendas, the importance of organisational priorities, goals, and procedures, and how programmes are managed, the issue of lack of clarity in relation to conceptions of gender and women's empowerment, and variations in understanding and interpretation.

A more recent study of Southern actors is research carried out by Transform Africa (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006). Concerned about the lack of progress for poor women across Africa despite years of gender rhetoric and activities, including by the Transform Network, they sought to investigate 'what was going on around gender' and why such work was 'not translating into real change, either within NGOs or within communities' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:23 & 12). Focusing on the work of SNGOs in the Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia, who were perceived as resistant to gender issues, they aimed to uncover the reasons for the fact that 'there was much talk about gender… with little real action' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:30).

The research found that 'mechanical' methods were common in gender work. There was a 'preponderance of checklists of who does what, when and where at the expense of undertaking actual practical work with communities' (Wendoh and Wallace 2006:73). The use of such simplistic tools was reported to result in a focus on the roles of women and men, rather the relationships between them and the value of these roles. Integrally linked to this, the study found that the 'gender agenda' was often imposed as a result of donor and partner requirements, which could often lead to an absence of skills, understanding and ownership, and ultimately to various forms of resistance, ranging from outright rejection to staff 'masquerading' as gender sensitive.

Another factor was the influence of the views and beliefs of staff that were shaped by religion, family socialisation, and 'culture and tradition' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:69). The research concluded that such views and beliefs frequently conflicted with the objectives and ideologies of the gender work of these NGOs and were principal constraining factors. According to Wendoh and Wallace: 'What became clear during the research is how deeply [staff's] stated commitment to new gender approaches clashed with their own personal beliefs and behaviours' (2006:101), resulting in few that 'embraced' these new ideas.

Rather than simply interpreting this as a problem of staff's understandings of such principles, the authors argue that this resistance was partially the result of the inappropriateness of many gender concepts to local realities and ways of seeing the world: '…respondents felt that... their own local cultural gender values were either not considered or respected enough to be incorporated into the dominant gender transformation strategies' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:102). They argue for the need to 'approach... gender work from African local perspectives and contexts' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:105; see also Wendoh, 2007). However, despite this, there is no discussion in their account of ways in which these alternative perspectives might challenge and contest the content of the dominant gender transformative paradigm. Ideas such as 'gender equality' were perceived to be 'either misunderstood or misinterpreted' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005:71) rather than up for debate.

Although the view that gender issues have been imposed on Southern organisations, producing 'policy slippage', is fairly widespread,[19] some authors criticise this simple view of gender work as a set of unwanted 'alien' ideas and agendas. They point out the role local organisations have in interpreting, influencing and contributing to such ideas. Datta, for example, in research on local women's NGOs[20] in Botswana notes that some 'are more circumspect about the role of external agencies...; [whilst] acknowledge[ing] their impact on local thinking,... they also stress the importance of local dynamics' (2004:260-1). As one respondent told her: 'International conferences have helped people realise there are alternative ways of thinking. That realisation has inspired local thinking which is not internationally led' (Datta, 2004:261, quoting a respondent from Women and the Law in Southern Africa; see also Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Fallon, 2003; Manuh, 1998).

Investigating whether the timing was right for the inclusion of men in gender discourse and programmes, Datta (2004) evaluated the situation of gender work within the government and amongst women's organisations in Botswana, identifying a number of constraints. She noted, for example, specifically in relation to the government programmes, that 'institutional inertia and budgetary constraints' (2004:262) limited the government's progress on 'women's issues'. She also argued that despite rhetoric on 'gender' many 'government and NGO initiatives remain rooted in the Women in

[19] As noted above (see also Miers, 2011 for a discussion of this in relation to various African government institutions).

[20] What I term women's rights organisations (WROs). As discussed later in this chapter I distinguish between what I term WROs and development NGOs.

Development... philosophy at a programmatic level', demonstrated by the predominant focus on 'women-only projects' (2004:261). However, she did also note that some of the women's NGOs 'have prioritised equity and empowerment more in tune with the Gender and Development agenda' (2004:259), and that those focused on women only projects argued that this was a necessary approach in order to meet women's needs and not get side-tracked.

Another piece of research which focuses on the ways in which gender is incorporated and understood during implementation in the global South (but which also incidentally spans, and illustrates the overlap, between different types of organisations) is a study by Ferguson (2010) which focuses on a World Bank micro-credit tourism project in Honduras. While she notes how the project failed in its objective to adequately integrate women into the project,[21] another criticism was the ways in which 'gender' was interpreted at the project level. Although acknowledging that 'gender' and 'gender equality' were often equated in project documents with 'women's economic empowerment' (a common critique of the World Bank, as outlined above), she nevertheless criticised what she viewed as failures to adopt a more radical approach. Concerned, like others, about the 'appropriation' of 'gender' for other objectives, she was specifically critical of 'the conservative ways in which gender equity was translated at the operational level' (2010:12), and the reinforcement, as opposed to challenge, to existing gender relations. Implicit in her analysis is a perception regarding an inadequate and incorrect understanding of 'gender equality' as it is ultimately intended (and should) exist within development work.

Sardenberg (2007) focusing on gender and development work in Brazil, also highlights the potential 'watering down' of feminist ideas as they are translated from theory to policy and practice. Based on her experiences in the field, Sardenberg argues that the concept of 'gender' is resisted by planners and practitioners in Brazil, as it is 'bent' and 'stretched' to fit the needs of different actors, becoming less 'radical' in the process. As Sardenberg notes, while the 'concept of gender has gained greater acceptance, it is always necessary to verify the meaning at play behind it (Simião, 2002), and what approach to the concept does in fact get implemented' (2007:56). Indeed, she details a 'range of simplifications that arise' both as a result of 'pragmatic reasons' and also due to 'inevitable resignifications' as academic language is translated into policy and

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[21] She notes that this was as a result of women's groups not being given priority or being adequately supported, and a lack of analysis of how this could be achieved.

practice (2007:56). This includes: gender meaning 'man and woman'; gender meaning 'women'; 'doing gender' as something different from 'doing feminism'; and, 'gender hiding women'. As a result, and referring to the feminist endeavour to get gender on the agenda within development work, Sardenberg cautions:

> *...we must be aware that no matter our various attempts at 'refining' the concept of gender, and independent of our constant struggle to politicize it, translations and retranslations of the term may always 'water it down' or incur some other forms of 'corruption' of the meaning we strive to assert (Scott, 2001)... [T]here will always be 'tensions... between a feminist critique of social structures and more utilitarian uses of a "gender" focus in development' (Radcliffe et al., 2004:02).* (Sardenberg, 2007:60).

Sardenberg et al. (1999) provide a concrete example of this simplification and depoliticisation of 'gender' in an article which charts the process and challenges of trying to incorporate gender into a state-sponsored rural development project in North East Brazil, for which they worked as consultants. They detail several specific challenges. One was the difficulties of coming to a 'common understanding' with the project's senior management 'of what a gender programme should involve, and whether 'doing gender' was the same as 'doing feminism'' (1999:34) – with gender work often being equated with income-generation for women or seen as the need to focus on men and women, without being based on a gender analysis which recognises unequal power relations. Another challenge was resistance from some senior staff members, both men and women, to more political goals and objectives. And, yet another was the gender programme being seen as less important than more technical aspects of the project. Despite the success of their work with female project beneficiaries Sardenberg et al. (1999) detail the 'mounting complaints on the part of local project co-ordinators, who were still accusing us of doing 'feminism' instead of 'gender'' (1999:37), concluding that 'it is much more comfortable and safer for them [project co-ordinators] to restrict the aim to 'integrating gender', ignoring its more political objectives' (1999:37).

Once again, exploring the ways in which gender concerns are incorporated into and by development organisations, this time focusing on Southern institutions, this literature highlights a number of fairly similar factors and processes which are perceived to negatively affect this and the outcomes of such work. Although in certain cases quite different, similar sorts of issues are highlighted including not only resource and capacity constraints, but also individual resistance, lack of knowledge and skills, and once again

concerns regarding the transformation and watering down of 'feminist' agendas. However, other factors are also highlighted. They include the possible external imposition of the 'gender agenda' on such organisations as a result of donor and partner requirements. The potential result is a lack of skills, understanding and ownership, the use of inappropriate gender concepts, and ultimately staff resistance. In addition to this, different 'cultural' views and practices are also often noted to be of significance to the ways in which gender work is incorporated into and undertaken by Southern development NGOs and other institutions.

Much of the literature on Southern organisations cited above predominately focuses on more general 'development' oriented organisations and those that 'mainstream' gender into their organisations and interventions (often, although not always) amongst other goals. However, there are of course other kinds of organisations that work on 'gender' which exist in Southern contexts. This includes, for example, WROs and other rights promotion and protection organisations.[22] While Datta (2004, cited above) focused partially on WROs, others, for example Wendoh and Wallace (2005; 2006) specifically point out that they did not include such organisations in their research and suggest that findings may have been different for these types of organisations. Goetz (2001) similarly points out that she would expect findings to be different for these types of organisations.

Since this literature focuses on factors affecting the extent and ways in which gender is 'incorporated' into the work of development organisations, certain issues highlighted above may indeed be different in, and perhaps not relevant to, organisations for whom gender/women is their main focus. This includes, for example, the challenges of competing agendas, lack of organisational and programming priority, and internal budgeting constraints. It might also be that a lack of staff skills and knowledge is not so much of a potential issue in the case of these types of organisations. But, what about the specific ways in which gender is approached and policies and concepts are interpreted, understood, and enacted by such organisations and their staff, particularly

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[22] Although clear-cut distinctions are difficult to make, and such organisations might often also define themselves as 'development' NGOs, their focus is specifically, and often exclusively, on women/gender issues and/or the protection and promotion of women's rights. As such, while they may in some cases be involved in quite similar gender related activities as the more general 'development' oriented organisations, they can generally be distinguished from such organisations on the basis of their distinct overall organisational 'gender' and/or women's rights remit and focus.

as such work is put into practice? And related to this, what about potential assessments of resistance, transformation and/or watering down of 'feminist' agendas?

There is a wide range of literature which focuses, to varying extents and in different ways, on the work of WROs in Southern contexts. Some of this concentrates on the rise of autonomous women's movements in specific countries, exploring the various factors affecting this. This includes, for instance, Tripp's (2001) work on Uganda and the work of Fallon (2008) and Tsikata (2009) on Ghana (also on Ghana see Dawuni (2009)). While detailing the types of issues covered and the agendas and goals of organisations in general, this is not the primary focus of such literature, which does not focus on exploring the gender work and approaches, and particular understandings, of organisations and their staff *per se*.

There is other literature which also includes, to a greater or lesser extent, a focus on the gender work and approaches of WROs, at times alongside, and in comparison to, other types of organisations. While some such literature has a more general focus, others concentrate on and detail specific organisations. Literature which touches (in whole or in part) on WROs in Ghana, for example, includes Acquaye-Baddoo and Tsikata (2001), Agyemang-Mensah and Apt (1998), Anyidoho and Manuh (2010), and Manuh (2007b).

However, due to its specific focus, this literature on Ghana does not generally provide a detailed analysis of the gender work of, and its implementation within, specific organisations. Indeed, this literature is not generally aimed at assessing the 'success' or 'failure' of specific organisations in relation to gender work, and the possible reasons for this, or providing detailed organisational analyses of the ways in which gender is incorporated, approached and understood within implementation. Instead, the work of WROs is often detailed as part of a more general overview of the type of focus and approaches of organisations, and/or the women's rights sector in general, sometimes in relation to changes which have occurred over time, or in detailing the work of organisations on a specific theme (for instance gender training, e.g. Acquaye-Baddoo and Tsikata, 2001).[23] An exception is Anyidoho and Manuh (2010) who focus on

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[23] For example, Tsikata (2009) provides a summary of the issues, analysis and approaches of WROs in general (alongside other types of organisations) in her overview of the development of various women's rights coalitions and networks in Ghana. And, while Manuh (2007b) explores motivations and understandings of gender work (alongside an overview of gender work in Ghana, its history, and the issues covered), this is based on a survey of individual academics and activist, rather than the work of particular organisations.

discourses of empowerment in different types of organisations, including one WRO (WiLDAF). Focusing on written documents, supplemented by interviews, they conclude that while many empowerment discourses in Ghana suffer from instrumentalism and 'are framed in terms of welfare/basic needs and women in development (WID) approaches' (2010:272), 'a few organisations such as WiLDAF use rights-based approaches' (2010:272).

Although not based on indepth studies of the approaches of and implementation of gender work by specific organisations, other sources on Ghana (cited above) seem to suggest a 'political' focus among WROs, in terms at least of their areas of work and issues covered. Dawuni for example, talking of changes which have occurred since the late 1990s, notes that in addition to the 'exponential increase in the number of women's organizations in recent years... The goals pursued by these organizations have also changed, with a remarkable shift away from a concentration on service delivery and social welfare issues to a focus on legal and political advocacy on issues of governance, women's political participation, and the enforcement of women's rights' (2009:1). And Manuh (although not necessarily confined to WROs) states that organisations, during this period have 'broadened the range of concerns and issues and challenged the status quo in profound ways' (2009b:132). However, as noted above, this literature does not involve a detailed investigation of the ways in which such work is implemented and understood within specific organisations.

A body of literature of relevance here is that which focuses on how feminist concepts 'travel' between different contexts and geographical locations, and how ''local' organisations have absorbed, appropriated and refracted ['global' development] discourses' (Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010:147). Often (although not always) focused on WROs and/or other rights promotion and protection organisations, such literature explores how various actors encounter, engage with and utilise 'transnational' gender and feminist ideas within their work.

One example of such literature is the work of Millie Thayer (2000; 2010a; 2010b), who focuses on the ways in which transnational feminist concepts travel between the US and Brazil. As Thayer puts it, her work contributes to a 'growing body of academic literature on "travelling theories" [which is] interested in untangling the complex and often disjunctive connections among feminisms in different geographical locations' (Thayer, 2000:207). Her work specifically adds to this literature by providing a concrete analysis; focusing on 'how social movements selectively appropriate and transform global meanings, and materialize them in local practices' (Thayer, 2000:207-8).

Concentrating on the work of SOS Corpo (SOS Body), a Brazilian feminist NGO, Thayer outlines the ways in which transnational discourses focused on 'women's bodies and empowerment' (Thayer, 2010b:201) were 'selectively appropriated-and transformed-by local Brazilian movements' (Thayer, 2010b:202); examining 'the kinds of translations produced... as meanings crossed borders [both geographical and class] from one context to another' (Thayer, 2010b:202). Thayer outlines the ways in which activists in Brazil 'engaged in a process of political translation, appropriating discourses from Boston and elsewhere and reworking them to fit their own circumstances' (2010b: 207). In this process, concepts were reconfigured, giving them new meanings appropriate to the specific 'constituencies and institutions' that activists were working with, in the Brazilian context.

According to Thayer, her:

> *...study finds that, rather than simply passing on discursive bundles of meanings and practices, unchanged, feminists and other social movement actors shift the nature of practices, driving a wedge between received forms of language and their initial enactments. In the process, activists resignify meanings, adapting them for use in new circumstances. The inappropriate, unwanted, or the untranslatable are left behind as distinctive modes of implementation construct fresh understandings.* (Thayer, 2010b:206-7).

In this instance:

> *Brazilian feminists drew on Northern discourses of women and bodies that resonated, to some degree, with their experiences as young, middle- and upper-class, urban women. But their own location in a context whose class configurations, culture, and political alignments differed starkly from those faced by European and US feminists called for distinctive tactics and, ultimately, new meanings.* (Thayer, 2010b:209).

Grounded in the idea that 'there are no "original" meanings, only a continuous process of translation' (Thayer, 2010b:207), Thayer explores the ways in which, and why, discourses are transformed, rather than assessing understandings and practices and suggesting that concepts and discourses are in any way 'wrongfully' translated or misappropriated.

Another prominent author who explores the ways in which transnational feminist ideas are utilised within 'local' settings is Sally Engle Merry (2006a; 2006b). Drawing on case

studies from a number of diverse countries,[24] Merry explores how 'transnational ideas such as human rights approaches to violence against women [are] adopted' and 'become meaningful in local social settings' (Merry, 2006b:38). Focusing on the ways in which initiatives, programmes and strategies[25] are 'transplanted' (2006a:135), Merry identifies a continuum of, what she terms, 'vernacularization' – the process by which transnational ideas are 'adapted to local institutions and meanings' and thus 'remade in the vernacular' (Merry, 2006b:39). This continuum ranges from the 'appropriation' of transnational ideas, by which programmes, models and institutions are simply replicated, to 'translation', 'the process of adjusting the rhetoric and structure of these programs or interventions to local circumstances' (Merry, 2006a:135).

Focusing on the role of actors (such as 'community leaders, nongovernmental organization participants, and local movement activists' (Merry, 2006b:38)) who are involved in this process of vernacularization, Merry states that these actors: 'create programs and institutions that are a blend of transnational, national and local elements as they negotiate the spaces between transnational ideas and local concerns' (Merry, 2006a:134). According to Merry, these individuals face two ways, serving as 'intermediaries between different sets of cultural understandings of gender, violence and justice' (Merry, 2006a:2):

> *Intermediaries such as NGO and social movement activists play a crucial role in interpreting the cultural world of transnational modernity for local claimants. They appropriate, translate and remake transnational discourses into the vernacular. At the same time, they take local stories and frame them in national and international human rights language. Activists often participate in two cultural spheres at the same time, translating between them with a kind of double consciousness.* (Merry, 2006a:3).

As such these translators 'are people who can easily move between layers because they conceptualise the issue in more than one way... As they move between layers, these intermediaries translate between one set of principles and terms and another' (Merry, 2006a:210). According to Merry, within this process of translating 'up and down' (2006b:42), the human rights framework does not replace or merge together with

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[24] Including Fiji, India, China, Hong Kong and the USA.

[25] Including public education, service provision (such as shelters), criminalisation, and survey research on violence against women (VAW).

existing ideas but rather provides a 'new dimension to the way individuals think about [and can frame] problems' (2006a:180).

According to Merry, however, this process of 'translation' happens at a relatively superficial level. As she argues: 'translation does not mean transformation' (Merry, 2006a:220). Distinguishing between what she terms vernacularization, in which the 'fundamental meanings' (2006a:219) of human rights is not changed, and 'indigenization', which 'refers to shifts in meaning' (2006b:39), Merry states: 'The laws and programs acquire local symbolic elaboration, but retain their fundamental grounding in transnational human rights concepts of autonomy, individualism and equality. These programs are appropriated and translated but not fully indigenised' (Merry, 2006a:177-178). Indeed, Merry argues that while 'human rights ideas are repackaged in culturally resonant wrappings, the interior remains a radical challenge to patriarchy' (2006a:221). As such, in contrast to much of the 'gender and development' literature cited above – focused on development organisations and 'gender mainstreaming' work – Merry seems to argue that in such cases adaptations, appropriations and translations are generally strategic, and do not lead to a watering down or transformation of feminist agendas.

Another study which focuses on the 'translation' of transnational feminist concepts in a 'local' context is the work of Lu Zhang (2009). Focusing on the Chinese 'women's NGO' Domestic Violence Network (DVN), Zhang 'examine[s] the socio-political process through which DVN "translates" the transnational concept of "violence against women" in its local anti-domestic violence programs', and 'analyses how the transnational feminist movement's gender perspective and human rights rhetoric have been engaged, transmitted and transformed in local discourses and social policies in the context of DVN's activism' (2009:228).

Much of what Zhang describes is in many ways similar to Merry's findings in terms of the translation of ideas by intermediaries (in this case DVN's staff). However, unlike Merry, Zhang highlights, and appears to be concerned about, a potential loss of grounding of such work in transnational human rights and feminist perspectives that might result. Indeed, Zhang specifically describes the way in which transnational feminist ideas have been transmuted as a result of DVN's necessary engagement with the state, in particular the ACWF, the official women's organisation.

According to Zhang, the political climate in China, in which NGOs are required to work closely with the state, 'gives rise to [an] "embedded" approach' (2009:229), in which the

organisation 'engag[es] the state through dialogue, collaboration and even political dependence' (2009:235). While this has been a necessary engagement which has enabled DVN to progress with its work, Zhang describes how the transnational feminist ideas that DVN is heavily grounded in, based on a gender perspective and power analysis of violence against women, have been diluted and weakened within their work as a result. In their place work on violence against women has instead been framed in terms of family and community harmony and 'management of public order', both of which 'connect domestic violence intervention to the party state's institutional agenda' (Zhang, 2009:234). According to Zhang, this '"translation" of international feminist definitions and practices in China... has already yielded a gradual but significant *transformation* of the "original" gender and human rights perspective' (2009:236, emphasis mine). However, while Zhang concludes such transformation and translation of feminist practices, the implication seems to be that this is strategic and in response to the specific context in which DVN is working, as opposed to resistance or subversion from those within the organisation.

Mind the gap

A prominent theme in much (although not all) of the literature discussed above, particularly that which stems from and explores poor outcomes of gender policy in development organisations, is the image of 'the gap'. Disjunctures are argued to exist in a number of different areas. Particular types of changes expected in women's lives are not achieved; limited progress is made in gender objectives despite the increase in gender rhetoric; the ways which certain concepts *should* be understood and thus carried out is argued to be markedly different than what pertains in policies and/or practice.

One perceived gap is that between 'feminist theoretical positions' and aspirations and the actual policies of development organisations. Another is a disconnect between institutional gender policies and the actual implementation – where it is frequently claimed that rhetoric and commitments about gender equality and addressing unequal gender relations evaporate[26] and/or become 'depoliticised' in practice, ending up with interventions that simply target women and leave gender power relations intact. Some of these accounts also draw on theoretical distinctions developed to distinguish

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[26] For discussions of gender policy evaporation see for example Derbyshire (2002), Longwe (1997), and Moser (2005).

between different approaches, especially that between 'women in development' (WID) and 'gender and development' (GAD), in order to evaluate the theory and practice adopted by development organisations or in particular projects. In such cases, as described above, it is often argued that despite allegedly using the language of one approach, another is being adopted in practice. In these and other ways the outcomes of gender and development policies and interventions are described as being the result of a gap occurring between what it is perceived *should* happen and what *does* happen.[27]

In reflecting on the issue of disjuncture it is significant that the kinds of disparities noted are not confined to gender policy in development practice. Recent scholarship in the anthropology of development[28] has similarly drawn attention to the issue of the 'translation' of concepts by various actors during the development process and the attendant problems of disjuncture (Lewis & Mosse, 2006a; various in Lewis & Mosse, 2006b; Mosse, 2005; 2006a; Mosse & Lewis, 2006). Specifically highlighted is the need to focus on the potential influences of individuals, including staff members, and their attitudes, beliefs and values, and their 'informal everyday practices' (Mosse, 2006a:939) for their role in influencing the implementation of policy and shaping the actual development work which ensues. Utilising actor-oriented and actor-network approaches (such as those of Long, 1992), this scholarship aims to investigate the translation of ideas by development 'brokers' during the course of implementation (see Mosse & Lewis, 2006).

Such scholarship seems to suggest that development brokers 'translate' official policy ideas into something quite different – subverting these ideas for use according to their own ways of seeing and interpreting the world, and 'mak[ing] them part of their own social and political trajectories' (Mosse & Lewis, 2006:16). Although not always clear, there seems to be a suggestion that this is to some extent a conscious translation. Mosse, for example, notes how the work of de Certeau (1984): 'has added subtlety to the understanding of agency by alerting us to the devious, dispersed and subversive

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[27] Specific exceptions to this include, for example, the works of Thayer (2000; 2010a; 2010b) and Merry (2006a; 2006b). While Thayer talks of 'appropriation', 'reconfiguration' and 'transformation' of feminist discourses, her perspective that 'there are no "original" meanings' (Thayer, 2010b:207) results in an exploration of how and why this occurs, rather than a normative assessment. Merry on the other hand, while assessing gender violence work in relation to human rights conceptions enshrined in international law, concludes that the adaptations and translations which take place do not affect the 'radical challenge to patriarchy' (Merry 2006a:221).
[28] What Mosse (2004:644) has termed the 'new ethnography of development'.

'consumer practices' which are 'not manifest through [their] own products, but rather through [their] *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order' (de Certeau, 1984:xiii, emphasis in original)' (Mosse, 2004:645). Mosse goes on to argue: 'In other words, while 'beneficiaries' may consent to dominant models – using the authorized scripts given them by projects – they make of them something quite different' (2004:645). Not only the project workers, but beneficiaries too are engaged in this process. This point is illustrated in Mosse's detailed ethnography of a British government funded participatory rural development project in India, in which he concludes that 'both project workers **and** Bhil villagers consented to an authorised model of participatory development while *making of it something quite different from what was intended*...' (2005:129, bold emphasis original, italic emphasis mine). In this case they acted so as to maintain the social order, 'conspiring to reproduce relations of patronage' (Mosse, 2005:129).

However, this said, as Rossi, points out (while also talking about the instrumental manipulation of development discourses by development workers):

> *I am not suggesting that agents should be reduced to calculating strategists, consciously maximising their chances in all circumstances. In fact, a major challenge to anthropologists studying "development" settings today consists precisely in distinguishing between conscious strategic action (e.g., when brokers in development perform a "role" to attract projects to their village) and attitudes and dispositions that are produced unconsciously (e.g., when a Nigerien provincial functionary reenacts colonial rhetorical styles in formal speech and text).* (2006:29-30).

Getting gender 'right' – beyond disjuncture?

There are some interesting lessons from this literature for evaluating the work on gender and development policy and practice. The anthropology of development literature cited above seems to assess the perspectives of those involved against what are viewed as the *dominant*, and in some ways 'correct', development models – as Mosse puts it, in relation to 'what was intended' (2005:129) – thus, looking at the ways in which actors 'translate' and 'transform' *official* policy and ideas into *something else.* Whether this is viewed as intentional and conscious or not, it seems to suggest that there is a 'correct' reading and understanding of policy, against which these other readings are being measured.

Within the gender and development literature too the failure to achieve goals is explained in terms of disjuncture, together with, and often premised on, an underlying suggestion, albeit at times more explicit than others, that there is a 'correct' way of doing and understanding particular ideas (such as 'gender', 'gender equality' and 'empowerment') and that often what occurs in practice is the 'wrong' thing. Indeed, as I have described above, concern is frequently voiced about the cooption and subversion, watering down or mere simplification, of feminist principles and/or the reinforcement of, as opposed to challenge to, existing gender relations.

In relation to gender work, this understanding of the 'correct' way is frequently premised on what people term as 'feminist' goals and 'GAD' (as opposed to 'WID') approaches, and concerns regarding interventions in which feminist agendas are perceived as being 'instrumentalised' for other goals (such as economic growth). It also often stems from work being evaluated against a normative (often Western) feminist gender discourse, which is presumed to be 'correct'. As such, such arguments are frequently based on a view that gender work *should* be about addressing structural gender relations, themselves understood in a particular way, and anything other than this represents a disjuncture, which not only potentially leads to failures in outcomes, but represents a specific form of failure or transgression in and of itself.

However, there are a number of potential problems and dilemmas inherent in such critiques and assessments. One potential problem relates to assumptions made about the objectives of programmes. This point is highlighted by Goetz (1996), specifically in relation to the programmes of the two organisations in Bangladesh detailed above, but it is an argument that potentially applies to other situations as well. Goetz points out that it is 'in fact... probably unfair to assume that programmes targeting credit to women are necessarily concerned with transforming gender relations' (1996:9). Indeed, in this particular case 'neither programme raises gender relations and problems of conflict as being part of 'women's empowerment'' (1996:17). She claims, however, that despite the fact that 'formal policy statements avoid raising issues of conflict or transformation in gender relations. There has certainly been a process where outside observers, excited by the success of these programmes in targeting women, have assumed of and projected onto these programmes a stronger set of feminist policy ambitions than are directly espoused by management' (1996:9).

A similar point has been made by Standing (2007) who, as Cornwall et al. put it, 'argues for the need to understand the mandates of different kinds of development institutions and actors in order to assess whether they should be held responsible for

the social transformatory goals of feminism' (2007b:9; see also Razavi, 1997). Thus, the assessment that there is a disjuncture between policy and practice might in some cases be based on an erroneous or overzealous reading of the intentions of a specific organisation, programme, or project. This can be seen in a number of the examples detailed above. For example, in her analysis of a World Bank micro-credit tourism project in Honduras, Ferguson (2010), despite recognising the focus in project documents specifically on 'women's economic empowerment', nonetheless criticised the 'conservative' approaches adopted and the failure to take a more 'radical' approach.

This issue raises another, linked but separate, potential issue with such critiques of gender work, which focus on disjuncture. That is that, these sorts of critiques often occur despite an acknowledgment of the diversity, multiplicity and contested nature of terms such as 'gender', 'gender equality', and 'empowerment', and the difficulties of being able to clearly delineate between, and categorise work according to, various classifications (such as WID and GAD). In fact, in spite of this acknowledgement of diversity, there is often an underlying suggestion that there exists a position, definition, or set of goals that is 'correct'. Indeed, in assessing 'gender work' and the use of such terms and making judgements about disjunctures, authors often appear to be 'assum[ing]... an original or intrinsic meaning. [or] at least [have] a particular form in mind' (Lombardo et al., 2009:8), and are judging work against this.[29]

Talking specifically about the use of the term 'gender equality', Lombardo et al. note, 'we carry our own, implicit or explicit, normative assumptions about the criteria to assess the shaping of the meaning of gender equality, and thus see some interpretations of gender equality as more limited than others, compared with our own more or less explicitly defined concept of gender equality, which we think might produce better outcomes' (2009:8). Thus despite statements, such as that made by Porter et al. that 'there certainly has not been a linear evolution of a single set of ideas about how 'gender in Oxfam' should look, and how to get there – just as there is not, and never has been, one 'position' on gender equality' (1999b:10-11), there nevertheless often seem to be certain boundaries to this, which imply the possibility of getting gender 'right' or 'wrong' and according to which such judgements are made.

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[29] A clear exception to this detailed above is the work of Thayer whose work is premised on the idea that 'there are no "original" meanings' (2010b:207).

As such, if 'doing gender' can mean many different things and be understood in different ways, it is surely also possible that some actors and institutions actually *understand* something different by it, and this is what their policy and practice represents. Lombardo et al. (2009), for example, argue that there are multiple interpretations in policy making and that different actors' understandings of 'policy problems', such as gender equality, are affected by various normative assumptions and broader hegemonic discourses. Pointing out that gender equality 'can encompass different meanings and therefore fit into a broad range of contexts, depending on how actors from these different contexts frame it' (2009:2), they state:

> *A concept lives in a semantic universe, and its potential meanings depend on the relation with other concepts present in that universe. There is room for shaping the meaning of a concept, but not beyond the existing universe that limits what is conceptually and politically possible. This has at least two different implications: it means, first, that existing hegemonic discourses affect the strength of the borders within which the different concepts can move by constructing the parameters of the possible and thinkable and, second, that there is an element of un-intentionality in the process of making sense of reality and communicating it through frames. The main consequence of the later is that actors do not have total control on the framing of concepts, as underlying discourses delimit the understanding of issues and unconsciously steer people's frames in directions that express particular forms of gendering, racializing or sexualizing political issues and debates.* (Lombardo et al., 2009:12-13).

Drawing on the ideas of Bacchi (1999), and Verloo (2007), amongst others, Lombardo et al. (2009:10) outline that different actors attach different diagnoses ('what is/are the problem/s') and prognoses ('what is/are the solution/s') to a particular policy issue, such as gender equality. This incorporates ideas regarding 'who is deemed to face the problem of gender inequality, who caused it, who should solve it, to what extent gender and intersectionality are related to the problem and its solution, and where the problem and its solution are located in the organization of citizenship, labour or intimacy' (2009:10). Indeed, in a similar vein, Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue, utilising the ideas of philosopher Nelson Goodman (1978) in *Ways of Worldmaking*, that 'how we interpret the world depends on the frame of reference that we use' (2005:1047). Thus what individuals mean by a term, and the world envisaged, depends on this frame of reference.

Even the terms that might be used within, and in order to try and clarify what is intended by, for example, 'a gendered approach' or to distinguish between different intervention types, such as WID or GAD, are contested and can mean different things to different people. This includes, for example, 'gender equality' (see Jalušic, 2009) 'women's subordination', 'patriarchy', 'transforming social structures', and 'empowerment' (on empowerment see various contributions in Development, 2010, Vol. 13, No. 2).

This suggests that different people/organisations may *mean* different things by 'doing gender' and 'gender equality', both in policy terms and also in terms of specific ideas of 'equality' and what this might mean. As such, there is the possibility that different meanings are given to policy rhetoric and terms, and ideas such as 'gender equality', in a non-disingenuous way, where talk of subversion, co-option and/or depoliticisation, is not only too strong, but also might mean that the subtlety and intricacies of what is actually going on and understood in relation to 'gender' is missed.

This possible diversity of meanings is potentially relevant to all types of organisations, from the large international development organisations to SNGOs and WROs. However, the issue of diversity of meanings is perhaps particularly pertinent if we take into account different geographical contexts, with potentially very different 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses'. This is indeed suggested by some. For example, referring to the potential diversity within feminism, Goetz (2001) points out the need to be mindful of the context when analysing development policy and practice. She states:

> *In Bangladesh, women's identities are often bound up with relations of dependence on men, as wives and mothers, and they have few real alternatives to these identities. Given these identities, women may often articulate interests which do not challenge men's interests. It is important to recognise the value of the choices women make and not to dismiss what appear to be conservative choices within a very limited range of alternatives.* (Goetz, 2001:42).

Others similarly point out the need to be aware of the potentially diverse understandings of different concepts, such as empowerment and equality, in specific contexts. Greany, for example, in an article focused on the perceptions and ideas of two Niger programme staff, points out the often diverse interpretations and understandings of concepts such as rights, gender and education, which according to her 'challenge... feminist notions of the universal' (2008:565). As she puts it: 'such

goals, and the universalist notions on which they are based, tend to hide or even erase local and gendered understandings which constitute the 'messiness' of development in practice' (2008:565).

Likewise, Para Mallam, in a study of 'faith, gender and development agendas in Nigeria' (2006:409), notes the specific understandings and interpretations of ideas such as gender equality and empowerment within the work of a Christian women's organisation. As she argues: 'It is important to note that the motives and methods of these organisations for achieving female empowerment differ from mainstream approaches' (2006:418); 'women's faith-based organisations... are constructing their own discourses and approaches, and in the process detaching themselves from what is taken to be Western feminism' (2006:419).[30]

Indeed, the diversity within feminism itself is an important dimension to these debates. That feminism is by no means monolithic, and the existence of 'different feminisms' (Zaoudé & Sandler, 2001:26), is widely acknowledged. Basu for instance points out that there are 'profound differences in women's lives and the meanings of feminism cross-nationally' (1995:3). Mikell (1997a) highlights the ways in which African feminist approaches often differ from Western feminism. Pointing to African feminism's 'distinctly heterosexual, pro-natal' stance, she argues that 'until recently, the reference points for Western feminists and African women activists have been totally different, because Western women were emphasising individual female autonomy, while African women have been emphasising culturally linked forms of public participation' (Mikell, 1997a:4).

In addition, it should be added of course, that even references to African feminism as a single approach and to 'African women activists' as one group are also misnomers. Indeed, there are multiple views and perspectives and, as with other contexts, one must really talk about African feminisms. There exists within African feminisms a wide diversity arising out of different country contexts, different political and theoretical currents, and the different kinds of institutional contexts within which work on 'gender issues', whether self-defined as 'feminist' or not, is located, including academic institutions, government units, INGOs, and SNGOs.

The potential problems inherent in critiques of gender work, outlined above, raise questions regarding *who* can say what is 'intended' by gender policy, and whether we

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[30] The work of Thayer (2000; 2010a; 2010b) detailed above is also of relevance here.

can assume that there is a more 'correct' meaning, and that certain actors have 'translated' this into 'something else'. They also imply the imperative of looking at how specific actors understand policy ideas and the work aims they are engaged with and how this is influenced by, and can be understood in relation to, 'normative assumptions' and broader 'hegemonic discourses'.

However, at the same time, while it is indeed important to recognise and acknowledge the potential diversity of views and approaches in relation to gender work, there are also several fairly obvious predicaments related to adopting such a situated approach and emic perspective and in particular to taking this to an extreme. Indeed, while the points made above are all compelling and valid, it is possible to go so far down this route as to annihilate the possibility of making any assessment and/or critique of any gender work. For instance, if we recognise and accept *any* and *all* views and conceptions of gender, and related terms, as equally valid and 'acceptable', we lose any firm footing on which such assessment and critiques can be made. This can potentially lead us to a point where we are forced to accept (and potentially defend) *any* and *all* views and conceptions of gender, and related concepts.

Indeed, as Pearson and Jackson (1998) caution, while 'Feminism in general may reject grand narratives and policies and approaches founded on essentialist and universalist notions of women's experiences and priorities; at the same time... it cannot fall back on a 'different places, different voices' position which evades the challenge of theorising gender and development' (1998:13). As they go on to argue:

> *...in the context of what many have recognised as the institutionalisation of 'gender in development', to maintain an independent questioning feminism is paramount. ...the gendering of development is in many instances vulnerable to a reinterpretation as focusing on women, often as instruments of other development cooperation objectives, or as hiding behind an expressed concern for women's interests the pursuit of strategies which have never taken gender relations of women's conflicting and multiple interests as their starting point.* (Pearson & Jackson, 1998:13).

Indeed, it is important to be able to critique gender work, and make assessments and judgements, from a 'feminist' standpoint (whatever this might be in any particular instance). It is also important to be able to evaluate such work against certain (in many

cases perhaps 'external'[31]) criteria, values and perspectives, even if those involved (either as implementers or 'beneficiaries') *understand* it differently and/or have different perspectives, hegemonic discourses and frames of reference. This, in fact, is an important element of the feminist endeavour and political project; to challenge the status quo, analyse things from a different perspective, point out different ways of viewing the world, and critiquing how others operate and/or perceive things.

Although focusing specifically on research projects, Sharp et al. (2003) discuss this issue in relation to gender work in 'other' contexts. They note that 'one of the main dilemmas currently facing feminist geographers researching development is the contradiction between the desire to recognise the diversity of experiences of women... without falling back on a relativist position of 'different places, different voices' (Sharp et al., 2003:283, quoting Pearson and Jackson, 1998:13). They go on to argue that while:

> *The discussion of cultural imperialism is undoubtedly vital in ensuring that feminism does not go the way of other discourses of development in assuming a colonising mentality which suggests the outside expert is always right. However, this does not mean that feminists need to abandon their aims of the emancipation of women: 'Women need to be free to act from their own analysis and priorities and not be manipulated by outsiders; yet the restrictions of internalised oppression, which limit women's options, must be challenged' (Rowlands, 1997:34).* (Sharp et al., 2003:283).

Although this example talks about projects beneficiaries', the same sorts of ideas can be applied to discussions which focus on staff implementing gender work. Indeed, while staff need to be able to 'act from their own analysis and priorities' rather than being 'manipulated by outsiders' (Sharp et al., 2003:283), this does not mean that their specific approaches, perspectives and work cannot be assessed or challenged according to others' ideas, analysis and worldviews; by an 'an independent questioning feminism' (Pearson & Jackson, 1998:13).

It is also important not to discount the very real possibility that 'gender' might be taken on by organisations and/or staff because it's fashionable, and without any real understanding or commitment, and/or as an instrumental means to a goal other than 'gender equality' (at least in the way some feminists would understand it); thus affecting the ways in which such work is implemented and its outcomes. Indeed, it is important

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[31] External either to a specific organisation or to a specific cultural context.

that the space to be able to make such a conclusion is not closed down. However, the difficulty of course comes in trying to establish whether a specific 'gender agenda' has been '*knowingly'*, '*purposely'* or '*consciously'* subverted, and/or resisted, as opposed to simply being *understood* differently by those involved. Indeed, that people are not doing what we 'expect' does not necessarily mean *purposeful* subversion, or may not represent 'subversion' to them. However, this does not necessarily mean that we cannot critique such work nonetheless, or conclude that it is different from what we might intend or expect, and/or that it is not 'gender work' as we might understand it, or that it does not have the transformatory goals we envisage and strive for.

Overall, the above discussion highlights the obvious tension which exists in taking either a situated or more normative approach when looking at gender work, and the complexities and challenges involved in negotiating this path, with the clear dilemmas and contradictions that are inherent. Indeed, while pointing out some of the potential problems inherent in the critiques of gender work I do not wish to go so far as to deny the possibility of this critique, or to defend, at all costs, any and all 'gender' work. I also do not wish to deny the possibility that 'feminist' agendas might be subverted ('intentionally' or not) and remove the possibility of being able to critique gender work along these lines.

My aim is rather to highlight a potential issue which needs to be explored more fully in relation to gender work, particularly (although not necessarily only) in relation to other contexts. That is, the possibility of different conceptions and understandings, and exploring these more fully and how they influence the gender work that takes place in order for a more nuanced understanding of this work. This is to some extent what literature by, for example, Greany (2008) and Para Mallam (2006), cited above, does; exploring the particular understandings of gender concepts, such as 'equality' and 'empowerment', by those involved in such work.

Beyond disjuncture: Researching Ghanaian NGOs and gender violence

As discussed, much of the debate on gender work involves assessing such work against normative criteria. While recognising the value of this, and the necessity of being able to critique gender work against specific criteria, I have highlighted above some of the potential limitations inherent in this, particularly bearing in mind the potentially wide diversity of conceptions and understandings of gender work, and the terms used within this work (including for example gender, empowerment, and equality), which seems to exist. This is a diversity which exists not only between actors

and organisations that have quite different aims and objectives, but also between different geographical contexts and different 'feminists' who might have quite different ideas regarding causes, consequences, and solutions to, women's situation(s) and gender relations.

With this in mind, the research discussed in this thesis was designed to contribute to this wider debate, and often quite normative discussion, by exploring in detail emic conceptions and understandings of gender policies and practice, and situating these in the context of broader discourses and normative assumptions which pertain within the specific context in which such work is done. Within this I do not deny the possibility of critiquing such work. However I nevertheless argue for the importance of exploring and recognising the specific conceptions and understandings which pertain in a particular setting, and examining how these understandings influence the gender work that takes place.

Thus, rather than focusing on people's views mainly in terms of whether they either accept or resist, or the extent to which they conform to, 'gender policies', as they might be externally conceived, I explore what organisations, and those working within them, understand by specific policy ideas and what this understanding might mean in its own terms, and in relation to the broader context in which people live and work. This entails focusing on how people view existing gendered practices and the ways in which these might need to be changed. I thus aim to provide a more contextual and nuanced understanding of gender work, thereby adding to our comprehension of how gender work is undertaken by and within different development institutions and in different contexts.

Bearing in mind the issues highlighted in relation particularly to the potential significance of different geographical contexts, this study focuses on actors engaged in 'gender and development' work in the global South and investigates the ways in which prevalent 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses' influenced their understandings of their work and how it is carried out. In theory this research could have been conducted in any number of countries in the global South, but I chose to focus on Ghanaian NGOs, and their work on gender violence.

Ghana was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, Ghana presents an ideal place in which to undertake such research due to the history and range of gender work undertaken in the country. As I show in chapter 2, there is a wide variety of actors engaged in gender work in Ghana and there has been, over recent years, a burgeoning

local women's movement. Accompanying this variety and growth of gender work has been a great deal of literature, research, and critical reflection,[32] much of it by Ghanaian scholars and activists, that provides an invaluable resource and background for this research. Secondly, my knowledge of Ghana and the local 'development' sector, resulting from working in two Ghanaian NGOs from 1999 – 2001, made it an obvious choice in terms of contacts, logistics and familiarity.

There is a wide range of institutions engaged in gender and development work in Ghana. However, I decided to focus specifically on Ghanaian NGOs. [33] While neat categorisations are difficult, by Ghanaian NGOs, I refer to those which are based, operate and undertake their work within Ghana, are 'run locally by national staff or volunteers' (Wallace et al., 2007:12), are registered in Ghana as NGOs under the Companies Code, 1963 (Act 179) and with the Department of Social Welfare, and are not a subsidiary of an INGO. I focus on larger NGOs which worked nationally/in a number locations, rather than community-based organisations (CBOs) and self-help organisations (SHOs), which are generally smaller and operate only within a single community. An important part of the 'gender scene' in Ghana, NGOs are at once part of the transnational 'development' and, in some cases the 'women's rights' sectors, and at the same time they are embedded within the Ghanaian context within which staff live and work.

In terms of gender work, it is possible to loosely divide Ghanaian NGOs according to two categories: 1) more general development oriented NGOs; organisations which work on a wide range of development issues, but within this aim to 'incorporate gender' or mainstream gender into their work, or undertake some specific gender focused work, and 2) women's rights organisations (WROs); organisations which, although often also defining themselves as development NGOs, focus specifically, and often exclusively, on women/gender issues. Since it has been suggested by some (for example Goetz, 1996; Wendoh & Wallace, 2006) that differences might exist between the two, I decided to focus on both types of organisation. I was particularly interested in how variations in organisational goals and objectives and staff commitment, skills and

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[32] See for example: Anyidoho & Manuh (2010); Fallon (2008); Hodžić (2009); Madsen (2011); Manuh (1989; 1993a; 2007b); Manuh et al. (2013); Mensah-Kutin et al. (2000); Prah (2005); Tsikata (2001b; 2009).

[33] The terms 'Southern NGO' (see for example Wallace et al., 2007:12; see also Mawdsley et al., 2005), 'domestic NGO' (Fowler, 2000) 'indigenous NGO' (Fowler, 2000; Wallace et al., 2007), and national NGO are also often used to label such organisations.

knowledge, might affect understandings and implementation of gender issues within their work.

While 'gender work' in Ghana spans a range of issues, I focused specifically on work on gender violence,[35] which has become a significant focus of intervention during recent years, both globally (see Merry, 2006a; Merry, 2009), and also in Ghana (see chapter 2). Gender violence provides a particularly useful lens through which to look at the ways in which 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses' might influence understandings and implementation of gender work. A particular feature of work on gender violence is that it is to a large extent explicitly focused on the relations between, and roles and responsibilities of, men and women within marriages, and/or marriage type relationships. Within such work individuals talk about, critique, give advice about, and/or advocate for certain changes in such relationships. This includes focusing on behaviours of men and women within marriage, and their specific roles, rights and responsibilities, for instance in terms of domestic chores, decision-making, conjugal sexuality, and finances. Such work thus renders particularly visible the normative ideas and hegemonic discourses about gender relations, marriage, and the 'nature' and roles and responsibilities of men and women, which influence the ways in which it is understood and implemented.

This chapter has argued for the value of a more emic perspective in exploring the gender work of development institutions, particularly cross-nationally, in order to enable a focus on the ways in which the understandings and particular implementation might be influenced by, and thus better understood in relation to, the context in which it is carried out. This dictated that I adopt an ethnographic approach that enables one to look 'below the surface'. It entails spending extended periods of time within the organisations, participating in and witnessing their work (including not only 'formal' events and programmes, but also 'behind the scenes' discussions and processes), and talking with staff about their views and motivations. It is through such an approach that I was able to gain 'emic understandings' and attempt to 'put [myself and my readers] in the mindset and worldview of the people whose stories it tells' (Wies & Haldane, 2011:5 & 10).

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[35] This includes sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW). Although such terms are sometimes used with a specific and distinct meaning, with differences between them emphasised, they are also at times used interchangeably. For ease, I use the generic term 'gender violence' (as used by Merry, 2006a) throughout this thesis, unless referring to work which specifically defines itself in terms of SGBV, VAW or DV.

Adopting an ethnographic approach meant focusing principally on only a couple of NGOs. I therefore chose to concentrate on one development NGO (which I call People's Development Partners (PDP)) and one WRO (which I have named Action on Social Change for Women (ASCW)).[36] These two organisations were selected on the basis of a number of criteria, including their location, size, the extent and focus of their gender work, the active projects/programmes they were engaged in, and crucially their openness and willingness to participate in ethnographic research.[37]

Both ASCW and PDP have their main offices in Accra, but with operations also in other locations in Ghana. In terms of work on gender violence, this is the main remit of ASCW, a WRO established specifically to address and prevent gender violence. It does this through a range of activities including counselling, awareness raising and advocacy, training, and research. In contrast, PDP, as a more general development NGO, works on a diverse range of issues, related to key areas of intervention, including health, livelihoods, vocational training and education, and economic empowerment. The organisation incorporates gender issues into its work in a number of different ways, depending on the project,[38] and work on gender violence is only one aspect of this. It is the main focus of a few specific projects, and is also incorporated into other work, as and when appropriate.[39]

As I have outlined above, this research aimed to explore what these organisations, and those working within them, understand by specific policy ideas and what this might mean in relation to the broader Ghanaian context. This focus is reflected in the questions which guided this research:

- How do individuals in Ghanaian NGOs understand the gender focus of their work and the concepts within it, and how does this affect the ways in which such work is carried out?

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[36] As detailed in Appendix A, for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality I have used pseudonyms for the organisations researched, and staff within them. The organisational names People's Development Partners (PDP) and Action on Social Change for Women (ASCW) are pseudonyms and no connection with any organisations in Ghana, or elsewhere, with similar names is implied.

[37] While the research did not aim to investigate the two organisations selected as representative of these two particular types of organisations, the aim was rather to enable me to explore different organisational types and examine any differences which might exist between the two organisations studied.

[38] Along with a range of other factors, as outlined in chapter 3.

[39] A detailed overview of each of these organisations is provided in chapter 3.

- In what ways are these understandings shaped by the world in which they live, specifically wider normative assumptions and everyday lived gender experiences?

- In what ways is the gender-related focus and work of such organisations shaped by the specific views and understandings of these individuals and by the context in which they operate?

The data for this research was collected during two periods of fieldwork; a preliminary visit during October and November 2008, and the main fieldwork conducted over 10 months, from February – December 2009.[40] During this time, particularly the last 6 months of my main fieldwork, I focused principally on ASCW and PDP, spending considerable amounts of time in each. I moved between the two periodically, depending on their work programme and events, at times spending consecutive weeks in one or the other and at other times moving between them on a daily basis.

With ASCW, I spent most of my time mainly in and around the main office in Accra. While the organisation had some staff based in other locations, the majority of its staff members and much of its work were based in the Accra office. Hence although I inevitably got to know some individuals and areas of its work better than others, I generally interacted with a large proportion of the overall staff members and was able to gain a reasonable overview of the work carried out by, and functioning of, the organisation.

The situation in PDP however was somewhat different. Although the head office was in Accra, only a small proportion of its staff were based there. Others were located in several different project offices in various locations around the country. I wanted an overview of a range of the organisation's work and different levels of staff in the organisation, but I could not, for various logistical reasons, spend time in numerous locations. I therefore divided my time between the head office in Accra and one of the PDP field offices which was based in a small town that I refer to as 'Yassa'.[41] This project office was strategically selected based on the specific projects covered there. As a result, I spent time with only a small proportion of the organisation's overall staff, and observed only a selection of its overall work. However, I did gain an overview of the work of the whole organisation through my time in the head office, and whenever

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[40] Further details regarding research design and ethical issues are provided in Appendix A.
[41] 'Yassa' is a pseudonym adopted to maintain anonymity.

possible I attended organisational-wide events, such as meetings and trainings, at which staff from other project offices were also present.

Data was collected in these two organisations and more widely via a range of methods including participant observation, interviews, life history interviews, focus group discussions, and reviewing documents and grey literature. Although I took a broad and inductive approach to my research, my specific research focus led me to gather data related to four principal areas. First, a general overview of the organisations, and their 'gender work' in particular; second the actual planning, delivery and implementation of gender related work and practices undertaken by the organisations, and third, a focus specifically on individuals working within the organisations. This included not only their work tasks and remits, but also their views regarding their work and their broader worldviews and ideologies.

The fourth area of data collection was a focus on the broader sector of gender activities in Ghana as a whole and networking between feminist and gender focussed organisations. This came from various other 'fieldwork sites' including other Ghanaian NGOs, networking organisations and state institutions engaged in gender work, and inter-organisational and networking spaces. I interviewed a wide-variety of other NGOs, both in Accra and other locations in the country, and also spent short periods of time with a number of these conducting interviews and observing their work. This was undertaken partly for the purposes of a scoping exercise (to gain an overview of the types of organisations operating, the focus of their work, and the ways in which this was carried out), and partly as a part of the process of selecting the two main organisations on which to focus. I spent time in inter-organisational and networking spaces – another arena in which gender work takes place. I attended a number of events and meetings, either on my own or 'following' staff from ASCW and PDP to such forums. I also conducted interviews with representatives from various networking organisations. In addition to this, I conducted interviews with various government officials, academics, and gender activists. This enabled me to gain a picture of the scale and scope of gender work in Ghana and the environment within which ASCW and PDP were working, the topical gender issues being discussed, the extent of networking and collaboration between organisations, and the activities and discussions undertaken in such spaces. Further details regarding my principal research areas are provided in Appendix A.

Outline of the thesis

Having established in this chapter the rationale for this research and the literature to which it contributes, chapter 2 provides an overview of the context in which the gender work of ASCW and PDP is conducted. It gives both an overview and history of a) the wider field of 'gender work' in Ghana of which this is part, and b) broader elements of the national context which are of specific relevance to such work (particularly that focused on gender violence), predominately focusing on ideas and practices regarding marriage and the roles, rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives. Both elements are essential to enabling a fuller understanding of the gender work carried out by ASCW and PDP, which the subsequent chapters go on to explore. In chapter 3, I introduce ASCW and PDP more substantially. I provide a detailed overview of each organisation, including their structure, staffing, remits, projects and programmes, funding, and internal mechanisms – both in general and specifically in relation to gender.

In chapter 4 I begin to explore the ways in which the gender violence work of the two organisations takes place in practice, by focusing on two public events, one in each organisation. Exploring the ways in which ideas are talked about, the issues which emerge, and the reactions of 'constituents', the chapter begins to explore what might be going on in these situations and what might account for this. While the advocacy and public context may indeed influence what takes place and how issues are talked about, such explanations do not fully account for this. As outlined in this introduction, a focus on staffs' worldviews and general ideas from the broader Ghanaian context is also necessary. This includes understandings and ideas of the terms 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' and marriage, which impact on the ways in which individuals understand and carry out their work. I explore these issues and processes in greater detail in the next two chapters (chapters 5 and 6).

I focus firstly on understandings of 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' in chapter 5. Here I argue that the specific ways in which the staff at ASCW and PDP used the terms 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' in relation to their work contexts resulted from an interplay of different ideas and influences. These include the understandings of specific everyday terms, widespread gender ideologies, and various 'transnational' ideas and concepts relating to gender violence. I then turn, in chapter 6, to explore staffs' everyday ideas and normative values about gender, in particular in relation to marriage. I focus on how these intersect with individuals' understandings of various concepts

used within their work and with their professional work of challenging domestic violence and hence advocating for change in, and arguably different models of, marriage.

In the concluding chapter (chapter 7) I return to the issues highlighted within this introductory chapter, placing my findings in relation to the broader literature, specifically arguments of disjuncture. I argue that whilst the gender work that I have explored within this research might be assessed as 'conservative', depoliticised or watered down if viewed against external normative criteria, such explanations might not always fully account for what is going on, even when this might appear to be the case. Indeed, in this situation I have illustrated how the specific ways in which staff understand and therefore implement their gender work connects to and can be understood in relation to the particular context in which they live and work. I thus highlight the value of an emic understanding of such work. I also draw attention to some of the broader contextual specificities which differentiates my research from other studies and might account for the apparent differences in findings. This includes for example the specificity of the particular organisations which I researched and the Ghanaian context in which they operate. In addition to this, I also discuss the implications of my findings; and what can be done in gender training and gender work more generally to address the kinds of issues which have emerged.

Chapter 2 – The Context of Gender Work in Ghana

Introduction

A particularly important aspect highlighted in chapter 1 was the need to explore gender work in relation to the broader context in which it takes place. As such, this chapter provides an overview of the wider Ghanaian context in which the gender work that is the focus of this thesis is conducted and needs to be understood. I concentrate in particular on two specific elements of this context. Firstly, the broader field of gender work in Ghana. I provide a historical overview of such work, from independence to the present day. Secondly, I focus on specific elements of the national context; the 'broader hegemonic discourses' and 'normative assumptions' (Lombardo et al., 2009), which shape the ways in which gender work is understood. I concentrate specifically on ideas and practices of marriage, and the roles, rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives. As I detail in the overview of gender work in Ghana, views regarding marriages have long been argued to affect, and in particular 'constrain', the gender work which is carried out. As will become clear later in the thesis, these issues are also of particular relevance to the ways in which gender work, particularly that which focuses on gender violence, is understood and enacted amongst NGO staff.

Gender work in Ghana: Past and present

Gender work in Ghana is a diverse landscape, which consists of a broad assortment of actors.[42] In terms of NGOs alone, there is a wide variety working on women/gender; the 2005 Directory of Non-Governmental Organisations (GAPVOD/ISODEC, 2005), for example, lists 80 NGOs (including international and Ghanaian NGOs, CBOs and SHOs) under the area of interest section on 'gender and human rights', and 205 NGOs as 'targeting women'.[43]

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[42] This includes: state institutions, multilateral and bilateral organisations, international NGOs (INGOs), Ghanaian development NGOs, Ghanaian and international faith-based organisations, Ghanaian WROs, community based organisations (CBOs), networks and coalitions, independent consultants and activists, mass organisations (e.g. Ghana Trades Union Congress and the Ghana National Association of Teachers), workplace welfare associations, and University departments and academics (see Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Manuh, 2007b; Tsikata, 2009).

[43] While these figures may not be wholly accurate (indeed there seem to be key organisations missing and some of the listed organisations have since folded) it does give some idea of the high numbers of organisations involved in this type of work.

The gender work undertaken by these various organisations covers a range of issues, from income generation, to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHRs), to work on gender violence. It entails a variety of activities including for example direct service delivery, policy advocacy, and research. In addition, it is characterised by various commentators to be founded on and geared towards diverse policy approaches and ideologies. For example some such work is described (and at times criticised) as being aimed at improving women's immediate socio-economic conditions, whereas other work is argued to recognise and aim to address what are seen as more fundamental underlying gender power dynamics.

So what has led to this diversity in gender work, and what actors, issues, and activities have developed and proliferated over the years? And how, and by whom, are the policy approaches and ideologies underpinning this work characterised and assessed? This section provides a historical overview of gender work in Ghana from independence to the present day, giving details of the various actors involved, the issues focused on, and the types of activities undertaken. It also examines debates regarding the policy approaches and ideologies underpinning and influencing this work.

Such an overview of the history and current state of gender work in Ghana is crucial in order to contextualise and 'place' the policies and practices of the two organisations researched in relation to the broader national scene. It also enables an understanding of some of the potential influences on these two organisations, and of the wider concerns, approaches, and debates that have emerged and proliferate in relation to gender work in Ghana. In addition, it highlights the state of research and literature on gender work in Ghana and the various ways in which this work is characterised and evaluated.

The emergence of 'formal' gender work in Ghana

Some form of gender work as a distinct activity can be traced back to the colonial period when various associations were formed to support women and 'promote women's interests' (Tsikata, 2009:185). Such associations were mainly focused on economic and livelihood issues, with some also involved in supporting the struggle for independence. However, Tsikata argues that they 'did not tackle the wider question of the oppression of women' (1989:77).

Following independence in 1957 there were a number of active women's organisations, the two most prominent being the Ghana Women's League (GWL) and the Ghana

Federation of Women (GFW). There was also a Women's Section of the Convention People's Party (CPP), the ruling party. These three organisations were involved in a range of activities including protests against foreign governments, sensitisation work on issues such as childcare and nutrition, and education regarding government policies, such as the 1960 census exercise (Tsikata, 1989). In 1960 the government merged these organisations, along with several smaller ones, to form the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), which replaced the CPP Women's Section (Prah, 2005; Tsikata, 1997; for a more detailed discussion of the activities, history and merger of these organisations see Tsikata, 1989).

As a wing of the CPP and 'the only recognised body under which all Ghanaian women were to be organised to contribute their quota to the political, educational, social and economic construction of Ghana' (Tsikata, 1989:79) the NCGW dominated gender work in Ghana from 1960 until the overthrow of the CPP in 1966. Tsikata argues that the CPP's work with women was premised on a 'recognition of the contributions of women to the anti-colonial struggle, and the implications for development of a backward female population' (1989:79). As such it embarked on a range of activities aimed to improve women's situation, including building day care centres, sending members abroad to study, or helping them find employment, educational reforms which improved female enrolment in basic education, and encouraging 'the participation of women in politics and public life' (Tsikata, 1989:79).

However, Tsikata argues that the CPP government did not attempt to 'tackle gender relations and the dominant perceptions of gender roles' (1997:397). Indeed, she states that government officials' negative attitudes towards women constrained 'attempts at addressing women's problems' (Tsikata, 1989:80); with for example the General Secretary of the CPP seeing 'an organisation of women as a potential threat to the position of men' (Tsikata, 1989:80). She argues that prevailing attitudes among CPP members also contributed to the government's 'failure to address inequalities in gender relations in the household' (Tsikata, 1997:397), for example by failing to make amendments to the Criminal Code, and failure to enact the Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance Bill in 1963. Both pieces of legislation met with resistance by many in the legislature, including the CPP, who specifically stated their opposition 'to the abolition of polygamy' (Tsikata, 1997:397; see also Vellenga, 1983 for details of the reaction of 'traditional rulers' to such proposed laws).

Following the fall of the CPP and the consequential end of the NCGW, the field of gender work in Ghana was mainly populated by a number of smaller scale local non-

political, welfare oriented, self-help and charitable women's groups (Tsikata, 1989; 2009). One such organisation was the Ghana Assembly of Women, established in 1969 as 'a voluntary women's body which served as a central women's organisation in Ghana' (quoted in Tsikata, 1989:80-1), which supported its member organisations in various income generating activities (see also Greenstreet, 1972). Although, as noted by Prah (2005), there is little literature on gender work and women's organising during this period, it can be presumed (in part due to the types of organisations in operation), that most gender work during this time was of the nature of that undertaken by the Ghana Assembly of Women.

State dominance: The NCWD and DWM (1975 – 1990)

The next major development in Ghanaian gender work was the establishment in 1975 of the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), which was set up by the National Redemption Council (NRC) government, in response to the United Nations (UN) call for governments to establish national machineries to 'accelerate the integration of women in development and the elimination of discrimination against women on the grounds of sex' (Prah, 2005:33; see also Agyei, 2000; Ofori-Boadu, 2005; Tsikata, 1989). The NCWD was established with the specific mandate of advising the government on the advancement of women and their integration in national development (Agyei, 2000; Agyemang-Mensah & Apt, 1998; Baden et al., 1994; Manuh, 1993b; Ofori-Boadu, 2005), and monitoring progress on the government's commitments to international agreements regarding women (Manuh, 2007b).

The NCWD undertook a range of activities including the implementation of projects, principally related to income-generation, and research studies, proposing law reforms, making recommendations to government, and public education programmes (Agyemang-Mensah & Apt, 1998; Manuh, 1989; 1993b; Prah, 2005). Although the NCWD remained in place during the 1980s, its role as national coordinator of work with women was overshadowed and eventually, in effect, taken over by another organisation – the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM).

The DWM was established in 1982.[45] Although set up as an NGO, the DWM 'was widely perceived as the women's wing of the ruling [PNDC] government' (Manuh, 1993b:187; see also Prah, 2005); the president of the movement, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, was the wife of Jerry Rawlings, the head of state. Indeed, in addition to providing assistance to women and aiming to improve their situation, it was involved mobilising women to support and participate in the revolutionary process (see Tsikata, 1989:85), and as Tsikata (1997) notes, even its name was connected to the regime.[46]

The DWM soon came to dominate gender work in Ghana, co-opting many existing women's groups, marginalising others, and 'project[ing itself] as the only women's organisation in the country' (Tsikata, 1989:89; Woodford-Berger, 1997). By 1986 the DWM also controlled the NCWD, following the dissolution of the latter and the establishment of an Interim Management Committee, which included key members of the DWM (Manuh, 1993b; Tsikata, 1997). Thus, as with the post-independence period, the dominance of a state-led women's organisation once again prevented the establishment of an independent women's movement in Ghana (Fallon, 2003; Manuh, 2007b; Tsikata, 2009).

In terms of the work of the DWM, it has been argued that, as with the previous period of state led gender work, there was a concentration of activities aimed at practical support for women. This included the establishment of day care centres for working women, the provision of education and training programmes, social services, and a particularly heavy focus on supporting income generating activities (Manuh, 1993; E. Tsikata, 1989). In the words of Nana Konadu herself, the DWM took a 'practical approach' to improving women's lives (Agyeman-Rawlings, 1998:35). However, in addition to these 'welfare' issues, the DWM (along with the NCWD) was also involved in promoting women's political participation (Agyei, 2000), and pushing for legal reform (Tsikata, 1989; Manuh, 2007b). However, Tsikata (1989) and Woodford-Berger (1997) both suggest that the DWM's activity around legal reforms, such as the passing of the Interstate Succession Law (PNDCL111) in 1985 was related more to their support for government than their desire for the legislation itself.

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[45] Another organisation, the Federation of Ghana Women (FEGAWO) was also set up in 1982, and then a further organisation, the All Women's Association of Ghana (AWAG), established in 1984. However, of these, only the DWM remained active (see Tsikata, 1989; 1997 for further details).

[46] '...named for the date of the Rawlings *coup d'état*' (Tsikata, 1997:400).

Indeed, the DWM has been widely critiqued by Ghanaian feminist academics and activists who argue that it focused its efforts mainly on issues of women's 'welfare' and made little, if any, attempt to tackle issues relating to unequal gender relations and the subordinate position of women (see for example Manuh, 1993b; Tsikata, 1989; 1997). They argue that, as an organ of the state, the DWM reproduced, and thus reinforced, existing gender ideologies. Manuh, for example, states that 'the Movement... [had] little feminist vision and in reality [was] an agent of the gender ideology of men in general and of the regime in particular' (1993b:191). She argues that 'the Movement's [DWM] reliance on traditional authorities and its own promotion of patriarchal notions concerning women undermined any serious effort to confront the root causes of women's subordination. Thus women are enjoined to respect their husbands, whether they become independently rich or not, and to be dutiful and obedient wives' (Manuh, 1993b:191). Linked to this, Tsikata states that the DWM was 'anxious to reassure men that the attempts to improve the lot of women [were] not hostile to them' (1997:401).

Such criticisms regarding the constraining effects of 'patriarchal' ideologies and anxieties about the potential impact of such work on the position of men bear a strong resemblance to those voiced in relation to the work of the NCGW, as detailed above. However, in addition, it is argued that the approaches to gender work at this time were also influenced, and reinforced, by the dominance of women's 'welfare' and 'anti-poverty' development paradigms (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001; Awumbila, 2006; Prah, 2005).

Although the DWM (and NCWD) dominated gender work in Ghana during the 1970s and 1980s, inhibiting the development of an independent women's movement, there was however a number of other actors engaged in gender work during this time. There were a few women's organisations, such as the Ghana chapter of the Federación Internacional de Abogadas (FIDA-Ghana) and the Ghana Association for Welfare of Women (GAWW), in operation. In addition, other actors, for example, both Ghanaian and international development NGOs, religious organisations, such as the YWCA and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), and multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies, began to 'incorporate a focus on gender' within their work. However as Manuh argues, in relation to selecting organisations for research in the late 1980s, 'few [organisations] could be found either dealing exclusively with women or even with a specific awareness of gender issues' (1989:125).

The growing focus on women and gender among these 'development' organisations was in part the result of international concerns about women, the rise of 'women in

development' paradigms, and donor conditionalities (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001). However, it is important to point out that gender work is not undertaken only as a result of outside influences and impositions, and as Manuh (1989) suggests this work was also undertaken in direct response to the issues affecting women, and a desire to address these.[47] Indeed, it could well be argued that such international processes simply helped to provide a space in which women could push for certain concerns and, as Datta notes, in relation to Botswana, 'realise there are alternative ways of thinking' (2004:261). In addition, as Anyidoho and Manuh contend: 'To the extent that many Ghanaian women activists are also members of continental and global networks such as AWID [Association For Women's Rights in Development], to which they contribute as many ideas and they borrow, it may be difficult to separate the local from the global' (2010:267).

In terms of the gender work undertaken by such actors, Manuh, focusing on a sample of six Ghanaian and international development organisations (including the NCWD) established in the 1970s and 80s, argued that 'meeting basic needs' was a predominant focus (1989:144). Indeed, she reported that: 'In almost all samples studied, income-generation, healthcare, and health education top the list as the most common activities undertaken, followed by literacy and non-formal education' (Manuh, 1989:144). However, she suggests that this was not surprising given the concerns of the constituents with which they were working, and points out that the 'subordinate position of women in society' was also generally recognised (Manuh, 1989:148). Other reports relating to this period detail work which revolved around for example attempting to increase women's participation in the management and decision-making roles of community development projects (see Opare, 2005 for examples).

Thus, as with the DWM, it has been argued that there was a predominant focus within such work on what is characterised as basic needs, welfare and 'technicist rather than political' work (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001:64). It is argued that this may have been in part the result of the influence of dominant discourses and approaches on women and development promoted internationally at this time (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001). Equally, other factors, such as the lack of an autonomous women's movement, and the absence of a democratic space in which to make demands on the

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[47] A similar finding is noted by Fallon in more recent research on women's organisations in Ghana, who she claims sought funding 'after they prioritised their needs and determined which activities to pursue' (2003:532).

government, have been argued to have restricted work to addressing women's basic needs (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001; Fallon, 2003).

This said, some organisations characterised as 'explicitly political' (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001:64) did operate during this period. FIDA-Ghana, for example, which maintained its autonomy from the government, provided legal support and legal literacy programmes to women, lobbied for legal reforms, and was critical of government policy (Baden et al., 1994; Osei-Boateng, 1998). However, Acquaye-Baddoo and Tsikata state that, 'Even the few explicitly political organisations of the 1980s came to adopt income generation with a focus on development rather than gender equity and social justice' (2001:64). However, this may have been partly a pragmatic move to enable them to present their work with women in terms of the dominant and accepted justifications of 'national development' and 'women's welfare' (as Tsikata, 2009 suggests was the case in relation to such work in the 1990s).

Thus gender work in Ghana in the 1970s and 1980s was dominated by state actors, with some development oriented NGOs, but the absence of an autonomous women's movement. As outlined, the work of this period has been largely characterised, and critiqued, by Ghanaian feminist academics and activists as being focused on welfare approaches which prioritised practical support as opposed to addressing structural gender inequalities and the causes of women's subordinate position. Indeed as Bortei-Doku argues, referring to pre-1990s gender work in Ghana: 'common approaches... have tended to be ad hoc and highly sectoralized... typically symptom-oriented... welfare programmes' (1992:353). This approach is argued to have been influenced by a range of factors, including: the dominant development discourses of the time; a desire to maintain the existing patriarchal order; anxieties about the possible effects of gender work on men; and the dominance of the DWM and lack of autonomous women's movement. So what has become of gender work in Ghana during the 1990s and 2000s? What changes have there been in terms of actors, issues, activities and approaches?

Radical shifts? The rise of an autonomous women's movement (1990s onwards)

During the 1990s and 2000s there have been a number of changes in the landscape and practice of gender work in Ghana. In terms of actors, there has been a growth in the number and types of organisations involved, and changes in state institutions. This period also saw an expansion of the issues addressed. In addition, various commentators, including Ghanaian feminist academics and activists, argue that while

much work remained welfare oriented, there have been some changes in the approaches to and focus of gender work.

In terms of the state and other 'development' related actors, such as Ghanaian NGOs and INGOs, donors and religious organisations, many have continued to incorporate a focus on gender and implement specific gender work, and others have followed suit. Indeed, many such organisations now claim to 'incorporate gender' to some extent and in some way and form (see Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010 and Tsikata, 2009 for some recent examples).

The gender focus of such actors was further spurred on and influenced by the 1995 Beijing Conference, Ghana's signing of the Platform for Action, and, with this, commitments made to 'mainstreaming' gender (Awumbila, 2001). For example, during the 1990s many government departments, ministries and agencies established Gender Desks or appointed Gender Focal Persons, and along with many Ghanaian and INGOs, donors and other organisations, such as the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC), developed gender policies and incorporated a 'gender dimension' in their work and programmes (for more details of specific actions taken see Akpalu et al., 2000; also see Apusigah, 2007; Awumbila, 2001). The gender work of such organisations has also no doubt been affected and influenced by the flourishing of many autonomous WROs during the 1990s and 2000s (as detailed below). Changes in the government, and the consequential decline in dominance of the DWM, have also likely had some influence.

In relation to state institutions working on gender, there have been a number of important changes and additions during this period. The most significant perhaps is the establishment of the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) in 2001, by the newly elected New Patriotic Party (NPP) government. In addition to MOWAC, several other state bodies have been established which have some remit in terms of gender issues. These include the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) set up in 1993, and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana police service (formerly named Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU)), which was established in 1998.

However, perhaps the most significant development in relation to gender work during the 1990s and 2000s has been the rise in the numbers and activities of WROs, and the growth of an autonomous women's movement. This has been linked, in part, to Ghana's transition to democracy in 1992, and the consequential increased

opportunities and safe space for women to organise independently of the state, without concerns about being co-opted (see Dawuni, 2009; Fallon, 2008; Manuh, 2007b; Tsikata, 2009). Although the DWM continued to function and play a significant role, particularly between 1992 and 2001 when the Rawlings regime was still in power (Manuh, 2007b; 2009b), a number of autonomous WROs were established, mainly from the mid-1990s onwards. Such organisations include for example Women in Law in Africa (WiLDAF), the Gender Centre (Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre), Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE), The Ark Foundation, ABANTU for Development, and the African Women Lawyer's Association. In contrast to other actors involved in gender work (for example those detailed above), the work of these organisations is specifically, and often exclusively, focused on women/gender issues. Many such organisations specialise in one or more particular areas, including, for example, gender violence, political participation, law reform, and/or legal literacy (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004).

While during the 1990s WROs mainly worked independently of one another, from 1999 onwards a number of key coalitions and networks were established, and organisations began to collaborate with one another (Tsikata, 2009). The three most prominent networks and coalitions are the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) set up in 1999, the National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation (DV Coalition) established in 2002, and the Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana (WMC) formed in 2003/2004.

While each has its own specific mandate and focus, these three networks often work in conjunction, for instance holding shared meetings, and many organisations and individuals are members of all three. These coalitions have a diverse membership including most of the WROs, some more general development related organisations, and other institutions such as Women in Broadcasting (for more details regarding the establishment, mandate, activities and membership of these networks see: In Conversation, 2005; Manuh, 2007b; The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004; Tsikata, 2009). In addition, there are and have been a number of other networks, including: Sister's Keepers (2000-2002), the Gender Violence Survivors' Support Network (GVSSN) (2001-present) (see Manuh, 2007b for more details), and a few smaller, and some regional, gender related networks.

Networks and coalitions have become an important feature of gender work in Ghana, and are argued by those involved to provide a 'common platform to struggle for gender justice' (In Conversation, 2005:5) and organise around specific issues. They have

enabled organisations to come together; discuss, debate and take action; and use their collective weight to successfully lobby the government and push for changes, for instance in policy and legislation (Manuh, 2007b; Tsikata, 2009). As Tsikata notes: 'Together, the three coalitions represent an enlargement and consolidation of the space for women's organising in Ghana' (2009:191). Indeed, during my fieldwork, I witnessed a general sense of the existence of a 'movement', and various support amongst organisations involved in such networks, including collaborative work, attending one another's events, and sharing resources and research.

In terms of the focus of gender work during the 1990s and 2000s and the issues addressed, it is suggested that there has remained an often predominant focus on programmes involving income generation, skills training, provision of credit, and education (Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Mensah-Kutin et al., 2000). Indeed, according to Agyeman-Mensah and Apt, in the late 1990s economic empowerment 'appears to have been the single most common strategy' for 'reducing gender inequalities' (1998:39).

However, this said, there has been a general broadening of issues addressed, and an increase in activity (in some areas substantial) on issues such as gender violence, women's political participation and representation, law reform, legal literacy, and economic policy review and reform (Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001; Fallon, 2003; Manuh, 2007b). While much of this work is being undertaken by, and is often attributed to, WROs, many of whom focus predominately on one issue or another (as detailed above), other actors, such as development NGOs and state institutions, are also increasingly involved in these areas of work, although often in addition to other gender work, such as income-generation.

Many of these 'new' areas of work are gaining in importance and are commonly worked on by a range of organisations. However one which has taken deep root and become a specific issue around which the women's movement has mobilised, and many organisations are now engaged, is that of gender violence (Manuh, 2007b).[48] While some work on gender violence (specifically domestic violence (DV)) was being carried out in the early 1990s, for example by FIDA and the CCG (see Bortei-Doku, 1992;

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[48] Another significant area of gender work in Ghana is work focused on increasing women's participation in politics and public decision-making. However, as discussed in chapter 1, I decided to focus specifically on gender violence related work, as such work provides a particularly useful lens though which to look at the ways in which 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses' might influence understandings and implementation of gender work.

Osei-Boateng, 1998), and the issue has been of growing concern for some time,[49] this has significantly mushroomed over the last decade. Indeed, there are now a large number of WROs, development NGOs, state institutions and coalitions dedicated to/ working on this issue; engaged in counselling, research, training, public awareness raising, and policy advocacy (see Amoakohene, 2004; Manuh, 2007b for further details). In addition, following years of campaign, the Domestic Violence Act (DV Act) (Act 732) was passed in 2007, followed by the development of a National Domestic Violence Policy in 2008. And DOVVSU, a specialised unit of the Ghana Police Service, which was established in 1998, presently has 87 offices nationwide, with plans for continued expansion (Mitchell, 2012). Accompanying this work, and further attesting the significance of this issue in Ghana, is a vast body of literature on the topic, including research, manuals, commentary and analysis.[50]

There are a number of influences, both from within and outside Ghana, which have led to the growth of this theme of work. As Hodžić (2009) notes, and as I experienced during my fieldwork, Ghanaian activists often provide localised accounts. Such explanations generally include a range of factors including: national research undertaken on the prevalence of VAW by the Gender Centre in the late 1990s (see Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999), a spate of 'serial killings' of women in Accra in 1998 (see Tsikata, 2009:187), and a general desire amongst local activists to address this issue (see Adomako Ampofo, 2008). However, in addition to these 'local' factors, this work has also undoubtedly been influenced by increased 'transnational' attention to gender violence since the 1990s and the consequential availability of funding (Hodžić, 2009; Merry, 2006a; 2009; Zaoudé & Sandler, 2001). It was partially in light of the significant growth in and focus on this area of gender work by a variety of actors in Ghana that I decided to concentrate specifically on this issue within my research.

In terms of the types of activities undertaken during this period, it is argued that there has been a continued focus on service delivery amongst many organisations, both old and new (Dawuni, 2009; Tsikata, 2001a; 2009). Even MOWAC has been criticised by

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[49] As evidence by scholarship from various Ghanaian academics and activists from the 1990s (Adomako Ampofo, 1993; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994a; 1994b; 1997; Bortei-Doku, 1992).
[50] (For instance: ActionAid Ghana, 2007; Adinkrah, 2011; Adjetey & Ofori-Boadu, 2000; Adomako Ampofo, 2008; Akumatey & Darkwa, 2009; Amenga-Etego, 2006; Amoakohene, 2004; Archampong & Sampson, 2010; Boakye, 2009; Brocato & Dwamena-Aboagye, 2007; Cantalupo et al., 2006; Coker-Appiah, ud.; Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Cusack & Manuh, 2009; Duncan, 2005; Dwamena-Aboagye & Dela-Dem Fiamanya, 2003; Hodžić, 2009; King, 2006; Manuh, 2007a; 2007c; Martin, 2006; Minkah-Premo, 2001; Mitchell, 2012; Naaeke, 2007; Osam, 2004; RUMNET, 2004; The Ark Foundation, ud.).

local women's rights activists for being predominately engaged in implementing programmes, in particular related to income generation, at the expense of its policy formulation and analysis remit (see In Conversation, 2005; Manuh, 2009a; The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004). However, this said, there has also been an increase in gender activism and advocacy work in recent years (Dawuni, 2009; Tsikata, 2001a; 2009). This advocacy work has been particularly spurred on by the networking of organisations under the coalitions detailed above. Examples of such advocacy include 'campaigns, demonstrations and petitions' (Prah 2007:19) on gender violence, which led to the passage of the DV Act in 2007, and advocacy around women's political participation (Dawuni, 2009).

In terms of assessments regarding the approaches to, purposes, and philosophies framing and informing gender work in the 1990s and 2000s, as with the 1970s and 1980s, various commentators (principally including Ghanaian feminist activists and scholars) suggest a continued predominately 'technicist' approach, and concentration on 'welfare' needs, poverty reduction, and the mere 'involvement' of women in projects, rather than what they view as more 'political' work which addresses 'the underlying causes of women's unequal status' (Agyemang-Mensah & Apt, 1998:53; see also Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001 in relation to gender training; Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Awumbila, 2001; 2006).

At times, implicitly at least, taking a particular stance on how gender objectives 'should' be understood and what they 'should' involve and achieve, some argue that such 'depoliticised' approaches occur in spite of rhetoric and objectives about 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment'. Watson, for example, in research on an NGO-led sustainable livelihoods project, concludes that despite the explicit inclusion of 'gender sensitisation' and 'empowerment' objectives in project plans, in practice the project seemed to reinforce existing gender roles and ideologies and had 'little success in challenging unequal gender relations' (2005:47).

Similarly, Anyidoho and Manuh in a recent discourse analysis of three types of organisations working on gender issues in Ghana,[51] argued that, with the exception of WiLDAF, despite the use of words such as 'empowerment', 'gender equality', 'gender equity', and 'mainstreaming gender', there is little conceptual clarity over what these terms mean and 'economic empowerment' remains the dominant approach taken, with a focus on poverty reduction, development, and welfare measures 'which [do] not

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[51] State, multilateral and bilateral institutions and NGOs.

attempt to tackle structural and systemic factors at the root of victimhood' (2010:271). They argue that that women's 'vulnerability' and disadvantage is often reduced to economic and welfare issues, such that other forms of disadvantage and disempowerment, including those affecting affluent women, are not acknowledged. Seemingly premised on a particular definition of what 'empowerment' should signify, they argue 'it is difficult to classify these as discourses on empowerment as they have little transformative potential to question or change power relationships, restructure institutions and confront stereotypical ideas and values. Rather, it is largely basic survival and anti poverty discourses that *masquerade* as empowerment discourses in Ghana' (2010:273, emphasis mine). In providing possible reasons for this, they suggest a general preoccupation with 'development' in Ghana, and that economic empowerment of women is less 'threatening' than other interventions.

The issue of the perceived 'threat' of gender work, particularly to existing gender relations and ideas and practices around marriage, and the 'constraints' that such views are seen to pose in relation to such work, have been highlighted by a couple of commentators, specifically in relation to the government's response to the Domestic Violence Bill (DV Bill). As Hodžić (2009) and Adomako Ampofo (2008) both describe in detail, the DV Bill, which provoked widespread anxiety and accusations during years of protracted debate, was 'subjected to unprecedented national consultation' (Adomako Ampofo, 2008:410) and faced strong opposition, principally from the government, who claimed to be speaking on behalf of 'the people' (Hodžić, 2009; see also Manuh, 2007a).

According to their analysis, criticisms about the DV Bill centred around a few key themes including its 'foreignness' and its 'implications for family life and gender relations' (Adomako Ampofo, 2008:410). Indeed, in the nation-wide 'consultation' exercise the government mobilised 'discourses of cultural sovereignty' (Hodžić, 2009:346), raising concerns about the potential breakdown of marriages and the 'grave danger to Ghanaian culture' (Hodžić, 2009:331).

Of particular concern, within these debates, was the 'marital rape clause', which would lead to the repeal of Section 42 (g) of the Criminal Code of 1960, which sets out that consent to sex is given on marriage and can only be revoked by divorce. Anxieties about the potential implications on marital norms, rights and responsibilities were illustrated by the question posed by one Member of Parliament, who asked: 'Why should Parliament pass a Bill which will allow our wives to trample upon us and deny us conjugal rights?' (quoted in Adomako Ampofo, 2008:414).

Thus, as noted in relation to both the post-independence period and the 1970s and 80s, anxieties about the effects of gender work and desires to preserve the existing gender order, have once again been argued to influence aspects of gender work in Ghana, particularly amongst the government. As such, Manuh's statement that the DWM 'became a women's organisation with little feminist vision and in reality an agent of the gender ideology of men in general and the regime in particular' (1993b:191), might equally have been made about MOWAC in relation to its resistance to the DV Bill.

While there is a general concern voiced regarding a continued 'depoliticisation' of gender work in Ghana, there is, however, a suggestion by some, as in the study by Anyidoho and Manuh (2010), at times implicit, that some NGOs, especially WROs, are engaged in what commentators view as more 'political' work and adopting more 'political' approaches (Dawuni, 2009; Tsikata, 2009). This is seen for example in the statement made by Manuh (noted in chapter 1) that: the various NGOs which have more recently begun to 'assert themselves beginning in the late 1990s... broadened the range of concerns and issues and challenged the status quo in profound ways' (2007b:132). In addition, discussions detailed in a number of recent publications,[52] incidentally charting the work that many Ghanaian feminist academics and activists are themselves engaged in, suggests the presence of debate, reflection and analysis on more 'political issues', and work which takes a more 'political' approach – such as discussions focusing on the 'underlying structural issues' which affect women.

However, even in relation to such potentially more 'political' work amongst WROs, there have been suggestions that a 'technocratic rather than political standpoint' (Tsikata, 2001a:265) may be adopted; for instance in work on issues such as gender violence and legal rights that might hold the promise of focusing on structural gender inequalities and gender power dynamics. Tsikata, for example, argues that: 'Need arguments, couched in instrumentalist language and justified in terms of national development, became the dominant discourse of women's organisations, and even those focusing on questions and legal rights and the ratification of international conventions felt a need to demonstrate their developmentalist credentials' (Tsikata,

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[52] For example the annual NETRIGHT end of year review (see NETRIGHT, 2009a), the Women's Manifesto consultation and drafting process (see The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004), the 2006 African Feminist Forum held in Ghana (African Feminist Forum, n.d.), and the 2007 Ghana National Feminist Forum (see NETRIGHT, 2009b).

2009:186-7). Hodžić similarly notes that work on gender violence in Ghana is often framed within the 'discourse of development' (2009:336).

Both Tsikata (2009) and Hodžić (2009), however, suggest that these may be, at least in part, strategic and pragmatic manoeuvres aimed at legitimising such work and reducing potential resistance by utilising the dominant and accepted justifications for work on gender/with women (see also Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001:69, for similar examples from gender training contexts). Indeed, as Tsikata argues elsewhere: 'gender activists are accepted as long as they focus on programmes such as credit for women, income-generation projects and girls' education, and couch their struggles in terms of welfare or national development. Once they broach questions of power relations or injustices, they are accused of being elitist and influenced by foreign ideas that are alien to African culture' (In Conversation, 2005:130).

However, to some extent such analysis often appears to involve assessing gender work against particular ideas of what such work should involve and how it should be understood (as in the case of Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010). Alternatively, in some cases, for example in the work of Hodžić (2009) and Adomako Ampofo (2008), who focus on gender violence initiatives, WROs are simply portrayed as actors advocating for the Domestic Violence Law (DV Law), with little analysis of how such organisations might take up such ideas and how these might intersect with, for example, ideas of marriage and possible 'anxieties about power relations between husbands and wives' (Hodžić, 2009:345). Indeed, there is little detailed critical reflection and analysis of the more recent work and approaches of Ghanaian NGOs, including WROs, which explores, for example, how such work and ideas are understood and used, and how this might be influenced by the 'existing universe' within which such work takes place. It is such issues that this thesis aims to explore. As such, it is first necessary to provide more detail regarding the sorts of 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses' which characterise the broader context in which gender work in Ghana takes place.

Gendered anxieties[53] and moral panics: Empowered women and family values

As illustrated throughout the account detailed above, a common and recurring theme which is argued to have influenced and 'constrained' gender work in Ghana is concerns

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[53] The phrase 'gendered anxieties' is borrowed from a title used by Hodžić (2009:345).

over the possible consequences of such work, particularly in relation to family life and marriages. Indeed, suspicion and anxiety, particularly regarding changes to domestic relationships and the position of men, are argued to be fairly common features which have accompanied and constrained post-independence gender work in Ghana, particularly in relation to the government. Such anxieties have been noted, for example, by Tsikata (1989; 1997) in relation to gender work and resistance to legislative changes during the CPP era (1960-66), by Manuh (1993b) and Tsikata (1997) in relation to the work of the DWM (1982 onwards), and by Adomako Ampofo (2008) and Hodžić (2009) in relation to the government's reaction to the DV Bill.

These concerns, are linked to and illustrative of more widespread anxieties within Ghana regarding marriage, maintaining women's and men's place within marriage, and fears about single and empowered women. Such concerns are implicit in various writings on marriage in Ghana which talk of the need for wives to be respectful and obedient to their husbands (see for example Nukunya, 1992; Sarpong, 1974). In addition, such concerns are graphically highlighted by specific incidences in which fears, particularly regarding single, independent and 'empowered' women have erupted.

One such example relates to concerns which surfaced during the 1920s and 30s regarding single women and potential shifts in marital relations as a consequence of changes in economics and employment prospects resulting from colonisation, cocoa farming and urbanisation (see for example Allman, 1996; Soothill, 2007; Tsikata, 1997). In a detailed account of this period, Jean Allman describes how 'the general chaos in gender relations.... often articulated in the language of moral crisis, in terms that spoke of women's uncontrollability, of prostitution and venereal disease, was, more than anything, about shifting power relationships' (1996:198). She describes how, concerned about such changes, chiefs and elders directly intervened, arresting and detaining unmarried women until a marriage fee was paid for their release, in the process 'articulating a new definition of marriage that upheld the husband's exclusive sexual rights in his wife, while minimising or discounting completely the husband's reciprocal obligations towards that wife' (Allman, 1996:201-202).

Such disapproval of spinsterhood has been a continuing issue in Ghana, as noted by Dinan in her 1980s account of 'white-collar single women in Accra' (1983:344; see also Caldwell, 1968:66-68 for an account of reactions to spinsterhood during the 1960s). Focusing on such women's rejection of marriage, 'undoubtedly influenced by the highly inequitable marriage bargain which they considered was on offer to them from their

menfolk' (Dinan, 1983:349) Dinan notes the ways in which 'the normative themes of marriage and motherhood were raised periodically in newspapers and among their own families to discredit them and oblige them to marry. They were from time to time branded as selfish, worldly, irresponsible, sexually promiscuous and grasping' (1983:362-363).

Other manifestations of anxieties regarding women stepping too far outside 'their traditional roles of reproducers and nurturers' and 'gain[ing] wealth, economic independence and autonomy' (Manuh, 1993b:177) includes the fairly widespread hostility directed towards market women. According to Clark, such 'public hostility to [women's] trading work... draws [specifically] on conflicts rooted in marriage' (2000:719). This hostility particularly escalated during the 1970/80s economic crisis, when market women were attacked by the state, and Makola market was demolished, as a result of allegations of *kababule* (dishonest trading) (see Manuh, 1993b). According to Manuh, during this period there was a 'generalised resentment [exhibited towards] women who were perceived to have outflanked men in their pursuit of wealth' and again widespread accusations made towards women 'of immorality, prostitution and other social evils' (1993b:177).

Such accounts are illustrative of the widespread concerns within Ghana regarding changes in gender relations, particularly within marriage, and anxieties regarding single, independent and overly 'empowered' women. Indeed, of key concern in Ghana is how changes, including as a result for example of gender work, education, and/or employment, might affect marriage, and how marriage might accordingly shift in 'acceptable' ways.

With concerns about marriage so obviously pertinent in Ghana, it is a particularly important aspect of the wider cultural context that needs to be explored and taken into account for the bearing this has on gender work and how people working in this sector understand what they are doing. Indeed, as outlined above, such ideas have been shown to play a significant role in influencing gender work over the years.

In addition, a focus on marriage is expressly at the heart of initiatives regarding gender violence (the issue that this thesis specifically explores); such work explicitly entails raising the issue of what marriage should look like and how it should, and can, change. It is thus necessary to understand some of the prominent ideas and practices regarding marriage which proliferate in Ghana, as part of the exploration and understanding of

the broader cultural context within which gender work takes place and should therefore be understood. It is to this that I now turn.

Marriage in Ghana

While certain changes may have taken place more recently and among certain segments of the population, marriage in Ghana is generally considered to be an important institution, both now and in the past. It is widely noted that marriage is expected and is 'considered a desirable social status among almost all ethnic, social and economic groups and classes' (Manuh, 2009b:46; see also Assimeng, 1999). For the extended family marriage creates kinship ties with other families, and in patrilineal descent systems it guarantees that children belong to the patrilineage (Nukunya, 1992:38-45). For individuals it signifies the transition to adulthood (Asante-Darko & Van der Geest, 1983); as Assimeng claims, 'it is only when a person is married that he or she is taken seriously in social deliberations' (1999:79).

In terms of formal typologies and legalities, there are several forms of marriage in Ghana. This includes: customary marriage (also termed customary unions); Ordinance marriage; and marriage of Mohamedans Ordinance (see Nukunya, 1992; Oppong & Abu, 1987; Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 1998). In addition to this, 'consensual unions'[54] (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2006) exist in which, while 'no formal public contract is sealed, either verbally or in writing' (Oppong & Abu, 1987:29), couples are 'in a stable relationship... and are recognised by the communities in which they live to be in a marital relationship' (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2006:3).[55] While both customary marriage and marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance are potentially polygynous, marriages conducted under the Marriage Ordinance are legally monogamous.

In terms of proportions, figures from the 1970s indicate that customary marriages were by far the most common (71% of urban and 85% of rural marriages), followed by Muslim marriages (19% of urban and 9% of rural marriages). Mutual consent marriages 'varied from 3% among urban males to 6% among rural females' and 'Church and Ordinance marriages included 5% of urban and 2% of rural marriages' (Oppong & Abu, 1987:29-30, citing Ghana, 1970 Census Supplementary Enquiry). While current data is

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[54] Also termed 'common law' or 'mutual consent marriages' (Oppong & Abu, 1987:29).
[55] I thus use the term 'marriage' (and 'husband/s' and 'wife/wives') throughout this thesis to refer not only to couples who are formally married, but also to those in such 'consensual unions', which are reportedly on the increase in Ghana (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2006).

scarce, sources suggest that these trends have broadly continued (see for example Nukunya, 1992:164). Despite perhaps an increase in the proportions of Ordinance marriages (still according to Nukunya 'contracted by only a minority of Ghanaians' and 'limited to very well-educated and enlightened people and some devote Christians' (Nukunya, 1992:164))[56] customary marriages remain the most common in Ghana, either being undertaken on their own, or preceding Ordinance marriages.[57] As such, customary marriage rites continue to be of great significance; their importance even recognised and reinforced by churches during Christian/Ordinance marriage ceremonies, as noted by Soothill (2007:196).

However, beyond (and even within) the distinction of these formal legal typologies, describing marriage in Ghana is an inherently difficult task. Ghana's population of approximately 24.2 million people (Government of Ghana, 2011) is heterogeneous and, as detailed below, different aspects of marriage (including, for instance, inheritance, residence, and the roles, responsibilities and expectations of husbands and wives) vary considerably according to a range of cross-cutting factors. These factors include for example ethnicity, lineage systems, religion, geographical location, rural and urban location, class, and age[58] – and are further complicated by social and economic changes and various ideological influences. As such, as Assimeng puts it: 'When one examines a community of different ethnic, linguistic, and religious groupings, it becomes difficult to talk of 'the Ghanaian family' without over simplification' (1999:83).

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[56] Although according to Nukunya 'even among the well-educated its occurrence is not widespread' (1992:164). Evidence from Oppong's study of the 'educated elite' in Accra also suggests that this is the group most likely to have entered into an Ordinance marriage (two-thirds of her sample were married under the Marriage Ordinance) (Oppong, 1970); although commonly this type of marriage was preceded by a customary union (Oppong & Abu, 1987).

[57] Indeed, while these legal forms are distinct from one another, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In particular, it is not uncommon for couples married under the Marriage Ordinance to be married under customary marriage as well. In many instances the customary marriage is performed as the 'engagement' shortly before the Ordinance/church wedding, and in other cases 'born again' Christians previously married in customary unions contract a Christian and Ordinance marriage following their conversion (Assimeng, 1999; Nukunya, 1992; Soothill, 2007).

[58] The 2000 Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002:22-23) lists eight main ethnic groups, each of which contain various sub-groups, and according to Soothill (2007:1) there are 75 different ethnic groups in total. According to Assimeng there are three systems of 'kinship and lineage arrangements that pertain in Ghanaian society... the *matrilineal* type, well known among the Akan; the *patrilineal* system, existing among the Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, and several ethnic groups in the northern parts of the country; and the *double descent* system, well documented among the Fanti' (1999:75, emphasis original). In terms of religious affiliation, the 2000 Census recorded 68.8% of the population as Christian (of various denominations), 15.9% Muslim, 8.5% 'traditional' religion and 6.8% other or no religions (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002).

Although bearing such variation in mind, I do not aim to give a detailed and precise overview of the diverse ways in which marriages are conducted, the variations which exist and/or changes that have taken place over time. This task is beyond the scope of this chapter and there are various ethnographies and literature which cover specific groups and locations. While aware of the risks of oversimplification, what I attempt to do here is rather to give some form of picture of marriage practices and ideas in Ghana and explore some of the prominent discourses and normative ideas regarding marriages which exist in a more general sense, and some of the influences on these. I begin by discussing 'customary marriage' more generally in further detail, before going on to examine other specific influences on marriage ideals and practices.

Customary marriage

In general, marriages in Ghana are historically, and often still currently, conducted and governed by rules of customary marriage, which, as detailed above, is the most common legal form of marriage; undertaken either alone or alongside other legal forms. As Kuenyehia and Ofei-Aboagye note: 'there is hardly any marriage celebrated in Ghana under [the Marriage Ordinance or Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance]... or abroad under some other law, which is not preceded or followed by performance of all the essential rites of a valid marriage under customary law' (1998:25).

'Customary marriage', however, denotes not only the legal form and the marriage ceremony and rites, but also specific 'rules' and expectations regarding a range of aspects within the marital union. This includes for instance: residence patterns; inheritance; financial arrangements, obligations and expectations; authority structures; and other roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives (as well as other members of the extended family).

In this regard it is the customs (and 'customary law') of a *specific group* which 'govern the relationship, roles and legal rights of husbands and wives' (Mann, 1983:41). Hence, although customary marriage, as a legal form, is widespread, the specificities of such 'rules' and expectations (along with the ceremony and rites) vary significantly between (and even within) different communities in Ghana.[63] In addition to this, such rules and expectations are not fixed and changes occur over time, for instance as a result of, and in response to, various ideological influences and socio-economic changes. Allman, for

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[63] They vary for instance according to different locations, lineage systems, ethnic groups, and socio-economic groups – which, as detailed above, are highly diverse in Ghana.

example, talking specifically about the Asante, discusses shifts and 'contest[s] over the very meaning of marriage in the late 1920s... and what constitutes a marriage and what responsibilities are incumbent on each partner' (1996:201). And as Manuh points out, several authors 'show that there have been continuing struggles over the meaning and content of custom and tradition' (2009b:37). As such, specific 'customary' ideas and practices are subject to change and may not necessarily have a long history.

'Customary marriage' thus encompasses a range of different (and shifting) ideas and practices of marriage, making it difficult to provide a clear overview. Coupled with this, while some of the literature on marriage provides detailed ethnographies of specific groups and locations, other sources discuss marriage in Ghana more generally, at times using the term 'traditional' when referring to what appear to be customary ideas and practices.[64] Indeed, the term 'traditional' is used by a range of authors, who generally use this term to refer to what they regard as widespread practices, often of the past, but also of the present; this includes those providing instructive accounts which suggest certain ideals of how marriages should be conducted, and others using the term to refer to specific ideas and practices, often (although not always) in a critique of views and 'customs' deemed outdated and in need of change.[65] While mindful of these issues and the variation that exists, I discuss here some of the fairly common features (and differences) that are frequently noted, in order to provide some form of overview of the sorts of practices and ideas of customary marriage in Ghana and/or those commonly referred to as 'traditional'.

A common feature frequently pointed out in relation to marriage in Ghana is the often fairly unstable, fragile and fluid nature of the conjugal bond. As Vellenga describes, for example, referring specifically to the Akan during the colonial period, although 'some... forms were considered more permanent than others, ... generally it could be said that marriage was considered more of a *process* than a state of being' (1983:145, emphasis original). Others have also noted the briefness of marriages and the frequency of divorce (see for example Mikell (1997b) on the Ashanti, and Robertson (1984) on the Ga). In addition to, and perhaps because of, the fluid nature of relationships, marriage

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[64] This is highlighted below for instance in the quote by Sarpong in which he talks about the '*traditional* position' of women (1992:43, emphasis mine).

[65] Robertson however argues that: 'A [...] pitfall best avoided is the use of the traditional/modern dichotomy in analysing socioeconomic change. This model is ahistorical, because change is continuous in all societies, making it impossible to fix on one (usually apocryphal) point as having been 'traditional', and another as being 'modern'' (1995:45-6); an issue further complicated by the variations which exist in Ghana between (and within) different groups.

is not necessarily a person's principal affective relationship and is commonly subordinate to kinship ties (Nukunya, 1992). According to Robertson for example, amongst Ga women of Central Accra a husband ranks a 'poor third', after her mother and children first, and siblings second (1984:182).

Both a cause and consequence of this fragility is the common 'separateness of spouses' (Abu, 1983) particularly in terms of resources, and, among some ethnic groups also, living arrangements. Indeed, it is often noted that historically, and still for many today, it is rare for spouses to pool their incomes (Abu, 1983; Awumbila, 2001; Manuh, 2009b) and it is not uncommon for husbands and wives to live apart (particularly amongst specific ethnic groups, such as the Akans and Gas). Abu, for example, found in her research on an Ashanti town in the late 1970s, that only '45% of married women lived with their husbands' (1983:159); see also Robertson (1984) on the Ga, and Nukunya (1992).

However, while often relatively fragile, marriage is nevertheless an important relationship for both men and women, and in many regards sets out parameters in terms of their access to and control over resources, and their various rights, roles and responsibilities – particularly in relation to one another. As detailed above, in this regard, customary law, under which customary marriages are performed, sets out the specific rights and responsibilities of men and women, and husbands and wives, amongst a particular group of people.

In relation to these rights however, as Nukunya notes:

> *Although the rights that are created by a marriage are reciprocal in the sense that both sides gain something, it is usual to consider this issue from the point of view of the rights acquired by the husband. In many Ghanaian societies the **traditional** position is that women are never wholly independent. A woman must always be under the guardianship of a man, and when she marries, her original guardian hands over some or all of his responsibility for her to her husband.... Her guardian, usually a father or lineage head, gives to the husband the rights to which he is entitled. For these the husband makes some return in the form of marriage payment.* (1992:43, emphasis mine).

Indeed, it is generally posited that it is specifically the payment of a marriage transaction, a feature of customary marriages,[67] that conveys certain rights over women to men in marriage (see for example Fortes, 1962 cited in Frost and Dodoo, 2010; Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 1998; Manuh, 2009b). As Manuh notes for instance: 'On its proper construction, the transfer of bride wealth serves to give a man exclusive sexual access to his wife to control her sexuality, and to insist on her fidelity to him, as well as the right to receive domestic services from her' (2009b:53). However, referring to shifts in the nature of marriage practices and the meaning of marriage, in this case specifically among the Asante, Allman (1996) suggests that prior to the 1920s a husband's exclusive sexual rights to his wife were dependent also upon his continued subsistence support.

Whatever the case in this regard, women are generally seen as under not only the guardianship, but also the authority of the husband. Indeed, it is suggested that 'the various systems of customary law under which the majority of marriages and partnerships are contracted do not view woman and men as equal partners' (Manuh, 2007c:1), and that a clear authority structure exists which denotes the man (husband) 'as the head and master' (Nukunya, 1992:46). In terms of the authority assigned to men in marriage, many commentators note that a husband is generally seen to have 'undisputed authority within the domestic sphere and... absolute control over his wife's sexuality' (Manuh, 2009b:55), and that wives are expected to show respect and obedience to their husbands (see for example Nukunya, 1992; Sarpong, 1974) – even to the extent of addressing them not by name 'but rather by a term appropriate to him as her master' (Nukunya, 1992:44).

Robertson (1984) provides a detailed account of the views and practices regarding women's domestic obligations and the authority structure between husbands and wives amongst the Ga of central Accra. In terms of the authority structure between husbands and wives and the 'proper behaviour of women in marriage', Robertson found that: 'In her behaviour and attitude toward her husband a woman was supposed to be obedient, respectful, tolerant of his unfaithfulness, and sexually compliant.... Respecting the husband's opinions and not quarrelling with him were thought to be very important'

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[67] While marriage payments, which involve the transfer of items and/or money from the husband's to the bride's family, vary widely between different groups in Ghana in terms of the amounts and items given, this is a key element of customary marriage (see Manuh, 2009b for more specific details). According to Sarpong for instance, the marriage payment 'ratifies the marriage. It may be considered as a kind of "documentary evidence" attesting to the fact that matrimonial union has been duly entered into' (1974:83).

(1984:184). Correspondingly, 'The husband was seen as being dominant, and condescending toward the wife if he was a good husband. The wife was supposed to suppress unpleasantness and compromise more' (Robertson, 1984:184). These ideas and practices were illustrated through a number of detailed case studies which spanned from the early 1900s to the 1970s (Robertson, 1984 see in particular pages 125-127 and 168-170).

This authority structure, and ideas regarding male dominance and female submission, are often suggested as being widespread throughout Ghana, and the norm in both matrilineal and patrilineal communities (see Manuh, 2009b). They are commonly argued to manifest in terms of: male dominance in decision making; the requirement of wives to seek their husband's permission for various activities (including travelling, visiting friends and family, and business issues); male sexual rights over women – including male sexual entitlement and female acquiescence; and ultimately the right for men to 'discipline' their wives (see for example Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2007; Adomako Ampofo & Prah, 2009; Gadzekpo, 1999; Manuh, 2007c; 2009b; Martin, 2006; The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004). Indeed, as Nukunya states, tellingly in a rather matter of fact tone: 'Wife-beating is quite a common form of penalizing women in many Ghanaian societies and may be applied in the face of adultery, failure to cook for the husband on time and anything he considers to merit such a treatment. But it is expected of a reasonable man to exercise moderation in beating his wife so as not to hurt her' (Nukunya, 1992:45).

While the general presence of such ideals and practices have been noted by many, variations in particularities are noted to exist, both within and between groups, and over time. Indeed, it has been argued by some that residence patterns of husbands and wives might influence how women are affected by such ideologies of male dominance and female submission. For instance, several scholars suggest that separate residence of spouses, common for example amongst the Ga and Akan, may provide women with a certain level of autonomy, can protect women from the abuse of husbands, and reduces the level of control of husbands over wives (see for example Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 1998; Manuh, 2009b; Mikell, 1997b; Oppong, 1970).

However, as Abu cautions, talking specifically of the matrilineal Ashanti, while 'women may be left comparatively free from the conjugal authority of husbands', as a result of separate residence and 'matrilineal norms regarding decent and paternity', 'it would be a great mistake to push [these points] to extreme conclusions, and to imagine, for instance that paternity was quite irrelevant or that men had no control over their wives'

(1983:157). Indeed, the general roles and responsibilities of men and women, detailed here, often appear to be present in situations in which men and women do not reside together. For instance as Clark found, also in relation to the Ashanti, even 'in the classic duolocal marriage, a wife cooks the evening meal in her own house as a preliminary to visiting her husband for the night at his house' (1994:344).

Many note the generally widespread nature of such ideas. While some often refer to the past, there is also a vast amount of literature which suggests that such ideas (and practices) continue to proliferate, in one form or another. This includes: the burgeoning literature and research focused on gender violence, which has be produced over recent years (see for example Adinkrah, 2011; Akumatey & Darkwa, 2009; Amoakohene, 2004; Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Cusack & Manuh, 2009; Manuh, 2007c; Martin, 2006; The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004); other research, such as that focused on the marriage expectations and ideas of adolescents (for example Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2007; 2008; Frost & Dodoo, 2010); and research focused on widespread views present in and transmitted through the school environment (see for example Dunne et al., 2005; Dunne, 2008; Leach, 2003; Leach et al., 2003). Such literature suggests the continued widespread prevalence of these ideas amongst a broad range of locations, groups and classes in Ghana; including men and women in various rural areas of the country, educated women in urban areas (see Amoakohene, 2004), university students (see Adinkrah, 2011), and 'community members, government officials, judges, religious leaders, customary leaders, and law enforcement personnel' (Martin, 2006:350; see also various chapters in Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999 and; Cusack & Manuh, 2009).

In terms of the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, many note that under customary law a husband is required to maintain his wive(s) and children, and that a wife is responsible for domestic duties, including childcare and cooking (see for example Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 1998; Manuh, 1993b; 2009b). However, what this might mean in practice in terms of the roles and expectations of husbands and wives is complex, for example in relation to how far a husband's responsibility for maintenance extends (in terms of both expectations and practice), the variations which exist between groups, and the changes, in both practices and ideologies, which have taken place over time as a result of various influences and socio-economic changes.

As noted above, spouses in Ghana generally maintain 'separate purses'. As such they have a certain level of financial autonomy and often each have particular and separate financial responsibilities within the household. Thus, while great importance may be

attached to men's financial support of wives and children, it must be noted that it is not necessarily regarded as absolute, and wives are varyingly deemed to have responsibilities to contribute to theirs and their children's maintenance (see Abu, 1983; Awumbila, 2001). Indeed as Abu points out in relation to Ashanti women, they 'have always contributed significantly to the maintenance of their conjugal families through their farming efforts. [And] Under urban conditions their activities are directed towards earning cash' (1983:163). In relation to this, it is important to note the long history of women's economic activity, autonomy and contribution in Ghana.

In terms of the support men do provide and the expectations of them, accounts vary in terms of what this means in practice, no doubt due to various differences which exist between different groups and changes which have taken place over time. However, such support is often noted as including the provision of *chop money*[71] at the very least, and variably the payment of children's school fees, rent, medical care, and clothing (see for example Abu, 1983; Ankomah, 1996; Awumbila, 2001; Kuenyehia & Ofei-Aboagye, 1998; Manuh, 1997, for examples of the sorts of support noted). According to Abu, in her research on couples in an Ashanti town in the 1970s, while 'many women seemed to accept that a wife's financial contribution to the running of the household was a fact of life... they felt that the husband should pay for expenses as far as he possibly could' (1983:164).

In relation to the economic expectations of husbands and wives, it is important to note a number of changes and influences that have taken place, which may have varyingly affected this (on an ideological level at least), and what people might envisage when referring for example to a husband's responsibility to maintain his wive(s), and also wives' domestic responsibilities. Although focused on Nigeria, the research of both Mann (1981; 1983) and Lindsay (2007; see also Lindsay, 1998; 1999) outlines various changes in the roles and expectations of husbands and wives which occurred during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, among specific segments of the population. These kinds of shifts and influences no doubt simultaneously occurred in Ghana.

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[71] *Chop money*, 'the Ghanaian-English phrase for 'money for food'' (Abu, 1983:160) is the term used to describe 'The transfer of food or money from man to woman [which] occupies a central place in marriage and lover relationships in Ashanti' (Abu, 1983:160), as in Ghana generally. It is generally 'seen as the least a husband can provide; it is shameful, and can be cited as a reason for divorce, when a husband is unable, or refuses, to provide chopmoney' (Ankomah, 1996:41) However, the provision of *chop money* does not signify a simple idea of economic dependency within Ghanaian marriages. Indeed, husbands and wives in Ghana are generally economically independent.

Focusing on 'the marriage practices of... the educated elite in Lagos between 1880 and 1915' (1981:201), Mann discusses the influence of missionaries, repatriated slaves and the colonial government, in the introduction of 'Christian (ordinance) marriages' and Victorian ideals about 'the proper relationship between and roles of... husbands and wives' (1981:211). As well emphasising monogamy, love and companionship in relationships (as discussed further below), missionaries held 'that husbands should support their families economically and wives should not work outside the home but devote full time to domestic chores' (1981:211). Mann details the extent to which couples embraced such Victorian ideals. While not all adopted Christian/Ordinance marriage and the ideals these endorsed, and differences were noted to exist between men and women (with women more likely to embrace such ideals; see Mann, 1983), she notes how 'By the 1880s... most elite women aspired to the Victorian ideal, and many achieved it. These women devoted themselves to running homes... not to pursuing independent economic activities' (Mann, 1983:44). However, as Mann also details, from around 1900 elite women began 'reconsidering aspects of Christian marriage' (1983:52), due to various domestic problems, including their economic dependence on men, which led to a re-embracing of work outside the home for women.[72]

Also focusing on changes in marriage practices and ideals resulting from colonialism, Lindsay's research on Nigerian railwaymen charts the 'development of a male breadwinner ideal among wage earners in... Nigeria' (2008:241) in the late 1930s to the early 1960s. However, she discusses the ways in which such ideals were not simply imposed by colonialism, but also the processes by which they were actively taken up and reinforced, for various ends, by Nigerian men and women and the Trade Union movement (see Lindsay, 2008 for more discussion of this). Detailing actual changes which took place in terms of men's financial provision, Lindsay notes that 'steadily employed men seem to have become responsible for increasing proportions of the household budget' (2007:243). However, she also describes the ways in which both men and their wives, despite women's continued economic contributions, increasingly referred to husbands as 'primary financial providers' and 'breadwinners', even in

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[72] It is worth noting that, while Victorian ideals presented changes from customary norms in relation to certain aspects of conjugal relations, for example the economic activities and roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, they reinforced others; for example male sexual rights over women. As Mann notes: 'A double standard based on an assumption of male rights to female sexuality underlay both Victorian and Yoruba attitudes towards women... Values from these two different cultural traditions reinforced one another among the elite, leaving the group much more tolerant of extramarital sex for men than women' (1983:46).

situations in which this was not the case; with 'the importance of railwaymen's economic contributions reinforc[ing] prevailing notions that men were considered household heads, even when wives earned income as well' (Lindsay, 1998:452). As such, Lindsay details the emergence of the *ideal* of the male breadwinner, and with this, dependent wives and children, which 'in some contexts... remains an ideal' (Lindsay, 2009:248), even though the reality in terms of contributions was often more ambiguous.

Although both these studies focus on the elite and wage earners, a small group of the overall population, it is possible that such ideas have, along with other broader socio-economic changes, influenced more general ideals and practices of marriage; contributing to ideas regarding the levels of support men are deemed to be responsible for, and sentiments such as those expressed by Abu's (1983) Ashanti respondents, detailed above, regarding men's financial responsibilities.

In addition to economic expectations and practices, Mann (1981; 1983) and Lindsay (1998; 1999; 2007) also detail changes to other aspects of marital ideals (and in some instances behaviours) which occurred to varying extents within the cohorts they studied. This included, for instance, greater monogamy, marital stability and resource pooling, and an emphasis on love and companionship. Such changes in ideals and practices have similarly been noted to have emerged in Ghana, as described below, particularly amongst specific groups.

Such ideals are often presented as an alternative and in opposition to, and critique of, certain customary marriage practices and/or what people might refer to as 'traditional' marriage ideals (as discussed above). However, while such influences have no doubt provided more definite and extensive alternative ideologies and practices for certain segments of the population, they have also no-doubt simultaneously filtered into, and influenced, marriage ideals and practices amongst the general population and customary marriage practices in varying ways (as discussed above). They may also help individuals to deal with and make sense of social changes and concomitant shifts in marriage. I discuss below several such influences and ideas in more detail.

'Companionate marriage' ideals

Similar to the research of Mann (1981; 1983) and Lindsay (1998; 1999; 2007) on the elite and wage earners in Nigeria, research from Ghana, investigating the nature of marriage among the emerging urban elite in the 1960s and 70s (see for example

Caldwell, 1968; Oppong, 1970; 1974), suggested that certain changes were occurring due to significant social change and the 'influences of colonialism, changing economic systems, urbanisation, missionary Christianity and formal education' (Soothill, 2007:182). Such changes, included, for instance, a strengthening of the marital bond as couples moved away from wider kin as a result of urbanisation, increasing co-residence of spouses, nuclear living arrangements and increased spending on the nuclear unit, greater male involvement in household chores, and a movement towards joint decision-making, greater equality and closer relations between husbands and wives.

While such changes were at times perhaps more 'attitudinal' than 'behavioural', it was suggested that they characterised an ideal which was strived for, and as Caldwell put it: 'though belief and practice cannot be exactly equated, both are measures of change and do interact' (1968:71). As such, as Soothill describes, it was generally posited that '*traditional* family patterns would give way, in a relatively short space of time, to what was perceived as the more "*modern*", Western-style, individuated nuclear family system' (2007:182-3, emphasis mine).

A study of particular importance in this regard is the research carried out by Oppong (1970; 1974; see also Oppong, 2005) in the late 1960s. Interested in potential changes in the conduct of marriage among middle class urban couples, Oppong undertook a survey of 180 married male senior civil servants in Accra (Oppong, 1970), and followed this up with a panel survey focusing specifically on those from the Akan ethnic group (Oppong, 1974). With 'neolocal coresidence at a distance from senior kin' (Oppong, 1970:677) found to be the norm, Oppong was concerned with changes taking place in terms of the domestic rights and responsibilities of couples and the extent to which these were joint or segregated. She was particularly interested in investigating changes in the structure of conjugal decision-making which might accompany women's increased relative resource inputs, including their contribution to household finances and their 'ages, educational levels and occupations' (Oppong, 1970:676).

Overall Oppong found that the more equal the spouses' contributions in terms of the above factors, the more likely they were to share in household decision-making. For instance she reported that 'there appeared to be a trend towards greater egalitarianism among couples in which both husband and wife had benefitted from higher education and in three quarters of couples in which the wife's financial input was reported to be high, decision making was reported to be **syncratic'** (Oppong, 2005:7, emphasis original). Overall, it appeared that such couples were adopting, or aspiring, at least, to

new ideals of marriage which were emerging: in which women shared in decision-making, couples spent more leisure time together, and husbands contributed more to domestic chores (see Oppong, 1974; 2005). However, Oppong also found that in situations in which women's relative resource contributions were low, women might be in a worsening position in such relationships; with their dependence on their husbands increased and divorce and separation more stigmatised amongst this group (Oppong, 2005; see also Oppong et al., 1975).

While these ideals, and such changes, have been suggested by others referring to the potential effects of social change on marriage in Ghana (see for example Assimeng, 1999; Nukunya, 1992), Soothill for example posits that 'changes in family life have not occurred to the extent predicted' (Soothill, 2007:183). Indeed, she argues that 'the conjugal bond has not become characterised by joint decision-making and greater intimacy to the extent expected, though there is more emphasis on love and romance in courtship among some Ghanaians' (2007:184). In some senses echoing the findings of Lindsay (2007), cited above, others have also noted that despite increases in women's financial contributions, 'even where women are economic providers in their own rights they learn to concede the nominal role of provider or head to a male' (Adomako Ampofo, 2001:199); thereby maintaining existing power structures.

Indeed, while Oppong's research was important in highlighting some of the potential changes that were taking place with regards to marriage, her concentration principally on decision making, which she seemed to use as a proxy for 'conjugal power', provides a rather limited focus. Although links are often made between women's decision making and their status and levels of power (see Warren, 2009 for an outline of such links), this can potentially ignore other aspects of inequality and power within conjugal relations, and provides a very specific and limited definition of what 'egalitarianism' within marriage might mean.

However, whether such changes (which have undoubtedly occurred for some) have taken place to a great extent or not in practice, what is important is the existence of changed expectations and the presence of alternative aspirations, for some at least. These present alternatives to (and to some extent may also lead to broader shifts in) customary marriage practices and ideals, and what are termed by some as 'traditional' ideas of marriage.

Recent research form elsewhere in Africa discusses more contemporary marriage and relationship aspirations and practices among the urban elite and examines the various

influences on these. Research conducted by Rachel Spronk (2005; 2009a; 2009b; 2011), for example, which focuses specifically on young professionals in Nairobi, examines middle-class attitudes to relationships, marriage and sexuality. According to Spronk: 'Like previous generations of school-educated and middle-class Nairobians, these young professionals see themselves as explorers and creators of what they perceive to be modern African lives.... Their aspirations are in line with other young women and men around the world who take up the ideal of companionate marriage as a way to demonstrate their modern individuality' (2009:182).

According to Spronk such individuals reject 'conventional relationship norms and expectations' (2009:200), seeking to forge instead what they perceive as more 'modern' relationships. This incorporates the aspirations of romantic love, sexual and emotional intimacy, more egalitarian and companionate relationships, mutual sexual satisfaction, and monogamy. Examining the influences on such ideals Spronk 'explores how young professionals' expectations and practices of intimacy are shaped by postcolonial transformations, consumer capitalism, and engagement of [a] therapeutic ethos. In particular, [she] focus[es] on how young professionals consciously seek lessons about love and relationships from magazines and films, and from premarital counselling classes offered by middle-class churches' (2009:183), as they actively examine their relationships and define their relationship desires.

Charismatic Christian discourses of marriage

Another prominent, and more recent, discourse and influence on marriage in Ghana which is important to highlight is that provided by charismatic Christianity.[73] According to Soothill, charismatic Christianity offers a discourse on marriage and family life which 'reflect many of the social changes... regarding the state of the family in contemporary Ghana', including the 'shift [often in ideal rather than reality] towards the individuated nuclear family' (2007:181). She argues that in addition to enabling people to make sense of and negotiate such changes, it also, however, helps them to understand 'the absence of change in the direction desired by many, especially women', through the

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[73] 'Charismatic Christianity (also known as Spirit-filled Christianity) is an umbrella term that describes a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and modern day miracles. ... It is often categorized into three separate groups (though there is much overlap): Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, and neocharismatic movements' (Wikipedia, 2013).

use of 'a spiritualised discourse, which attributes male behaviour, in particular, to the activities of malignant forces' (Soothill, 2007:181).

Perhaps surprising to some, considering the role of religion in reinforcing what are widely considered 'traditional' marriage ideals and practices (see for example Ammah-Koney, 2009; Oduyoye, 2009), charismatic Christianity has been argued to provide an alternative model of marriage, through the reconfiguration of gender and specific marriage ideas such as male headship and female submission (see for example Newell, 2005; Soothill, 2007). While Newell (2005) specifically highlights the role of female authors of Christian pamphlets in this reconfiguration, Soothill (2007), in a study of three prominent charismatic Churches in Ghana, indicates that such ideas are more widespread within the charismatic movement.

Although maintaining the biblical ideas of male headship and female submission, these ideas are however redefined, as charismatic Christianity sets itself apart from and critiques the ideas of male superiority present in what it terms 'African culture' and 'tradition' (Soothill, 2007:189; see also Maier, 2012, on Pentecostal constructions of manhood among Nigerians in London). As Soothill notes: 'it is argued that whilst a male-female hierarchy is preserved, the concept of male authority is redefined in terms of "sacrifice" and "self-giving" love' (2007:191). As such, in charismatic Christianity, 'Male headship does not mean that men are superior to women, or more precisely, that the husband is superior to the wife. The concept of the superiority of the man over the woman is presented as an African traditional belief' (Soothill, 2007:191). The idea of female submission is similarly reconfigured; 'born-again men are encouraged to "respect" their wives and treat them with kindness so that wives will submit to their husbands not out of fear but "with love"' (Soothill, 2007:191).

It is important to note however that despite these changes in interpretation the male-female hierarchy is nevertheless maintained. So whilst it might be argued that men should not be domineering or abusive, and should respect women, treat them well and make sacrifices for the family, this is presented as part of their responsibility as the authority figure and leader, someone who is still 'in charge' of the household. It is the ways in which a man carries out his duties, rather than the nature of his position which is questioned.

Similarly, while women should be treated with respect, and not mistreated, they are nevertheless reminded of their place in the gender order. Soothill for example, notes that Francesca Duncan-Williams, a leading female figure in one charismatic church,

'often reiterates that women are not competing with men: "We are not fighting for equality; we know where we belong"' (2007:135). In addition, Soothill notes that, 'the churches are... critical of married women who try to "boss" their husbands because their income matches or even exceeds that of their spouse' (2007:207). Speaking of one pastor who suggested this as the reason for the breakdown of his marriage, Soothill details: 'he expressed anger about women who feel empowered to "act like the boss" at home when economic conditions make it so difficult for "men to be men"' (2007:207).

A common analogy made within charismatic Christianity in order to explain these reconfigured ideas of male headship and female submission is that of comparing a married couple to a body, in which the man is the head and the woman the neck or body (something that I frequently heard during my fieldwork). As Maier explains:

> *The man takes over the function of the head and the woman the neck or the rest of the body. Two leading spouses would make marriage a multi-headed monster. However, the gender relationship is marked by complementarity: the man needs the woman to connect him to the body he belongs to. Otherwise he would become a floating head – also a monster and unable to survive. In this logic, the man values his wife and treats her well, gives her a say in decisions, and fulfils her needs voluntarily.* (Maier, 2012:130).

Thus while advocating for marriages which are characterised by harmony, mutual support, respect, fidelity (both on the part of men as well as women) and joint-decision making, this is still within a specific male-female hierarchy which should be maintained. This enables the hierarchy to remain intact despite what might be seen as dramatic changes in roles and responsibilities, and the ways in which women and men relate to one another in marriage. In addition, as Soothill (2007) explains, where this ideal is not met, and men behave in a manner condemned by these churches, for instance in situations of domestic violence or male infidelity, this is accounted for by spiritual forces, such as the devil and witchcraft. Indeed there does not seem to be any suggestion of the potential influence and problematic consequences of the ideologies of male hierarchy and female submission in such situations.

In terms of practical arrangements, the features of the 'ideal Christian family perpetuated by the charismatic movement' (Soothill, 2007:196) that Soothill (2007) outlines are in many ways similar to ideals of 'companionate marriage', detailed above. This includes: nuclear family living arrangements; pooling of incomes; expenditure on

the nuclear family rather than wider kin; joint decision-making; lack of interference from kin; and inheritance by the nuclear family. The main difference, however, is that such changes are embedded within, and not seen as a threat to, the gender order of male headship and female submission. Although, as detailed, these ideas are reconfigured in a way which enables the rejection of what are seen as 'traditional' African values of 'sexual inequality which favours men and disrespects women' (Soothill, 2007:187).

Such ideas have gained increasing prominence in Ghana with the rapid rise in charismatic Christianity since the late 1970s (see Meyer, 1995; Sackey, 2001 for details of the growth of charismatic Christianity). In the last 20 years charismatic Christianity has grown faster than any other Christian denomination (Soothill, 2007) and 'Pentecostal/charismatic' was the largest religious affiliation noted in the 2000 census; accounting for 24.1% of the total population, and over 1/3 of all Christians (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). According to Soothill, charismatic churches 'have made an enormous impact on Ghana's religious scene, especially in Accra where they now occupy many of the city's disused cinemas, industrial buildings and other formerly secular sites' (2007:1). They are also popular in rural areas, where many have branches (Meyer, 1995). However, in addition to their members and congregations, Soothill notes that their 'discursive influence' (2007:182) reaches a far wider audience in Ghana through daily radio and television broadcasts, literature (including books and pamphlets)[74] and recorded material, particularly in Accra. As such charismatic Christian ideals have become fairly widespread, especially among urban populations eager to reject certain aspects of marriage, perceived as 'traditional', while still adhering to religious ideologies.

Feminist influences

Another influence on marriage ideals in Ghana, which it is important to highlight considering the topic of this research, is feminism. Although recognising the potential overlap between the two, I refer here specifically to feminists and gender activists driving the feminist movement in Ghana, including researchers, academics and activists, as opposed to many NGO staff; what Goetz referred to as the 'actual implementers of policy: the lower-level bureaucrats or field workers in development agencies' (1996:i, see chapter 1). Again often critiquing what are variably termed as 'traditional' marriage ideas, these feminists and gender activists advocate for a range of

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[74] See also Newell (2005) for details of such literature.

changes to marriage practices. The detail and extent of suggested changes vary between different individuals and groups, but can range from a focus on transforming fixed gender roles within marriages, for example advocating for husbands' participation in household chores, and wives' increased financial contributions and participation in decision making (fairly common themes in much gender work), to what might be seen as more fundamental shifts in interpersonal dynamics and changes in certain marriage practices, such as marriage transactions, polygyny, male infidelity and manifestations of male authority.

Many prominent feminist actors and academics in Ghana are involved in shaping and putting forward these proposed changes to marriage ideals and practices. For example a number have critiqued and called for changes in relation to specific practices and norms, including for example leviratic marriage (wife inheritance), polygyny, the payment of marriage transactions, inheritance practices and the sexual double standard (see for example Adjetey, 2005; Akumatey & Darkwa, 2009; Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Cusack & Manuh, 2009; Dwamena-Aboagye, 2005; Sam, 2005; The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004). While such activists might represent only a small proportion of the population, their ideas are taken up, albeit to varying extents, and some more than others, by the general populace and specifically those involved in implementing gender work.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has outlined elements of the broader Ghanaian context that need to be taken into account when focusing on the ways in which gender work is understood and enacted by Ghanaian NGOs, such as ASCW and PDP, and the individuals within such organisations. As well as giving an overview of gender work in Ghana, I have particularly drawn attention to the widespread concerns about changes in marriage and the positions and roles of husbands and wives which pertain in Ghana. Recognising both the importance of marriage in Ghana and the specific focus on marriage within work focusing on gender violence, I have outlined some of the prominent ideas and practices regarding marriage which proliferate in Ghana. While the various ideas and influences that I have detailed are by no means the only ones that exist, they provide an understanding of some of the prominent discourses and influences regarding marriage that individuals are exposed to and might hold.

Having explored this background and outlined some of the broader 'normative assumptions' and 'hegemonic discourses' that make up the context in which gender

work is undertaken and interpreted, I now focus in the rest of the thesis on the work of ASCW and PDP and the particular ways in which gender work is conducted and understood. I begin in the next chapter (chapter 3) by providing a detailed overview of the two organisations.

Chapter 3 – The Gender Work of Two Ghanaian NGOs

I explore the specific research questions set out in this thesis through a focus on the work of two Ghanaian NGOs and the individuals within these institutions. This includes one development NGO, which I call PDP, and one WRO, which I refer to as ASCW.

This chapter introduces these two case study organisations in greater detail. I provide an overview of their structure, staffing, remits and focus, projects and programmes, funding and internal mechanisms.[75] While I outline these issues in general, I specifically explore the development and focus of their work on gender issues and the sorts of ideas commonly used, particularly in relation to gender violence. It is the specific ways in which such work, and the concepts contained within, are implemented and understood that this thesis goes on to explore in greater detail in chapters 4, 5, and 6. In these subsequent chapters I focus on what this work looks like in practice and the issues which emerge, the ways in which concepts are talked about and used, the specific influences on this, and how this practice and understandings need to be read in relation to the broader context in which this work takes place.

I begin with ASCW.

Action on Social Change for Women (ASCW)

Action on Social Change for Women (ASCW) is a WRO and an active and integral player in Ghana's emerging women's movement. Like many such organisations, ASCW classifies itself as both a development organisation, and more specifically a WRO. It is a Ghanaian NGO, managed and staffed principally by Ghanaians, with occasional interns and volunteers from Ghana and overseas.

As detailed in chapter 2, during the 1990s there was an increasing focus on the issue of gender violence in Ghana. During this period, and since, many organisations focusing principally, or in part, on gender violence were established; ASCW was one of them. With a number of areas of intervention, all focused principally around its core

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[75] I have attempted in this chapter to give as accurate an overview of both organisations as possible, but whilst maintaining organisational anonymity. As a result some of the key elements of the organisations' identities – such as their mission, vision, aims and objectives, project/programme details, department details, and job titles – are not detailed or have been changed. It is hoped however that the overview nonetheless captures and reflects, as accurately as possible, the overall essence and nature of the organisations and their operations.

mandate of addressing and preventing gender violence, ASCW provides counselling services and referrals for survivors of gender violence, undertakes training, awareness raising and advocacy activities, carries out economic empowerment projects and some research work.

The primary focus of the organisation is on women and children, as reflected in the organisation's mission, strategy, and programmes. This focus follows from the acknowledgement, and often cited evidence, that women and children are disproportionately affected by, and survivors/victims of, gender violence. ASCW describes itself varyingly as a feminist and/or women's rights organisation, and although not its immediate aim or focus per se, ASCW talks about its work in relation to inequalities between men and women. However, ASCW also provides assistance to men, and works with both male victims and perpetrators of violence, and is often keen to inform people about this (an issue discussed later in the thesis).

ASCW's work is principally based in Accra, with a few operations in other locations in Ghana. At the time of my fieldwork the organisation employed a few dozen staff. Like many other WROs, the organisation has a female Executive Director, but employs a mixture of both male and female staff for other positions, including counselling posts. There are several different departments within the organisation each with their own specific roles and remits. Although staff work principally within a particular unit, there is also a significant amount of collaboration and shared working across the organisation. For example, all staff are trained as counsellors, and staff from different units across the organisation are often involved in awareness raising outreach events, training programmes, and networking events. The activities and remits of each of the departments are fundamentally geared towards and guided by the overall organisational mandate of addressing and preventing gender violence, and the work of each unit is designed to complement the others. The three most prominent areas of the organisation's work include advocacy, training and counselling.

In terms of advocacy, ASCW organises and undertakes various outreach programmes aimed at raising public awareness regarding gender violence and other related issues. Outreach programmes are organised in a variety of settings including schools, market places, on radio programmes, with community groups and churches, and among selected professional groups. The advocacy work aims principally to raise general awareness and understanding regarding gender violence, for purposes of prevention and also to inform people of the support services available.

In relation to training, the organisation organises and facilitates external trainings for a range of audiences, including other service providers (such as the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), the Ghana police service, lawyers and health professionals), and community members. The aim of this training is to build the capacity of individuals and institutions to enable them to respond appropriately to incidences and survivors of gender violence, making referrals where necessary. Such training commonly covers information on gender violence, including types of violence, examples, causes and effects, counselling and communication skills, and the DV Act and other human rights legislation. ASCW also organises in house training for its own staff, this includes topic specific training, for example counselling and police procedures, and skills training, such as IT training and facilitation skills.

In terms of counselling work, ASCW provides this on both an individual and group basis, carried out by a number of dedicated counselling staff, who work in various different locations, providing counselling and making referrals where necessary. While the principal focus of counselling is to provide support to survivors of gender violence, ASCW counsellors also counsel clients who present with other issues including, for example, marital and relationship problems, maintenance and custody cases, and teenage pregnancy. While the majority of clients are female, as detailed above, ASCW also provides services for men.

In addition to these areas of work, ASCW undertakes research and monitoring, and produces reports and public information materials. ASCW also places a significant value on networking and collaboration and its role within the women's movement in Ghana and internationally. It is an active member of the three main national networks and coalitions (NETRIGHT, DV Coalition, and WMC), in addition to several others, and ASCW staff regularly participate in and act as resource persons at events and programmes organised by other organisations.

In the words of the Executive Director: "*[ASCW] is not a project organisation, [ASCW] is a programme organisation*" (Interview, 11/12/09). In contrast to many other NGOs, its work and organisational structure are not organised principally around distinct projects that are each separately funded by one donor or another. The organisation has a fixed structure of different departments, each with their own specific remit and work activities, aimed at working towards the overall organisational aims. And the majority of ASCW's work consists of a range of ongoing activities, decided on and designed by ASCW.

ASCW receives funding for this work from a wide variety of donors, including INGOs, bilateral and multilateral organisations, foundations, trusts, and individuals. However, rather than donors supporting a specific isolated project, which is then linked to that funder, ASCW gives donors details of the range activities it undertakes, and for which it would like support. For example, as the Executive Director informed me, ASCW contacts donors with a breakdown of its various activities and the funds required for each of these. The donor then chooses which activities, and how many, it would be willing to support, depending on its own aims and remit (Interview, 11/12/09). For example a donor might fund three advocacy outreach events, two trainings, and provide a certain amount of money to support the provision of counselling services. In other instances a donor might be approached regarding a particular activity that the organisation has planned, for example an event planned as part of the activities around the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence' campaign.[76]

As a result it is very much ASCW, as opposed to donor agendas, that guides the work of the organisation. Work is designed almost irrespective of donor interests and focus; based instead on the clear and fixed organisational remit, focus and set of activities. A similar situation has been noted by Fallon in relation to WROs in Ghana. She states:

> *Although organisations are generally funded by donor agencies to carry out their agenda, this was not always the case in Ghana. Through interviews, I determined that some members [of staff] did not realise that donor agencies had specific agendas. Therefore, instead of organising their proposals to address the needs of donor agencies, members would meet to determine which projects were most important to their organisations. After they prioritised their needs and determined which activities to pursue, they would then seek funding.* (Fallon, 2003:532).

Indeed, in the case of ASCW, it does not appear that this organisational and funding model is in any way adopted as a means of protecting itself from donor pressure and influence. Rather this is simply the way that the organisation has developed and chosen to operate; deciding on its goals and interests, and how to achieve these, and seeking funding to support this.

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[76] 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an internationally recognised campaign which began in 1991 and runs each year from November 25th (International Day Against Violence Against Women) to December 10th (International Human Rights Day) (see Anon, n.d.).

These mechanisms of funding, planning, and operation also enable ASCW to be responsive to the demands of its constituents, providing services at short notice and at its own discretion. For instance requests for advocacy outreach programmes are frequently made by schools, communities or groups that have heard about the work of ASCW. Such programmes often result in demands for counselling services, as people become aware of issues and the potential support available. To illustrate, during my fieldwork ASCW was contacted by various individuals from one small town with requests for assistance following a recent radio programme on which a couple of ASCW staff were discussing issues of gender violence. After internal discussions and an initial visit to the community, outreach programmes at a number of churches in the community were planned and carried out.

While most of ASCW's work involves such ongoing counselling, training, and advocacy programmes, which are financed through the securing of funds from various donors for a particular number of activities (as detailed above), it does however have a handful of specifically funded stand-alone projects. Nevertheless, such projects are still predominately aligned to the overall mission and mandate of the organisation, and care is taken to ensure that the organisation is not distracted from its core mandate. For example, the Executive Director told me about an instance in which ASCW had to scale back the number of staff working on a specifically funded project when the tasks carried out by staff started to deviate from the organisation's mandate. She said that in this instance ASCW could have continued with these unrelated tasks, but instead decided to receive less funding and ensure that it was not distracted from its core objectives (Interview, 11/12/09).

So how are the specific programmes, approaches, and activities of ASCW decided? As outlined above, many of these are ongoing, designed by ASCW, and based on the established organisational structure and mandate. This is the case for much of the counselling work, advocacy outreach programmes, and training programmes. For ASCW these are tried and tested activities that enable the organisation to fulfil its mandate. As the Executive Director stated during a focus group discussion, "*In terms of approach I think that we are on top really (...) I don't think there is anything wrong with what we have now, we can only add to it. And when I talk about adding to it, if we have a legal person as a staff of [ASCW] that would be an advantage*" (FGD, 11/12/09). Where and to whom such services are offered is determined through a combination of mechanisms including: being responsive to outside demands (as detailed above), staff

ideas of locations to target, established practices (for example in the case of counselling work), and in a few instances in response to donor requests.

However, some new activities, initiatives and approaches are developed. For example during my fieldwork ASCW began a new advocacy project. This project was initiated by the organisation, as part of its 10 year strategic plan. The project was begun with existing organisational funds and further funding from a number of donors, along the same lines as funding for other ongoing activities. Another new area being developed was work on gender violence and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). While no doubt influenced by an increasing focus on this issue within the development sector in Ghana in the past few years,[77] and with this an increased availability of funding, this proposed area of work was also inspired by cases that ASCW has dealt with and the perceived need for such interventions. The availability of funding might therefore be seen equally (if not more) as providing an opportunity for ASCW to undertake work in this area, as opposed to a factor which is enticing the organisation into an otherwise unconsidered new area of work.

Thus, whilst ASCW does not operate in a vacuum and is obviously not immune to trends in ideas, themes and funding (indeed, perhaps particularly benefiting from the availability of funds for work on gender violence in recent years), much of its work and focus is developed as a result of a) its clear and relatively narrow core mandate and strategic aims, b) emerging issues that it encounters within its work, and c) community demands. Indeed, ASCW is *part* of, and *contributes* to, these trends. As highlighted in chapter 2, gender work is the result of an interplay of various factors including international concerns and processes (which 'local' actors contribute to and share), available funding, and 'local' concerns and realities.

But what about the internal mechanisms for developing and planning programmes and activities, and people's involvement in these processes? In relation to the ongoing work, staff act mainly as implementers of existing plans and activities that have been carried out for a number of years, within an organisational structure that has remained largely unchanged. For example, when I asked one of the advocacy staff, about the design of ASCW's advocacy approach she told me that she "came to meet" it

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[77] Indeed, there have recently been a number of such projects undertaken by various organisations in Ghana, and a number of publications focused on this issue (see for example ActionAid Ghana, 2007; Akumatey & Darkwa, 2009; Brocato & Dwamena-Aboagye, 2007).

(Interview,[78] 05/11/09); meaning that the structure, and main activities and approaches, were already established when she started at the organisation, some years ago.

The same is true for other areas of work within ASCW. Departments submit work plans at the end of each year, providing numbers and details of the activities and events that they aim to carry out in the following year, based on their remit, existing work practices, and previous years' activities. These work plans are then approved by the board, and funding secured by the organisation. A budget for each individual activity is then submitted during the year to the Executive Director for approval, depending on the availability of funds. The exception to this is the counselling work that operates on a demand driven basis, with staff being always available to provide counselling and referral services, although even they have targets and budgets linked to funding. Within this structure, staff are however involved in decisions regarding where activities might be carried out, for example the location of an outreach event and, as detailed below, in the content design of specific activities and events.

In terms of the internal processes around the development of the few new projects and activities, it appears that most staff are generally not involved. For example during one focus group discussion staff told me that they were not really sure how new projects were conceived of and developed (FGD, 13/11/09). Similarly during another focus group discussion the Executive Director stated: "*staff are not necessarily involved in programme design. (...) we have worked a lot on programmes that have already been designed, the new ones come out as a result of needs assessment and stuff like that, or (...) the desire to improve on whatever services we provide. (...) it's not the entire staff who are involved (...). We haven't made a conscious effort to involve all staff in programme design*" (FGD, 11/12/09). Thus, as indicated above, the majority of staff generally seem to be involved primarily in the implementation of programmes, and not the design and/or strategic direction of the organisation.

But, what about the actual content of ASCW's work, and the ideas and concepts that it works with; for example the specific materials, toolkits and ways of thinking in relation to gender violence? Whilst staff are in change of and involved in the implementation and logistical coordination of programmes, what are the ideas used, how is the actual *content* of activities developed, and how are staff involved in this?

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[78] Interview not voice recorded.

There are a number of recurrent ideas and concepts that proliferate within ASCW, which in essence underlie and guide the remit and focus of the organisation. Such ideas are imbued within ASCW, and are used varyingly throughout the work of the organisation; for example in everyday talk within the office, in training programmes, at advocacy outreaches, and in written materials, including the website, information leaflets, and booklets. They are also the principal foundations underlying the counselling work.

These fundamental 'official ideas' and 'official positions', as I would call them, mainly relate to 'facts' regarding gender violence and child abuse. Such information includes definitions of DV and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), details of the different forms and types of violence, the underlying causes of violence, the effects of violence, common myths about violence, 'facts' about violence, and details and figures regarding those affected by violence. This includes for example that the underlying cause of gender violence is "*patriarchy*", "*male dominance*", and male "*power and control*". The frequently used list of types of abuse details physical, verbal/emotional and economic/financial abuse, and harmful traditional practices, listing specific examples under each of these. The 'common myths', identified as such in various materials, which are talked about include that violence affects mainly poor, rural women, and that alcoholism causes violence. And figures are used to illustrate that it is predominantly women who are abused, and that abuse is widespread throughout Ghana.

Such ideas seem to be standard rhetoric used by the organisation and its staff, and during my fieldwork I frequently witnessed the utilisation of what came to be very familiar ideas. For example*, '*patriarchy' was often mentioned by staff members when talking about the cause of violence. For instance when I asked about the main causes of violence during a focus group discussion a female member of staff narrated *"We have patriarchy. When we say patriarchy it is the male dominance that exists in every society"* (FGD, 13/11/09). Such statements were not uncommon. And sessions on 'patriarchy' were also included in training programmes. Similarly, the list of forms and types of abuse was frequently used in advocacy outreach programmes and staff would often talk about the different forms of abuse that exist, careful to point out that abuse is not just physical.

But where do such ideas and concepts come from? As with the development of programmes and the range of activities undertaken, these ideas were an established element of the organisation, something that staff 'came to meet'. Indeed, such ideas were part of existing organisational materials, passed on to staff at the frequent

trainings received whilst working at ASCW, and/or taken from external manuals and resources, both from outside and inside Ghana, and the internet. These same ideas and concepts are also commonly used by many other NGOs in Ghana, in particular other WROs working on gender violence – such that it is not unusual to see the same materials and ideas appearing verbatim elsewhere.

This is perhaps not surprising since, as Hodžić notes, 'Merry's multi-sited ethnography about the formation of laws against 'gender violence' shows that both the forms and discourses of advocacy are surprisingly similar across the globe' (2009:335, citing Merry, 2006a). As such, ideas relating to gender violence seem to be generally and internationally accepted and promoted, and have to a large extent become an 'industry standard'. Merry uses the term 'transnational' to refer to these widespread ideas about gender violence which proliferate around the globe; as she notes the 'global human rights system', of which this is part, 'is now deeply *transnational*, no longer rooted exclusively in the West. It takes place in global settings with representatives from nations and NGOs around the world' (2006a:2, emphasis mine).

Indeed, on the whole, the concepts and ideas generally used within ASCW appear to be principally based on these common transnational models and frameworks which are globally adopted. However such materials are often supplemented with local examples and case studies from the organisation's own work experiences. An example of an often used local resource is the 1999 Gender Centre research (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999); although, this too is framed in relation to transnational definitions and frameworks, and is part of this transnational knowledge.

However, this is not to suggest that the ideas and concepts used by ASCW, and other organisations in Ghana, are 'foreign' and simply imposed from 'outside'. Indeed, as noted by Merry (2006a) representatives from around the world are involved in these processes. In fact, as noted in chapter 2, Anyidoho and Manuh specifically point out that 'many Ghanaian women activists are also members of continental and global networks such as AWID, to which they contribute as many ideas as they borrow' making it 'difficult to separate the local from the global' (2010:267).[79]

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[79] In fact, something I noticed during my fieldwork was the extent to which staff in many WROs, especially those in more senior positions, travelled internationally to various 'women's rights' meetings, for example the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In addition, some such women hold positions on international committees, such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women).

However, in terms of the internal functioning of ASCW, what is important to note is that the main concepts and ideas used in relation to gender work, and gender violence in particular, are generally received and accepted transnational ideas and concepts that staff learn about, and then use in their work. Although such ideas are no doubt discussed during training sessions, on the whole staff are engaged mainly in the routine implementation of programmes; indeed there were very few forums in which I witnessed staff discussing and debating the underlying ideas and concepts used – staff meetings, for example, were usually spent on team updates, and discussing internal issues.

There were some instances in which staff did, to some extent, examine these ideas. However this often tended to involve staff striving to understand and make sense of these 'accepted' ideas and what they meant in practice, rather than questioning or (re)defining them. For instance, at one staff meeting staff discussed the content of a talk given by a pastor at a recent event. Their discussion touched vaguely and briefly on issues relating to the principles and ideas underlying their work and the appropriateness of the message given, but this was not a sustained or detailed debate (Fieldnotes, 11/12/09). However, this lack of debate, analysis and theorising is perhaps not surprising since ASCW, like many NGOs, is principally an implementing organisation. Indeed, as the Executive Director commented during a focus group discussion, when I asked for opinions regarding a specific example of a form of abuse listed in organisational documents: *"she's trying to turn us into sociologists"* (FGD, 11/12/09).

Having provided a detailed account of ASCW, I now turn to give a similar overview of the structure and focus of PDP.

People's Development Partners (PDP)

People's Development Partners (PDP) is a development oriented NGO. It has a broad remit and mission – working with predominately poor and vulnerable individuals and groups, on a range of issues including well-being, rights, status, and economic circumstances – and implements a varied portfolio of projects. It employs roughly the same number of staff as ASCW.

Unlike ASCW, PDP is not principally focused on one specific theme but works on a diverse range of 'development' related issues, all aimed at working towards its broad objectives. PDP's work is loosely organised around a number of key areas of

intervention, including health, livelihoods, vocational training and education, and economic empowerment. However, as the Executive Director, pointed out, *"you know our vision is also so broad that (...) any project can fit into it"* (LHI, 16/12/09).

In contrast to ASCW, PDP is a project oriented organisation – working principally through and on separately funded individual and isolated projects, which are focused on a wide variety of areas. In general, each project is individually designed, funded and managed, and staff frequently refer to projects by the name of the funder. With its head office in Accra, PDP has a number of project offices in various locations around the country. Each office contains various staff members and implements a variety of projects; the precise focus of projects and staffing depends to some extent on the specific location and/or expertise and remit of the office in question. The head office in Accra provides central management for the organisation, including coordinating funding and reports for donors, in addition to also implementing projects.

So, as a general development organisation, with a broad focus, to what extent is the work of PDP *formally* about women and/or gender? And what does this entail? As the Executive Director pointed out PDP is not, and does not think of itself as, a *"women's or gender organisation"* (Interview, 29/06/09). Gender and/or women are not the organisation's principal areas of focus. However, this said, like many other general development organisations, PDP aims to specifically focus on the needs of women and girls, and incorporate a 'gender' focus into its work. Indeed, the organisation explicitly mentions women and girls in its mandate, and talks of the need for equal opportunities between women and men.

I was told separately by both the Executive Director and Deputy Director, that these broad statements of intent guide the work of the organisation regarding the aim of focusing specifically on women and girls, ensuring that they are not forgotten (Interviews, 29/06/09 and 21/04/09, respectively). In the words of the Executive Director: "*Because if you don't [explicitly state it] (...) projects come and you are in a hurry, I mean you are in a bid to satisfy your project objectives and all that, if you don't really state it there you will overlook it. So it is a constant reminder that within every project if it is possible for us to look at the needs of women and girls then we do that*" (Interview, 29/06/09).

PDP has a brief statement on 'mainstreaming gender' within its administrative policy, however other than this and the quite broad statements detailed above, there are no specific and more detailed organisational policies, guidelines, or aims regarding

working with women/ on gender issues. The only *organisational-wide* initiatives I witnessed during my fieldwork relating to women/gender included a short 'brief on gender' at a staff meeting, and a training course facilitated by an outside organisation.

The 'brief on gender' at the staff meeting was just one of four head office briefs which was covered during a short, approximately 10 minute, session at a rare organisation-wide meeting, which included head office staff and selected staff from project offices. The training course on the other hand was a three-day event, and was attended by various female staff from across the organisation, including some from the head office and others from various project offices. While this training covered a specific model for incorporating gender into HIV work, and it was hoped would help staff to include gender into their work more generally, it did not aim to provide clear organisational objectives on women/gender. So while the organisation makes some statements relating to women/gender, and their desire to incorporate this into their work, these are generally rather loose and relatively ambiguous in terms of the objectives, focus, and approaches.

For an organisation such as PDP that works on a wide variety of themes and projects, such broad statements, potentially encompassing a range of issues, approaches and objectives, can enable the organisation to be flexible in its approach to working with women/gender – working things out on a project by project basis, depending for example on the scope of the project and interests of the donor. For instance, as the Executive Director stated:

> "*In every situation we realise that women are more vulnerable, women and girls, their needs are more, in every little situation. (...) if there's HIV in the family the men make sure that they have the best medication, they will take the money, go to hospital (...) they will not consider that, 'well let my wife go first'. (...) Even in ... education, income, everything you realise that the vulnerability of women is much more than those of men. So that is why it is important to just make sure the women are not forgotten, (...). If you go for, let's say a school programme, school hygiene, the needs of the girls are different.*" (Interview, 29/06/09).

However, on the other hand, such broad statements, combined with the absence of specific and detailed organisational policies, guidelines, or aims on gender/women, can equally be read as, and result in, a lack of clear overall organisational direction in terms

of how and why it works with women, what it aims to achieve, and a diversity and lack of consistency of approaches and ideas.

This seeming lack of clear direction and consistency on women/gender is both a product of, and further compounded by, the project nature of PDP's work and operational structure – with diverse projects being individually devised, funded and implemented. As a result different projects have quite different objectives and approaches in relation to women/gender (as described in more detail below). Hence, in reality the extent to which the work of the organisation is focused on women/gender, and what this means, changes (in some cases quite dramatically) according to the different projects implemented. Thus there is not one overall organisational approach, and set of aims and objectives in relation to women/gender, but different approaches adopted on a project-by-project basis. This assortment of approaches in turn, no doubt, also reinforces the absence of a consistent gender policy and clear organisational goals and remit around women and gender, as well as contributing to the diversity of ways in which staff talk about the 'gender focus' and work of the organisation. In terms of networking, unlike ASCW, PDP is not an active member of many of the gender networks in Ghana. However, the organisation is a member of a range of 'development' related networks, which cover different themes.

As detailed above, PDP mainly works through the implementation of individual projects. At the time of my fieldwork the organisation was implementing a wide range of such projects, each separately funded, with its own specific aims and objectives. Projects generally run from 1 to 3 years in length. However, the organisation does engage in more long term interventions with specific communities and groups. In some cases this involves a series of separate projects, and in other cases ongoing work around the same focus, facilitated by sequential funds from a series of donors.

Before detailing the specific objectives and focus of some of these projects, both in general and in relation to women/gender, it is first important to outline the various processes by which the organisation develops its work and by which the various projects come into being. This is important because, as will be outlined, the latter has a bearing on the former.

The projects implemented by PDP are developed in a variety of different ways. Some result from specific calls for proposals (CFPs), expressions of interest (EOIs) or being approached by a specific donor. In such cases the donor often has a clear idea of the project to be implemented – in terms of the themes, approaches, objectives, and in

some instances even location, although the degree to which this is specified by the donor varies from project to project. Within this process, organisations, such as PDP, bid against one another, putting forward a case regarding their ability and suitability to implement the project, along with other documents as required. Another common mechanism is the development of project proposals by PDP, which are then submitted to donors for consideration. In some cases the scope of such projects might be tailored to a specific funder or available fund, while in other instances this might not be the case. Other projects emerge as a result of collaborative work with other NGOs, and are funded by either of the two mechanisms already outlined – either through donor initiation, or from the development and submission of a proposal which may be led by either PDP or the other organisation in question.

Thus, as two senior staff members, told me:

Programme Manager: *For some we write to tell them [the donors] this is what we want to do, and it's funded. But for others it is a call that is related to what we wanted to do and then we write (...) around health education...*
Deputy Director: *Our intervention areas*
Programme Manager: *You know, anything that would improve people economically* (Interview,[80] 30/11/09).

Indeed, through conversations with staff, and observing the work of the organisation, it became clear that the development of projects in PDP is influenced by a combination of intertwined factors, which vary in their prominence depending on the specific project in question and how it is initiated and funded. These factors include: the availability of funding and donor interests and agendas; emerging trends in development and gender work both globally and locally; the organisation's strategic plan and priorities; existing organisational expertise; emerging issues that PDP encounters within its work; and, community and constituency needs and requests. Thus, while it could be argued that the organisation's work is influenced by donor agendas and trends, for instance in the funding of projects through EOIs and CFPs, in such cases it is also influenced by PDP's mandate, expertise and priorities.

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[80] Due to the work priorities of those involved, this recorded 'interview' was conducted fairly informally and intermittently, over a period of time in the office one day. As such the information in the recording is a mixture of informal interview and more general conversations and work related discussions.

For example while the organisation is often approached by donors regarding CFPs or EOIs, these generally relate to the organisations' areas of expertise and previous work on the issue in question. So rather than shifting their focus according to donor priorities, they appear to attract donor interest for projects that fit within their existing work, remit and areas of expertise. As the Programme Manager pointed out: *"That's what we do, based on priorities we write proposals, or donors call us and say 'this one, I think you have been doing this kind of stuff, so can you help us with this project?'"* (Interview,[81] 30/11/09). This is something that I saw happen, during my fieldwork, when PDP was approached by an INGO regarding an EOI that they wanted PDP to bid for involving a health related project which was similar to other projects that they have implemented.

The same diversity of influences noted above are also at play in relation to PDP's inclusion of and approaches to women/gender in its work. The Executive Director, told me that where it can, PDP takes advantage of available opportunities to work on 'gender issues' – "*So what we do, if where opportunity exists, to really make use of the actions that will promote gender issues, we quickly take hold of it*" (Interview, 29/06/09).

This can be seen in projects which PDP was implementing at the time of my fieldwork focused explicitly on 'gender and HIV', funded both as a result of proposals submitted to a donor and through submissions in response to specific donor CFPs. It is true that 'gender and HIV' is becoming an area of increasing focus and funding both globally and in Ghana (as detailed above). As such, the move into this area by PDP could be seen in this context – in terms of following trends and funding opportunities. However, as the Deputy Director and Programme Manager pointed out in relation to this area of work:

Deputy Director: *Throughout our intervention programmes, I mean, we come across gender, socio-cultural factors that are fuelling HIV-*
(...)
Programme Manager: *It was something we were interested in going into, so we just took advantage of this.*
Deputy Director: *Because you know, we have support groups (...) and we (...) have care and support programme for people living with HIV and then children affected and infected by HIV (...) We form the support groups, (...) we nurture, we strengthen them, we build their capacities so that they will be able to operate on their own. Most of the stories told by these persons infected with HIV we realise*

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[81] See footnote 80.

> *that, I mean, it has all these socio-cultural factors and all that. So all along it's been the aim of [PDP] to go into an area, addressing all these norms, I mean factors which really fuel HIV. (...) So it's from our intervention programmes that we have identified what the issues are.* (Interview,[82] 30/11/09).

So, although they may have been influenced partly by increased awareness of these issues and funding trends, according to various staff this is an issue that the organisation has identified, and the available funding merely facilitates their work in this area. The same could also be said in relation to other areas of work around women/gender that PDP appears to be increasingly engaged in, such as women's rights awareness and gender violence.

I was also told about other projects in which the focus on gender was initiated by PDP due to its own concerns and desires to assist women – in its view, in some cases, even influencing donors. One such example is a combined micro-credit and rights education project, developed by PDP. As the Programme Manager narrated, *"we wanted to do something in that area, and we looked for people who would be able to fund us and we picked [the funder]"* (Interview,[83] 30/11/09). Concerned that the identified donor would not fund the micro-credit aspect, PDP contacted them to put forward their argument regarding the need to combine the two elements. According to the Programme Manager this resulted in the donor adopting a new approach and the project received funding (Interview,[84] 30/11/09). However, the additional component of women's rights education, may well have also been the product of the donor's interests and a recent rise in focus of work on this issue in Ghana.

On the flip side of donor conditionalities, I was also told about ways in which donor interests *restricted* PDP's work on women/gender. For example, PDP's Executive Director pointed out to me: *"we are always on the lookout for organisations [donors] that would, you know, [enable us to promote gender issues, if] the interest is there. But sometimes donor demands, you know, shift your attention to another area"* (Interview, 29/06/09). She went on to tell me that often donors do not include a focus on gender and it is up to PDP to build something in during the implementation. She told me:

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[82] See footnote 80.
[83] See footnote 80.
[84] See footnote 80.

"*So, the (...) donor community, they are not sensitised about this kind of gender things, because they want quick results, they don't have time to go into how it can happen in the US and how it can happen in Africa, you know the various dimensions and all that. So they say 'go and implement a project', but we who are down here, who know the problems, we can add a little bit and say okay this project is like this, but let's see how we can take care of some of the girls."* (Interview, 29/06/09).

She told me, for example, about some work with an HIV support group in which PDP became aware of and decided to focus on issues regarding women's leadership and vulnerabilities within the group, issues that the donor was not aware of (Interview, 29/06/09). Similarly, a male project manager from one of the project offices, told me, when talking about the gender violence and women's rights focus of a new project: "*It's now before most of the donors wanted to go into this area*" (Fieldnotes,[85] 16/06/09).

So, while it could be argued that PDP is often strategic and opportunistic in its approach to women/gender, as opposed to being led by its own clear position and mandate, it is not correct to suggest that gender concerns and conditionalities are principally imposed on the organisation from the outside, or that the organisation is simply following funding and thematic trends in development and gender work. Once again, as certain scholars have pointed out in relation to gender work, while NGOs and activists are no doubt influenced by wider processes, initiatives and concerns, they also contribute to these debates, take advantage of this enabling environment, and are driven by their own concerns which emerge from the contexts in which they work (see Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Datta, 2004; Manuh, 1989). Indeed the development and funding of several different PDP projects indicates that the organisation's various focus on women/gender is not simply the result of donor conditions or following trends – although these factors no doubt play some part in influencing and facilitating such work, in certain instances perhaps quite significantly.

But what does PDP's work on women/gender consist of, and what are the aims and objectives? As detailed above, PDP does not have clear and consistent ideas, and aims or objectives regarding working with women/ on gender issues. This combined with the organisation's project based design, funding, and implementation mechanisms mean that the precise activities, aims, and approaches utilised in relation to women/gender (as well as other issues) varies from project to project – even those

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[85] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

focusing on similar issues. This results in a wide range of issues and approaches being adopted, depending on the focus of the project, the interests of the donor, and general prevailing ideas and issues which emerge. Unlike ASCW, which has a largely consistent approach to its implementation plans, PDP's wide variety of projects means that it can be working towards different goals and utilising a variety of approaches depending on the project. Accordingly, the concepts, toolkits, materials, and ways of thinking about women/gender that PDP works with, can also vary from project to project.

Below I detail a range of projects, to illustrate this diversity. Although this is a somewhat artificial categorisation, PDP's projects can be loosely divided into three groups in relation to the way in which they approach and focus on women/gender: 1) general projects which focus on women's welfare needs, as poor, marginalised and vulnerable individuals; 2) projects which focus on welfare needs, but also have an explicit component on women's rights issues, such as rights awareness; and, 3) projects which specifically identify and focus on gender power relations.

A significant proportion of the organisation's work involves general service delivery projects which focus, in various ways, on basic welfare needs and poverty alleviation. Such projects include, to name a few, HIV/AIDS prevention work, health projects, education and training provision, and income generation projects. While 'gender' is often not a central element or specific output of these projects, in line with the organisation's aim of helping women and girls, many of these projects are aimed towards women and/or efforts are made, where possible, to address women's specific welfare needs, and/or at the very least to ensure that women have equal opportunities and are not discriminated against. As the Executive Director pointed out, "*...you have to make a conscious effort to remember that the needs of women are different from the needs of men. (...) Every organisation will say (...) they have women in their programmes, but we have to go (...) a step further to say 'what are the needs of women?'*" (Interview, 29/06/09).

Although the rhetoric on this was far from consistent, staff talked about the need to "*encourage the women to do more*" (Interview, 21/04/09), and the need to work with women *"because the women are down here and the men are here in terms of socio-economic status. (...) So what we're doing is to push the women up, so there can be*

some form of equality" (Fieldnotes,[86] 16/06/09). Staff also talked about the need to economically empower women so that they could contribute to household finances, and have a greater say in decision-making.

Much of PDP's work is aimed at poor women, who are seen by the organisation as vulnerable and disadvantaged principally *because* of their poverty. Similar to Anyidoho and Manuh's conclusions, in relation to other organisations in Ghana, it could be surmised that 'the remedy (...) is welfare which does not attempt to tackle structural and systemic factors at the root of victimhood' (2010:271). Indeed, as the Executive Director, told me:

> "*For us it's more about practical needs than the rights thing. We do a little bit of rights based approach. But as a development NGO we are more concerned about practical needs, how do women also have their needs satisfied, more than human rights or rights based approach. (...) [PDP wants] to make sure that development is well (...) managed so that everybody, especially women, have their practical needs met."* (Interview, 29/06/09).

This approach fits in with assessments, as highlighted in chapter 2, about a continued predominant focus on welfare needs, poverty reduction, and the mere 'involvement' of women in projects within gender work in Ghana (see Acquaye-Baddoo & Tsikata, 2001; Agyemang-Mensah & Apt, 1998; Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Awumbila, 2001; Awumbila, 2006).

However this said, as indicated by the Executive Director in the quote above, PDP is also involved in work on 'women's rights'. Indeed, a number of PDP's projects, such as the micro-credit project detailed above, and various projects on sexual and reproductive health, include components on rights awareness, including general women's rights issues and awareness raising regarding the recent DV Act. Within these projects, the focus on rights awareness is often part of a wider project focused on addressing practical welfare needs, and such projects usually incorporate rights awareness workshops, facilitated by PDP staff and/or resource persons from other organisations. As the Executive Director stated, in PDP's view:

> "*There should be a balance between, you know, fighting for women's equality and meeting their practical needs"* (...) *"The equality, you know the rights things,*

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[86] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

it's quite recent that we moved into. But as I said, I'm not dismissing those outright, but I'm saying when we do that we have to look at the practical needs as well" (...) *"...all angles are important, I do agree, but we want to look at practical needs more than gender equity and all that."* (Interview, 29/06/09).

In terms of these projects, the principal goal often seems to be assisting women on a practical level, helping them to address their welfare needs; but while simultaneously combining this with rights awareness – indeed, these projects have a formal and explicit 'gender' component built in as a specific focus and output. However, similar to the projects detailed above, the focus remains on helping women as poor, vulnerable and marginalised individuals, with the suggestion that improving their socio-economic status and situation is what is primarily needed. For example one proposal, in detailing how it is hoped the project will benefit women, states: *"They will be able to contribute to the family income and thereby have a say in decision making with regards to the Ghanaian culture. This economic empowerment will make the women assertive so that they will insist on their sexual rights"*.[87] In this instance, the additional focus on women's rights issues enables the women to become aware of what these rights are.

In addition to the types of projects detailed above, PDP is also engaged in projects that have a more predominant and central focus on 'gender' issues and/or are *specifically* concerned with addressing gendered power relations. This includes, for example, projects focused directly and centrally on addressing gender issues and gender relations specifically related to HIV and work on gender violence. The 'gender and HIV' work, for example, focuses specifically on the underlying causes of women's higher susceptibility to HIV infection; the gendered power relations which enable men to have multiple sexual partners, lead to male entitlement and female acquiescence in sexual relations, and men's use of violence against female partners.

The concepts and ideas utilised within and underpinning PDP's gender work/work with women, the materials and toolkits used, and the training regarding these themes, like the rest of PDP's work, is generally project based and accordingly shifts from one project to another. As a result different projects seem to highlight different elements of gender analysis. Unlike ASCW, which has a number of core organisation-wide ideas, concepts, and materials on which its work with women is based and driven, this is not the case with PDP, partly no doubt due to the varied nature of its projects.

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[87] Details taken from photocopy of project proposal, obtained with permission of PDP. Further details of source not specified for purposes of anonymity.

On the one hand, as indicated above, in general PDP staff talk about the problems women face as a result of their poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation. Without tending to theorise this to a great extent, women's situation seems to be generally linked to their socio-economic status, although reference is also frequently made to the issues of 'socialisation' and fixed gender roles. However, similarly to ASCW, staff at PDP also talked explicitly about issues such as "*unequal power relations"* and "*patriarchy"*, mainly during project activities, but also in some conversations within the office. However, this came up less frequently than in ASCW and mainly in relation to work focused on 'gender and HIV' and gender violence.

However, while diverse, the concepts and ideas generally utilised in PDP, as with ASCW, are generally widely accepted transnational models used within gender work globally. Indeed, many of PDP's general projects seem to utilise and be loosely grounded on general transnational gender concepts, tools and ideas, often from 'development' related training manuals, such as the ideas of 'practical' and 'strategic' gender needs', the conceptual distinction made between 'sex' and 'gender', and tools such as the 'Stepping Stones methodology'.[88] Similarly in work on gender violence they utilise many of the same transnational ideas found in ASCW and other Ghanaian NGOs working on this issue. For example, the different forms of violence, definitions of violence, causes and consequences of violence. Like ASCW, such ideas were generally received through training programmes and various materials. However, the staff at PDP did appear to be slightly less familiar with some of these ideas than the staff at ASCW (as discussed in greater detail in chapter 5).

In summary, PDP is a development NGO which has a broad remit principally related to addressing the welfare needs of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. The organisation works on a wide variety of themes, on a project by project basis; each project separately designed, funded and implemented. The organisation's work and approaches regarding women/gender are as varied as its projects, and encompass a range of approaches – with no overall clear and consistent organisational mandate or objectives. Although, within this PDP utilises various transnational models and concepts of gender, basing its work on these.

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[88] 'Stepping Stones' is a widely used transnational participatory approach to HIV/AIDS, sexual health and gender. This, according to staff, works on the basis of dividing communities into age and sex discussion groups, to enable more freedom of discussion and the identification and addressing of women's and men's specific needs.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of ASCW and PDP. Focusing on each of the organisations in turn, I have outlined how they are each structured, their focus, their funding mechanisms, how they operate, their projects and activities, and the ideas they utilise. Within this I have also paid specific attention to detailing their 'gender work', including for example their remit and focus around women/gender, their expertise, the ideas and concepts used, and the various influences on these issues. Emerging from this overview are some significant differences between the two organisations, which are important to explicitly highlight; differences both generally in the ways in which the two organisations are structured and operate, and also in relation to their focus and work around, and approaches to, gender/women.

In terms of their remits, the biggest difference of course is that ASCW is a WRO and PDP a general development organisation. As such whilst ASCW is specifically focused on gender issues, PDP has a much broader development focus, which variably includes (or not) work on women/gender. However, further than this ASCW has a very clear and narrow core mandate and specialism, on addressing and preventing gender violence, around which all of its activities are focused. PDP on the other hand works on a diverse range of development related issues and within this focuses on a number of different themes and issues related to gender/women; within which it adopts various different approaches. As such, unlike ASCW, PDP has no consistent overall organisational ideas, aims or objectives on gender.

Another principal difference between the two organisations however, is the ways in which each of them is structured, funded and operates; factors which both contribute to, as well as result from, the differences in their overall remits and work focus. The key difference is ASCW's programmatic structure and way of working, as opposed to PDP's project orientation. Indeed, as detailed in the account above, ASCW has a fixed programmatic organisational structure which reflects and determines the specific activities carried out by the organisation, each of which contributes directly to the focused core mandate of addressing and preventing gender violence. This programmatic structure determines not only the organisation's work activities, but also the way in which the organisation is funded; in general sourcing funding specifically for these established activities. As such the organisation's activities are generally decided by the organisation itself. PDP on the other hand is a project oriented and project funded organisation; this means it has many and varied individual projects, each with their own funding source, aims and objectives, and specified duration. As such both its

general remit, along with its gender remit, are fairly broad. Added to this, this project orientation means that PDP's work activities are more prone to being affected by outside influences, as is the organisation's gender focus and activities, which can at times be variably facilitated or restricted by donor demands and project objectives and designs.

Another key difference, specifically in relation to their work on gender, relates to the ideas and concepts used, staff knowledge and expertise, and levels of staff training and internal debate. While both organisations use many of the same fairly common transnational models and frameworks, particularly in the area of gender violence, staff exposure, knowledge and expertise and levels of training differ quite dramatically. By nature of its focused remit and activities staff within ASCW are more firmly grounded and rehearsed in transnational ideas, such as those relating to the causes of, types of, and myths surrounding, gender violence. They work with such ideas on a frequent basis, their work constantly focused on the theme of gender violence, and they have generally received numerous trainings in this area, as well as providing training to others. There are also frequent discussions within the organisation in which such ideas come up. In addition, ASCW is an active member of Ghana's women's movement and the women's movement internationally, where such ideas proliferate. Staff in PDP on the other hand work on a range of themes, with gender (including gender violence) being only a part of the explicit remit of a selection of staff. As such their exposure to and use of such ideas is more limited, and they have generally received less extensive training on gender issues and are hence less familiar with such ideas. In addition, the varied nature of PDP's work, both generally and in relation to gender, means that staff work with a wider variety of ideas, concepts, materials and toolkits, and as such are not necessarily as grounded and well practiced in any in particular.

Such differences between the two organisations are interesting in and of themselves. However, they are also important factors to highlight and bear in mind in the subsequent exploration and analysis of the ways in which the two organisations carry out their work, the ways in which ideas are enacted and understood and the influences on this.

Within this chapter I have provided details regarding the structure and work programmes of ASCW and PDP and the sorts of ideas and concepts which are used, highlighting some of the specific differences between the two organisations. This however tells us little about how the policies and projects of these two organisations are actually understood and enacted by those involved, and the factors that affect this.

Indeed, it is important to investigate not only *what* these ideas and programmes are, but also *how* they are actually understood and therefore used by the individuals involved, and how this affects the ways in which work is enacted. It is these issues that the rest of this thesis explores. Specifically focusing on the gender violence related work of the two organisations and the implementation of such work, I explore: how the sorts of projects outlined here, and ideas and concepts contained within them, are understood and enacted by those involved; what such work looks like in practice, what issues are addressed and the themes which emerge; and the factors which influence this. Ultimately, I focus on what this work means, and how it is, and should be, understood, in relation to the broader Ghanaian context in which it takes place.

Chapter 4 – Doing Gender Work: Public Portrayals of 'Abuse', 'Domestic Violence' and Marriage

In the previous chapter I described ASCW and PDP in terms of their structure, policies and projects. However, as yet we know little about the actual implementation of this work and how individuals understand and utilise the various ideas they work with. In this chapter I turn to focus on the prosecution of gender work by ASCW and PDP, specifically that related to gender violence. I explore the specific activities undertaken with communities and their various constituents, highlighting some of the common features that occur within this work. I also begin to examine what might account for the specific ways in which this practice unfolds and what takes place.

In line with the focus of the thesis, my purpose here is to describe the work carried out by these two organisations. The focus is on the NGOs themselves, the work that they implement and how this is done. The aim is not to explore the *impact* or *effects* of these activities on the communities and 'beneficiaries'. In addition, as outlined in chapter 1, my aim is to explore what takes place, seeking to explore the various influences that might account for and affect this. I thus examine what this work looks like, the ways in which it is implemented, the different ideas utilised, and how it is received by the organisations' constituencies.

As detailed in chapter 3, the two organisations are engaged in various different activities and projects which are related to gender and gender violence in some way. However, rather than attempting to give a broad overview of all, or a range, of these various activities, I focus here on two specific events; one from each organisation. The two events I outline are: the community launch event for a specific PDP project focused on 'gender and HIV', and one of ASCW's community gender violence awareness raising advocacy sessions.

While foregoing a broad overview of the various activities of ASCW and PDP, focusing on these two events enables me to provide a detailed, rich and situated description of the work context and activities of the two organisations. The aim is not to provide a 'representative' example of the practice of the two organisations. Indeed this would be impossible; the organisations had such varied activities that no one specific example could be said to be 'typical'. However, the two examples were chosen as they enable me to outline some of the common features that I witnessed during the implementation of gender violence work in the two organisations. While the different types of activities and specific individual events undertaken by the two organisations were in many ways

unique, there were a number of relatively widespread similarities in terms of the sorts of issues discussed and the ways they were discussed, specifically in relation to gender violence, but also in relation to other areas of gender work.

I begin this chapter by describing both of the events in detail. I then draw out some of the specific issues which emerged. I highlight in particular the gender specificity attached to the issue of 'abuse', the various conceptions of 'abuse' and 'violence' that were utilised, and how these are linked to specific ideas regarding the marital roles, relations and responsibilities of men and women. Following this I begin to develop some explanations for the ways in which these ideas operate in the two organisations.

While the particular context of the events no doubt had a bearing on how issues are talked about, this is not the only explanation for what takes place. The two examples also point to the need to explore the broader worldviews and normative assumptions of the staff members for their influence on the specific shape of gender work. It is this that I will turn to explore in the following two chapters in order to better understand the gender work that takes place in these two organisations.

Focusing first on the two events in question, I begin here with the PDP event.

PDP's community *durbar* in Kintubi

The 'official' launch of this new PDP project took place one morning in Kintubi,[89] the rural community where the project was to be implemented. The project, which aimed to address gender inequalities that affect women's higher susceptibility to HIV, was designed and managed by the Gender Awareness Foundation (GAF),[90] a Ghanaian WRO, with funding from an external donor. PDP, who were responsible for implementing the project through their field office in the nearby small town of Yassa, had however been involved in some of the initial research.

The project was to be 'formally' launched that morning at a 'community *durbar'*. *Durbars*, a term 'imported by colonial administrators from India', are 'events at which all those from a village come together to discuss issues' (Yarrow, 2008:239). They are a

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[89] 'Kintubi' is a pseudonym adopted to maintain anonymity.
[90] As detailed in Appendix A, for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality I have used pseudonyms for the organisations researched, and staff within them. The organisational name Gender Awareness Foundation (GAF) is a pseudonym and no connection with any organisations in Ghana, or elsewhere, with similar names is implied.

fairly common occurrence in Ghana, held for a range of functions, and often used for various aspects of community development projects, including project launches. *Durbars* are presided over by the chief and community elders, along with other invited dignitaries (such as state leaders) where appropriate. They are public events open to everyone, and all members of the community are welcome and encouraged to attend. However, attendance is voluntary, and it is rare to find all of 'the community' present.

Prior to this particular launch event several meetings had taken place between Komla and Elizabeth, two of the local PDP staff who worked at the field office in Yassa, and Kintubi's chief and community leaders. These meetings, part of the project's community entry, involved outlining the details of the project and getting permission from the chief and his elders; an important part of any community development project in Ghana. Towns and communities in Ghana each have a chief and various 'elders', who make up the 'traditional authority'. Stretching back to pre-colonial times, while their specific function and powers have changed over the years (and in many ways diminished), they still retain a high level of 'importance', 'respectability' and 'honour' (Nukunya, 1992:187) and a certain level of authority. As Nukunya notes, their role in 'help[ing to] mobilise the people for development projects' (1992:187) is widely recognised, and as such their support and 'permission' has become a matter of 'protocol' in the planning of community development work.

In addition to these meetings, a baseline study had also been conducted, and the launch event was the next element of the project and part of the process of gaining 'community endorsement'. The launch was also seen as an opportunity to undertake some 'community sensitisation' and 'awareness raising' regarding the issues to be covered by the project, and introduce and inaugurate the community-based peer educators who would be the principal project implementers.

I had travelled from Yassa to Kintubi that morning with Komla and Elizabeth, Patrick, an occasional local PDP volunteer, and Vivian, a member of GAF programme staff, who had travelled up from Accra to Yassa the previous day (with Michael, GAF's driver). Having set out sometime after 6am, we travelled along the dusty, heavily potholed road to Kintubi, located approximately 45 minutes away, in the fairly plush air-

conditioned GAF vehicle; a welcome change from the rickety, cramped and dusty public transport *tro-tros*[91] that Elizabeth and Komla usually had to use.

On our arrival in Kintubi we went straight to the compound of Kwesi, a community 'opinion leader',[92] advisor to the chief, and former Assembly Member, to announce our presence. After a short meeting at which everyone was formally introduced and plans for the morning were briefly discussed, we left Kwesi's compound and set about preparing for the event. Although the durbar ground was being prepared by the community, there were other tasks to be done in the next two hours or so before the event was to begin. As Elizabeth explained to me, despite repeated visits to the community throughout the week to confirm that the programme would be going ahead, a previous postponement at short notice meant that the community would not begin to assemble until we arrived. So, while Vivian sat at the durbar ground where she remained until the event began, Komla and Michael returned to Yassa to collect various invited local dignitaries, while Elizabeth, Patrick and I made our way to the local school, where the pupils had assembled ready to participate in a march that PDP had organised as part of the launch.

As we walked to the school, Elizabeth explained that the march was part of the efforts to raise awareness of the event. She told me that, as on other occasions, this is what is done in the community to let parents know that there is something going on. Elizabeth had brought along 20 or so home-made cardboard placards on which she had written various slogans in marker pen. The slogans, all in English, included various messages relating to HIV and gender violence, such as: '*Domestic violence must end*', '*Do not rape*', '*Be faithful to your sexual partner*', '*Anyone can get HIV*', '*Never beat your wife*', and '*Physical assault against women is a crime*'. The pupils, dressed in their school uniforms, were gathered outside the school in small groups – talking and playing. After fixing the cardboard signs to freshly cut sticks the children, around 150 in total, assembled in a long line, four abreast, ready to begin the march.

With the accompaniment of a brass band, the children sang hymns as they marched 'military style' at first, and then danced, as they were urged to do by teachers, along the few tarmaced roads that looped through the settlement, passing many of the one story

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[91] *Tro-tro* is the term used to refer to public transport vehicles (often converted mini-buses) which are used in Ghana.
[92] As the regional director of CHRAJ explained to me a few days later, an opinion leader is an elder in the community that gives advice because of his rich experience (Fieldnotes).

houses and compounds that made up the large village. While to 'outsiders' this might have resembled some form of community-led demonstration, it was actually a somewhat 'orchestrated' element of the formal programme. Indeed, with the project yet to begin no work seemed to have been done to 'educate' the children thus far on the contents of the slogans they carried and they had not been involved in the development of these.

After 20 minutes or so, the children reached the durbar ground and dispersed, many taking seats for the main event. The durbar ground was a fairly large opening at one end of the village. Set out in the shade of a few large trees were rows of wooden benches and plastic chairs, arranged in a slight semi-circle. By the time we reached the durbar ground these had begun to fill with various community members, a mixture of men and women of all age ranges, that had turned up for the programme. This 'audience' faced towards a long concrete building, the porch of which was being used as a 'stage'. At the centre of the stage was a table covered with *Kente* cloth.[93] To the left of this were several rows of chairs, on which various speakers and invited dignitaries were seated, and to the right another table on which a computer and the public announcement (PA) system were sat, wired to a large stack of speakers which were located at the base of the 'stage'.

As we waited for Komla to return with the other dignitaries and for the durbar ground to fill, the village gong-gong beater announced the event, and Kwesi took up one of the microphones, urging people to come, calling out to various groups, for instance stating that in particular the women should come, and then calling carpenters to attend. As everyone assembled for the programme to begin, Vivian asked Patrick to call Komla so that the proceedings could begin. Vivian's role and position in the event was slightly ambiguous; on the one hand an 'outsider' and invited guest, waiting for the event to unfold around her, on the other hand, she was 'in-charge' to some extent, ensuring that things were in order and implemented as they should be.

Soon after Komla returned and the event began; it was now approximately 9.30am. By this time the durbar ground had filled, with around 200 people – all the chairs taken and a number of people standing in rows behind those seated. Approximately 20 people

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[93] Kente is a woven cloth that originated in the Ashanti kingdom, but has been adopted by many other ethnic groups in Ghana and West Africa. Originally a 'sacred cloth worn only in times of extreme importance', it use has become more widespread over time, although 'its importance has remained and it is held in high esteem' (Anon, 2013).

were seated on the stage. Mostly men, they included various village leaders (the village chief and queen mother, along with other elders), religious leaders, local representatives of various state institutions and government offices based in Yassa (including a regional CHRAJ representative, the Director of Education and the local SHEP (School Health Education Program) Coordinator), and Komla, Vivian, Patrick (who translated the proceedings for me) and myself.

Everyone stood as the National Anthem was played, and an opening prayer was delivered. The programme, as with other such events I witnessed in Ghana, was fairly formal. There was a set agenda, and a chair person – the Chief's Linguist – presided over the running order, with the assistance of Kwesi. In total seven people took turns to speak, covering various issues (as outlined in more detail below). In addition to these speeches, the rather formal and serious tone of the event was lightened and livened up by music and dancing between two of the speeches, and a long sketch performed by a local drama group. Another element of the programme was the formal introduction of the community volunteers. The event was conducted in the two languages spoken in the community, Twi and another; each speech delivered in the preferred language of the speaker and translated into the other by different individuals during the programme. The event was translated into English for me by Patrick, and my description below and quotations (all paraphrased)[94] are based on this translation.

After a brief welcome from the chair person, who spoke for a minute or two about community development, Kwesi took the microphone, talking about the focus of the project on HIV and emphasising, seemingly without further explanation, that "it is spread among women more than men". Next to speak was Komla. Introducing PDP, Komla talked about the organisation's previous work in the district, before saying a few words about the project being launched, briefly detailing the activities undertaken so far. He then introduced some of the invited guests, and also spoke about the role of the peer educators, as mediators between PDP and the community.

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[94] As detailed in Appendix A, in the section titled 'The status of informants' words', certain material and quotations in my thesis are taken from fieldnotes of events conducted in other languages. These are indicated through the use of double quotations marks and underlined script (e.g. "example"). These quotations are paraphrased accounts of the translations provided and I have adopted the anthropological convention of writing them out in a fuller format, so that they are easier to read. As a result they are not necessarily, nor do they claim to be, an accurate account of the exact words used by informants or the translator.

As Komla returned to his seat, Kwesi introduced some of the other dignitaries present, while the local drama group began to move their various props into place – an open space between the seated community members and the 'stage' – ready to perform a sketch which was the next item on the agenda. The drama group had developed the sketch specifically for this event, looking for material and ideas in a copy of the 'Simplified Version of the Domestic Violence Act',[95] given to them by Elizabeth. As they prepared for the performance, their group leader, a middle aged man, introduced them and the drama, commenting: "...especially men have been beating their wives and mistreating them, from the beginning to the end of marriage".

The sketch, which lasted approximately 20 minutes, depicted a household setting in which a man beats his wife and teenage daughter, and is subsequently arrested and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. The man, portrayed as obnoxious, unreasonable, and short-tempered, made various demands on his wife – such as cooking and ironing – tasks which he thinks are her responsibility, stating at one point: "I married you to cook and do everything for me, as well as washing my clothes on time". Meanwhile, he had not been providing her with adequate *chop money*, and regularly beat her. Threatening to send her back to her parents, because the food was not sufficient and there was no meat, he stated that he will fight with her again that day. He then physically beat her as a result of her failure to iron his shirt before he went out to work. The husband went out to work, the daughter left for school, having not eaten anything, and the wife commented: "I am married to a greedy husband". Later that day the daughter returned from school and told her mother that they were taught that men should not beat women in the house.

Returning home drunk, complaining that there was no food in the house, the husband physically beat the wife and then left the house once more. A stranger came to the house and the wife told the woman that her husband only gave her ₵5,000,[96] which was not sufficient, and told her about the beating. The visitor advised the wife that she should report the husband to the police regarding his behaviour – that the police would then come and arrest him. The two of them left for the police station. When the husband returned to the house he was arrested. The next scene showed the man

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[95] The 'Simplified Version of the Domestic Violence Act' (WiLDAF Ghana, 2009) is a small 32 page publication produced by WiLDAF to help raise awareness of the DV Act. It presents the DV Act in a simplified, easy to understand format, using pictures and examples.
[96] Ghana has recently redenominated its currency, and at the time of my fieldwork people often still referred to amounts in the old currency. In this regard ₵5,000 [old cedis] is the equivalent to approximately GH₵0.5 [new Ghana cedis], which at the time was worth approximately £1.60.

being sentenced. Before sentencing he was sent for an HIV test and found to be HIV positive.

Similar in format (and content) to many of the role plays I witnessed at gender violence trainings during my fieldwork, the sketch with its slightly comical, over-dramatised performances, in this case by an all female cast (some of whom acted the male parts), provoked laughter, clapping, heckling and brief conversations amongst the momentarily animated audience. The rest of the launch event stimulated more subdued applause as the audience listened to the short speeches given.

Although both HIV and domestic violence were covered in the sketch, the mention of HIV at the end seemed like an afterthought, and the two issues remained somewhat unconnected – the links between them did not appear to be made. In relation to domestic violence, the drama depicted what seemed to be a somewhat 'everyday' scenario in which a husband beat his wife; the situation did not seem to be presented as a particularly rare and uncommon occurrence. However, this said, the man seemed to be portrayed as a generally negative character, displaying undesirable social behaviour – greedy, drunk, and giving inadequate *chop money* to his wife. He was not characterised as someone who was otherwise respectable and responsible or someone who was 'well to do' and highly regarded in the community. The potential suggestion seemed to be that the husband's violent behaviour was part of his general negative character; that it is such men who are violent, and not other more respectable members of the community, who deal with their wives in a more reasonable manner.[97] This also potentially suggested that violence is a matter of individual behaviour, rather than the symptom of broader systemic and structural issues.

Following the sketch Kwesi spoke encouraging women to report such violence, as Vivian rose to take the microphone and give her address. Speaking first about the play Vivian commented: "It is not only men who beat women – some women also beat men". She then went on to deliver her pre-prepared address. She introduced GAF and spoke about violence against women, detailing statistics on the prevalence of VAW in Ghana. She then talked about HIV and gender issues. Detailing the reasons for women's higher HIV prevalence rates in Ghana, Vivian talked first about "biological

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[97] I also witnessed a similar view expressed by a community leader at a sensitisation meeting as part of this project, in which it was suggested that the problem is among "illiterates" and that you wouldn't get someone who is well educated mishandling their wife; the suggestion being that in doing so such a man would disgrace himself (from fieldnotes).

reasons", before outlining "social reasons", mentioning the links between HIV and domestic violence, and then other 'gender issues' affecting HIV transmission. She stated:

> "women might want their husbands to wear condoms if they are going outside.[98] But [... research in Ghana has shown that women have] poor negotiation skills and there is no way that they can tell their husbands to wear condoms. (...) Because of the women in the community, that is why we are here, to educate them on domestic violence and HIV – but not only the women, also the men too – educate them on using condoms, especially between girlfriends and boyfriends. Before domestic violence, something will happen between the husband and a wife, and at this point they can alert community members. But where there is a fight it shouldn't be settled in the community, it should be sent to the police station".

Vivian finished by giving a few brief details about the peer educator training, and other elements of the wider project.

Following Vivian's address, the formal introduction and acceptance of the community volunteers took place. Taking the microphone, the village Assembly Woman called out the names of each of the volunteers, who gathered in a line at the front of the stage. The volunteers had been previously selected through a process facilitated by PDP. This had involved various groups within the community, including the chiefs, queen mothers, religious representatives, school representatives and representatives from various geographical divisions of the community, making recommendations according to a criteria provided by PDP. As such the 10 volunteers selected represented a wide cross-section of the community. Asking the 'audience' present whether they accepted the volunteers, and waiting for the collective confirmation that came as everyone said "yes", Komla outlined the role the peer educators would play within the project; they "will come for the training and will educate the community members. They will come and teach people confidentially, so as not to embarrass them".

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[98] Going 'outside' refers to a man having a sexual relationship with a woman other than his wife/wives. Soothill, for example, notes the use of the terms 'outside wifeship' and 'private polygamy' (2007:184), in referring to the situation that Assimeng describes: 'a new system of polygyny, that comprises one 'legitimate' (that is to say, ordinance, church, or traditionally acknowledged) wife, and a host of concubines... This arrangement is generally with the knowledge of married women' (1999:96).

As the peer educators returned to their seats, a male community leader stood up to address the 'audience' next. Speaking specifically about HIV, he began by explaining the difference between HIV and AIDS, before going on to talk about antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), encouraging people to test for HIV, explaining some of the different ways HIV is transmitted, and ending by calling on people not to stigmatise those with HIV.

Next to speak was a regional representative of CHRAJ, a middle aged man, who had travelled to the community from Yassa that morning, invited to the event by PDP as one of the local dignitaries. Based in the CHRAJ office in Yassa, he is an appointed government official, who holds a respected position in the District, in a well-known state organisation established to uphold human rights. Stating that "the emphasis on domestic violence is against women" the CHRAJ representative went on to instruct: "when a man is married to a woman and she behaves in a way that you don't like, instead of beating her, send her back to her parents." He then cautioned: "Men have to be responsible to enable women to be faithful"; indicating that if men don't take care of their wives financially women will seek support from elsewhere, engaging in sexual relations in 'exchange'. Addressing the women present, he stated: "when your husband beats you anytime, send him to the police". He then added, in a similar caution to the one for men to take care of their wives, that: "Parents need to see to their children's needs so that they don't go looking for things elsewhere and risk getting HIV".

Following the CHRAJ representative, Kwesi took the microphone once again. Stating that women have also been beating men, he added: "although this is not common, it is not men alone who beat their wives". Talking specifically about the problem of women denying men sex, he stated: "some women are fond of doing that". Somehow suggesting this as a form of 'abuse' against men, he gave the example of a woman wearing multiple pairs of shorts to bed, in order to deny her husband sex. This slightly comical and exaggerated tale elicited much amusement from those present who laughed at his example, with its explicit sexual statements, for example, the husband's rather crude question to the wife: "then where should I put my dick?"[99] Unlike Vivian's earlier comment about the possibility of men being abused, Kwesi seemed eager to make a particular point regarding abuses against men and the nature of these; this being the main issue covered during this short address.

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[99] This was narrated to me after the event, as I discussed this specific address with several people, asking for more details about exactly what had been said and the example given.

An open forum was next on the agenda, during which members of the 'audience', including both men and women, briefly spoke. This was an opportunity for community members to raise issues and ask questions. Accordingly, unlike the other speakers at the event, most did not make 'presentations' conveying information about specific issues as such, but brought up issues to be dealt with; asking for assistance and leadership from the various authority figures present, including traditional leaders, the CHRAJ representative and the project more generally. One woman for instance asked about the steps that could be taken to ensure husbands pay maintenance, another about how to deal with men who 'mistreat' women, while others focused on more general issues regarding HIV risks. Several people, including the CHRAJ representative and the school Head Teacher, responded, giving details of various support available and details of where people could seek help for specific issues.

Following the open forum, the Chief gave the closing remarks. Thanking the community for coming, he encouraged people to test for HIV, and talked about the importance of educating women about HIV. The suggestion seemed to be that women especially needed education. Then, referring to domestic violence he stated: "men should have a tempered heart on their wives, because women are very significant in the community". He then encouraged people to come to such events, telling them that when the gong-gong is beaten they should be patriotic. Following a number of announcements from the Assembly woman regarding post-event refreshment arrangements, a closing prayer brought the event formally to an end.

Following the event, snacks and refreshments were provided in various locations – the community members remaining at the durbar ground, while the chief and elders moved to the chief's palace, and the various guests invited to another location within the village. Such 'incentives' are often given out at these types of events by the organisers; they are seen as a 'requirement' and part of the 'protocol', and it could be argued are used to encouraging people to attend; a 'recompense' for their time. As everyone gradually dispersed, Vivian, Michael, Komla, Elizabeth, Patrick and I drove to a few different locations in the community for Komla and Elizabeth to speak to various leaders – I presume to bid them farewell and to discuss their next visit and the subsequent stages of the project, in particular plans for the volunteer training session. At around 12 noon, about an hour after the event had ended, we returned to the PDP office in Yassa from where, shortly after, Vivian and Michael set off back to Accra.

As detailed in the introduction to this chapter, the event described above is just one example of the gender violence work of PDP. Although in many ways unique, it is also

in some senses fairly typical in terms of the sorts of themes addressed and the issues that surfaced. The example was not only a launch event, but also part of the project implementation – an opportunity for awareness raising, which is one of the principal goals and key aspects of this particular project. As such, in addition to introducing the project, it was also used as a forum for communicating ideas and 'educating' people – for example regarding HIV and gender violence.

In terms of the project proposal and documents this is a PDP and GAF project, and it is these two organisations that are 'in charge', and the 'experts' so to speak, with the community, including the chiefs and elders, the 'beneficiaries'. Indeed, on another occasion I witnessed an 'awareness-raising' session specifically aimed at the chief, queen mother and various elders. However, despite being in essence a PDP event, in many ways the launch was 'hosted' by the community leaders – who shared the stage and 'authority' with the PDP and GAF staff. Indeed, the launch event, perhaps due to the need for 'endorsement' and local legitimacy, in many ways presented the chief, elders and other community leaders and invited dignitaries as part of the project administration and knowledge holders, as a result of both the seating arrangements and the opportunities provided to speak. Of the seven people that gave 'presentations', only Komla and Vivian were 'formally' involved in the project administration. The other five, incidentally all men, were key leaders, either 'traditional' or state appointed authority figures, who were given the opportunity to address the 'community', and did so with what appeared to be equal 'authority' on the topics in question. The community leaders were thus presented as knowledgeable and informed and the views they presented as in-line with and representing the project ideas and objectives.

Having outlined this event, I now turn to an example of ASCW's work; a community outreach sensitisation session, which I describe in similar detail. Following this, I will draw out and discuss some of the key themes arising from the two events, both of which, in certain respects, contain a number of fairly similar features. Although, as I also highlight there are also a number of key differences apparent between these two events; due in part no doubt to the nature of the events, but also perhaps demonstrating differences between the two organisations in terms of their approach and understanding of issues.

Educating the public on gender violence: ASCW's community outreach event in Twegoasi

The ASCW event that I describe below was a community outreach sensitisation session which was conducted by the organisation in Twegoasi,[100] a small town located approximately one hour from Accra. The aim of this relatively short event was to raise awareness, and 'educate' the 'general public' in the community about DV, and inform them of where and how they could seek help. As detailed in chapter 3, ASCW organises and implements a range of outreach programmes, in a variety of different settings, and this event was essentially just another one of these programmes and part of ASCW's overall advocacy remit.

This particular event had been arranged during the previous month by ASCW, in conjunction with the chief and elders of Twegoasi. As outlined above, NGOs typically consult with the chiefs and elders of a community before carrying out specific work and as one of the advocacy staff, told me:

> "*If you want to do this general outreach with the community, you need to contact the heads of the community. You can't just walk into the community and then do your own thing, (...) you need to contact the heads to seek their permission – that this is [ASCW] (...) you tell them about our services, that we want to sensitise their people on domestic violence, because it is a major problem that is also going on around, so we also negotiate with them.*" (Interview, 12/03/09).

So, the previous month, Miriam (one of the advocacy staff) and Belinda (a senior staff member), had travelled to Twegoasi to discuss the proposed programme with the chief and elders and ask for their support.

ASCW's visit to meet with the chief and elders, and their decision to conduct an event in the community, was a direct response to requests made by various inhabitants of Twegoasi during a radio programme which took place during the previous year. As part of ASCW's outreach and advocacy activities, Miriam and Susan (another of the advocacy staff) had appeared on a series of radio programmes to talk about domestic violence. During one of these programmes three inhabitants of Twegoasi (one woman and two men) had telephoned during the 'phone-in' to voice their concerns about what

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[100] 'Twegoasi' is a pseudonym adopted to maintain anonymity.

they saw as the high incidence of abuse in the community and to ask for ASCW's assistance. As Belinda explained to me, ASCW did not inform the chief and elders of these calls during their initial meeting; conscious of offending them they chose instead to simply announce their intention to undertake an outreach session. The chiefs and elders, who neither confirmed nor denied the problem, were simply happy that ASCW was offering to come and do the work, and suggested conducting the programme during regular Sunday services at a number of churches in the community; a time when both men and women would be present. The event had thus been planned for a Sunday morning the following month.

This particular event was made possible through ASCW's general funds, and as such is an illustration of ASCW's ability to be responsive to the demands of communities, as a result of its specific organisational structure, and funding and planning mechanisms, as outlined in chapter 3. As with other such outreach programmes, the staff participating in this event were from various departments within the organisation. On this occasion this included Belinda, Miriam, Susan, Winifred (a counsellor), Charles (a member of support staff), and Albert (a driver). Each wore a T-shirt of various colours with the organisation's logo on the front, along with fairly casual trousers or skirts. Also accompanying ASCW to the event that day were myself, and Augustine, a journalist who was to act as a translator and was to talk about the event on his radio programme.

On the day of the event we arrived at approximately 10.30am in the small town of Twegoasi, a flat, sandy, coastal fishing community, typical of the area, having travelled together from Accra in one of ASCW's vehicles. After meeting the chief at the church he attends, we were escorted to another church where the first of the two outreach sessions was to be conducted. When we arrived at the church the service was well underway and we quietly entered and took seats on wooden benches near the front.

The church was a relatively small, somewhat makeshift, structure; walls constructed from concrete blocks, with loosely woven palm fronds supported by a wooden frame making the upper parts of the walls and the roof. On the bare sandy floor were three columns of wooden benches, stretching back five rows, on which approximately 20 members of the congregation sat; men on one column of benches and women on the other two. Approximately 10 other members of the congregation, both men and women, some with children, sat on benches placed along the side walls near the front of the church. At the very front, sat behind a white cloth covered table were four men – the various leaders/pastors of the church, one wearing a suit and a clerical collar.

Shortly after our arrival, we were introduced to the congregation and welcomed to the church. Following this brief introduction, Belinda stood just in front of the table and began the outreach session. As is common in Ghana, the church, despite its small size, had a PA system and a collection of microphones. Speaking into one of these, in English, which was translated by Augustine into the language spoken in the community, Belinda introduced ASCW and the session they were there to conduct:

> "*... okay what we do is to provide public services for domestic violence survivors. We are here today to have a very short discussion with you on domestic violence, the types of abuse, and then the help available if you are going through such a problem. So we will enthuse all of you to please stay with us, we won't spend much of your time, and then ask all the questions you can. Feel free to ask all the questions you want to. Thank you very much.*"[101]

Although it could be argued that the outreach session was intended for the whole of the church, including the pastors, the position of Belinda (and later Miriam) in front of the 'high table', with her back to the pastors, may have given the impression that she was speaking specifically to the congregation, and the pastors might have been in some way part of the 'experts' and 'knowledge providers', as opposed to the audience. However, this said, as discussed below, it seemed quite clear during the event that it was the staff from ASCW that were the principal 'experts' on the topic being discussed. In terms of the audience, unlike some of the other programmes that I attended, they were in many senses a captive one, there principally for the church service, rather than to specifically attend an outreach session.

Following Belinda's introduction and a round of polite applause from the congregation and pastors, the microphone was passed to Miriam, who was delivering the main session. "Praise the Lord", Miriam pronounced in English, as the clapping subsided, before switching into Ga for the rest of the session, which was again translated for the audience into the local language. Although mainly delivered in Ga, Miriam's address contained occasional terms in English, principally those related to 'technical' terms, such as 'domestic violence', 'verbal and emotional abuse' and 'PEP' (post-exposure prophylaxis). The event was translated into English for me by both Belinda and Augustine, who swapped over at various points in the proceedings depending on their other tasks.[102] In addition to this, I subsequently had a recording of the event

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[101] Recorded at event.
[102] As such there were occasional short gaps in this translation.

transcribed and translated in to English. My description below and quotations (the majority paraphrased)[103] are based on a combination of these translations.

Introducing her session, Miriam explained to the congregation: "<u>we are here to talk about domestic violence. There are six types of domestic violence</u>". Over the next 20 minutes or so, Miriam outlined these six types of abuse: physical, verbal/emotional, social, economic/financial, sexual, and "<u>traditional abuse</u>" (negative "<u>cultural practices</u>") – describing each in turn and providing concrete examples to illustrate. Having obviously done this before, she delivered her lecture-style address with no written notes to guide her to the generally silent congregation.

Miriam began by talking about 'physical abuse' giving specific examples to illustrate. She then moved on to discuss verbal and emotional abuse. She explained, with examples, what this meant in relation to the way in which people talk to one another, referring to tone of voice, the kind of words used and the use of "<u>insults</u>". Within these examples she made reference to spouses and also to parents interacting with their children. Within this Miriam specifically talked, at times, about actions by men against women, however, she also stated: "<u>Women tend to be very guilty regarding verbal abuse due to our lack of physical strength compared to men</u>".

Moving on to 'social abuse' Miriam talked about "<u>jealousy and unnecessary suspicion</u>", referring to men who control their wives' mobile phones, answer their calls and read their text messages. She also cautioned about men who "<u>prevent their spouse from going out</u>" or from "<u>joining associations</u>", often because they might be staying out late. She explained that in such cases: "<u>If a woman forces to go out it leads to beating – we have to bring an end to these things and respect one another</u>".

Moving on to 'economic abuse' Miriam explained:

> "<u>Although women might work, men might prevent their wives from working, promising to provide for their needs. However, if men cannot meet the needs</u>

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[103] As detailed in Appendix A, in the section titled 'The status of informants' words', certain material and quotations in my thesis are taken from fieldnotes of events conducted in other languages. These are indicated through the use of double quotations marks and underlined script (e.g. "<u>example</u>"). These quotations are paraphrased accounts of the translations provided and I have adopted the anthropological convention of writing them out in a fuller format, so that they are easier to read. As a result they are not necessarily, nor do they claim to be, an accurate account of the exact words used by informants or the translator. In this case, as detailed above, I have also relied on a subsequent transcription and translation of the event, incorporating material and quotes (occasionally reworded) from this.

> and demands of women they get tired of this, resorting to physical abuse. Women must be able to work, so that they can help the household. [...] Other men seize the salary of their spouse; thus ensuring that the women continue to depend on them. God created women to help men, not to be their servants".

She also talked about men "shirking their responsibility for the care of children" and their financial responsibilities toward their family. Added to this, she mentioned that some women leave men to cater for children, when they leave the home, often due to other abuse they may be experiencing. She stated that: "the care of children must be the joint responsibility of both parents".

Then, broadening out the remit of abuse somewhat, Miriam went on to talk about "skilled employees, such as hairdressers or dressmakers working on 'work and pay' terms who are not paid what was agreed. These actions also constitute economic abuse".

Moving on to "sexual abuse", she talked about the need to report cases to the necessary authorities, such as the police, rather than them being settled as family matters. Seemingly, mentioning neither men nor women specifically, she talked about the various actions that need to be taken, and the potential health consequences of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the need to administer PEP in cases of rape. Talking about children, both boys and girls, she also raised the issue of sodomy. She stated that ASCW encourages people to live in families as friends, suggesting that parents should be open and not instil fear into children, so that children feel comfortable to talk to them and make them aware of such abuse, and also so that they do not seek advice from their inexperienced peers.

During Miriam's address the congregation were mainly silent, the only noise to be heard was from children playing or crying, and chickens in the distance. However, at the mention of PEP the woman translating exclaimed: "Amen", to which someone from ASCW replied: "Amen... Hallelujah", sparking quiet laughter amongst members of the congregation. This laughter was an indication that the congregation, or at least some of them, despite sitting quietly, were engaged in the contents of the programme.

The final form of violence Miriam covered was that of "traditional abuse". Here Miriam gave examples of a range of practices which specifically affect women, including: widowhood rites, forced and early marriages, female circumcision, and food taboos. Miriam repeatedly called for the need to end such practices and outlined the various negative consequences that potentially result, focusing on physical effects, and also

mentioning other consequences such as girls' education being curtailed in the case of early marriage.

Having outlined the six types of abuse, Miriam talked fairly briefly about the potential effects of domestic abuse in general, listing various physical and psychological effects. She also detailed possible economic effects, suggesting that armed robbery, rape and pick pocketing may result from men refusing to take care of the needs of their family, with the State then having to bear the financial cost when they are sent to prison. Miriam ended by outlining the various assistance available from ASCW and other institutions and giving directions to the different locations at which ASCW provides counselling services. The audience, which had been mainly silent up to that point, again clapped politely as she ended her address.

Miriam then opened the session up, inviting the congregation to ask questions. There was a long pause while the congregation sat quietly. It appeared that no one had any questions or contributions to make. After a short while the pastor took up one of the microphones. Speaking in the local language, translated into Ga for the ASCW staff by Augustine, he said: "This is vital information that has been given and it should be taken seriously". He then went on to ask a question specifically relating to child abuse. Talking about how things have changed and worsened over the years, with social ills and vices increasing in recent times, he said, referring to the lack of training and discipline of children in current times: "There used to be respect. If an old person went on a trotro young people would get up and offer their seat, but now a child will simply say that they too have paid for a seat". Talking about the breakdown in discipline from parents and schools, resulting from the "worldwide campaign against discipline", he talked of "children doing what they like" and increases in armed robbery and rape cases as a consequence of this. He referred to specific teachings within the Bible, which advocate caning (within certain parameters), stressing the need to train children.

Going on to talk about spouses, however, he said: "In the Bible the duties of husbands and wives are stated – a wife has control over the body of her husband and the husband over the body of his wife". The suggestion here seemed to be that husbands and wives should take care of one another, and that there needs to be understanding and respect.

Following this short address the congregation again clapped politely, and another of the church leaders took the microphone thanking ASCW for coming, saying, as if to point out the relevance of the session: "we have heard of domestic violence on the

radio". He also picked up and further elaborated on some of the points made by the pastor in relation to child abuse.

Before the event came to a close Miriam spoke once more, responding to the questions and comments on child abuse. Providing clarification regarding ASCW's position, although also concerned it seemed about the potential treatment of children which might have been inferred by the statements made, she stated: "You can train or discipline your child, you can beat your child [e.g. caning], but you don't have to overdo it to the point of hurting the children. You should explain the reason for the discipline". She went on to detail that "ASCW does outreaches with children to know their rights, but we make them aware that when they do not respect their parents and are disobedient it is a form of emotional abuse. [...] We educate children to respect their parents and the orders of their parents".

It is worth noting here that the input of the pastor and church leader during the question and answer session and Miriam's response to this, in which she appeared to clarify some of the issues that they talked about, seems to signify an important difference between the events of the two organisations. As noted above, the seating arrangements and the opportunities specifically provided for various dignitaries and community leaders to speak during the PDP event seemed to suggest that these individuals had equivalent 'authority' and knowledge on the topics in question, and were also there to 'educate' others. In comparison, at the ASCW event (despite the positioning of Belinda and Miriam in front of the high table, with their backs to the pastors, as detailed above) it seemed to be much clearer that the staff of ASCW were the 'experts' on the issues being discussed, and were being 'hosted' by the two churches in order to convey this message. Although this difference might be in part due to variations in the specific nature of the two events, it perhaps also signifies a different sense of authority and proficiency amongst ASCW and its staff (as compared to PDP) on the topic of domestic violence.

Following Miriam's response to the pastor, and a final round of applause from the congregation, the presentation was concluded.

While Miriam and Augustine rushed off to begin a repeat of the session in the Chief's church, the rest of us remained to give out information leaflets on 'abuse' and the ASCW staff asked the men present to sign 'White Ribbon' pledge forms. The black and white information leaflet, produced by ASCW, detailed various forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and social) and listed specific examples of

these. It also detailed the counselling services available from ASCW, along with the organisation's telephone numbers. The White Ribbon form, also produced by ASCW, is based on the international 'White Ribbon campaign' that urges men to pledge not to commit, condone, or remain silent about male violence against women. Taking up this international initiative, ASCW had developed its own White Ribbon pledge forms, with the organisation's logo, information and statistics about VAW in Ghana, and details of the international campaign. As everyone moved around the room, the staff spoke to individual men, who signed the form and had white ribbons pinned to their shirts. While not necessarily wanting to question the men's commitment to the pledge, they appeared to sign the forms almost automatically, with what seemed like a sense of duty rather than a considered action that they could have equally refused.

Once the leaflets were distributed and the pledge forms signed we left the church, walking the short distance to the Chief's church to join Miriam and Augustine. When we reached this church – a larger and more substantial structure built from concrete blocks, with a corrugated roof and concrete floor – Miriam was already in the middle of the session, with Augustine translating. Although I was unable to follow the programme, Belinda informed me that Miriam was covering the same issues as in the previous church. The much larger congregation, of approximately 60 people, also divided by sex, again sat quietly listening to Miriam talk. However, unlike the previous church, following Miriam's address there were a few short questions and contributions from members of the congregation – some asking for advice, for example how to discipline children, and another asking whether this was to be a one-off event or whether ASCW was planning other activities in the community. Miriam briefly responded to the questions, for example encouraging people to talk to rather than beating children, and explaining that ASCW was planning to conduct various follow up events.

Once again, following the presentation, the ASCW staff handed out the information leaflets and asked the men to sign the White Ribbon pledge forms. After this, the congregation settled down once more and a final hymn was sung before the service ended and the congregation dispersed. The ASCW staff, mainly seated at the back of the church, joined in with the singing, and, like many of the congregation, held up their hands in order to 'receive the word of God'.

Following the service, while the rest of us remained at the church, Miriam, Belinda and Augustine accompanied the chief and a few other dignitaries to their homes in the ASCW vehicle. Shortly after we travelled back to Accra, the journey relatively quiet,

everyone tired it seemed from the morning's activities. Arriving in Accra during the early afternoon, most of the staff went home, save Belinda and Miriam who had a brief meeting with ASCW's Executive Director, who was in the office, to report back on how the programme had gone.

As detailed above, this outreach session was part of ASCW's advocacy programme and remit, and like the PDP event described, although in many ways unique, was also fairly typical of some of the sorts of activities undertaken by the organisation. For instance, while the precise details and words used by Miriam may have differed somewhat from other events, the outlining of the six types of abuse and the sorts of examples used were fairly similar. Indeed, as outlined in chapter 3, ASCW had a number of principal recurrent ideas and concepts that it used within its work, and this classification of different forms of abuse was one of them and something that I regularly came across during my fieldwork. Detailing the different forms that domestic violence can take and highlighting that it is not only physical in nature, it was perhaps thought to be a good starting point at introductory sessions such as this, which aimed to raise public awareness regarding domestic violence. Indeed, on several occasions different ASCW staff had told me that people often don't know what abuse is or that certain acts constitute abuse. Thus the outlining of the various forms was perhaps seen as a good way of addressing this issue.

Discussion: Public portrayals of 'violence', 'abuse' and marriage

Within this section I discuss the two events together, drawing out some of the key features which arose. I focus specifically on the ways in which 'violence' and 'abuse' were talked about – specifically the gender specificity attached to 'violence' and 'abuse', conceptions of 'violence' and 'abuse', and the principal focus on violence/abuse as the issue to be addressed, and, linked to this, ideas regarding marriage that surfaced. In focusing on these issues, I outline certain commonalities, but also draw out some of the specific differences, in the ways in which these issues were dealt with and emerged in these events of the two organisations.

I begin by focusing on the gender specificity attached to the issue of violence/abuse. The focus of both these events, to varying degrees, was on domestic violence. The ASCW event was specifically focused on awareness raising around this issue, and the PDP event, while focused on gender issues more broadly in relation to women's susceptibility to HIV, had a strong concentration on violence. Within this, both the events had a heavy emphasis on violence/abuses against *women* in particular. In the

PDP event for instance, in line with the project focus on VAW and *women's* susceptibility to HIV there was unsurprisingly a general focus, throughout much of the event, on women as victims of violence and men as perpetrators. For example, the play portrayed a situation of domestic abuse by a husband against his wife, the CHRAJ representative talked specifically about VAW, Vivian spoke on this issue, providing evidence from research in Ghana, and while some of the placards carried by the school children gave quite broad messages such as '*end domestic violence now*', those that specified a particular sex talked about women as victims – for example: '*never beat your wife*' and '*wife assault is a crime*'.

Similarly, there was a strong focus on abuse against *women* within the ASCW event. This was in accordance with ASCW's particular focus on women – as reflected in the organisation's mission, strategy, and programme focus (outlined in chapter 3) – stemming from the often cited evidence that women and children are disproportionately affected by gender violence. Indeed, throughout her address, Miriam emphasised many abusive behaviours which are perpetrated against women by men, for instance talking about men preventing their spouses from going out and controlling their wives' mobile phones, men's economic abuse of women, and 'negative cultural practices' which affect women. In addition, the emphasis on men signing 'White Ribbon pledges' and the information included on these forms, seemed to give a clear indication that the message from ASCW was that women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence.

However, this said, a particular feature of both events was also the mention of violence against men, and women as perpetrators.[104] At the PDP event the issue of violence against men was explicitly raised by a couple of speakers – albeit in quite different ways. Vivian, although she went on to speak about VAW, specifically pointed out in her opening remark, in reference to the play, that some men are also beaten by their wives. The other speaker to mention violence against men was the opinion leader, Kwesi, who made a particular point of talking about this issue, and speaking about women denying men sex as a form of abuse.

At the ASCW event too Miriam talked explicitly about violence against men, and about women as perpetrators of violence. For example, as noted above, she made specific

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[104] As I discuss in chapter 5, this issue of female perpetrators and male victims did not just occur on these two occasions; it was something which I heard consciously brought up during a number of other PDP and ASCW events.

reference to women's verbal abuse of men, referring to "women resorting to insults when fighting with our husbands". She also made specific reference to women physically abusing their husbands. The potential inclusion of both men and women as perpetrators and victims in all forms of violence (except financial abuse, as discussed below) was also present in ASCW's information leaflet which was distributed at the event. The leaflet, which asked '*do you...*' and then listed various forms of abuse and specific examples of these, specified male and female victims under emotional, sexual and social abuse – for example '*do you.... constantly yell at **him /her** and call **him/ her** stupid?*' (Bold emphasis mine).

Another feature of the events that is significant is the different conceptions of 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' that were described. Unlike the ASCW event, which made a point of outlining different types of abuse, the examples talked about at the PDP event mainly focused on physical violence – specifically 'beating'. Indeed, many of the speakers who talked about 'abuse' mentioned physical violence – including the sketch, Vivian and the CHRAJ representative. However, a slightly broader definition of 'abuse' was mobilised by Kwesi when he talked about women denying their husbands sex. In this instance, the term 'abuse' seemed to be utilised to denote behaviour that is seen as generally unacceptable and unreasonable.

As mentioned, the ASCW event outlined various different forms of abuse; making people aware that DV is not just physical, but can take many forms. Indeed, this was part of the purpose of the event and a key difference to the message of the PDP event, which mainly highlighted physical forms of abuse. This difference may well have been due to the different nature of the two events. Indeed, the very purpose of the ASCW event was to educate people about domestic violence, including specifically the different forms of abuse. In contrast the PDP event was principally aimed at launching the project, although it was also used as an opportunity for awareness raising on the issues of gender violence and HIV. However, this difference between the two events might also demonstrate and be the result of ASCW's firmer and more established grounding in transnational ideas regarding gender violence (as outlined in chapter 3), in which the different forms of abuse are often listed and care is taken to highlight other forms of violence than just physical abuse. However, within this overview of different forms of abuse at the ASCW event, quite broad and general conceptions of 'abuse' were also drawn upon. For example, Miriam's mention of employees not being paid as constituting economic abuse – something that is not specifically a 'gender-based' or 'domestic' issue.

Another feature of the events that I would like to highlight was the focus placed specifically on 'violence' and 'abusive behaviour' as the problematic issues to be addressed within marital relationships (as well as more generally). At the PDP event for example the CHRAJ representative specifically drew attention to the issue of men 'beating' their wives and did not problematise the wider gendered relations in which husbands are seen as authority figures and in a position to control and police their wife's/wives' behaviour. In this case it was specifically the 'violent/abusive' behaviour, and the act of beating itself, which was presented as the problem and in need of being addressed. While he did not *explicitly* talk about and promote male conjugal authority, his anti-violence message, premised on the idea that 'beating' is not an appropriate method of dealing with an errant wife, was based on and reinforced certain relationship ideas. For example, the suggestion that a husband should send a wife back to her parents is a fairly common sanction in Ghana, based on certain ideas regarding the husband's role and authority as the head of the household, and the opinion that it is the 'man who marries the wife' (see chapter 2).

In many ways this notion of 'violence as the problem' to be addressed was also present within the sketch at the PDP event. While it portrayed beating as an unacceptable (and illegal) way of behaving, and the man as unreasonable in his demands on his wife, there was no sense of comment or questioning regarding the broader marital roles and responsibilities of men and women. The man's authority was evoked by the common saying: "are you married to me or am I married to you" uttered by the husband during the production. While the play drew attention to what was seen as the unreasonableness of the husband's demanding nature and the way he dealt with his wife's failure to do certain tasks as requested by him, it was his violence and not the expectations that women should do all the chores and men bring in the income that seemed to be commented on and problematised. Similarly, within her address, in relation to gender issues affecting HIV transmission, while Vivian touched on the issues of male infidelity and women's poor negotiation skills, her emphasis was on promoting condom use and people's ability (or not) to insist on this, rather than on changing marital relations and male 'sexual rights' themselves.

As discussed above, within the ASCW event, the types of 'behaviour' specified as problematic were more diverse than the PDP event. With a focus on different types of abuse, not just physical, attention was also drawn to issues such as men "prevent[ing] their spouse from going out" and "men seiz[ing] the salary of their spouse". However, even so, the main attention was again generally focused on these particular

'behaviours', rather than explicitly questioning the underlying position of men and women in marriage. In one instance, when talking about verbal and emotional abuse, Miriam did however draw attention to the potential impact of ideas regarding male conjugal authority, pointing out that "<u>Because men are regarded as heads of the family, some men have taken advantage of this to disrespect their wives in the presence of their children</u>". However, within this example it was the disrespect of wives that was problematised rather than the view of men as heads of the family *per se*.

This highlights and leads me to an interrogation of another aspect of the two events; the various ideas about marriage and the relations, rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives which emerged and the extent to which these were problematised. Indeed various ideas about marriage surfaced during both events. However, as indicated above, these ideas were not necessarily themselves the direct focus of the message and the issue being 'problematised'. Rather they were mentioned in terms of the context of the issues being talked about. Such ideas, which seemed to be based on and reinforce certain ideas regarding marriage in Ghana, thus appeared as accepted, normal and expected dynamics.

For instance, during the PDP event, the notion of men's position as authority figures surfaced at various points. The address by the CHRAJ representative seemed to implicitly draw on widespread ideas regarding a husband's authority, as did the sketch – neither case questioning this situation. Both the sketch and the CHRAJ representative also talked about men's financial responsibility for women; the sketch disparaging of the husband's inability to provide adequate *chop money* for his wife and the CHRAJ representative pointing out that 'responsible' men, and part of men's responsibility is to, financially provide for their wives.

The CHRAJ representative's suggestion that women reciprocate men's financial support with sexual relations also drew on certain ideas regarding female sexuality, including their sexual availability to those who provide for them economically and a suggested lack of sexual desire and autonomy; their potential infidelity seen principally as a result of subsistence requirements. Specific ideas regarding male and female sexuality and 'marital rights' were also present in the speeches of Kwesi and Vivian. Kwesi drew on widespread ideas regarding marital relations and responsibilities – including male sexual rights and fulfilment, and female acquiesce, along with broader ideas regarding male and female sexuality, when he talked about women denying their husband's sex as a form of abuse. Although quite different in tone and message, Vivian's mention of male infidelity (men 'going outside') seemed to present this almost

as a fact of life. Her address did not challenge male infidelity itself, but suggested instead the, perhaps easier and more achievable, 'solution' of promoting condom use.

Some similar ideas regarding conjugal roles, relations and responsibilities were present at the ASCW event too. For example, when talking about economic abuse, Miriam seemed to talk principally about male perpetrators and female victims,[105] using the examples of men preventing their wives from working, with promises of providing for their needs, or seizing their wives salaries to ensure that women depend on them. Similarly, within the information leaflet financial abuse was the one type of abuse which specified only female victims. Contrary to the other forms of abuse listed, which talked about him/her, the section on economic abuse asked:

> *'do you... make **her** depend on you for needs? Cease **her** income? Prevent **her** from earning an income? Refuse to give housekeeping money, using joint family resources on mistresses or girlfriends at the expense of the family? You are abusing **her** FINANCIALLY!'* (Bold emphasis mine).

The nature of the ideas about economic abuse, with their focus on female victims and male perpetrators seemed to be grounded in commonly held views and understandings regarding the financial roles of husbands and wives. As such, it might generally be considered that women are not able to abuse men financially due to their often lower economic status and power, and men's commonly perceived role as 'breadwinner' and financial provider (as described in chapter 2). For instance, Miriam made the case for female economic activity on the grounds that men alone might not be able to meet the needs of the woman and that both should work to help the household. Although Miriam did make the case for women participating economically, their responsibility in the provision for children, and also critiqued men's financial *control* of women, she seemed to draw on widespread ideas of men as mainly economically responsible for the household, but in which women can assist, presenting this as relatively 'normal' and 'acceptable'.

Ideas regarding other elements of conjugal roles and responsibilities were also drawn upon within Miriam's address and in ASCW's information leaflet; specifically, for

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[105] Although she also included the example of employees not being paid (as detailed above), which could include male victims, importantly, this was not specifically about women 'abusing' men. In addition, while she talked about women leaving men to cater for children, when they leave the home, it was mentioned that this is often a consequence of abuse they may be experiencing, rather than suggesting women's economic abuse of men.

example, ideas regarding male and female fidelity and sexuality. Although not necessarily *condoning* such behaviour, the general acceptability of married men having mistresses and girlfriends (as outlined in the information leaflet – see extract above) and fears about female infidelity were brought up, but were not in themselves the issues in question.

We thus see the presence of what seems to be a general acceptance, or at least lack of overt challenge, to certain ideas about marriage at these two events. Specifically such ideas relate to the roles and responsibilities of men as the heads of the household, including their roles as financial provider and authority figure, the domestic duties of wives, and male and female sexuality. However, it is important also to point out certain variations in this regard, in the ways in which different people spoke, in terms of their tone, emphasis and sentiment conveyed; a difference principally between recognising (and not necessarily challenging) certain ideas, versus promoting and reinforcing them. This difference was signalled above, for example, in relation to the variation in tone and message of Kwesi in comparison to Vivian regarding male and female sexuality at the PDP event. Kwesi for instance seemed to be actively supporting specific ideas of female sexual acquiesce and a husband's right to have sex with his wife. Similarly, the CHRAJ representative at the PDP event was in many respects reinforcing the idea of the authority of husbands with his statement that men should send their wives back to their families if they were unhappy with them. In contrast, Vivian (the staff of a WRO) seemed rather to be merely recognising and acknowledging male infidelity rather than *supporting* it per se. Likewise, certain statements within the ASCW event, both by Miriam and within the leaflet provided, while not necessarily challenging the status quo per se, seemed to be more statements of recognition of how things are, as opposed to actively reinforcing and/or condoning them.

Questions arising and conclusions

A number of questions arise from the overview and analysis of these two events. What might account for the way that these events unfolded, what was addressed and how? Why did ASCW give examples of violence against men and women as perpetrators when they have such a clear focus and mandate on violence against women? The same thing occurred at the PDP event which was launching a project centred specifically on women and VAW. Why was 'abuse' presented in such a broad way that the 'gender element' was in some senses obscured? And why were certain ideas regarding marital roles, relations and responsibilities – such as men as authority figures

and the main 'breadwinners', and women as helpmeets and responsible for domestic tasks, as well as ideas regarding male and female sexuality – not explicitly questioned or presented as problematic? After all, as outlined in chapter 3, these are organisations which in various 'official' documents (in the case of ASCW), specific project documents (in the case of PDP), and in conversations in the office, refer to 'patriarchy', 'male dominance' and 'power dynamics' as the underlying causes of gender violence, and specific gender norms, such as male infidelity, affecting HIV transmission.

In seeking to understand what happened in both of these situations, one factor that might be particularly relevant may be the fact that these were, to varying degrees, 'advocacy events'. Indeed, as outlined above, 'sensitising the public' and 'educating' them on gender violence was one of the principal purposes of such events, and of much of the work of ASCW in general, and of this specific project and others like it for PDP. Indeed, one of ASCW's advocacy staff told me that the purpose is to sensitise the public on what DV is and its effects on individuals and the whole nation; to sensitise people and tell them there is a need to stop DV because of the dangers involved (Interview,[106] 05/11/09).

As such it is no doubt important at such events, and in their work in general, to adopt a considered and strategic approach; to tread carefully, ensure that the 'audience' is taken along with them, and that they present ideas that are not seen as being too antagonistic or challenging of the status quo. The organisations therefore perhaps don't want to publicly challenge the 'audience' and in particular those in positions of authority, often the 'hosts' of such events, such as chiefs and pastors. They also need to consider what is achievable and manageable, both in terms of change and what can be covered within the limited time available at such events, taking into account that this might be the first of many encounters, laying the gentle foundations on which more 'challenging' ideas will be presented at later events as trust is built up and ideas become more familiar.

Indeed, in both organisations staff talked about the need to be strategic and careful in their encounters with constituents and members of the 'general public', and the limit to what can be achieved and covered during such events. For instance, as ASCW's Executive Director said to me in relation to the Twegoasi event, this was just the community entry event at which the process is started. And on another occasion she

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[106] Interview not voice recorded.

pointed out: "*well, technically it is difficult to address issues of patriarchy [within advocacy work]*" (Interview).

Various staff at ASCW also told me that as an organisation they often face criticism for their particular focus on women, and need to ensure that they do not alienate men during their work, either by criticising them and/or neglecting them as possible victims of abuse. As Josephine, one of the advocacy staff, explained during an interview:

> "*So a lot of people when they hear of [ASCW] they are like (...) 'oh so you don't have time for men?' We say 'no, you know women and children suffer abuse most, that is why, but we do it for men, and we even have male counsellors'. I remember one funny thing that happened, there was a time we went for one on one campaign and that day we were just females (...) So that day the males [male staff] were not part of it. Something just came up and they [the 'beneficiaries'] are like 'ah you see you are always saying women, women and it's true' (...). And you know we didn't even realise we were all females, we were bent on doing the work, so we went to the field. They said 'eh, even you said 'putting women and children..., you do counselling for men, we talk to men, do this'. Where are the men in even your organisation? Look at you, you are all women'. And then we realised and started laughing. And then we said 'oh they are also doing their work on the field, they are in another place'. And then one followed us only to meet the guys in counselling sessions and said 'ah okay'. It was really fun; we said 'ah, we didn't even notice'. But normally we work with them [men]...*" (Interview, 12/03/09).

Another member of ASCW staff cautioned in a focus group discussion that a potential barrier to addressing gender violence in Ghana is:

> "*...the way activists carry out the message to the people (...) You know when your message, you couch it such that you are attacking, let's say those you think are the perpetrators, sometimes it doesn't work.*" (FGD, 11/12/09).

And Emily, a member of the training staff, explained to me that they have to say that the man is the head of the household or they will face too much resistance. But she added that they also explain the responsibilities that go with this to men, using

examples of a general, or a leader and what their responsibilities are (Interview,[107] 12/11/09).

So staff within ASCW are aware of concerns about their specific focus on women and the potential neglect of men, and the need to tread carefully in terms of the issues that they address and what they cover within their work. As such, avoiding certain issues, talking about violence against men, and focusing specifically on the issue of violence, as opposed to wider marital relations, at such events might make a lot of sense in this context.

Similarly, various staff at PDP also talked about the need to be careful in their approach, concerned about creating resistance as a result of being too heavy handed, confrontational, and being seen to be attacking men. They specifically talked about the need to include men in their work, taking a 'gentle approach', in order to get their full support and achieve results. As one senior female staff member told me: "*We should make the thing such that they [the men] should also feel that we are concerned about them.*" (Fieldnotes,[108] 16/06/09).

This issue is something that Wendoh and Wallace (2005) found in relation to those SNGOs, in the Transform Africa research, undertaken in Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda and the Gambia, that managed to make progress in 'gender mainstreaming' work. They noted that these organisations: 'avoid[ed] using frameworks that can appear foreign, that can cause confusion or that risk alienating the people with whom they are working' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005:79). Similarly, as noted in chapter 2, both Tsikata (2009) and Hodžić (2009) suggest that WROs in Ghana might frame their work in terms of 'development' partly in a strategic and pragmatic move aimed at reducing potential resistance to their work.

However, although the need to make a bridge with their constituents, not alienate them, and focus on changes which are achievable, is indeed part of the reason that the work unfolded as it did, it is important to also note that staff did not seem to be overly concerned about what happened at such events. They were not disturbed or resentful about how they had to talk about things, and the messages of others. They did not mention these, nor apparently did they see themselves as having to drastically compromise their message and principles. Whilst indeed being part of a strategic

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[107] Interview not voice recorded.
[108] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

manoeuvre, certain conversations – and indeed silences – amongst staff suggested that this was not the only reason that things were talked about in certain ways at events. Nor were these ways of talking necessarily significantly at odds with people's own ideas and understandings of the purpose of their work. For example in the interview with Josephine, detailed above, in which she talked about the need to also focus on violence against men, she continued:

> "*Because some people are like 'oh, domestic violence is a women's issue, it's women who suffer they should be educated'. It took a long time before men accepted it and when they were able to even get time to listen they were like 'oh, so I can also get hurt?' You see, and when the awareness was created, they are now like 'yeah we all need to fight'. And first they thought it was women only fighting for the Bill to be passed into law, to favour women, but they got to know that it's there to favour both men and women and children. So if a woman does something wrong against you, just as the man does, you will be punished equally and now they understand it."* (Interview, 12/03/09).

This quote perhaps indicates that it is not only to appease others that such a focus is included in events, but also due to concerns that staff also share; in this case that men can also be the victims of domestic violence. There was no sense that Josephine was exasperated at having to include such a focus in order to placate others.

Likewise, concerns within PDP regarding the possible neglect of men and approaches taken within gender work appeared to be not only the result of strategic considerations, but were also issues that staff were themselves worried about. In conversations with me and within the office, they occasionally lamented the approaches of "feminists", which in their view often exclude men and are too confrontational. They also talked about the need to address women's abusive behaviour. For instance, as one senior female staff member pointed out: "*And you find some homes that the abuse is from the woman.*" (Fieldnotes,[109] 16/06/09).

Similarly, in conversations that I had with staff following events there seemed to be little indication that they were overly concerned about what issues were covered, and how, and what was said by others, for example pastors, chiefs and 'opinion leaders'. There was also little sense that they had to 'compromise' their message in these forums in order to generate consensus. For example, on the return journey to Accra I spoke to

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[109] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

Belinda about the ASCW event, specifically the address of the Pastor in the first church and what he had said about parenting and lack of discipline of children leading to an increase in various forms of violence and vices. Tired from the day's activities, Belinda briefly responded, telling me that she didn't necessarily agree with this, that parenting might be a contributing factor, but it is not the only issue. Although partly due to tiredness perhaps, her short and somewhat flat response did not suggest that she was concerned about his message nor thought it out of the ordinary.

Although there is the possibility that events were discussed in detail at meetings or during conversations that I was not part of, I was not aware of the contents of such events being subsequently analysed in great detail. The one exception to this was discussions that took place during a staff meeting regarding the contents of an address made by a pastor at a recent event (as detailed in chapter 3). However, in general, as far as I could tell, events were conducted, considered satisfactory, and staff moved onto the next activity. In the case of this event for example, the only conversation that I witnessed between staff was in the office later that afternoon when Miriam reported back to ASCW's Executive Director that the sessions had gone well and the community were happy that ASCW was there. Although it is also possible that staff are used to the kind of views expressed by the pastor, hence an acceptance and lack of discussion, this may nevertheless further indicate a general lack of agitation regarding the messages being conveyed.

Similarly in relation to the PDP event, individuals did not express concerns about the messages conveyed, or the need to compromise or adapt their message. For instance, as we waited to return to Yassa, I asked Vivian what she thought of the programme and how it went. She gave a short response, seemingly happy with it. Asking her specifically about Kwesi's comments regarding women denying their husbands sex, something that I had not fully understood during the proceedings, she filled me in on the detail of what she had heard him say, but suggested that he said it as a joke and that it was not part of the programme. She appeared relatively unconcerned about what he had said and spoke no more about it.

Later that day, I also chatted with Komla and Elizabeth, again asking them how they thought the programme had gone. More animated in their responses, they both told me the event had gone well; no doubt pleased it had run smoothly after all the organising, and the previous postponement. Again I asked them specifically about Kwesi's comment, still trying to understand what he had said. Also seemingly unconcerned about this speech, Komla explained that if a woman doesn't want to have sex then she

has to provide her husband with a tangible reason for this. Elizabeth went onto explain that women are told when they marry that they shouldn't deny their husbands sex, that that is why they should then provide a reason. Turning the issue around I asked them what would happen if a woman wanted to have sex and her husband did not. Komla explained that it is unlikely that a woman will instigate sex in their setting, but if they did it is not common for a man to say no – men are always ready for sex. Elizabeth however argued with Komla, saying that it is common for men to say no, but what can you do, suggesting that if a woman pushes her husband it is likely to end in violence. While illustrating certain variations between the views of different staff members, this discussion indicates that their ideas were not necessarily that dissimilar to the views of community members, and they did not seem to be especially concerned about the messages portrayed.

Overall, this chapter has outlined in detail a couple of examples of the gender violence work undertaken by ASCW and PDP, highlighting some of the specific issues that arise and ways in which such work is conducted. It has illustrated that while the advocacy context might partly help us to understand what is going on in these situations, there is also a need to look elsewhere, specifically at the ideas and understandings of the staff, to enable a fuller exploration of the factors that influence the gender work carried out by these two organisations and the ways in which this might be understood. Indeed, various conversations highlighted give an indication that the ideas of staff and their constituents might not be that dissimilar and that staff are not overly concerned about what is said and done at these events. Thus, their ideas about gender, and broader worldviews, for example in relation to marriage roles and responsibilities, might also help to account for and explain why gender practice looks like it does, and help us to understand what is going on.

The conversations detailed here have provided hints about staff ideas about gender; in the next two chapters I turn to explore these in more detail, looking at how these ideas get shaped and their bearing on the gender work that takes place. In light of the specific points raised in this chapter two particular themes emerge as particularly important to investigate in relation to staff ideas. The first is the ways in which the term 'abuse' and the concept of 'domestic violence' are understood. I turn to explore this in the next chapter (chapter 5). The second concerns ideas and practices regarding marriage and the extent to which, and how, these should be changed, and how these ideas intersect with and affect individual's understandings of their work and the concepts contained within. This is the focus of chapter 6.

Chapter 5 – Universal Concepts? The Situated Meanings of 'Abuse' and 'Domestic Violence'

A key feature highlighted in relation to both events described in chapter 4 was the particular ways in which the concepts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' were used.[111] This included three specific interrelated elements. Firstly, there was an inclusion of both men and women as potential perpetrators and victims, with the at times explicit mention of violence/abuse perpetrated against men by women. Secondly, these terms were commonly used to specify interpersonal situations in which a person is 'mistreated' in some way by another. Within this, in addition, for example, to physical or verbal abuse, also included were situations such as women denying their husbands sex, as brought up by Kwesi at the PDP project launch, and employees not being paid, as highlighted by Miriam at the ASCW event. Thirdly, there was a frequent focus on acts of abuse/violence as the main problem to be addressed, with little explicit mention of changes needed in other gender dynamics between husbands and wives. The advocacy context of these events provided only a partial explanation of these features, which were not significantly at odds with staffs' general understandings of these terms. In this chapter I explore the views of staff in more detail, focusing on other factors that help to explain how the terms 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' were being used in the context of gender violence work in Ghana.

Komla working in PDP

During my first meeting with Komla, I asked him about his work and the projects that he was involved in. Telling me about one specific project which had a central gender component he explained how it differed from other types of work he had been engaged in, and talked about the focus of the project:

Komla: *(...) ...we have to probe more into domestic violence, you see, because in a situation, it will, we have to advocate for most of the women's who have been marginalised, who cannot decide for safer sex, so this project is more demanding*

Hannah: *And that's something that you haven't done before?*

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[111] It is important to note that while these two terms are occasionally used differentially in certain contexts, or at times to refer to different acts, they were on the whole used relatively interchangeably by staff when talking about this area of their work. For instance, while staff might specifically use either the term 'abuse' or 'violence' when talking, this did not often seem to denote a specific act/behaviour that would not also be covered by the other term.

Komla: Before, before we were not into, because this is more into, into women rights, (...) so you have to work with these people like the Domestic Violence Unit of the Ghana Police Service [DOVVSU], and then (...) the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice [CHRAJ], then National Commission for Civic Education, because they also have to interpret some of the rights, because they have just passed the Domestic Violence right in Parliament. But it is like over there [in the communities], ignorance, a lot of people are not aware that things are going on, so these are key people that we have to involve in this project. So at least at the end of the project, at least, at most, 80% of the women should be awake to know their rights, aheh. It's not like those days where everything is being controlled by (...) the men. But in other side too, in terms of sexual demands, the mens are also complaining, are also complaining bitterly that their wives are assaulting them at times. If the women's, as at now over there what happens is, is like there the mens, you know the system, the men can marry more, like two or three, so it's like some of the womens they are not being satisfied, so those womens are also feeling very bad of their partners. So they also, visa versa, this time it is not only the mens that are forcing or beating up the women. The womens also beat the.... So we have to look at the other side of the whole issue. So that together, so we'll be doing a lot of focal group discussion. We have to do a lot of discussion so that we get their views, then based on that we know what to.... (Interview, 16/06/09).

A few days later, sitting in the PDP Yassa project office one morning, waiting for the working day to begin, I chatted with Komla about another of the projects they were implementing, which also had a focus on gender violence:

June, 2009, Fieldnotes

I asked Komla why the project focuses on the DV law. He responded that women are at a disadvantage and that they can't negotiate for safer... [sex]. Men always dictate to women, and if women do not accept this and what the men say they are being attacked – therefore there is a need for education. He stated "the womens are always marginalised in the community" and talked of the "high rate of violence and attacks on women". I asked him though about what he had mentioned in Accra [a few days earlier] in relation to men being beaten etc (...). Komla told me that: this time around because many of them [women] are being enlightened about the DV law and they know where to report etc, they now have awareness and want to abuse it. He stated: "because you know African women always want to take advantage". But women need to understand that they are not above the law. He said women perceive that the law is only about

protecting women. Men are therefore being careful. (...) He argued that women are taking the law for granted and taking advantage of it and abusing their husbands. I asked him to clarify what he means by "women abusing their husbands". He said, if for instance a man went to visit a female friend and then decided to go out in the evening with her, wives find it hard to accept and start abusing the man with insults, he then said something like: if you don't take care it will escalate into something else. I suggested that this behaviour on the part of women might be due to the high incidence of male infidelity, but Komla suggested that sometimes their jealously is unfounded.

During these conversations, as on other occasions, Komla included in his discussion of this area of his work behaviours in which one person 'mistreats' another, including not only acts by men against women, but also frequently acts by women against men too. As such, according to Komla, both the physical violence against women and the verbal insults from women constitute acts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse', and issues to be addressed under the new DV Law. Indeed, the abuse of men by women was something that Komla seemed particularly eager to highlight and was relatively agitated by, often animated and frustrated when he talked about the issue, his voice and emotions raised. For instance during another conversation in the office about VAW Komla interjected, talking over others present: "*But as at now the womens are abusing us. The womens are doing worse things.*" (Fieldnotes,[112] 23/06/09).

Komla had worked for PDP for approximately 10 years. Although some of his previous work at PDP had, to varying extents, included 'gender' elements, the area of gender violence (often named, and more specifically focused on, 'violence against women' in the case of PDP) was relatively new for him. While he had become aware of the issue from the radio and newspapers, he had also attended over the years various workshops and seminars dealing with gender issues in which he has been exposed to various 'transnational' gender concepts related to gender violence (discussed in chapter 3).

The extracts above illustrate the importance of these 'transnational' gender concepts in certain elements of Komla's interpretation of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse'. This includes his highlighting of women's marginalisation, the problems of male control and dominance, and the citing of high rates of violence and attacks on women in particular.

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[112] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

Noting that gender violence is a global phenomenon, Merry (2006a) describes how various concepts and models relating to domestic violence and abuse have been adopted all over the world by organisations focusing on this issue, and PDP is no exception. Although only one element of PDP's work, their gender-related projects that included a gender violence element utilised and were grounded in such ideas and concepts. They came up in the various training courses that I witnessed during my fieldwork, in particular those relating to gender and HIV, and were also utilised, to varying extents, in PDP project proposals and other documentation.

Indeed, as Komla explained to me, he had obtained specific knowledge on gender violence as a result of attending workshops and seminars and specifically from recent trainings as part of the gender violence focused projects that he is/was involved in (FGD, 03/12/09). These recent trainings explicitly covered 'transnational' ideas on gender violence, including globally accepted definitions, categorisations of different types of violence, common myths around violence, cycle of violence models, and details regarding the impacts and causes of violence. Importantly, the principal focus of these transnational ideas is on 'violence'/'abuse' perpetrated against women (and children), which is explained by theories of male power and control. Notably, both the terms 'violence' and 'abuse' are used in these global discussions, often synonymously and interchangeably, with the focus having been broadened over the years from physical violence to include other forms of abuse against women.

Elements of these transnational ideas have also begun to be taken up and circulated more widely in Ghana, due to a combination of the passage of the DV Law in 2007, the proliferation of work in this area and, importantly, accompanying media coverage and various awareness raising programmes, for example government billboards, such as the one's illustrated below (see figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Figure 5.1 – MOWAC billboard in central Accra

Figure 5.2 – MOWAC billboard in Bolgatanga

Everyday gender behaviour and meanings of abuse

Transnational ideas, and in particular the focus on women as victims of violence, and the types of abuse they experience, can clearly be seen in Komla's explanation for the project's focus on the DV Law, in which he specifically highlighted abuses that women face as a result of their position vis-a-vis men. However, his frequent highlighting of 'abuses' against men, which included both physical violence as well other forms of abuse, along with the use of the term 'abuse' to refer to a variety of situations in which a person is being in some way 'mistreated', for example a man being questioned and insulted by his wife, needs to be understood in its specific Ghanaian context. Of central importance here is the specific and widespread everyday usage and meaning of the term 'abuse' in Ghana.

The term 'abuse' is widely used in Ghana, and is deeply embedded and strongly meaningful. It is used to refer to a person being rude, disrespectful or offending another in some way, often, but not only, verbally. Indeed, it is often used synonymously with 'insult', for example the entry in 'A Comprehensive Course in Twi (Asante)' provides the Twi word for 'abuse/insult' (Dolphyne, 1996:131), and Blench in 'A Dictionary of Ghanaian English' details under 'abuse' its use as a verb – 'to insult', and a noun – 'insult', giving the example: '*it is an abuse* it is an insult' (2006:6, italics original; see also Blench, 2005).

The seriousness attached to such behaviour in Ghana is noted by the Rt. Reverend Dr. Peter Sarpong (the Catholic Bishop of Kumasi) in his book 'Ghana in Retrospect' (1974).[113] In a chapter titled 'Etiquette' Sarpong deals with the issue of 'Abuses and Insults' first and foremost. He cautions: 'If there is anything the Ghanaian cannot stand, especially in public, it is insulting him. I need only mention that *abusiveness* in public is one of the legitimate causes for destooling a chief, and the reader will realise the serious import of the point I am trying to make. Words like "foolish", "silly", "stupid", should, wherever and whenever possible, never be used openly' (Sarpong, 1974:93, emphasis mine). The use and meaning of the term abuse, and the purchase of this idea can be seen in the following quote, a comment made by a participant in Van der Geest's research on witchcraft in Ghana, in which the interviewee stated: 'If you are *disrespectful*, if you *insult* or *abuse* an old person, he will say, 'You're *abusing* me? OK.

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[113] The book, which brings together articles originally published in 'The Catholic Voice', aims to 'preserve the fabric of our culture for later generations to adopt', amidst concerns that social change will leave 'the highly educated Ghanaian, for example, alienated from his tradition and cultural heritage' (Sarpong, 1974: description on back cover).

Tena hɔ na wubehunu [Stay there, you'll see]. Wadome wo [He has put a curse on you]' (2002:445, emphasis mine).

Importantly, although the term is used widely to refer to anyone's 'abuse' of another, it is fairly frequently used to describe and comment on women's/wives' misbehaviour and disrespect of men/husbands (and other women). Indeed, this is an issue of particular and widespread concern in Ghana. As Sarpong notes: 'For a woman to call a man a "fool" for whatever cause, is unpardonable, no matter the degree of provocation, or difference in age, or degree of relationship. Such behaviour is conceived of as a challenge to an exchange of blows' (1974:93).[114]

However, included in this concept and concern of women being 'abusive' towards men is not only the use of *insulting words*: even being 'quarrelsome', and the mere questioning of men, are seen as an 'insult' and 'abuse', often along with other behaviour deemed offensive towards men (as discussed below). For example, still talking about 'Abuses and Insults', Sarpong notes: 'Quarrelsome women are resented because they are supposed to be a disgrace to their family (in the broader sense of the term), and husbands. So are abusive women' (1974:94). Indeed, in a section on 'Motherhood', in a chapter entitled 'Ghanaian Values', Sarpong observes (as detailed in chapter 2): 'A good wife is obedient to her husband, faithful, hard-working, helpful, and not quarrelsome' (1974:69). Dunne also notes that the idea of being 'quarrelsome' is 'a derogatory gendered term' (2007:507) in Ghana, directed at women and girls (see also Dunne & Leach, 2007; Dunne, 2008). And Luginaah & Dakubo similarly point out that it is seen as 'disrespectful for a wife to question her husband's acts' (2003:1753). As Aniwa cautions: 'A woman who insults her husband in public is considered to have misbehaved, while complaining about her husbands' behaviour and arrogance are considered transgressions of her prescribed role' (1999:59). Such ideas are widespread in Ghana; indeed, as Manuh notes, 'folklore and songs are replete with aphorisms about the 'obaa na no pari pari' i.e. the female incessant talker who actually talks back to the man' (2009b:52).

However, also seen as 'offensive conduct' by women against men in Ghana are a variety of other acts, including for example 'going out without permission, making friends with unmarried women, and disagreements [with men] over children' (Aniwa, 1999:58), to name a few. Indeed, there is a general preoccupation in Ghana about

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[114] Notably, Sarpong (1974) does not make similar comments about men 'abusing' women.

women's misbehaviour towards men, often denoted as 'abusive'; including not only their verbal 'insults', but also their exercise of sanctions, and failure to observe what are deemed as appropriate forms of behaviour, especially in their role as wives. Such expectations, as outlined in chapter 2, include for example respect and obedience towards their husbands, domestic duties (in particular cooking for their husband), and sexual compliance.

The nature of such misbehaviours, and the use of the term 'abuse' to denote them, can be seen in an example given by Maier (2012). Talking about men's participation in childcare and housework, she notes of one couple: 'Even though James helps voluntarily around the house his relatives would accuse Sarah of 'abusing' him if they knew' (Maier, 2012:133). Although in this case focused on Nigerian's living in London, as illustrated by Blench (2005) the term 'abuse' is used similarly in 'Nigerian English'.

Thus, while the term 'abuse' is commonly used in Ghana to denote behaviours which are deemed as generally unacceptable, the assessment of this is heavily influenced by broader gender ideologies and views regarding the appropriate behaviours of spouses in general, but wives in particular. As such, widespread concerns about and commentary on women's (mis)behaviour towards men, mean that the term is often used to refer to women's 'abuse' of men.

This can be seen clearly in the ways in which Komla uses the terms 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' to include not only verbal insults, but also women questioning their husband's actions. For instance on one occasion, telling me about one women's jealousy on hearing a rumour that her husband had been seen with another woman, Komla told me that DV cases usually favour women and therefore women are abusing men, adding "they don't want men to have their privacy" (Fieldnotes, 19/06/09).

In contrast, many actions by men against women do not appear to be referred to as 'abuse' under this everyday use of the term. For example, male physical violence towards women is often deemed to be 'appropriate "discipline" for women who fail to fulfil marital duties' (Martin, 2006:350). It is seen by many, including women, as the role and right of husbands to correct and discipline their wives (see Adinkrah, 2011; Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2008; Cusack, 1999; Manuh, 1999), or is at the very least 'fatalistic[ally] accepted' (Ofei-Aboagye, 1994a:925). As Ofei-Aboagye puts it:

> *How many times had I myself heard about wife beating and shrugged? Not in defeat, not with indifference, but with fatalistic acceptance. I accepted it in much the same way that I have accepted that I could not study women as a subject of*

> *law. These were things that were. You do not change the order of things.*
> (1994a:925)*.*

As such, and as detailed in chapter 2, as Nukunya notes:

> *Wife-beating is quite a common form of penalising women in many Ghanaian*
> *societies and may be applied in the face of her adultery, failure to cook for the*
> *husband on time and anything he considers to merit such a treatment. But it is*
> *expected of a reasonable man to exercise moderation in beating his wife so as*
> *not to hurt her.* (1992:45).

That such behaviour by men is often not deemed as 'abuse', was indicated by frequent comments made by staff at ASCW and PDP, that people do not know that such actions constitute 'abuse'. It seems that such behaviour is not termed as 'abuse' in this everyday use of the word as it is not generally seen as 'disrespectful' or 'offensive' towards women, being considered as 'normal' behaviour.

Yet this does not mean that such behaviour by men is unanimously approved of and always accepted in Ghana. Indeed as Cusack notes, in relation to nationwide research on VAW: '...patterns indicated that it was acceptable to correct, discipline or chastise women and children so long as the chastisement was seen as being **proportionate** to the act of disobedience' (1999:15, emphasis original) and vice versa. In addition, there are many individuals who do not agree that such violence by men is acceptable, as evidenced by the growing anti-VAW movement. Furthermore there are indications that widespread views are beginning to change as a result of a variety of influences, including, for example, transnational ideas regarding gender violence.

Returning to Komla, it is apparent that the work he is doing on gender violence both mobilises his everyday understandings of gender behaviour, as well as bringing him into contact with other (such as transnational) ideas. This is clearly evident from a comment he made during a focus group discussion, in which he told me that before working at PDP he would not have seen violence by men against women as a problem, *"I just see it as normal"* (FGD, 03/12/09). He brings these ideas into active engagement through the work required of him. These processes of intersection and engagement of concepts, ideas and language will now be examined more fully through looking in more detail at how they are in play in the two organisations.

'Domestic violence' and 'abuse' in PDP

Other members of staff in PDP used the concepts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' in ways similar to Komla. For example, two senior staff members, Stella and Jane, (both based in Accra) included in 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' women being physically beaten, denied money by husbands, and sexually abused (an issue that came up frequently in relation to their work on gender and HIV). Like Komla, they also frequently spoke about women "*insulting"* their husbands, and other abuses of men by women, including physical and sexual abuse.

The focus on male physical violence against women seems to come largely from 'transnational' ideas, which specifically highlight violence against women, and as a result of their work, which utilises such ideas. For example, several other PDP staff told me that before working on this issue they saw such behaviour as 'normal'. This is not to suggest that staff would necessarily have condoned this, but as Elizabeth explained: "*It is common here and we accept it, we think it is normal (...) we didn't see anything wrong with it*" (FGD, 03/12/09). As she elaborated, referring to commonly held views: "*Because we know that as a woman you have to cook for your husband, if you didn't cook beatings. So that, no problem, it is normal. Because you didn't cook that is why you were beaten, simple, aha.*" (FGD, 03/12/09).

As discussed above, male physical violence towards women is often deemed as appropriate, or at least 'accepted', in Ghana, specifically as a 'disciplining' measure by men. Thus the idea of men's physical violence towards women, whatever the cause, as problematic and unacceptable (and indeed against the law), at least as a widespread and 'popular' view, is relatively recent in Ghana. This is not to suggest that there has never been any resistance to men's physical violence to women in Ghana, and that this is simply an external idea imposed/adopted from 'outside'. Indeed, there has been a growing concern regarding this issue since at least the early 1990s among Ghanaian feminists and WROs, many of whom have contributed to work in this area, both in Ghana and transnationally (see chapter 2). However, it is only more recently that this has become a more widespread view, which now appears to be gaining ground more generally, as illustrated in the way it has been taken on by staff at PDP, along with many others in the country, who increasingly include this behaviour by men in ideas of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse', and something that needs to be addressed.

Other misbehaviours by men against women included sexual abuse and economic abuse. For instance, as Jane explained, talking about the different forms of violence

detailed in a counselling manual: "*people say: 'oh sometimes he refuses to give me money', and how does that affect the person? If it causes harm to the person then it's violence. So that is how they couch the types of violence.*" (Interview,[115] 30/11/09). The transnational notion of economic abuse readily fits in with an important element of everyday ideas about marriage in Ghana – the requirement that a husband provides his wife with *chop money*.

However, a husband's failure to provide his wife with *chop money*, and the other misbehaviours Jane describes, are not necessarily termed 'abuse' in the 'everyday' Ghanaian sense of the word, although they are seen as objectionable, and not a correct way to behave. Their inclusion in the concepts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' that are used by staff in their work seems to stem principally from 'transnational' ideas that identify these as specific forms of 'violence/abuse'. PDP staff's interpretations of these transnational ideas are influenced by normative ideas and gender ideologies regarding the appropriate roles and behaviours of husbands and wives. In this case, the transnational notion of 'economic abuse' is easily understood through fairly widespread gendered expectations of men as economic providers, with *some* responsibility for maintaining their wives and children, at the very least through the provision of *chop money*[116] (as detailed in chapter 2).

There were, in addition, other broad behaviours by men against women, deemed by staff as undesirable, which were also denoted as 'violence' and 'abuse'. For example during a focus group discussion, Elizabeth, a member of the Yassa office staff, conjectured that rich women might suffer from men "*not help[ing] the woman (...) at home; let's say maybe helping the woman fetch water or cooking or certain things. Women who have money they suffer from emotional violence, but those who are poor maybe physical, emotional and so...*" (FGD, 03/12/09). This provides an example of the broad ways in which the terms 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' were used within their work; an example which results from the intertwining and broadening of both the everyday usage of the term abuse and transnational ideas of 'domestic violence'/'abuse'.

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[115] Due to the work priorities of those involved, this recorded 'interview' was conducted fairly informally and intermittently, over a period of time in the office one day. As such the information in the recording is a mixture of informal interview and more general conversations and work related discussions.

[116] As detailed in chapter 2, the provision of *chop money* does not signify economic dependency on the part of women in marriages.

This example also draws attention to the ways in which gender violence was explained by PDP staff. When talking about the causes of violence/abuse, both at public events and in conversations within the office, staff referred to transnational ideas of "*patriarchy*", male control, "*unequal power relations*", and socialisation; ideas, which commonly arose in various materials and training events. However, in addition to this, some staff, in particular those based outside of Accra, also talked about poverty as a principal cause of abuse/violence. As Elizabeth explained to me one day: if poverty is reduced the problem of domestic violence will also be reduced; when there is money there is happiness (Fieldnotes, 07/12/09). Elizabeth, for instance, while aware that all women are affected by domestic violence, mentioned on more than one occasion that among the rich this might be emotional rather than physical abuse.

The inclusion of actions by women against men within ideas of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' that was noted for Komla is a further common feature in the work and accounts of other PDP staff. They made reference to a wide range of behaviours, including actions considered as disrespectful to men: for example women's verbal 'insults' to men and their not observing proper forms of behaviour or fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers, along with other mistreatments of men by women. The details of the kinds of unacceptable behaviour labelled domestic violence and abuse against men at work, clearly included all those actions which I have identified as actions termed 'abuse' within the everyday use of the term in Ghana and which figure in media and popular accounts of deep-seated concern in Ghana regarding women's misbehaviour towards men; principally a neglect of their wifely duties or acting in an unwifely manner (see above and chapter 2).

Arguably PDP staff interpreted 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' as including 'misbehaviours' by women against men, in a merging of the everyday notion of 'abuse' and transnational ideas. The inclusion of 'verbal and emotional abuse' in transnational conceptions provides the scope for such behaviour by women to be seen in this light. This is then further reinforced by the existing everyday use of the term 'abuse' to denote such behaviour by women, along with widespread concerns and social commentary regarding what is seen as women's misbehaviour and disrespect of men/husbands. Indeed, research in other countries has shown that popular understandings of 'domestic violence' often include such (mis)behaviours by women (Narayan et al., 2000).

A related idea that emerged in discussions in the office about 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' was the concept of women 'provoking' men to violence. While staff were often

unanimous that men should not beat their wives on any account, the *problem* of women 'provoking' men occasionally surfaced. For example, as Stella commented one day, concerned about the behaviour of some women:

> "*So as much as we are condemning the violence against women, we also have to speak to our women not to provoke their husbands, not to do things that... Because sometimes they are, now there are so many women who are even in higher positions than their husbands, they are earning more than their husbands, if you come to the cities. And because of that they are on top of their husbands, they don't care, they don't care about anything. They decide what to do and sometimes you go to a home and it has turned – the woman controls the home, and the man is just there.*" (Fieldnotes,[117] 16/06/09).

Similarly, Komla, in response to my question on the issue of provocation during a focus group discussion, asked: "*Have you witnessed it before?*" He went on to give examples of women having sex with their husband's friend or "*complaining all the time*" as acts of provocation exclaiming: "*It's common, some women can abuse their husbands, hey!*" (FGD, 03/12/09). It seemed that such provocations are themselves thought of as acts of 'abuse', which men are responding to by retaliation. As such this behaviour is deemed in some senses as similarly (although perhaps not quite equally) problematic as men's resulting violence.

Such views appear to be common in Ghana, as illustrated by a newspaper article which provides details of the speeches given by various dignitaries at an event in the Brong Ahafo Region held to mark International Women's Day in 2009, based on that year's international theme 'Women and men united to end violence against women and girls' (Duodu, 2009). As the article reports, as well as appealing to men not to abuse their wives, 'Madam Owusu-Kyeramaa [the Brong Ahafo Regional Director of the Department of Women] advised women, especially wives to desist from subjecting their husbands to verbal abuse which has been the cause of physical abuse by some men' (Duodu, 2009). Similarly, as the article goes onto report: 'the Regional Minister, Mr Kwadwo Nyamekye-Marfo... noted that as much as some men were guilty of abuse of women, he equally called on women to do away with all negative behaviours or acts that sometimes had been the root cause of violence against them' (Duodu, 2009; see appendix B for a copy of the full article).

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[117] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

The frequent and vehement focus on abuses by women against men by some PDP staff was also linked to their concern that men are neglected in work on gender violence. As outlined in chapter 4, some of their concern regarding the exclusion of men related to the need to educate them for change to occur in terms of violence against women. This was either as individuals who should be educated to understand and support the issues addressed, as community leaders who might have roles in resolving cases brought to them and/or as the perpetrators of such violence. They were also concerned about the potential resistance from men that might result from their exclusion. Beyond this, understanding 'gender' to be about men and women, and 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' as affecting both sexes, staff were also concerned that the specific focus on women as victims of domestic violence was ignoring 'abuses' against men. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, as Komla remarked, stating that "*women... also beat the [men]*", "*So we have to look at the other side of the whole issue*" (Interview, 16/06/09).

Stella similarly spoke about the need to include a focus on men as victims: "*They always think that we are attacking the men, and it's not gender balanced. But I believe that when you say gender, it is not only woman, the man is also included.*" (Fieldnotes,[118] 16/06/09). For example at a training session of peer educators, pointing out that "gender does not only include women", Stella talked about women defiling "young boys" (Fieldnotes). As such, staff talked about also including violence against men in their projects. For example, as Komla told me in relation to one of their projects, the launch of which was detailed in chapter 4: "*...one of the people [at the launch] said, the fact that they say women, but at the same time (...) they should, it [violence/abuse] is not limited to only women. So the project is going to be visa versa.*" (LHI, 26/09/09).

This concern to include men, not only as those to be educated as individuals or potential opinion leaders, and/or perpetrators, but also as victims is a fairly widespread concern in Ghana in general. For instance, as one of ASCW's senior female staff pointed out to me, that was the reason that the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana police service was renamed the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU): "*they started complaining, you know, like 'why are you talking about women and juvenile, how about the men?'*" (Interview, 25/06/09). Indeed, as a female DOVVSU officer, who was presenting at a training session as part of a PDP project,

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[118] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

explained when introducing herself, their unit is "*now is no more for the women and children alone.*" (Fieldnotes[119]).

So not only did the PDP staff understand 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' as including these acts by women against men, but they saw these as being potentially ignored by the predominant focus on women as victims. They acknowledged that violence affected women more than men, for instance as Komla conjectured "*it's about 80 against 20 (...) 80 for the women (...) the women's are higher than the men's*" (LHI, 26/09/09), but were concerned that those men who are victims of violence might be ignored. Related to this, some staff also expressed concern about women taking advantage of and abusing the law; for instance suggesting that women think that they are above the law, and that the law is only about protecting women (Fieldnotes, 19/06/09). Not only were there concerns that women would abuse men, thinking that the law does not apply to them as perpetrators, but also that women might 'provoke' men to violence "*because they know there's the DV [law]*" (Stella, Fieldnotes,[120] 16/06/09).

Overall the concepts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' are used and understood by PDP staff in ways which includes a range of behaviours that are perceived in some way as negative, unreasonable, socially undesirable or in some way causing harm or doing something against another person, including behaviours by both men against women as well as women against men. What is crucial here is that the judgement regarding the denotation of something as 'abuse'/'domestic violence' and what is deemed as negative and unreasonable is influenced not only by ideas and concepts from transnational notions regarding gender violence, but also from broader normative assumptions and frames of reference; in particular ideas regarding how men and women should behave in marriage, and, linked to this, the everyday notion of 'abuse'.

Although the everyday idea of abuse includes a range of behaviours deemed problematic in one way or another, what PDP staff focus on is women's abuse of men and wives of husbands, a preoccupation they share with those in popular and media discourses. This, along with the idea that gender is about men as well as women, means that a woman 'insulting' her husband is considered as an instance of 'domestic violence'/'abuse', in the same way as a man physically beating his wife is. However, there was no differentiation made between the idea of insults which might be used as 'powerful weapons utilised to cause pain and to ensure that women *conform*' (Cusack,

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[119] Recorded at event.
[120] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

1999:25, emphasis mine), and women 'insulting' men as a 'weapon of the weak' in which women's 'abuse' of men is not an exercise of power, but of relative powerlessness.

While transnational ideas and concepts regarding 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' were taken on by staff at PDP, these were however read through and merged with the everyday understandings of the term 'abuse' and existing concerns and ideas regarding the ways in which men and women relate to one another and should behave. As discussed in chapter 3, PDP's principal focus is not on gender violence (or even gender issues more broadly), but these have been taken up as key elements in certain aspects of their work. In the next section I explore how staff at ASCW, with its principal remit on gender violence, conceptualise this work and the language in which it is described.

'Domestic violence' and 'abuse' in ASCW

When talking about 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' in relation to their work, staff at ASCW predominantly focused on women as victims/survivors and men as perpetrators, commonly pointing out that women are more affected than men. For instance, the following statement made by one senior member of staff during an interview was fairly typical of the sort of thing that staff would say. Talking specifically about gender based violence she explained: "*It means abuse that a victim receives because of their gender. And so, normally it's women and children. I mean men don't get abused because they are men. It's not (...) common. It's rare. Sometimes you know they get..., but normally when we say gender violence, (...) you are suffering this abuse because of your gender, because of your sex*" (Interview, 25/06/09). Although staff did mention men as victims/survivors and women as perpetrators (as discussed below) this was far less frequent.

This focus on women seemed to stem from, and be very clearly and firmly embedded in, transnational ideas regarding gender violence. This was also the case in relation to the common types of abuse/violence that staff talked about, and the causes of abuse frequently mentioned. In terms of the types of abuse, although perhaps talking marginally more frequently about physical violence, staff regularly referred to various types of violence/abuse that women face, often pointing out that 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' is broader than just physical violence. This happened not only at events, such as the one described in chapter 4, but also during conversations in the office. For example during a focus group discussion Tina (a senior member of staff) stated: "*All*

types are prominent (...) I think most people see domestic violence as battering. For them that is their understanding of domestic violence. So even if it's the psychological, economic or whatever, they don't see it as... But all those things are there." (FGD, 13/11/09).

In relation to the "*root causes*" of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' staff referred to "*patriarchy*", "*male dominance*", and "*power relations*", along with the division of gender roles, often talking about these factors in explaining the predominance of male violence against women. For instance, as one of the advocacy staff explained during a focus group discussion, in response to my question regarding the main causes of SGBV: *"We have patriarchy. When we say patriarchy it's the male dominance that exists in every society. Because men are believed to be heads of the family they use that as a yardstick to maltreat the women or to relegate them to the background so that is the main one"* (FGD, 13/11/09). Staff actively rejected arguments that women 'provoke' violence, and poverty and alcoholism as causes. For instance Josephine told me, during an interview, that while some people think that alcohol abuse is an underlying cause of violence, it is not, it is only an excuse. She similarly rejected the idea of poverty as a cause, telling me that rich people also abuse their family members (Interview,[121] 05/11/09). Indeed, as Tina explained:

> *"when you ask anybody, that is any lay man 'what are the causes of sexual and gender based violence?' (...) what people will normally tell you is maybe alcoholism, poverty, insecurity, economic dependence, you know, they would give you a whole lot. But then, we come to realise that these are just excuses (...) they are not the actual root causes, (...) But the actual root cause, (...), that is the patriarchy."* (FGD, 13/11/09).

In relation to these issues – the higher prevalence rates amongst women, the focus on these various types of abuse, and the causes of abuse – staff were mainly drawing on transnational ideas and statistics that they had specifically come across within their work. For example, citing the national research on VAW conducted by the Gender Centre (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999) and also commenting that there is "*scientific proof*" to show that women are more affected (senior staff member, Interview, 25/06/09). In addition, the six categories of abuse that were frequently mentioned were listed in various training manuals and materials that the staff used, which were

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[121] Interview not voice recorded.

developed both inside and outside Ghana, as were the details of 'underlying causes' of abuse which were often talked about.

These were predominately transnational ideas that staff learnt about whilst working at ASCW. Indeed, when I asked staff how they had become aware of issues relating to gender violence, they all told me that although they had some knowledge previously, often from the media, they had gained much of their *detailed* knowledge whilst working at ASCW. One of the advocacy staff, for instance, explained that she first heard about SGBV/DV in "*2002; I heard about it in the newspaper. And fortunately I had to do my National [Service] with [ASCW], so I had a deeper knowledge into what it is all about*" (FGD, 13/11/09). Another, a female member of support staff, similarly stated: "*I got to know about it when DOVVSU (...) when it was set up, it would see to cases on domestic violence. That was when I first heard about it. But when I came to [ASCW] I've learnt a lot; the types, the effects...*" (FGD, 13/11/09). And Emily, a member of the training staff, explained that before she worked at ASCW she was not too sensitised about the issue and had not been aware of the root causes of power and control and patriarchy (Interview,[122] 12/11/09).

As one of ASCW's female counsellors, explained this knowledge came not only from training but also from the experience of working with clients:

> "*Until [I worked at the counselling site] it was all fuzz. Like we're doing training, (...) we (...) did a lot of training for one year – on how to talk to an abused person, how to identify abuse, how to sense it language wise, body language wise, a whole lot. But then we were like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So until you go to (...) [the counselling site] it's like 'oh really, this is real you know', so that is somebody's everyday experience, then it became like 'oh my God, oh my God'. That was what got me interested and that made me, so it made me more alert, (...) begin to see things.*" (LHI, 05/11/09).

However, although heavily influenced by transnational ideas, staffs' specific understandings of ideas regarding VAW (and its causes) were also shaped by their broader worldviews and in particular ideas about the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. For instance when staff at ASCW talked about 'patriarchy' and 'male dominance' as the main cause of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' they were talking about specifically problematic relationships in which the man *misuses* his power

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[122] Interview not voice recorded.

and position of authority. Indeed, the position and role of the man as the head of the household was not in itself questioned as such. Rather, what was problematised were certain ways in which some men behave in this position. For example as Kate (one of the training staff) and Theresa (a senior staff member), put it during a focus group discussion:

Kate: *... it's where the man uses that to abuse the woman, 'I'm the head of the home so when I talk its final', (...) or any other thing where you're mistreating the woman as a result. But aside that, I think that in everything there should be a leader. And once, if you know if the Bible has said the man's the leader fine, but that doesn't mean you should lord it over me.*

(...)

Theresa: *Like [Kate] is saying, you know, it is not something that you should dispute, and it's not a big deal if the man is the head (...) all it means is when it comes to the crux of it and nobody can do anything you should be the one doing the something. (...)*

(...)

Theresa: (...) *But where, you know, that is used to disadvantage another person then we are quick to talk about it. So I think it's for lack of whatever else, an alternative as it were, which one do we know? (...) and it's not a big deal if the man is [the head...] it is like an adult and a child, you know aha. But where one..., that person is using their authority to abuse another then we'll jump up in arms.* (FGD, 11/12/09).

The ways in which economic 'abuse' was talked about also illustrates the influence of broader worldviews and normative assumptions on the understanding and use of transnational ideas. For instance, as illustrated in chapter 4, a man refusing to give a woman 'housekeeping money' was listed as financial abuse in ASCW's information leaflet; an idea which draws specifically on notions regarding men as 'providers' and their particular role in providing their wives with *chop money*.

However, as mentioned above, and seen in the event detailed in chapter 4, in addition to the predominant focus on VAW, staff at ASCW also at times brought up the issue of men as victims and women as perpetrators. While mentions of violence/abuse by women against men included various forms, including occasionally physical and sexual

abuse, verbal and emotional abuse were often emphasised. For instance Grace, a senior member of staff, suggested to me one day that while physical violence is more often against women, some women are violent towards men, especially in terms of emotional and psychological abuse (Fieldnotes, 05/07/09). Dina, one of ASCW's support staff with psychological training, similarly pointed out, in a mini informal presentation about gender violence at a weekly meeting, that abuse is not only against women, there are male victims too; going on to link verbal abuse with women and physical abuse with men (Fieldnotes, 27/02/09). And talking about women as perpetrators, one of the female counsellors suggested that this is more likely to be psychological rather than physical abuse, such as a woman refusing her partner sex because he has not provided her with money (Fieldnotes, 20/10/09).

Importantly, what was being referred to in some such instances was the issue of women 'insulting' men and/or other 'unacceptable' behaviours. Here in ASCW, as with PDP, we see the everyday notion of 'abuse', and broader ideas regarding the acceptable (and unacceptable) behaviours of men and women, influencing staff's use of the terms 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' in their work and their ideas regarding gender violence.

Thus, for staff at ASCW 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' also included such actions by women against men. This can be clearly seen in the following statement by Josephine: *"Because a lot of adults (...) were exposed to violence from their childhood, and they didn't know, so they grew up with it, thinking it is just right for you to beat a woman, for a woman to insult the spouse, whatever."* (Interview, 12/03/09).

Similarly, Mensah, one of the male counsellors, suggested to me that men are often victims of verbal abuse. Talking about insults he stated: "Some words in Ga, they are really something"; going on to tell me that the causes of such abuse are varied, but that maybe the man is not providing financially or he is seeing another woman (Fieldnotes, 04/09/09).

The inclusion of such behaviour by women in conceptions of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' is perhaps enabled however not only as a result of everyday notions of 'abuse' and widespread ideas regarding unacceptable behaviours of women. It also likely results from the listing of 'verbal' and 'emotional' forms of abuse within transnational ideas. Hence, staff also included such behaviours by women, as well as men, as acts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse'.

Although distinctions were not always made, interestingly several staff at ASCW at times talked about such 'abuse' of men specifically being perpetrated by urban, educated, and 'empowered' women. Grace, for instance, following on from the statement above about women's emotional and psychological abuse of men told me that this is more likely amongst women who are 'empowered' and earn money; for instance women in Accra. She suggested that once they are empowered and have reached a certain level they are likely to try and seek revenge for the abuses that they have suffered (Fieldnotes, 05/07/09). Similarly, a female counsellor and a male project manager, in a conversation in the office one afternoon, suggested that the idea of women as perpetrators is based on Accra and urban areas – areas that are more elite and with higher levels of education (Fieldnotes, 20/10/09).

This focus on urban and 'empowered' women as abusive might simply indicate a perception that such women might be more likely to 'insult' their spouses or deny men sex, for example, as they are less economically vulnerable than their rural counterparts and/or due to different relationship dynamics which enables them to act in this way. However, it may also indicate wider concerns with the balance of power between men and women and a view of the kinds of changes taking place in gender relations, and perhaps with women 'being too independent' (Martin, 2006:350); I explore these issues in greater detail in chapter 6.

A further example of situations in which men, as well as women, are seen as victims, and the broad way in which the concept of 'abuse' was used, was evident during a focus group discussion in which staff discussed '*bride price*'[123] being listed as a form of abuse under 'harmful traditional practices' in various ASCW materials.[124] One senior female staff member, Theresa, questioned: "*but you know in terms of abuse, um [pause] abuse for whom? The woman, or the man? Because technically it's the man*

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[123] '*Bride price*' is a term commonly used to refer to what Nukunya calls the 'marriage payment' (1992:43), which is transferred from the husband's to the bride's family during customary marriages. Although this transfer of items and/or money varies considerably across Ghana, for example between, as well as within, different ethnic groups and social classes, according to Sarpong it is this payment which 'ratifies the marriage. It may be considered as a kind of "documentary evidence" attesting to the fact that matrimonial union has duly been entered into' (1974:83). This customary marriage rite continues to be of great significance in Ghana, its importance even recognised and reinforced by churches. For instance, as Soothill notes, at each of the four church weddings she attended during her fieldwork in Accra, 'the father of the bride was invited to the stage to confirm that the groom had completed all the necessary rites, which included the payment of money and other gifts to the bride's family' (2007:196).
[124] As well as in materials from other WROs.

who pays the bride price, so..." (FGD, 11/12/09). While Kate (one of the training staff) argued that the bride was the one being 'abused' by her parents who are *"trying to sell"* their daughter, other's argued that it is the man who is 'abused'. As Mary, one of the counsellors, stated, and others agreed: *"...if it is too exorbitant [the bride price demanded] they are abusing the man. Yes, that's the bottom line"*. Agreeing that it could be both the man and the woman being 'abused' Mary added: *"we understand that fine the daughter is being abused, but the man is still being abused, by asking him to pay that much"* (FGD, 11/12/09).

Staff also talked about the payment of *bride price* leading to the 'abuse' of women by their husbands after the marriage has taken place. As Mary stated: *"then afterwards the woman gets abused"; t*o which Patricia added: *"A guy actually made that comment. He was like 'why do you think I paid so much for her?' So he thinks he's paid so much so he can do anything"*. Still arguing against the idea that the woman is abused by her parents, Theresa asked rhetorically: *"what harm are they [the parents] doing to the woman at that point [on marriage]? It's only when she gets into the marriage and the man starts taking it out on her (...) Then she's paying for what they did"* (FGD, 11/12/09).

Here the term 'abuse' was being understood quite broadly, to denote something negative and unreasonable being done by one party against another – whether a family 'selling' their daughter, a large sum being demanded from a husband to be, and/or the potential harm caused to the daughter who might be subjected to 'abuse' from the husband as a result of his perceived 'ownership' of her. The discussion was principally regarding *who* was actually 'harmed' by the 'transaction'. Here, as with the focus on women 'abusing' men, it seems that the use of the notions of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' are heavily influenced by the everyday notion of 'abuse', as well as broader ideas relating to marriage and what is appropriate.

Indeed, the example also highlights that as an accepted element of marriages in Ghana, the payment of a *bride price* is not in itself at issue and the problem to be addressed. For instance as Grace pointed out to me, over lunch one day, gifts will always be given from the husband's to the bride's family, because this is the tradition. However, she explained, referring specifically to parts of the north of the country where cows are given, that the problem is in cases in which a large sum is given and needs to be returned on separation of the husband and wife. She told me that in such situations a woman might have to remain in a relationship if the family is unable to repay the *bride price*; whereas in her situation, although many gifts were given, it is only a bottle of

schnapps that would have to be returned to her husband's family (Fieldnotes, 28/10/09).

However, this said, while mention was made of violence/abuse against men this was not especially common and often, although not always, in response to my explicit questions on the subject. ASCW staff also seemed to be generally less agitated and animated than PDP staff about the subject. Indeed, they were often quite matter of fact about it; pointing out that violence does also occur against men, but not appearing concerned about their neglect. For instance, when I asked Josephine about the idea of women as perpetrators and it being important to let men know that the law is for them too, she told me that while perpetrators are not solely men, most of the time they are (Interview,[125] 05/11/09).

It might be argued that the ASCW staff's lack of agitation regarding violence against men was due partly to the fact that the organisation has a specific remit to help women and children. However, coupled with this is also explicit scope for them to work with abused men. Indeed as the Executive Director pointed out at one event, when introducing the work of ASCW: "*Let me add, that although we put women and children first, we have supported men in the past*" (Fieldnotes[126]). Thus, staff at ASCW generally did not have a sense that men experiencing 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' are being ignored and neglected. In addition, staff seemed to have a clear sense that violence/abuse affects women more; a transnational idea that they have learnt about within their work (as detailed above), and something that they also witness within their counselling work. For instance, as one senior female member of staff stated: "*...there are men who get abused, no two ways, there are (...) It happens to men, no doubt, but it happens to more women*" (Interview, 25/06/09).

ASCW staff's lack of agitation regarding violence against men seemed to stem from their remit to address this within their work as well as the far fewer cases brought to them, and their recognition of the lesser extent of this, rather than any analysis that identified certain actions by women against men (such as verbal insults) as something different from 'domestic violence' and 'abuse'. Indeed, while ASCW staff talked about 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' affecting women more than men, they nevertheless considered certain actions of women against men also as 'domestic violence' and 'abuse', arguably again as a result of the everyday use of the term 'abuse' in Ghana

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[125] Interview not voice recorded.
[126] Recorded at event.

and broader ideas regarding the appropriate (and inappropriate) behaviours of women. Indeed, as with PDP, there was no suggestion that certain actions by women might not constitute 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' as such, but rather be deemed as 'weapons of the weak'. For instance, as Josephine put it: "*So if a woman does something wrong against you [a man], just as the man does, you will be punished equally*" (Interview, 12/03/09). Indeed, as with PDP staff, identifying actions as 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' involved the assessment of a behaviour as 'harmful', 'inappropriate' or 'unacceptable'.

Overall, ASCW staff's ideas and understandings of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' are firmly grounded in transnational ideas. However, at the same time these ideas are 'read' through everyday ideas and concepts (specifically cultural meanings attached to 'abuse') that label gender relations, and also through wider gender worldviews and frames of reference.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how staff at ASCW and at PDP understood 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' in relation to their work in a fairly wide-ranging way, including in it a broad range of behaviours, and also actions by women against men as well as men against women. However, this said, as indicated in the accounts above there were certain differences between the two organisations in terms of the ways in which staff talked about 'domestic violence' and 'abuse'. For example, staff at ASCW mentioned violence against men less frequently than staff at PDP, and also appeared less agitated about this issue and the potential neglect of men. They also actively refuted ideas regarding women's provocation, and that violence is caused by poverty.

In exploring these findings I have highlighted the ways in which two different conceptual frameworks were in play in the accounts of staff of both organisations: a transnational one using globalised ideas of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse', identifying a range of abuses and an array of explanations; and one that owed much more to everyday understandings of gender relations in Ghana. Staff in the two organisations understood the work they were doing on 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' within the framework of the very specific use of the term 'abuse' in Ghanaian English. This usage signalled broader Ghanaian worldviews and normative assumptions about gender relations in which gender ideologies regarding the roles, relations and responsibilities of men and women in marriages, and specifically women's behaviour towards men, were marked by anxiety and concern about contemporary changes. I argue that

differences between PDP and ASCW staff are principally due to ASCW staff's understandings of the issues being more firmly influenced by and grounded in transnational ideas. The organisation's remit and the kind of work they do has resulted in much more frequent trainings and exposure to such issues.

However, while differences between the two organisations do exist, the material discussed illustrates that ideas, concepts and analysis from both frames are drawn on by staff working on gender violence issues in both organisations. These two influential frameworks should not be represented as consisting of a set of 'cultural values' that are being challenged by ideas and analysis from a 'transnational framework'. Rather staff are actively engaged in putting these two frames together in acts of interpretation and reinterpretation. In doing this they draw on their own experiences, on the direct body of their work experience, as well as on training, on institutional ideologies and approaches, and also on broader worldviews and social norms. The varying ways in which staff use and understand the key terms from these frames are a complex amalgam of specific organisational remits and staff's reactions to these, of individual's work experiences, and their exposure to, previous knowledge of and understanding of these issues. What the material also brings out is the centrality of normative ideas about gender relations, especially those about the roles and relations between husbands and wives in how staff interpret the concepts of 'domestic violence' and 'abuse'.

Although focused on specific terms, the chapter has illustrated ways in which staff's ideas about gender relations, about marriage and about men and women are mobilised and understood within their gender work and how this is done. Arguably staff are so actively engaged in interpretation of the two frames precisely because their work touches on aspects of contemporary gender relations which have significant resonance in their own lives. I turn to explore these issues further in chapter 6, where I focus in more detail on staff's ideas regarding marriage, and how these fit with and affect their broader understanding of certain elements of their work, how ideas are interpreted and what is done more generally.

Chapter 6 – Everyday Ideas of Marriage and the Interpretation of 'Feminist' Concepts

"It is not possible to have two captains on a ship"

Staff at ASCW talked explicitly about 'patriarchy', a widely used transnational feminist concept, in relation to the underlying causes of SGBV. For instance, as detailed in the previous chapter, during a focus group discussion a couple of individuals explained, in response to my question, that patriarchy is the root cause of gender violence. Going on to detail what this meant and the problems of male dominance in marriages and society in general, they talked about the resulting maltreatment of women and their "*relega[tion] (...) to the background*" (ASCW advocacy staff member, FGD, 13/11/09; see page 155). As another staff member, Tina, went onto explain further in this instance: *"[patriarchy] is the number one root cause that you can talk about. Because in a society where it is believed that the men should wield power, men should wield authority, men should be the one taking decisions for everyone. And it has transcended down from the community to the homes, from the homes it has gone as far as the schools – you know wherever we find ourselves. And it has made an important role in what causes sexual and gender based [violence]."* (FGD, 13/11/09).

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October, 2009, Fieldnotes

Passing the time between activities, I sat one lunch time in one of the ASCW offices, discussing various issues with Benjamin, one of the counsellors, Ama, a member of the advocacy staff, and Samuel, a member of support staff.

Talking about what men and women are expected to do in relationships, particularly in relation to the churches that they attend, Benjamin explained that as he and his wife belong to different churches, she will have to move to his church, as according to the bible he is the spiritual head of the household. Telling me that it is not possible for him to move to her church, she has to move to his, Benjamin explained, using a common phrase, that "I have come for her" (i.e. *I* have married *her*). He went on to point out that it makes sense for the husband and wife to attend the same church – if they go to an all night service for example there might be some misunderstanding, and the man might not like the wife going alone and might become suspicious.

I asked about other decisions that men might take for women and in the household, talking of the common idea that the man is the head of the household. I asked them

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how this fits in with the ideas that ASCW holds and the idea that domestic violence can be fuelled by the notion that men are superior and the authority figures.

Ama and Benjamin told me that ASCW does not necessarily believe that men should not be the household head. Benjamin explained that it is often perceived that the man has bought the woman and therefore should make the decisions. Asking him what he thought of this, Benjamin replied: "to some extent it is true, but it is wrong". I asked what decisions a man should take as the head of the household and how this process should work. Benjamin explained that a woman can make suggestions, but that the man will make the final decision. Pointing out a different approach, Samuel explained that his father would always consult his mother on things and he learnt this from him, and that he wouldn't for example ask his wife to change to his church. Commenting that his father "is not a true African", Ama made a comment about it not being "possible to have two captains on a ship". (...) They later explain that in terms of men taking decisions and being the heads of households: "this is the norm in Ghana".

The previous chapter focused on two significant discursive formations at play within gender violence work – the concepts of 'abuse' and 'domestic violence'. Exploring the *situated meaning* of these terms within the Ghanaian context, I examined various factors that shape this. I specifically highlighted the interplay of transnational ideas regarding gender violence, the 'everyday' usage of the term 'abuse' and broader normative assumptions and hegemonic discourses. Everyday ideas about gender relations, particularly marriage and views about (in)appropriate behaviours of husbands and wives played an important part in shaping this.

However, in addition to ideas of marriage being *implicitly* present and 'there in the background', work on gender violence is to a large extent *explicitly* focused on the relations between men and women within marriages. Indeed, despite the fact that individuals understood 'domestic violence', and in particular 'abuse', in fairly broad ways, this work and related discussions mainly concentrated around marriages and domestic relations. Indeed, work on gender violence involves explicitly commenting on and advocating for certain changes in such relationships, particularly in terms of problematic aspects of male authority and female (mis)behaviour, but also in relation to the division of domestic chores and decision-making, financial responsibilities and provision, and conjugal sexuality. As such, individual's ideas regarding marriage are inextricably linked to how they understand and make sense of the various concepts

and objectives contained within their work, including not only in relation to gender violence, but also in terms of gender work more broadly.

As the opening material illustrates, several transnational 'feminist'[127] terms are prominent in the organisations' gender violence work,[128] as like much of this type of work internationally, it is generally grounded in certain common 'transnational' gender concepts and objectives. These include the wider goals of 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment', and the identified problems of 'male dominance' and 'patriarchy'. The exchanges also show ways in which staff brought ideas and values about their own practices within marriage and the domestic setting into the issues being raised by their work. However, while it might look as though the material illustrates the co-existence of apparently contradictory ideas, as I explore within the chapter, the situation is more complex than this and there is in fact something else which is going on here, specifically in relation to the particular ways in which concepts are understood.

The chapter focuses on exploring ways in which the broader gender goals of fighting 'patriarchy', promoting 'equality' and 'empowering' women were staple ideas commonly used within and underpinning the work of the organisations. However, the meaning of these labels and ideas cannot simply be read off from what might be assumed to be transnationally understood by them. In answering such questions as: how precisely were these concepts used and understood?; what was specifically being talked about under such labels?; and what did 'equality between men and women' mean? we need to explore how the use of these terms in their work is refracted through staffs' everyday understandings about marriage and men and women. Analysing the complexity of this interaction requires an in-depth emic and ethnographic exploration.

As such, a second focus of the chapter is on how staffs' everyday ideas and normative values about gender, especially marriage, intersect with their understanding of such concepts, and with their professional work of challenging domestic violence and hence advocating for change in, and arguably different models of, marriage. The ways in which staff reflect on their own marriages leads to an investigation of the wider context of staff's lives which is a powerful source of norms and values about marriage.

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[127] It is important to note that not all of my informants would term these as 'feminist' concepts per se, largely due to the scepticism and hesitancy that sometimes surrounded the use of this term amongst some individuals.

[128] This is also true for gender work more broadly, in particular in relation to PDP which had a broader gender remit, working on issues other than gender violence.

Fighting 'patriarchy', promoting 'equality' and 'empowering' women

Within ASCW, individuals frequently talked about 'patriarchy' in relation to the causes of violence and the goal of women's empowerment as a particular objective of their work, and something to strive towards. As the Executive Director explained, the organisation also works from an underlying belief in gender equality (Interview), an issue which appeared in some of the organisations' documents and was occasionally brought up by staff. My fieldnotes record one of the advocacy staff telling me he had "always seen women as equal to men" (Fieldnotes, 20/10/09) and it is a principle that many staff professed a commitment to.

Such ideas were also articulated within PDP, although overall perhaps slightly less frequently than in ASCW, mainly because gender violence, and gender work more generally was not the organisation's principal remit. However, these concepts and ideas regularly emerged in their discussions and documents relating specifically to gender related projects. The goals of 'women's empowerment' and 'equality' for instance were mentioned fairly frequently by staff in relation this area of their work, and although not talked about quite as often, 'patriarchy' and male dominance were similarly mentioned in reference to the causes of violence. In addition to this, the organisation's mandate explicitly talked about women, and the need for equal opportunities between men and women.

'Patriarchy' is a common transnational term used to explain the specific dynamics which account for male violence against women. It was explicitly covered in gender violence training courses in both organisations, and surfaced regularly in day to day discourse, particularly within ASCW. As ASCW staff often went on to elaborate, the term denotes male dominance, power, and authority, which results in the maltreatment of women. For example, as pointed out in chapter 5, one member of the ASCW advocacy staff explained the problems that the idea of male authority can cause, in terms of men using *"that as a yardstick to maltreat the women or to relegate them to the background"* (FGD, 13/11/09). Another, talking about ASCW's training programmes, explained to me that, using the analogy of a tree, participants are led to understand that "anger is a leaf", but that something triggers that anger. Referring to root causes, she explained: Men believe they have power over women and that they have to put women in their place. The training lets them understand that this anger is based on the fact that, because of certain power dynamics, they think that women

should not do certain things, talk in certain ways towards them and so on (Interview,[129] 12/11/09). The term's use in discussions within the office can be seen in the following statement made by one of ASCW's support staff, during a meeting in which she discussed the dynamics of abuse: "Because of patriarchy men run things and have the upper hand" (Fieldnotes, 27/02/09). Although they talked about male dominance in general, often what was specifically referred to were situations within the family and marriages. Accordingly, staff talked about the need to change such relationships, and for men to be less domineering and less controlling.

Although 'patriarchy' came up frequently in the gender violence training courses that I witnessed in PDP, and within these were understood in the same way as in ASCW, it was less ubiquitous in everyday conversations and in discussions about their work. Indeed, staff rarely used the term when talking in the office, even when discussing gender violence and its causes. Although, having said this, like ASCW, they did talk about the problems of male power, husband's having too much control, and unequal power relations between men and women, but not necessarily explicitly using this specific term.

In terms of the notions of 'equality' and 'women's empowerment' these surfaced in a range of different ways, with a number of different emphases, in both organisations. Within ASCW, while the term 'equality' was not used frequently on a day to day basis, when staff did talk about it, at times what was referred to was the general situation between men and women. This included the need for men and women to be seen as 'equals', and equality in terms of both sexes' general access to opportunities and services, and rights in law. For instance, when I asked one of the counsellors at ASCW, what he thought of the idea of 'gender equality', he told me, as if to signal his approval of the concept, that everyone is equal before the law (Fieldnotes, 04/09/09). A senior female figure in ASCW similarly explained, talking about ASCW's belief in *"equality"*: *"So if I can do something because I am a man, then if you are a woman then you should also be able to do the same thing"* (Interview, 25/06/09). And another senior female staff member, giving examples of a couple of recent experiences, talked about the problem of men's disrespect for women, saying of one man she encountered: *"he has so much disrespect, not because... so position or wealth will not change anything, he see's you as a woman, and then you are not his equal"* (LHI, 10/12/09).

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[129] Interview not voice recorded.

'Women's empowerment' was also sometimes talked about in terms of improving women's general situation vis-a-vis men, in relation to the idea of equality. However, on other occasions staff simply used empowerment to talk about the situation of women generally and the need to assist them in various ways to improve their circumstances. At times this was in quite a broad sense without particular specification of meaning given to the term. For example as one member of ASCW staff commented one day in relation to a woman begging at a filling station, "this woman needs empowerment" (Fieldnotes, 15/03/09). Also talked about was 'social'/'emotional' empowerment; for instance at one weekly meeting staff at ASCW discussed how they might empower women 'emotionally' through counselling (Fieldnotes, 30/10/09). However, women's empowerment was frequently used to refer to improving their economic situation, for example enabling women to acquire a skill, or through the provision of micro-credit.

Staff in PDP also talked about 'equality' and women's 'empowerment' in relation to the situation between men and women in general. This is illustrated in the following discussion, in which Stella and Jane (two senior PDP staff) talked about the reasons for providing micro-credit to women within a project aimed at addressing child trafficking:

Stella: ...we thought of empowering them financially so that they can be engaged in some small scale businesses, and take care of their children. (...) Surprisingly we don't give the micro-credit to the men. We give it to the women

Hannah: Why don't you give it to the men?

(...)

Stella: Because we know the men they have means of survival (...) so it's still empowering women-

Jane: It's still equity. So it's no more equality but equity, because the women are down here and the men are here in terms of socio-economic status. The women don't own land in the rural community, the men own land, they have access to all the resources. So what we're doing is to push the women up, so there can been some form of equality. (Fieldnotes,[130] 16/06/09).

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[130] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

Distinguishing between the ideas of 'equity' as fairness, and equality as *"50:50"* or being on the same level, they talked about the need to *"push [the women] up"* so at least there could be a greater level of fairness between men and women, even if equality was not yet achievable. On another occasion, at a project stakeholder meeting, Jane told those present that in terms of socio-economic empowerment of the disadvantaged PDP "are a bit gender biased towards women." Illustrating with her hands, she went on to explain that women are down here and men are up here in many areas including education, religion, politics, and so on. PDP therefore prioritise women, providing them with micro-finance, so that they can go some way to addressing this (Fieldnotes).

However, in both organisations 'equality' and 'empowerment' were also discussed specifically with reference to marriage and the situation between husbands and wives. On occasions, again this involved talking about equality in terms of access to opportunities and resources. Talking of equality in marriage, a senior individual in ASCW explained: *"when I talk about (...) equality I'm looking at it from an angle where there is respect for all. Not because you are a man you are respected more. I can make a choice, you can make a choice. We all have equal access to (...) same opportunities, resources, same everything"* (LHI, 09/11/09).

However, often also referred to was the need for changes to what were deemed to be negative aspects of some marriages in Ghana. While staff might not always use the term 'equality' explicitly, they discussed, for example, the need to alter situations in which men make all of the decisions and control the household finances, and in which women are 'dictated to' and maltreated and/or expected to be solely responsible for all domestic chores. Although gender work in general promotes such changes, for example men and women sharing in household chores and financial contributions, with the frequent mantra that what men can do women can also do, and vice versa, work on gender violence involves explicitly advocating for certain changes in 'problematic' relationships, including in relation to male authority and control.

When I asked Mark, a project manager in ASCW, whether his ideas about equality between men and women extended to husbands and wives, he talked specifically about his approval of men and women sharing decision-making. Telling me that it is great to share ideas, he went on to point out that some men might not agree with this; some are more authorative and would want to make all the decisions themselves (Fieldnotes, 20/10/09). And as Josephine, a member of ASCW staff told me, equality

means that women should be respected and treated with honour (Interview, **131** 05/11/09).

Staff in PDP also used the term 'equality' to talk about the situation between husbands and wives and the need for certain changes. For example, talking at a community sensitisation meeting, Elizabeth explained to those present that both men and women should contribute financially to the household, telling them: "men should not be seen as the breadwinners alone, we need equality now" (Fieldnotes[132]). As she explained further during a focus group discussion:

> *"If the society says women should sweep, women should cook, women should do certain things, we are also saying men can equally do that. (...) [we] are just trying to change it and make things equal. (...) So we are promoting this equality so that the men too they will know that, no, they can also do this and the women too can also know that they can do this. (...) So, if you promote, this the women will also realise that no, they also have a part to play, they shouldn't solely depend on men [financially], and vice versa men too should do certain things at home and help the women"* (FGD, 03/12/09).

Individuals were generally advocating for changes towards a greater sharing of roles, both financial and domestic, between husbands and wives, and with this a consequential shift in marital relationships. As such, empowering women, often talked about in terms of economic empowerment, was often seen as a way of achieving this, giving women the means to contribute to the household and thus take part in decision-making.

The need for women's empowerment to address negative aspects of marriages can be clearly seen in the following discussion, between two senior staff in PDP.

Stella: You know our system is such that the man provides for everything, if you go to the communities [rural areas]. I mean let's take those who are educated aside, but let's take the illiterates

Jane: That's about 70% of the population

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[131] Interview not voice recorded.
[132] Not conducted in English, Elizabeth described to me what she had said after the session.

Stella: I mean they have nothing. Yeah, 70% of the population the man provides for everything. So once he's provided for everything, then that comes in, he has control over everything. (...) And so it becomes like you always have to (...) take whatever he says; do this, it's like yes sir master relationship, master servant relationship (...) But if we empower women, that is why we believe in-

Jane: -then they [are] also contributing to household incomes. You know they can have a say in decisions that need to be taken in the home, they can contribute-

Stella: -They can have a say, they can contribute (Fieldnotes,[133] 16/06/09).

Explaining the need to empower women, and what this would mean in terms of change sought, they explained:

Stella: if I want to empower a woman, why am I empowering the woman? So that she can also take up... play a role in decision making in the house. Because if the man is only providing... So you look at micro-credit, you just see it as micro-credit, but no it's women's empowerment.

Jane: Empowering them so they can contribute

Hannah: Which leads to equality?

Stella: Exactly, contribute to the home-

Jane: -decision making in the home

Stella: And when they contribute to the home it will change a whole lot of things in the home. (...) Because if you take 5 cedis, I will also add 5 cedis. If you are paying school fees and it is left with the books, 'oh, I've gone to buy the books'. The man sees you in a different way. Classes fee, 'oh, I've paid, because you paid the school fees'. Next time when he's talking to you, when we are even sleeping, when we are having sex we can negotiate, because you give, I also provide. (Fieldnotes,[134] 16/06/09).

While, in ASCW, the economic empowerment of women was often, although not always, explicitly talked about in terms of enabling women to become economically

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[133] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.
[134] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

independent so that they were able to leave abusive relationships, it was also clear that staff viewed women's financial contribution to the household as an important factor in changing the dynamics within marriages, and enabling women, for example, to participate in household decision-making. As one senior member of staff explained talking about equality between husbands and wives: *"You can only not be equal if one person is the one doing the provision, of course obviously that is not fair that you don't provide and you expect to be on the same level with the person"* (LHI, 11/12/09). Although, she did go on to explain that this does not apply in situations in which the woman is not contributing because the husband and wife have agreed that she should not so that she can take care of the children.

We thus see that 'equality' and 'women's empowerment' were generally used to talk about some form of positive change for women, or a re-balancing of opportunities and relationships between men and women. While this might refer generally to the situation of men and women, also talked about was the need to address what were seen as negative aspects of relationships between husbands and wives (occasionally talked about in terms of 'tradition'). Within this, the notions of 'patriarchy' and 'male dominance' were used to denote such problematic situations and 'empowerment' and 'equality' to refer both to the changes desired and the means to achieve such change.

"...no one is challenging men's position as bosses"

There is no doubt that staff in both organisations understood and undertook their work on domestic violence, and gender more broadly, as commenting adversely on some kinds of behaviour in marriages and advocating for change. However, there was also a clear boundary of how far such changes might (or might not) extend and what changes were actually being promoted. Individuals in both organisations frequently added caveats to clarify what they meant (or specifically did not mean) by ideas such as 'equality', 'empowerment', and 'patriarchy', particularly when marriages were being talked about. While women should be treated with respect, men should not be too domineering, and there should be a greater sharing of roles within the home, a principal concern was that this did not mean women should neglect their 'duties', become arrogant and/or disrespectful, or challenge men's position within the household. For instance, after telling me that equality means that women should be

respected and treated with honour, Josephine added that women are not "asking to be bosses" (Interview,[135] 05/11/09).

Several other ASCW staff were eager to point out that their work did not involve radically upsetting the family and the position of husbands and wives. A female member of the training team, discussing comments a pastor had made about women's roles within the home at a recent event, explained to me that many people fear that gender activists, when arguing for equality, are suggesting that since men don't cook or do household chores that female activists will also refuse to do such things and the house will breakdown (Fieldnotes, 18/12/09). From the way that she spoke it was clear that this was not her position and that for her this was not what gender activists were advocating for.

The following extracts from a life history interview with Grace, a senior member of ASCW (10/12/09), clearly illustrate the sorts of concerns expressed. Telling me about the development of her awareness of gender issues and her efforts to make sense of her work at ASCW, she told me about concerns that she had had before attending a training programme facilitated by another prominent Ghanaian WRO:

> "I was asking myself a lot of questions. People were saying empowered women are arrogant, empowered women are this... and I was trying to place it. Why would they say that? Is it really true?"

> "Sometimes because, people say 'where do you work, what do you do?' 'Aye, you people', you know, it's like... [..] They say 'hey you people (...), you are the people who (...) are very arrogant, who worry your husbands in the house'. People, you know, passing comments. And I was like, is that really how they see us? And is that really the case? So those were the questions I was asking myself before I went."

Clearly concerned about what her work meant, Grace explained how the course had enabled her to make sense of it in a way that she was comfortable with:

> "...at the training I also learnt that (...) empowerment means humility. I looked at [the director of that organisation] and I realised that you don't have to be noisy and jumping all over the place to be empowered. (...) When I listen to her, after that I become very comfortable with what I am doing."

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[135] Interview not voice recorded.

> *"I realised [at the training] this [work] is right, I mean this is what the church should really be doing (...) protecting the vulnerable (...) feeding the widows, caring for the needy, you know that kind of thing. So why is it that somebody had decided to do it and then the church says that she is arrogant, that kind of thing?"*

These quotes help us to understand the particular meaning that Grace gives (or more accurately does not give) to the concept of 'empowerment'. Grace understands and portrays her work in terms of, what are for her, acceptable ideas of *"protecting the vulnerable"* and *"caring for the needy"*. She is careful to distance it from what she views as an often misconceived goal of making women bossy, arrogant, and noisy. This for her is not what such work, and 'empowerment', is about and it should not be perceived as such.

Staff in PDP added similar caveats, indicating that the changes they were advocating for had certain boundaries, and that women should still respect their husbands and not boss them around, or neglect their role in managing the home. For example, as two female staff pointed out, the idea is not to make women bossy over men; they do not want women to act like men, but for men to start helping out and to empower women to do things too (Fieldnotes, 15/12/09). As one of them went onto explain: *"we are not trying to empower the women so that the women will come home and be bossing over them [the men]. That is not what we are trying to do. But we are trying to say that there are certain things that are at home that the men need to know to help the women to do it"* (Fieldnotes,[136] 15/12/09).

It is the case (see chapters 4 and 5) that staff were aware of the possible criticisms that they faced in relation to their focus on women and perceptions that such work might have negative consequences for family life and/or the behaviour of women. Indeed, coupled with widespread anxieties regarding marriage, maintaining women's and men's place within marriage, and concerns about single and empowered women, fears about the possible negative consequences have been a fairly common feature of gender work in Ghana over the years (see chapter 2). More recently this has particularly surfaced in relation to work on gender violence, with concerns over implications for marital norms, rights and responsibilities, and the potential breakdown of marriages (see Adomako Ampofo, 2008; Hodžić, 2009).

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[136] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

Conscious of such accusations being levelled against them, staff were no doubt keen to quell such criticisms and point out that they were not contributing to such behaviours. For example, the comments made by Josephine (ASCW) that equality does not mean that women are asking to be bosses, was in direct response to a question I asked about arguments which suggest that working on gender equality and domestic violence breaks up families. Others' additions of such caveats were also clearly in direct response to my questions about the perception of the possible negative consequences of such work or the criticisms of others.

However, it was also apparent that individuals shared concerns about what the changes they were advocating for might actually mean and what this work might include. They were apprehensive themselves, for instance, about the possible misbehaviour of women and negative implications for family life, and shared the view that women should not become bossy over men. This concern can clearly be seen in the quotes from Grace (above), in which she asked herself *"Is that really true?"* in reference to others' views that empowered women are arrogant.

This seemed to be particularly the case in PDP, where staff, especially those in Accra, appeared to be generally more agitated than those in ASCW about the potential for gender work to have negative effects on marriages and women's behaviour towards men. While ASCW staff often brought up the issue in response to my direct questions and would then relatively briefly make the point that gender work, and concepts such as 'equality', were not about women becoming bosses, staff in PDP raised concerns about female 'misbehaviour' themselves, at times accompanied by detailed descriptions of such problematic behaviour. In addition, while staff at ASCW, as with Grace in the quotes above, seemed to have made sense of their gender work and what it actually involved, deeming others interpretations to be wrong, staff in PDP raised concerns about the consequences if such work is not approached in the right way. For example, after one senior female staff member of PDP cautioned one day about the problems of urban empowered women, I asked: *"So do you think then, that if you do work around economic empowerment of women that you might have that problem happening (...) a similar situation occurring (...)?"* Replying that she *"didn't think so"*, she went onto explain the approach which needs to be taken to avoid this:

> *"That is why the education should go to both of them [men and women], because you know if you educate them and you keep condemning the men and you empower the woman, you put some ideas in the woman's head and she might rise to that level. But if you educate the woman too, that equality this and*

that, this is what is expected of you, so you don't just empower the woman but you add some education, then they know how to manage their home and respect their husband." (Fieldnotes,[137] 16/06/09).

Staff in PDP were clear that efforts needed to be made to ensure that work is carried out in such a way that women do not get the wrong idea about what was aimed for or an incorrect understanding of what concepts such as 'equality' and 'empowerment' might signify.

As was discussed in chapter 5, again, it appeared that the differences in levels of concerns raised in ASCW and PDP were perhaps the result of working for different sorts of organisations, and consequential differences in individuals' training, exposure to ideas and perceptions of gender work. Staff in ASCW it seemed had become more comfortable with gender work, this being the main focus of *all* of their work and something on which they had received various training. In addition due to their primary focus on such issues they had invested more time, and effort, in trying to understand these work ideas and what they might mean and how they could be acceptable, as Grace appeared to have done. As a result, staff in ASCW appeared generally to be quite comfortable with gender work, and were clear about what it did and did not involve. Staff in PDP, on the other hand, held more reservations about such work, and had more misgivings about the potential outcomes, especially if such work was not approached in the 'right way'. Indeed, they occasionally referred to the problematic and confrontational approaches of WROs, distancing their own work from this.

However, despite these differences between the two organisations in terms of the levels of concern about the consequences of such work, it was clear that staff in both organisations generally shared fairly similar understandings of the concepts of 'equality', 'women's empowerment' and 'patriarchy'. What is also clear from many of the quotes above is the role that individuals' broader worldviews and normative assumptions, particularly regarding marriage and the relationship between husbands and wives, potentially played in their specific understanding of such concepts and their concerns over the maintenance of certain marital roles and responsibilities. In order to understand the ways in which individuals in the two organisations understood the gender terms used specifically in the context of their work, it is necessary to look at their broader ideas and understandings of marriage, and the relationship of these to

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[137] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

people's own domestic context. As I illustrate various factors are of particular significance in relation to the shaping of these ideas, in particular religion.

With views and influences on marriage ideals slightly different in Accra and elsewhere, I focus here specifically on those based in Accra. This includes the staff in ASCW, most of whom were located in Accra, and those staff in PDP who were based in the head office.

Situating meanings: Everyday ideas and practices of marriage

The caveats described above indicate ways in which transnational ideas, embodied for example in training manuals, in analytical descriptions of gender issues and in calls for project funding are specifically taken on by staff. They are filtered through both their own and more widely held normative understandings and ideas about marriage in Ghana.

When talking about marriages and the roles and position of men and women, individuals in both organisations were generally adamant that a husband was, and should remain, the 'head of the household'. They were clear that only one person could hold this position and that this should be the man. Correspondingly they talked also about the notion of 'female submission', in particular with regard to women's relationship with their husbands.

This way of describing a wife's relationship to her husband and vice versa, are quite common phrases throughout Ghana, and corresponds to a cluster of ideas which are widely held (see chapter 2). Imbued in the public consciousness, these norms are widely transmitted through various avenues that includes: proverbs, sayings, folktales and popular culture (Adomako Ampofo & Prah, 2009; King, 2006; Ofei-Aboagye, 1994a); the education system (Dunne et al., 2005; Dunne, 2008; Leach, 2003; Leach et al., 2003); general socialisation (Adomako Ampofo, 2001; Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2007; Frost & Dodoo, 2010); and, widespread religious ideas regarding the role and position of husbands and wives (see for example Adomako Ampofo & Prah, 2009; Ammah-Koney, 2009; Oduyoye, 2009). However, rather than taking such ideas at face value, it is important to look at precisely how they were understood by those in ASCW and PDP. During my fieldwork it became clear that while widely used, such ideas are differently interpreted by various individuals, shifting often in relatively subtle ways and that staff themselves reflect on these changing meanings.

Often distancing themselves from what they saw as problematic interpretations, staff clarified their understanding of such concepts. For example talking about her beliefs in the idea of the man as the head of the household, Grace went on to qualify:

"But being the head of the house (...) for me you are leading the rest of the family (...) so you being the head does not mean you should abuse anybody down there, you should rather even set examples, because you have, for me, you have higher responsibilities [laughs] to be answerable to God as Christ takes on the church, very concerned about everything (...) you go through. So you have, you should be really concerned about the welfare of your family, not the other way around. So for me, I believe the man is the head of the house but they take it (...) wrongly to mean that once I'm the head of the household, oh like a typical boss servant situation, it's not right." (LHI, 10/12/09).

And on the notion of female submission, she clarified:

"Before the bible even said women should submit, it said the husbands should love, do your part. If you do your part... Because for me if you really show love to your spouse, to your family, they will submit to you, it comes naturally, I mean something that doesn't really come with an effort. (...) And I know they always press it, submit, submit, submit, but as to the other person loving they will always leave it out – "if you submit he will love you". But it is the other way round rather, that is what the bible says. So you do your part, if you do your loving and let me also do my submission. If I don't do my [submission], I will be answerable to God; don't beat me into submission in the first place." (LHI, 10/12/09).

Such interpretations were echoed by others within ASCW and the Accra based PDP staff. Like Grace they were often keen to qualify their understanding of these concepts, distancing their interpretations from other common, and in their opinion, problematic views. Pointed out, for instance, was that being the head of the household does not mean *"being a bully"* (male, ASCW, LHI, 27/10/09), "domineering" (female, ASCW, Fieldnotes, 12/11/09), that "*he should lord over you*" (female, PDP, Fieldnotes,[138] 15/12/09), or that he *"should make all of the decisions"* (female, PDP, Fieldnotes,[139] 7/12/09); it "has nothing to do with power, it is about leadership, but not power" (male, ASCW, Fieldnotes, 17/12/09).

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[138] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.
[139] Transcribed from recorded session at a training programme.

Staff generally explained that as the head, the man has certain responsibilities. Although there were some differences in the specific details, they commonly referred to men's role in protecting women and providing for their basic needs (male, ASCW, Fieldnotes, 14/10/09), the expectations that they will *"sacrifice a lot more for the family"* (female, PDP, LHI, 27/11/09), and their position as a leader and in 'facilitating' decisions. As a senior female in ASCW explained:

> *"It's about him showing leadership. Because you see a good leader does not take decisions on their own, no (...) A good leader finds a way of bringing everybody's ideas, thinking on board and to decide (...) which decision is in the best interest of everybody (...) I can't sit here and say "I am a good leader so I'll decide, you do this, you do that", it doesn't work. But unfortunately that is what, for us in Ghana, especially the men, that is what they think the head is supposed to do. Take a decision and shove it down everybody's throat."* (LHI, 09/11/09).

Correspondingly, female submission was not understood *"in terms of lie down and let me walk over you, that kind of thing. But show respect. But respect is each other. So if you love your wife why will you think she'll do anything to hurt you, and if you love your wife why will you try to hurt her?"* (female, ASCW, LHI, 09/11/09). Indeed, while women were encouraged to respect their husbands, as a senior female member of PDP staff clarified: *"That does not mean you should be a slave to your husband. You get the whole thing?"* (Fieldnotes,[140] 16/06/09).

So while staff adhered to and supported the ideas of male headship and female submission, their specific interpretations of such concepts, and importantly what they did not signify, set them apart from what they perceived as the problematic views of others'. These interpretations encompassed certain changes that staff were advocating for in relationships and adopting in their own marriages; changes from what they saw as widespread ideas and practices, which were often perceived as the norm in Ghana. Such changes included for example men's increased participation in household chores, women's participation in decision-making and their increased household financial input, and a rejection of male dominance in terms of men being authoritarian, acting like dictators and/or being violent.

However, while changes were indeed advocated for, men and women were still viewed as having certain roles, responsibilities and expectations, which were enshrined within

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[140] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

the concepts of male headship and female submission. For instance, while the man as the head of the household should not *"Take a decision [alone] and shove it down everybody's throat" (senior female in ASCW, LHI, 09/11/09)*, or be solely responsible for household finances, he was still required to *lead* the family in terms of decision-making and financial responsibilities. Equally, while wives should be involved in decision-making they should still respect their husbands, and should not act like bosses, become arrogant, or 'worry' their husbands. In addition, while men were enjoined to participate household chores and wives were not expected to be 'slaves', women should nevertheless not neglect their roles as wives and mothers.

For instance in describing what the head of the household meant, Grace explained to me that this is about the man "*leading the rest of the family*", particularly in terms of financial responsibilities and decision-making. Although acknowledging that things are changing in terms of finances, she explained: "*with economic strength (...) usually the men bring in more than the women*", and in terms of decisions: "*It's like you still discuss issues, but sometimes what I've found out is there are certain things, certain decisions he feels he..., he can take certain actions before informing you*" (LHI, 10/12/09).

This indeed seemed to be the situation in Grace's own relationship with Peter, to whom she had been married for several years. For instance, although Grace works, she explained in a matter of fact manner, accepting this as normal and not in need of change, that Peter "*earns [...] more than I do (...), so he does most of the things [in terms of financial responsibility], but sometimes if I can afford it (...) I do it*" (LHI, 10/12/09). However, while accepting the man's primary financial responsibility, Grace did express concern about the financial "*burden on men*", cautioning that "*we expect too much from them*" (LHI, 10/12/09), particularly in instances in which men who are on a low income, or earn the same as their wives, are still expected to be the main financial providers. And, in terms of decision-making, although she did not talk explicitly about the process in her own household, it was clear that she felt that men are able to, and indeed perhaps more adept at making decisions for the family.

Meanwhile, while Peter takes care of the family financially, it appears that Grace is the one principally *responsible* for the upkeep of the household, including cooking, childcare and other household chores. Although Grace has a 'househelp'[141] and Peter

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[141] In Ghana it is not uncommon for families to have individuals living with them who help out with household chores and childcare. While such individuals might be employed, they are often

undertakes various chores, Grace talked about their participation in terms of 'helping' her out. For example, talking about Peter, she explained: "*he's always helpful, I have no problem with helping around the house. (...) Just that he is quite busy, he's always (...) moving around, so sometimes you don't see much of him around the house. But anytime he's around, he tries to help"* (LHI, 10/12/09).

Others in ASCW and PDP similarly talked about their support for such types of relationships and divisions of roles both in others' and their own marriages, and raised concerns about situations in which changes might go too far. Staff, were concerned about women neglecting their domestic responsibilities and becoming too empowered and bossy, talking reproachfully of such situations. For example, talking about the situation of one urban couple, Stella (from PDP) narrated in a disapproving tone:

> "*If the husband sit here to tell you about the treatment he went through – she [his wife] will not even... she wakes up at five, the children is not even her concern, she won't even check whether the househelp bath the children, she is gone. She wants promotion. So the man too [has an office job], but he will check whether the children are bathed, have eaten, and he goes. And it was always like this*" (Fieldnotes,[142] 16/06/09).

Clearly as far as Stella was concerned women have certain roles and domestic responsibilities, and although they should be empowered economically, this does not mean that they should neglect such duties. Indeed, talking about the responsibility of women to take care of their homes, even if they have a career, she explained that the headmistress of a school that she had attended taught her that: *"You should be able to be domestic and at the same time a career woman. And so she was training us for both, and not just our career; so that in future you will be able to manage your home"* (LHI, 08/11/09). This indeed seemed to be the situation for Stella.

 Stella spoke on several occasions of the need for men to help with domestic responsibilities, especially if the woman is working: *"...if you take Accra, we do it here, we arrange, husbands and wives we arrange. If I am hot in the office you pick the kids home, you sort the dinner for them. I will come around this time. If you are also busy... So I mean, because we are all working we understand"* (Fieldnotes,[143] 16/06/09).

members of the extended family or others who they have taken in to their homes who work in exchange for food and accommodation and often the provision some form of vocational training.
[142] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.
[143] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

However, despite these views, and some help from her husband and 'househelp', it still appeared that Stella was the one principally *responsible* for the home. She told me, for instance, that she would spend Friday nights cooking for the week ahead (Fieldnotes, 08/11/09), and also spent time at the weekends cleaning (Fieldnotes, 07/09/09), and that *"I mop my floor every day"*, telling me: "*it's part of me, I'm cleaning my bath everyday because this is how I was brought up [in school]"* (LHI, 08/11/09). As Stella went onto explain later in the life history interview: *"Right from the word 'go', we have been socialised to the system that men are superior. Even with the well educated ones, it is there. So unknowingly, I mean we don't demand too much from our husbands; I feel it is my role to cook"* (LHI, 08/11/09).

'Modern' marriage

These specific interpretations of the concepts of male headship and female submission, and views regarding the limits of change in ideal marriages were influenced by a number of varied, but interrelated, factors. While arguably affected by the kind of ideas concerning marriage that arose within their work, such ideas intersected with those they encountered from other areas of their lives and the broader contexts in which they live.

A significant influence is ideas of 'modernity', particularly regarding relationship practices and ideals. Indeed, in many ways the relationship ideals that staff seemed to advocate for correspond to the 'companionate' marriage ideals (described in chapter 2), which have emerged in Ghana, particularly among the urban elite and middle classes (Caldwell, 1968; Oppong, 1970; 1974; see also chapter 2). This includes for example an emphasis on greater male involvement in household chores, joint decision-making, greater 'equality' between husbands and wives, and support for monogamy. Such ideas of marriage, which by virtue of their contrast with practices that were occasionally talked about in terms of 'tradition', might be deemed as more 'modern' and a sign of progress. Indeed, they were occasionally associated with other social changes and elements of modernisation and enlightenment, such as higher levels of education, literacy and urbanisation.

For example, talking about the reasons for some men's infidelity, a male member of ASCW staff, suggested that religion and education are significant factors, telling me that it is often people who are "traditional, un-enlightened and uneducated" that engage in this (Fieldnotes, 16/10/09). Accra based PDP staff also referred specifically to the rural and illiterate when discussing marriages characterised by a *"master servant*

relationship". This can be clearly seen in the quote above from Stella and Jane, in which they refer specifically to *"illiterates"* when talking about the 70% of the population in which the *"man provides for everything"* (Fieldnotes,[144] 16/06/09).

For many, such ideas appeared to have been imbued during their lives, often as a result of their upbringings and the views of those around them, be this teachers, as in the case of Stella, or family members. Grace, for example, explained how as a result of her upbringing with her sister who "*didn't find anything wrong with the man cooking, with the man helping in the house"*, she *"realised anybody at all can do anything, wash cars, weed around the house. (...) So I grew up and I didn't really like the idea of girls doing everything and boys just lazing around. I just couldn't stand it"* (LHI, 10/12/09). A male member of ASCW staff similarly explained, telling me about his parents' relationship:

> *"there were certain things that I was brought up not to accept. (...) So some of those things, like I see somebody yell at a woman, or order a woman about, or beat a woman, was something that even without all the knowledge of human rights, equality and all that, (...) I will frown on that... were totally unacceptable. So my attitude towards those things (...) they were part of my upbringing, that those things were unacceptable"* (LHI, 27/10/09).

It seems that a movement towards these new ways of being in relationships, and new expectations of marriage, have become fairly acceptable, at least among a certain segment of the population. Such ideals however, did not necessarily signify a complete breakdown of male and female roles, but, as indicated above, a move rather towards a greater sharing and companionship, and less abusive and authoritarian relationships, but still within some form of overall male-female hierarchy.

In relation to this, another significant influence on the specific ways in which individuals interpreted and explained how marriages should be conducted, and the meaning of headship and submission, was charismatic Christianity. The largest religious affiliation in Ghana, representing 24.1% of the population in 2000 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002), charismatic Christianity has provided a specific discourse on marriage in Ghana through the redefinition of certain ideas (see chapter 2). Whilst maintaining the notions of male headship and female submission, charismatic Christianity has reconfigured

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[144] Transcribed from recorded conversation/informal interview in the office.

these in ways which, according to Soothill 'reflect many of the of the social changes (...) regarding the state of the family in contemporary Ghana' (2007:181).

Staffs' descriptions of certain concepts of marriage clearly mirrored, at times almost verbatim, those provided by charismatic Christianity. Indeed, the similarities between the words uttered by staff and the discourses of the Charismatic churches (noted in detail by Soothill (2007); see also Maier (2012) and Newell (2005)) were uncanny. This included, for example, the idea that women should submit out of love and not fear, and that the man's role as the head of the household is to lead the family, protecting and guiding them, rather than domineering. The charismatic Christian explanation of the man being the head and the woman the neck (or other parts of the body) (detailed in chapter 2, see Maier, 2012:130) was also used. For example as one senior female in ASCW explained:

> *"That quotation about the man being the head, yes the man is the head and I don't fight that any day, cause even as the body there's got to be a head, but the head cannot go anywhere without the legs, the legs cannot go anywhere without the head (...) my interpretation is you are supposed to work together as one body. So if you're a man and a woman and you're married you become one. That is what the bible says"* (LHI, 09/11/09).

Like many within the charismatic Christian movement, individuals in the two organisations pointed out the ways in which others *misinterpreted* biblical scriptures in order to back up their erroneous views of headship and submission, and in order to justify certain behaviours by men.

The majority of the staff in ASCW and PDP were Christian, and of these a large proportion belonged to charismatic Churches. However, it was not only these staff which utilised Charismatic interpretations. Reaching a far wider audience, particularly in Accra, as a result of media coverage and daily discussion shows (Soothill, 2007), such ideas have become ubiquitous, readily adopted by those seeking to make sense of 'modern' ideas of marriage and rejecting what might be viewed as 'traditional' and outmoded ideas, although without necessarily rejecting religious principles.

Having outlined the specific understandings and practice of marriage adhered to by staff in ASCW and PDP, I discuss below the ways in which these merged with and influenced their understandings of work ideas discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Making meanings: Ideas in tension

I began this chapter by outlining the specific ways in which individuals understood the broader gender ideas within which their work was grounded, focusing on the notions of 'patriarchy', 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment'. As illustrated, while these concepts were used to refer to positive changes related to improving the situation of women, certain caveats were often added. Indeed, reacting to both others' and their own concerns, along with my questions, staff were often careful to clarify what such concepts actually meant, and more importantly didn't mean, particularly in terms of marriage roles and relations. Of particular concern was that such ideas did not signify that women should become arrogant, bossy, or usurp the position of men as the head of the household.

Through exploring in more detail the ideas and practices of marriage adopted and supported by these individuals, it has become clear that the ways in which they understood 'empowerment', 'equality' and 'patriarchy' were directly related to, and read through, their everyday ideas of marriage, including in relation to household authority and the roles of husbands and wives. Indeed, while advocating for certain changes in relationships, they generally adhered to the widespread notions of male headship and female submission. They were however careful to point out that this did not mean that men should abuse their wives, be domineering, or make all of the decisions, or that women should be slaves to their husbands. Indeed, men were expected to help women with household chores and women to have more of a role in household decision-making, for example. Nevertheless, despite such changes, men were still viewed as in-charge of the household, so to speak, benevolent leaders who looked after and cared for women, who in turn were respectful, and although assisted by men, did not abandon their roles as wives and mothers, or attempt to 'boss men around'.

What this illustrates is the specific ways in which gender terms used within the context of their work were interpreted and understood by staff in ways that were informed by and fit within the wider worldviews of themselves and others around them. Indeed, as Lombardo et al. argue, concepts such as gender equality 'encompass different meanings and therefore fit into a broad range of contexts, depending on how actors from these different contexts frame' (2009:2) them (see chapter 1).

In this context, concepts were framed and shaped by widespread ideas regarding male headship and female submission, and other ideas concerning the roles, rights, responsibilities, and appropriate behaviours, of husbands and wives. Indeed, it is these

broader ideas and ways of seeing the world which define 'what is conceptually and politically possible' (Lombardo et al., 2009:12), and within which such notions are understood. As such, while staff advocated that relationships should change in certain respects, this remained within an overall male-female hierarchy in which the man is the authority figure and leader; a hierarchy which should not be fundamentally altered and staff were careful not to dispute. Indeed, 'equality' in terms of the dissolution of male headship, was outside the conceptual realms of possibility, and desirability, for most in ASCW and PDP. As such 'patriarchy' was understood in terms of full male control of household matters and over women's behaviour and an oppressive exercise of male authority, rather than simply male headship per se.

Correspondingly, however, what is also evident is the ways in which ideals of marriage, such as male headship and female submission, were understood in ways which fit alongside the objectives promoted within gender work. As individuals pointed out, their own understandings of such ideals were clearly different from the notion that men have the right to beat their wives and dictate to women. Indeed, their understandings of how marriages should be conducted clearly corresponded, as far as they were concerned, to the goals of 'empowering women', 'promoting equality', and 'fighting patriarchy'.

Individuals were aware that violence against women, and men's mistreatment of women and their 'dictatorial' behaviour, was defended by some on the grounds of husbands' supposed authority and right to discipline their wives by virtue of their position as the head of the household. They were thus eager to point out that their ideas of headship and submission, which they viewed as 'correct', were different to others 'misinterpretations'. According to Grace, for example, although *some* might take it to justify such actions by men, this is not her understanding. Indeed, she specifically indicated that the interpretation she was presenting was different to alternatives which she saw as problematic; making reference to others – "*they*"– who *"take it **wrongly** to mean..."* or *"press it, submit, submit, submit"*.

However, although staff were often careful to qualify what they meant by male headship and female submission, distancing themselves from others' interpretations, this was generally in response to my questions on the issue. Indeed, they did not generally appear themselves concerned that such views might in any way be seen as in conflict with their work. Indeed, to them they were not, and many were bemused by my repeated questions on the issue. There was only one occasion in which an individual expressed concern, although this was perhaps due to my specific questioning on the subject. In this particular instance when I asked a senior female

member of ASCW whether the man being the head of the household would affect whether men and women could be 'equal' within marriage, she responded, obviously conscious about how her explanation of headship and submission had come across: *"Absolutely not (...) Sometimes you say some of these things and then you start wondering, okay, did it come out right, or did it sound right, or what does it really mean?"* (LHI, 09/11/09).

Staff's specific ideas of marriage roles and responsibilities were influenced by a range of factors, including their upbringings and ideas of modernity. However, it was specifically charismatic Christian discourses on headship and submission that enabled them to make sense of the changes that they were advocating for in a way which did not involve also challenging too fundamentally certain normative ideas regarding the ways in which men and women should behave and marriages organised. Indeed, staff were conscious of general concerns in Ghana regarding changes to the conduct of marriages and the potential misbehaviour of women which may accompany social change and gender work (see chapter 2), concerns which they themselves shared.

Staff were keen to ensure, as much to themselves as others, that their work was about changes which occur within, and do not challenge, the 'divine gender order' (Maier, 2012:129) or upset other ideas commonly held in Ghana. The discourses of charismatic Christianity provided them with a 'ready-made script' with which to explain, and help them to make sense of, the changes they were advocating for in their work (and lives in general) in a way that was acceptable. It enabled them to advocate for changes in relationships, but without promoting women as 'bosses', rejecting male authority and turning everything on its head, so to speak. Further, they were able to talk about the need to for women to respect their husbands, but without this meaning they should be a 'slave' and/or 'dictated' to.

By using explanations provided by charismatic Christianity they were able to justify their work, while deflecting criticisms from others and addressing their own concerns and anxieties. They were able to argue that what they were promoting was no different from the church and that challenging and critiquing problematic aspects of male authority, and advocating for certain changes, was not a rejection of the biblical principles of male headship and female submission.

We thus see that the ways in which people understood the various gender ideas used within their work, was directly related to the context in which they reside and the broader hegemonic discourses and normative assumptions which pertain. Similarly,

however, the specific understandings of certain normative assumptions have also shifted for some, albeit seemingly quite subtly. Although resulting from broader social changes, such shifts have been further bolstered by ideas encountered within their gender work, and also aided by charismatic Christian discourses which help people to make sense of such changes in ways which fit within the broader Ghanaian setting.

Thus, on the one hand, staff understood and interpreted the concepts used within the context of their work in ways which fitted within certain ideas of marriage, and the particular expected roles, responsibilities and behaviours of husbands and wives. And on the other hand, ideas of marriage were understood in such a way that they corresponded to these work ideas. Although this was not necessarily a seamless merging and flow of ideas, with staff at times having to actively wrestle in order to reconcile and mediate meanings, it was not however a process of making ideas into 'something else' and giving them a meaning other than that which was 'originally intended'.

Indeed, according to Lombardo et al. (2009) terms like 'gender equality' while often assumed to have some original or intrinsic meaning, in actual fact, do not, and are understood differently in different contexts. As such, while to outsiders it might appear that in this case such workers 'misinterpreted' the concepts they use within their work, making them more palatable and able to fit with apparently incongruent ideas such as male headship and female submission, this was not what was occurring. Rather the meaning of concepts were shaped in relation to one another and within the realms of what was deemed possible and desirable according to particular ways of seeing the world (Lombardo et al., 2009).

In fact, as I have illustrated above, it is clear that for those involved in this work, the ideas of 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' were not incompatible with those of 'male headship' and 'female submission', and the roles and responsibilities that go with this. Unlike others who have reported a clash of ideas and/or disjuncture between work 'rhetoric' and personal 'beliefs' (see for example Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006) this was not the case in this situation. Staff were not 'masquerading' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006) as gender sensitive and 'talking the talk', so to speak, whilst not fully understanding or actually agreeing with such gender objectives. Neither were they were professing a belief in and incorporating widespread ideas regarding marriage, despite the apparent contradiction with their work ideas, as a strategic manoeuvre aimed at keeping their audience on side, possibly out of fear of being accused of importing foreign ideas which contravene Ghanaian family values. Indeed, I

came to understand that, due to the specific ways in which such concepts were understood, actually for those involved there was no contradiction between these various ideas, and that what I might perceive as incompatible sets of ideas were not necessarily so.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions

This research has focused on two Ghanaian NGOs, and the staff working within them, investigating the ways in which gender is incorporated into their work. Exploring the particular way in which staff understand and therefore implement their gender work, specifically that focused on gender violence, I examined the relationship of this to the particular context in which they live and work.

Within the thesis I have shown that while staff in PDP and ASCW encounter and utilise various transnational concepts and ideas within their work, these are specifically 'read through' an interplay of, and understood in relation to, the broader hegemonic discourses they are surrounded by, their specific worldviews, and the experience of their everyday lives. Individuals' ideas regarding marriage and the rights, roles, responsibilities and expected behaviour of husbands and wives, are significant here. As such, it seems that there is no level at which gender policy or practice is not seen through the prism of local understanding. The lens through which I examined these themes – violence and 'abuse' – is a particularly strong illustration of this.

However, this said, it is clear that individuals' encounter with and training in transnational ideas and definitions also has a significant bearing on their understandings of the work that they are engaged in, and that this in turn also affects, their broader worldviews. This can be seen for example in the concern regarding and identification of men's violence towards women as problematic. Indeed, many staff pointed out that before working in this area they did not realise the extent of this, and, whilst not necessarily condoning such behaviour, to some extent 'accepted' this as 'normal'.

I have shown within the thesis how these two influential frameworks are actively put together in acts of interpretation and reinterpretation, which result in specific understandings of the work in which individuals are engaged. However, I argue that these do not represent two sets of separate and conflicting ideas. Crucially, for the people I engaged with in ASCW and PDP there was not a clash of ideas, for example between 'home' and 'work', which necessitated them choosing or mediating between one and the other. Indeed, my informants did not seem to view these as separate ideas; for example understanding 'work' ideas in one sense and 'home' ideas in another, incongruous sense. Unlike the NGO staff quoted in the Transform Africa research, my informants did not talk about putting on their 'gender coat' at work when they 'went out to work in communities, but taking it off when [they] got back to the office

or home because the ideas were not appropriate or acceptable in [their] workplace and [their] own home[s]' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:59), or talk about having to 'wear two hats, one at work and another at home' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:59).

Although at times staff were clearly apprehensive about how their work might be perceived by others, what it might mean, and its fit with other ideas in their lives – as a result having to actively make sense of certain objectives and concepts utilised within their work – it was clear that individuals ultimately came to understand and make sense of their work in ways which fitted with their broader worldviews. As my fieldwork progressed, and particularly during my data analysis, it became clear to me that a clash of ideas and/or disjuncture between work 'rhetoric' and personal 'beliefs' (for example about marriage) was not in fact what was occurring for those involved or how they perceived the situation at least. Indeed, I came to understand that actually for those involved there was not necessarily a contradiction as such between these various ideas, and that what I might perceive as incompatible sets of ideas were not necessarily so to them. As such, although the explanation of apparent disjuncture, masquerading and conflicting ideas or the transformation of the gender agenda into something else was an initially easy one, which fitted with my worldview and understandings of these various concepts, it did not really fit with the ways in which people spoke about their ideas of marriage and their work.

Indeed, there seemed to be little that indicated an overall lack of commitment to these work-related goals, or a wilful 'masquerading' as 'gender sensitive' or 'blocking' of gender work. Their commitment to their work appeared to be genuine, and not perceived of by them as in contrast to their broader beliefs from other areas of their lives. Their sincerity and unfaltering statements left me with no indication that 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment', for example, were ideas and concepts that were simply adopted at work. Indeed, as the following discussion with a senior female staff of ASCW indicates, the contrary seemed to be the case. Telling me about the response of a pastor to a leaflet on DV that she had asked to give out in church, Grace told me that, after taking a copy, her pastor had turned to her husband and asked: "'*has she been worrying you with this, has she been worrying you in (...) the house, or she doesn't bring it home?*'". She told me about her surprise at this response, to which I suggested:

Hannah*: I think people think it is something you can do in your workplace, that you shouldn't bring home (...) that you are equal to your husband and things, but-*

Grace: -I mean for me it should..., it's a way of life, let it be part of you.

Hannah: So for you like it's a work thing and it's also a home thing, being equal to your husband?

Grace: Once it becomes, yes, once it becomes work and home then you don't really believe in what you are doing, that's what I think (...) you don't really believe in that. Then you shouldn't be going around deceiving people, if you don't really believe in it yourself, you just [laughs] (...) Just forget about it and find something else to do. (LHI, 10/12/09).

From the 'outside', Grace's, like many others', ideas regarding the roles and expectations of husbands and wives, such as the belief in male headship and female submission, might seem to contradict her stated commitment to objectives such as equality between men and women. However, as I have argued in chapter 6, this is not the case, due to the specific ways in which each of these ideas is read though and comprehended in relation to one another.

My findings regarding the commitment of those involved, and the lack of disjuncture between their work and 'personal lives' and between gender policy/rhetoric and practice, stem, in part at least, from the specific approach that I took. Importantly, an emic understanding of what the ideas within their work actually mean to those involved, rather than assuming some correct and intrinsic meaning (Lombardo et al., 2009), and assessing work and staff views against this, provided a different analysis of the situation, what might be going on and why work proceeds as it does, how the situation might be understood, and another potential explanation and understanding of the possible factors at play.

My conclusions and perspective are, in certain respects, quite different to other studies which have noted a *conflict* between staff's work related gender objectives and their 'personal' beliefs regarding the relationship between men and women; a conflict which is argued to consequently affect the implementation of such work. For example, as Wendoh and Wallace reported, in relation to SNGOs in the Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe: 'what became clear during the research is how deeply [staff's] stated commitment to new gender approaches *clashed* with their own personal beliefs and behaviours' (2006:101, emphasis mine), which were shaped by religion, family socialisation, and 'culture and tradition' (2006:69). They argued that: 'many of [the staffs'] attitudes were more strongly shaped by community norms than the new gender frameworks and concepts' (2006:59). And that 'rather than admit the conflict of beliefs

and understanding between their own culture and the demands of outside agencies around gender, many NGO staff took up a range of defensive behaviours. Many were seen to be gender *blockers*, *sceptics* or *masqueraders*' (2006:59, emphasis mine).

Others similarly talk about those involved in gender work merely paying 'lip service' to these agendas (Miers, 2011) or such agendas being depoliticised, co-opted or transformed under the camouflage of 'buzzwords'. Indeed, as outlined in chapter 1, much of the literature on gender and development work often assesses work against an 'external' conception of what this work 'should' be about, comparing what is carried out against these normative ideas. Such literature frequently concludes some form of disjuncture, either between feminist theoretical positions and the policies of development institutions, and/or between institutional gender policy and practice, or deduces the depoliticisation or watering down of 'feminist' agendas within development practice.

As stated in chapter 1, I do not wish to deny that gender work might indeed be 'knowingly' subverted, or imposed on unwilling recipients and resisted. Indeed, as the informant quotes from Wendoh and Wallace (2006) at the beginning of this chapter indicate this may indeed be the case in some instances; where, for example, individuals themselves identify a disjuncture in ideas. However, my research suggests that such explanations might not always account for what is going on, to those involved at least. Indeed, it is possible, at least in some cases, that gender work and the ideas contained within are *understood* differently by those involved, which might be missed by assessing such work mainly against an 'external' conception of what it 'should' be about.

Indeed, if viewed mainly against such external normative criteria, the gender work that I have explored within this research might well be assessed as 'conservative', depoliticised or watered down, with concepts being subverted or changed into something other than that which is deemed as 'originally intended', or viewed as being understood and interpreted 'incorrectly'. One example might be the understanding of 'equality' expressed by Josephine, where 'equality' exists within a gender hierarchy of male headship and female submission, in which the term is understood in relation to women being well treated and respected, but not them acting like bosses. Another example might be the focus on 'abuse' and 'domestic violence' which identifies women's verbal insults of men as problematic in a similar, although perhaps not quite identical, way as men's violence towards women. As such, it might look as though staff are 'resisting' or 'subverting' such work, not understanding it correctly, and/or making it

into something else. However, as I have argued, another element of what might be going on is that those involved understand this work and concepts such as 'gender equality' differently.

However, this said, as cautioned in chapter 1, I do not wish to go so far as to annihilate the possibility of any form of critique of gender work. Indeed, taking a situated approach does not necessarily preclude the possibility of any critique of the gender work of others, the particular ways in which people understand their work in a specific context, and the implications of this for how such work might be carried out. Critique is after all an important element of the feminist endeavour and political project. In this regard, it is important to point out that the specific understandings of my informants are not necessarily shared by, and would be potentially challenged by, others involved in transnational gender work, including others in Ghana, for instance Ghanaian feminists. In addition, as I have highlighted in several places, my informants ways of understanding their gender work and related ideas, as with some of my former Ghanaian colleagues (as detailed at the beginning of this thesis), did not fit with my own worldview and specific understandings of various concepts or the aims of gender work.

However, the aim of my research, and what the emic perspective adopted affords, is an 'insider' view of how this work is perceived and understood by those involved and a more nuanced explanation of what might be going on in such instances and how this might be understood. It highlights the importance of gaining such an insight into the approaches and understandings of others, and how this may deepen our understanding of what is occurring; an understanding that could have important implications for how such work is approached and training conducted (as detailed below).

However, while staff in ASCW and PDP may have been sincere and committed to their work, and this is indeed significant to note and understand, what is also important, and what I have specifically aimed to draw out in my analysis, is the precise ways in which these individuals understood their work and the influences on this. It is this understanding that ultimately affects *how* their work is done. This is also important since, the sincerity and commitment to their work that I have noted was in many respects *enabled* through the specific ways in which they understood and were able to make sense of this work; in ways that fitted, and could be explained, within their broader worldviews.

I have highlighted and explored, within the preceding chapters, a number of themes and specificities of understanding which emerged amongst the staff at ASCW and PDP, in this particular context. This included for example: the mentioning of violence against men as well as women; broad understandings and usages of the terms 'abuse' and 'domestic violence'; and, particular ideas regarding marital relations (including male headship and female submission) which influenced the ways in which concepts such as empowerment and equality were understood. However, while there were in many respects certain elements of commonality between the two organisations, there were also several differences which were apparent between them (and to some extent between different individuals within these) in terms of their understandings of and approaches to their work, and concerns expressed.

One such difference, for example, was in the ways in which staff in the two organisations brought up and talked about violence against men, with clear differences evident in their sentiment and tone. While staff in ASCW did mention violence against men, this was less frequent than staff at PDP, and generally with less concern and agitation, often in order to acknowledge that men too can be victims of abuse. In contrast, certain staff within PDP seemed to express deep concerns, not only about the occurrence of and need to address violence against men and 'women's abusive behaviour' which they were keen to point out, but also about the potential neglect of men within gender violence work, and gender work more generally; pointing out for example that 'gender is about both men and women'.

This links to another difference between staff in the two organisations, related to the levels of concern expressed about the focus and implications of their gender work, and gender work in general. As the example of Grace, in chapter 6, illustrates, staff within ASCW, did at times actively question and try to make sense of their work. They were clearly aware of and apprehensive about perceptions regarding the possible negative consequences of gender work and the criticism of others, specifically in terms of the implications for family life and the (mis)behaviour of women. However, through making specific sense of their gender work, and gender work in general, and clarifying what it did (and importantly what it did not) mean, they generally appeared to be relatively comfortable with it. Certain staff within PDP, on the other hand, were more concerned and agitated about the potential implications of gender work, especially if not approached in the 'right' way, and were keen to distance themselves, and their work, from such approaches. Within this they occasionally spoke disparagingly about

'feminists' and WROs. A specific concern regarded women's 'misbehaviour' as a result of becoming too empowered, which was often elaborated on with examples.

Another difference noted was between the knowledge and understanding of staff in the two organisations. This could be seen for example in relation to ideas regarding the causes and types of violence and common myths about gender violence. In this regard, staff in ASCW generally had more extensive knowledge than those in PDP, in particular of common transnational ideas. For instance, they were keen to dispute arguments of women's provocation of violence against them. In contrast, certain staff in PDP occasionally talked about the 'problem' of women provoking men.

I have argued that the differences, such as those highlighted above, stemmed from a number of factors. This includes: ASCW staffs' more extensive training in the area of gender violence and more frequent internal discussions; differences in the remits of the two organisations; and differences in their work focus and experiences. Indeed, perhaps principally as a result of these factors, what became clear was the generally firmer grounding in transnational ideas amongst the staff in ASCW, than those within PDP.

Contextual specificities

It is important to stress that, it is not simply my focus on emic understandings which differentiates my research from other studies and might account for the apparent differences in findings in relation to the theme of disjuncture. The types of organisations, their particular work focus, and other elements of the context in which they operate are also significant. Indeed, there is perhaps something about the specificity of the particular organisations which I researched and the Ghanaian context in which they operate which had a bearing on my findings. This might include, for example, the specific focus of the gender work that they are engaged in and the proximity of these issues to staff's everyday lives, the training which they receive, their focus on and grounding in gender issues, the organisations' relationship with donors and the extent to which they set their own agendas, and elements of the broader context in which they are working.

In terms of the focus of ASCW and PDP's work on gender violence, this is quite different from many other SNGOs discussed in the literature. These often have a broader gender remit, covering various aspects of development work, or focus on issues such as the provision of micro-credit to women (see for example Ackerly, 1997;

Datta, 2004; Ferguson, 2010; Goetz, 1996; 1997b; 2001; Rao and Kelleher, 1997; Sardenberg et al 1999; Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006). By contrast ASCW's remit is exclusively focused on gender violence, and while PDP does have a broader general remit, aiming to 'mainstream' gender within its diverse projects and improve the general situation of women and children, my specific focus within this thesis has been principally on their gender violence related work.

Work on gender violence specifically involves individuals having to directly engage with and think about particularly problematic manifestations of existing gender relations. Indeed, as many, in both ASCW and PDP, pointed out, work on gender violence is potentially about life or death situations, or at the least situations in which someone might be seriously harmed by another. Although, as discussed in chapter 5, there is a level of concern about both men and women as victims of 'abuse', staff in both organisations acknowledged that women are far more frequently affected. Further to this, staff generally identified male power and control over women as a principal cause of such violence, although as discussed in chapter 5 this differed slightly between the two organisations, with staff at ASCW being more firmly grounded in these transnational ideas due to more frequent training and their exposure to such issues through their direct counselling work.

Thus, work on gender violence potentially brings staff up against a concrete problem that they can see needs to change; something related directly to the ways in which marriages are conducted and men and women relate to one another within marriage. This includes for example situations, often viewed as the norm in Ghana, of male dominance, in which the husband is controlling, authoritarian and makes all of the decisions. However, as discussed in chapter 6, for my informants such changes do not necessitate a complete overhaul of the gender order in which male headship is the accepted norm and men are deemed responsible for leading the family. Indeed, situations, in which the man behaves as a 'benevolent leader', acting for the good of the family, protecting and providing for them, were generally promoted and accepted by staff, representing for them the ideal of how marriages should be conducted. Correspondingly, situations in which women became bossy and neglected their specific responsibilities were condemned.

Thus, unlike some other forms of gender work, such as that supporting micro-credit, this work is quite deliberately, and obviously to those involved, focused on, and necessitates, addressing problematic relations between husbands and wives. By comparison, as detailed in chapter 1, as Goetz pointed out in relation to the micro-

credit work of two organisations in Bangladesh, it is 'in fact... probably unfair to assume that programmes targeting credit to women are necessarily concerned with transforming gender relations' (1996:9). Indeed in contrast to the gender violence work of ASCW and PDP, Goetz argued that in that particular case 'neither programme raise[d] gender relations and problems of conflict as being part of 'women's empowerment'' (1996:17). As such, we see how the specific focus of their work potentially had a significant bearing on the particular way in which the staff at ASCW and PDP engaged with their work, their commitment to change, and the ways in which they directly linked this work to their own beliefs and views regarding the conduct of marriage.

However, in relation to this, a particularly important aspect of the Ghanaian context is the fact that concerns about gender relations, specifically with regards to marriage, are the subject of widespread popular discussion and anxiety, particularly in relation to potential shifts which may occur as a result of social change. This can be seen in the widespread media attention given to these issues and the various concerns raised in relation to such changes in general and also those related specifically to gender work, in particular more recently that focused on gender violence (Adomako Ampofo, 2008; Hodžić, 2009; see also chapter 2). As such it is important to point out that the everyday discourses of the staff are very much embedded in and affected by the fact that their professional work topic is something that is also a subject of widespread public concern, a concern which they also appear to share. This results in a need for them to make sense of their work in certain ways, taking into account these broader concerns, which are deeply embedded in their own and the public consciousness.

As highlighted within this thesis, within this potential turmoil and anxiety, Christianity, in particular the discourses of charismatic churches, plays an important role in enabling individuals to make sense of and accommodate the potential shifts in marriage. Actively rejecting what it terms 'traditional' marriages, charismatic Christianity is one of the sites in which the most active refashioning of marriage seems to be taking place in Ghana. It specifically provides a discourse on marriage which accounts for and makes sense of many of the social changes taking place within marriage, but within and maintaining certain fundamental normative ideas regarding the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, thus allaying people's anxieties about such changes (see Soothill, 2007 for an extended discussion of these issues). Indeed, amongst my informants based in Accra, charismatic Christian discourses on marriage appeared to be a particularly crucial element in their explanation of their gender work.

That these ideas generally corresponded to their work ideas provided staff with a ready-made script with which to understand and justify their work in relation to the rest of their lives, not only to others but also to themselves.

In some ways linked to their particular thematic focus on gender violence, ASCW and PDP's particular relationships with donors and the extent to which they set their own agendas are also significant elements of the contextual specificity of my particular research. Work on gender violence is a global phenomenon which has greatly expanded in the past 20 years bringing funding and increased transnational attention. However, the mushrooming of work on this theme in Ghana over this period, while enabled by transnational work and available funding, also stems from more localised factors. This includes the concern of Ghanaian activists, some of whom themselves play a central role in the transnational anti-gender violence movement, to address what has become recognised as a significant problem in Ghana.[145] It also reflects the response to specific incidences, in particular the 1998 serial killings of women in Accra (Adomako Ampofo, 2008; Hodžić, 2009; Tsikata, 2009; see also chapter 2).

Indeed, this localised activity and movement is a particularly important aspect of the broader context of gender work in Ghana. As pointed out in chapter 2, gender work in Ghana is not undertaken only as a result of outside influences and impositions. Indeed, as well as organisations reacting in direct response to the issues affecting women and a desire to address these (see for example Manuh, 1989), there is a strong gender activist movement in Ghana which is an important element driving local agendas and thinking. This has included more recently a rapid rise in the number and activities of Ghanaian WROs, and the emergence of an autonomous women's movement.

This strong Ghanaian gender activist movement consists of many who are members of and contribute to various transnational networks and bodies. As a result, as Anyidoho and Manuh argue, 'it may be difficult to separate the local from the global' (2010:267) in terms of gender ideas and influences. As such, it is indeed the case that transnational ideas utilised in gender work in Ghana are in many ways essentially 'home grown'. They are very much owned by African feminists, and it would be erroneous to conceive of them as 'Western' and/or imposed. Indeed, there is a very active and knowledgeable

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[145] Partially as a result of national research by the Gender Centre, a prominent Ghanaian WRO (see Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999).

discussion about gender concepts at the national level, as illustrated by the presence of various networking organisations, events and publications.[146]

Although many of my informants may not have been directly involved in these discussions – with the exception perhaps of certain senior staff in ASCW – many have attended some such networking meetings and are aware of many of the debates taking place amongst, and perspectives promulgated by Ghanaian gender activists. Potentially as a result of this, but also their own recognition and identification of certain issues affecting Ghanaian women,[147] there was little sense amongst individuals in either organisation that work on gender violence, and in PDP gender work more generally, was imposed on them from 'outside', and represented a concern which they did not also share.

This was particularly the case within ASCW, which was specifically established to address gender violence, predominantly against women, and which worked solely on this issue. Through their various training and exposure to cases staff were thus convinced about the need for work in this area, set their own agendas and programmes of work, and sought funding for these (see chapter 3). They also regularly used ideas and materials which were nationally produced (including figures from national research undertaken by the Gender Centre (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999)).

Staff in PDP also generally agreed with the need to address the issue of gender violence, alongside its other gender-focused work. Although affected by donor interests and funding availability (which in some cases actually *constrained* this work), they generally viewed themselves as identifying the problems to be addressed and driving this work (see chapter 3). However, while they shared a similar commitment to work on gender violence, they were to some extent more circumspect about some of the approaches advocated for within this, and other gender work, and the potential neglect of men (see chapter 5). As noted, some were particularly concerned, for instance, about the explicit focus specifically on VAW which was promoted within the projects they were implementing. However, this said, staff in PDP did not talk about such an

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[146] See for example the annual NETRIGHT end of year review (see NETRIGHT, 2009a), the Women's Manifesto consultation and drafting process (see The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004), the 2006 African Feminist Forum held in Ghana (African Feminist Forum, n.d.), and the 2007 Ghana National Feminist Forum (see NETRIGHT, 2009b) and various Ghanaian publications focused on gender violence (Coker-Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Cusack & Manuh, 2009).

[147] Which were of course no doubt influenced by these broader discussions and the highlighting of issues by Ghanaian feminists.

approach being forced upon them and something which they therefore needed to resist. They simply talked about the need to also make sure that men were included in such work and the importance of adopting a different approach to others, in particular 'feminists', whom they often deemed to be too confrontational.

As such, the situation in ASCW and PDP appears to be very different from, for example, that of the SNGOs in the Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia, who were reported, in the Transform Africa research, to be resistant to gender issues, partially as a result of the imposition of this agenda through specific requirements from donors and partners (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006). According to that research, 'resistance to gender as a northern imposition was found and seemed to lie especially in the manner in which the concepts, tools and frameworks were translated, and the approaches that were used in implementation' (Wendoh & Wallace, 2006:92). This, it was argued, resulted in an absence of skills, understanding and ownership of the gender agenda, and, along with other factors, ultimately to various forms of resistance from staff, which ranged from rejection to 'masquerading' as gender sensitive (Wendoh & Wallace, 2005; 2006).

However, while such factors may indeed play a part in influencing the specific ways in which some SNGOs engage with gender issues within their work, what this research has ultimately highlighted is the need to, and benefit of, taking a more emic perspective when focusing on their gender work. This I argue potentially provides a more nuanced account of what takes place, rather than an assessment of such work which focuses mainly on whether gender policies and goals, as externally interpreted, are accepted or resisted, or understood and implemented 'correctly'. It also acknowledges a diversity of views and approaches, and the agency and perspectives of such actors and organisations. As such, it seeks to explore how this work is understood and what it means to those involved.

Implications for gender training and gender work more generally

So what are the implications of these findings; and what can be done in gender training and gender work more generally to address the kinds of issues which have emerged in this thesis?

A clear implication of my findings is the importance of recognising the potential diversity which may exist between different actors (including different individuals and different organisations) that are involved in gender work. This diversity may exist in relation to

both, a) specific understandings of terms and the aims of gender work, and b) individuals' broader worldviews, which influence this understanding. Indeed, I have highlighted some of the potentially diverse ways in which people might understand certain terms (for example gender equality, empowerment, patriarchy, abuse and domestic violence) and have explored how these understandings are influenced by individuals' worldviews and the broader normative assumptions and hegemonic discourses which pertain within a particular context.

However, this diversity of understanding of ideas may well be masked by the common language and universal concepts that are used within, and also to describe, gender work. As a result, we may simply assume that because people appear to be talking the same language, the meanings they attach to specific concepts are the same too. However, this may not be the case. This does not only apply to stated commitments to working towards 'gender equality', for example, but even to the ways in which individuals describe this work, which might also appear to be similar to our own understandings, on the surface at least. Indeed, as I have illustrated, even when people talk about ideas such as 'patriarchy' and 'male control of women', for instance, this might signify and represent for them something quite different than what 'we', or others, imagine. Similarly, the idea of men and women being 'equal' may well be understood in quite different ways and within very different frames of reference, meaning that the relationships and realities envisaged and specified by what might seem a common goal may be quite diverse.

Such diversity may also be seemingly unapparent as a result of individuals' conviction and commitment to their gender work and the goals contained within. Individuals' sincerity, for instance to 'gender equality' and/or their concern about 'patriarchal relations', 'male power' and 'women's vulnerability', may lead us to simply assume that their views, understandings and usage of such ideas are no different to our own; thus a lack of interrogation of what they mean and understand by such ideas. On the other hand, of course, it is also possible that any 'uncovering' or awareness of a difference in the understanding of others might lead us to conclude a lack of commitment to gender goals, rather than recognising their specific understandings and what is behind this.

All of this points to the need to be aware of the potential for different understandings and conceptions of ideas, even when we may appear, on the surface at least, to be talking 'the same language'. It therefore highlights the need to understand the views of others and the broader understandings and worldviews they bring to their work, and work with this and with an awareness of this. There is a need to be aware of how such

understandings and broader worldviews might influence the ways in which individuals comprehend and carry out their gender work. In addition, there is a need to recognise others' commitment to their gender work, even when this commitment might be to a different idea than our own, thus facilitating further understanding of what is happening, and the factors at play, in any given situation.

In relation to gender training, these findings may well imply the need for long and indepth training programmes, which allow a deep exploration of individuals' ideas and where they are coming from. Asking for example, 'what does gender equality mean for you?', and really getting behind this. It also implies the need to give space for individuals to explore, and potentially challenge, their broader normative ideas and worldviews, for example in relation to marriage, and examine how these might influence their understandings of gender goals. Such ideas might apply not only to the training of staff who are working on gender issues, but also to training and other activities which are carried out within the gender work of organisations as part of project/programme implementation; for instance trainings and awareness raising sessions with 'beneficiaries' such as community members, and other stakeholders and/or service providers. This would necessitate sustained, ongoing, and indepth work with 'beneficiaries'.

In addition, my findings also have implications for the evaluation and assessment of gender work. My findings highlight, for instance, the importance of gaining an emic perspective of gender work, in order that we gain a detailed picture of what is taking place and why. Also highlighted is the need for indepth evaluations which delve below the surface, so that we do not assume what the work taking place might signify and mean simply by the language used by staff or beneficiaries.

However, there are a number of clear challenges and dilemmas inherent in such approaches. A very practical challenge of course is the time and funding needed to facilitate such ways of working. Another difficulty is in how to challenge and enable others to explore their own beliefs, for example around marriage; ideas which may be highly normative and intertwined with religious beliefs. In many ways linked to this, another issue which emerges in relation to the actual practice of gender work is the question of whose approach, views and understandings are deemed to be 'correct' and what we are striving for – both in relation to a) gender concepts, such as equality, and b) broader ideas, for example the ways in which marriages should be conducted, and the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. Indeed, despite taking the time to understand and work with others' views and understandings, working to challenge and

deepen these ideas may still imply that ultimately we feel that our own views and approaches are 'correct'. This brings up the question of how to approach such work in a way which enables and values different worldviews and approaches and views on gender, but without losing the ability to critique, the need for normative standards, or having to potentially accept and defend any and all 'gender' work.

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Appendix A: Researching Gender Work in Ghanaian NGOs: Research Design and Ethical Issues

In chapter 1 I outlined the methodological approach taken in this research, my predominant focus on ASCW and PDP, and detailed the four principal areas on which I gathered data. In this section I provide further details of my research design, including a detailed overview of the research focus and types of information collected, a description of the research methods utilised, data gathered and challenges encountered, and an extended discussion of the status of informants' words and the ethical concerns which arose.

Research focus

Although I took a broad and inductive approach to my research, thus enabling an openness to issues and themes that might arise in the 'field', I was also guided by my research questions to gather data which focused specifically around a number of principal areas.

A first body of data centres on a general overview of the organisations, and their 'gender work' in particular. This included: their general histories and trajectories; their gender perspectives, discourses and objectives; where such ideas came from and the different influences affecting these; the mechanisms by which the objectives and focus of work was decided; the planned activities, focus, and approaches taken; stated aims in relation to gender work and perspectives regarding how these can be achieved; funding sources; and, other organisations and actors (national and international) with whom they interact and collaborate and the nature of these interactions.

The second area of focus was the actual planning, delivery and implementation of gender related work and practices undertaken by the organisations. This included looking at the intricacies of what was done in practice and how it was done. For instance: the specific activities, approaches and practices; the issues focused on; the ways in which things were talked about; the actors involved; reactions and responses to such work; and, the views of staff.

A third area of the research was the focus specifically on individuals working within the organisations. I specifically explored their work tasks and remits; their input into the approach, focus and work practices of the organisation; their views regarding their

work; their life and work trajectories; and, elements of their personal lives, including their broader worldviews and normative assumptions.

The fourth area of focus was the broader sector as a whole. This included gaining an overview of gender work in Ghana and the organisations undertaking such work, exploring and mapping relationships and networking between organisations, and investigating the various inter-organisational networks and coalitions operating in Ghana. Although this provided me with an overview of the context of gender work in Ghana and actors involved, this mapping was principally undertaken as an element of understanding how ideas relating to gender work develop, where they come from, and how these processes affect and are contributed to by particular organisations.

Research methods and data collected

A range of strategies and methods were adopted throughout the research process, in order to gather a combination of 'provoked' and 'unprovoked data' (Silverman, 2001) covering these themes. This included participant observation, conducting various interviews, focus group discussions and life history interviews, and gathering organisational documents and 'grey' literature. I discuss each of these below, outlining the ways in which I went about my data collection and some of the specific challenges encountered.

Participant observation

Participant observation, one of the principal methods used within this research, enabled me to gain an insight into, and understanding of, the work of the two main organisations.[148] This included how work was conducted and the processes involved, and staff's engagement with, and perceptions and perspectives on these (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). In particular, this allowed me to see what actually happened in the organisations as events unfolded, observing the 'processes and relationships that lie behind surface events' (Denscombe, 2003:93).

In this regard I spent considerable periods of time in each of the two organisations, observing and participating in various aspects of their day-to-day work and specific events. I assisted staff with reports and other documentation; attended various internal

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[148] As well as a limited knowledge of the work of several other organisations with whom I spent time.

meetings (taking minutes at some); observed counselling sessions; attended (and occasionally helped out at) events, including training programmes, advocacy outreach sessions, stakeholder meetings, and various project events and meetings; chatted with staff over lunch; and accompanied them to meetings and events 'outside' the organisations.

I attempted, as much as possible, albeit with varying levels of success (as discussed below), to 'insert' and 'embed' myself into the two organisations in order to gain a broad and balanced overview. Within both the organisations the Executive Directors, along with various other staff, were very welcoming, open to my presence, and in theory granted me access to participate in all levels and aspects of organisational life and activities.

However, in practice, access was far more challenging than it first appeared, for a number of reasons. Two particular and interrelated issues were: 1) the practicalities of researching two organisations simultaneously (and within one of these, PDP, spending time in two different locations – the head office in Accra and a project office in the small town of Yassa)[149] and, 2) the lack of fixed schedules and last minute changes to dates and timings of events (including public holidays). It was quite common for example that events and meetings (both internal and external) would be postponed and rearranged at very short notice, occasionally on the day on which they were due to take place. Or they would be planned, but with no fixed date scheduled until the last minute, often depending on the availability of certain individuals, such as invited dignitaries. This made structuring my time, planning ahead, and coordinating between different sites, very challenging. I often found out about events serendipitously by being in the right place at the right time, or on other occasions discovered those I had missed after the event. Whilst these challenges initially caused me great anxiety, I eventually learnt (partially at least) to let go and just see what happened, whilst at the same time being aware of and attempting to ensure that I managed to attend certain activities that I was particularly interested in.

In this regard there were differences between the various sites. Visits to Yassa were particularly difficult to coordinate, due to a combination of shifting schedules and the day's travel involved in getting there. However, once there it was generally easier to observe and participate in what was going on than in Accra. This was due to the smaller office size in Yassa, the limited activities concurrently taking place, and a

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[149] 'Yassa' is a pseudonym adopted to maintain anonymity.

greater sense of responsibility amongst staff for my 'care' and 'entertainment' in this small town.

However, challenges of access occurred even in instances in which I was aware of meetings, events and programmes taking place. One of the issues was that of logistics, in particular travelling to events and meetings outside of the office when space was at a premium in office vehicles. While I often travelled to events with the organisations, when room permitted me to, on other occasions I was either unable to attend, or had to arrange to meet staff at the venue, making my own way there. In addition, there were some occasions (although this was fairly uncommon) in which individual staff seemed reluctant about my presence, and/or events and meetings were deemed 'internal', thus precluding my presence. Whilst at times frustrating, I respected these boundaries, which illustrated to me that that negotiating access and consent should be a continual rather than one-off process (Hirsch & Gellner, 2001; Miller & Bell, 2002).

In some cases, however, such challenges were overcome by sheer (but gentle) persistence and attempts to make myself useful. Keen in any case to 'give something back' to the organisations, participate in a constructive way and integrate myself into their work (if only in a small way), I offered my assistance in any way I could. This involved a range of activities from blowing up balloons, handing out leaflets at events, taking notes at meetings, to setting up projector equipment and demonstrating the use of female condoms.

However, even when physically present, my 'access' to what was going on was not necessarily always ensured. A particular issue was language – one of the main limitations I faced during my research. While many of the conversations and meetings within both organisations were conducted in English, staff would often slip into other languages during more 'informal' conversations and in order to make certain points.[150] In addition, some, although not all, work programmes and events (such as counselling, trainings, outreach sessions, and project events) were conducted in one or another of the local languages. This made it difficult, and at times impossible, for me to follow what was going on, other than a vague idea about the general topic being spoken

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[150] While English is the official language in Ghana, there are over 80 different languages spoken (Ethnologue, n.d.), the main ones in southern Ghana, other than English, being Akan (including Twi and Fante dialects), Ewe, and Ga.

about and sometimes not even that.[151] In some such instances, particularly during events, the proceedings were often translated for me, on the spot, by a member of staff or someone else present.[152] However, this inevitably led to certain gaps in my knowledge and understanding of what was going on in certain situations, particularly 'informal' conversations between staff.

Another problem of access, despite my physical presence, related to the 'hidden' nature of, and challenges of access to, much of the office based day-to-day work that took place within the two organisations. This included for instance work carried out on computers and 'important interactions [which]... occurred in private encounters that were not immediately accessible to observation' (Riles, 2000:xv). This was less of an issue in Yassa, where there were fewer staff, only one computer (which was rarely used), and much of the work occurred 'out in the open', involving interpersonal interactions. However, it presented a challenge in both ASCW and the PDP head office. Indeed, situations in which staff were shut away in different rooms, working individually, often on computers, conducting work via email and telephone, and in 'private' meetings and conversations were difficult to observe and participate in. This difficulty diminished somewhat over time as I got more involved in the organisations, and, where possible and welcomed, assisted staff with reports and written documents,[153] in order to get an understanding of this element of their work, what was being done, and how. However, this nevertheless still remained a significant source of challenge to the quest of 'participant observation'.

As a result of these issues, whilst I managed to observe a reasonable range of elements of the work and functioning of both ASCW and PDP, specific gaps were a particular source disappointment and concern. Indeed, despite having a list of events and types of activities that I intended to observe in each organisation, it was difficult to achieve this in any planned way. In ASCW for instance, despite the openness of the organisation, I was unable to witness any of their training events or attend a meeting of

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[151] While I can understand some very basic conversational Twi, this was of little use in following what was being said at events and during general conversations, especially those conducted in other languages.

[152] The presence and use of multiple languages, particularly in Accra, and the proficiency that would need to be gained in order to conduct research, meant that it was not possible to learn 'the local language' for the purposes of my research. Another solution would have been to engage the services of a research assistant and/or translator, however, the logistical constraints and issues of access detailed above made this largely unfeasible.

[153] This is similar to the approach adopted by others, for example Riles (2000) in her research on institutional networking for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

more senior staff which took place periodically. Similarly, within PDP, my knowledge of their work was in many respects limited to the head office and the Yassa project office. In addition, there were elements of specific programmes that I was particularly interested in, and have focused on within this thesis, that I was unable to attend, mainly due to logistical challenges. Although it is impossible to know for sure, such gaps may have had potential effects on my findings and analysis.

In addition to focusing on the work of the organisations, my interest was also on the staff engaged in this work (the third area of focus, as detailed above). This included, not only concentrating on staff in relation to their work, but also elements of their personal lives, their histories and their broader worldviews. In this regard, another element of participant observation involved generally getting to know staff on a more personal level, chatting with them over lunch, joining in with more general conversations and, where possible, spending time with staff outside of the office.[154]

Once again my research experience in Accra and Yassa was quite different. During my time spent in Yassa (several visits, the shortest lasting 4 days and the longest 11 days), it was very easy, and indeed part of my daily routine, to spend time with staff members outside of the office. Yassa is a relatively small town in which the boundaries between work, home and community are much more fluid than Accra. In addition, in comparison to Accra, it was more difficult for me to exist 'autonomously'. As such I often ate meals at staff members' houses, went on 'excursions' with them, and spent considerable amounts of time 'hanging out' at their homes.

The situation in Accra however was quite different. While I did spend some time with certain members of staff outside the office – for example days at the swimming pool, attending church services, the wedding of a staff member, and going for dinner – this was much more limited and a far less organic process. This was due to a number of factors, including: the greater size of Accra and staff's greater spatial dispersal; seemingly greater time pressures on staff in Accra; and my relative independence from staff and organisations in Accra.

In terms of recording data from participant observation, brief notes were taken during or soon after events and interactions, and then written up in a more detailed form in a fieldwork diary as soon as possible afterwards. This resulted in over 700 pages of

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[154] This was in addition to other methods, such as life history interviews (as outlined below).

electronic fieldnotes, along with several physical note books.[155] Within these fieldnotes I recorded detailed accounts of things that happened and conversations – taking care where possible to record 'verbatim quotations and 'flat' (or unadorned) descriptions' (Silverman, 2001:68) rather than impressions, including 'the actual words people use'; the 'situated vocabularies and folk taxonomies' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:182-183). In addition to this, I also recorded my thoughts and impressions, notes on methodology and preliminary analysis. While the writing of these detailed fieldnotes was often done at 'home' in the evenings or at weekends, I also frequently wrote up fieldnotes while at the organisations (either notes from that or previous days). Setting up my computer at a spare desk enabled me to be physically present in the organisations, thus on hand to observe the often slow ebb and flow of everyday life and interactions, and also in a prime location to find out about events taking place and last minute changes of plan.

Key informant interviews

In addition to participant observation, I also carried out several interviews with various staff in the two main organisations (as well as with staff of other NGOs, and with government officials and networking organisations). Within ASCW 11 interviews were conducted; this included several with the Executive Director, and others mainly conducted with the heads of the various departments within the organisation. Within PDP 7 interviews were conducted, again with a range of staff from within the organisation, some of whom were interviewed on more than one occasion, and at times interviews included two or more members of staff.

All interviews were formal and semi-structured, following a list of guiding questions, and all except two were voice recorded and fully transcribed.[156] Each of the interviews covered different issues and themes depending on the organisation, the interviewee and the type of information sought. However, in general these interviews were used to gather information regarding the structure, work and objectives of the organisations,

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[155] Note books were used in instances in which using a computer was not possible or appropriate.
[156] Before interviews took place, the participants were asked if they consented to voice recordings. While such consent was almost always given, on these two occasions the staff concerned chose not to be voice recorded, and notes were taken by hand and written up in more detail directly afterwards.

including for instance issues such as funding, the development of projects, and how work was carried out, as well as staff's perspectives on these issues.

Life history interviews

As part of my specific focus on individuals within the organisations (the third area of my research), I conducted life history interviews. These were undertaken mainly, although not exclusively, with individuals from the two main organisations researched, in which I conducted five in ASCW and five in PDP.[157] Although there were fairly equal proportions of male and female staff in each of the two organisations, by virtue of my focus, logistics, and the specific relationships I built during my research, these life history interviews were conducted with four females and one male in each organisation. These staff spanned a range of levels and departments within the organisations. Each of these interviews lasted between one and two hours and although efforts were made to conduct them outside of the workplace this was not always possible. They were each voice recorded and fully transcribed.

While life history interviews can take a variety of forms and focus (see Miller, 2000; Plummer, 2001: chapter 2), those I conducted could generally be classified, according to Plummer's (2001) distinctions as 'short', 'topical', and 'researched'. While they each focused around the individual's life trajectory and experiences in general, a particular focus within this was on their careers, what had led them to their current work, and the various influences on this. However, within this basic structure and focus I aimed, where possible, to enable the interviewees to 'take (...) control' (Bertaux, 1981:39) and 'define what was significant or crucial in shaping their experiences' (Slater, 2000:39).

Focus group discussions

In total four focus group discussions were conducted; two in ASCW and two in PDP. Both of the focus group discussions in ASCW took place during office hours, and were attended by nine and 13 staff each. Planned in negotiation with the Executive Director, they combined my specific questions and focus with an internal evaluation of the organisations' work and internal functioning (which although principally for the purposes of the organisation was also useful for my research). Of the two focus group

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[157] In addition to these, life history interviews were also undertaken with two individuals from another NGO.

discussions undertaken in PDP, one was conducted in Yassa during office hours, and the other with four female staff from various project offices, one evening following a training course in Accra.

All of the focus group discussions, which lasted approximately 1½ hours each, were voice recorded and transcribed. In the case of those conducted at ASCW, summary reports focusing on specific elements, and excluding individual staff details, were prepared for the organisation. Although the specific focus of the questions varied somewhat between the two organisations, the focus group discussions principally focused on: staff views regarding the organisation's approach and internal functioning; the development of staff's awareness of gender violence; the types of ideas and materials used in relation to gender violence; and marriage ideas and practices.

As outlined in chapter 3, there were generally fairly limited occasions in which staff, in either organisation, discussed and debated the underlying ideas and concepts used within their work. As such, the focus group discussions were particularly useful in enabling specific elements of the research to be investigated in a group setting in which staff 'present[ed] their own views and experience, but... also hear[d] from other[s]' (Finch & Lewis, 2003:171). This facilitated a dialogue in which the diversity of and similarities between staff's perspectives, attitudes and feelings were revealed (Anderson, 1996 quoted in Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003; Fielding & Thomas, 2001), thus helping to uncover the nuances of their views and attitudes more explicitly (Finch & Lewis, 2003). Indeed, during each of the discussions there were certain areas of contestation between staff members as they debated their views and put forward different arguments. One such example of this was a debate which took place between staff in ASCW regarding 'bride price' being denoted as a form of abuse, during one of these discussions (see chapter 5).

Organisational documents and grey material

In addition to the above, I also reviewed a range of organisational documents and grey material. This included, for example, annual reports, work plans, organisational strategies and profiles, various project documents (proposals, reports and evaluations), materials and manuals (for instance leaflets focused on gender violence, training materials and facilitation notes). Although fairly straightforward, the biggest challenge in this regard was the, at times, rather ad hoc use and storage of such documentation. In some instances for example staff working on a particular project did not have copies of

the original project proposal or were unaware of whether the organisation had a current strategic plan.

The status of informants' words

As detailed above, data was recorded via a range of methods. This included: interviews, discussions, events and focus group discussions which were voice-recorded and later translated verbatim; interviews in which shorthand notes were taken and written up soon after; and, fieldnotes in which I wrote detailed accounts of events, everyday life and conversations. While fieldnotes and records of interviews which were not voice recorded do not provide a verbatim account of what was said, they contain as far as possible the words that I heard in a particular situation. However, on some occasions my fieldnotes are of events that took place in languages other than English. In such cases I have recorded in my fieldnotes an account of what was said based on the translation provided to me, from notes taken at the time.

As such, this thesis contains three types of informants' words, which I have identified throughout through the use of specific formatting styles, for the purposes of transparency. Firstly, direct quotes taken from voice recorded material, which are indicated through the use of double quotation marks and italicised script (e.g. *"example"*). These provide a verbatim account of what was said. Secondly, material and quotations taken from interview write-ups and fieldnotes of events conducted in English but not voice recorded and transcribed. Indicated through the use of double quotation marks and non-italicised script (e.g. "example"), these are not verbatim accounts, but represent, as far as possible, the words used by informants. Thirdly, material and quotations taken from fieldnotes of events conducted in other languages, in which the quotations are an account of what the translator told me was being said. These are indicated through the use of double quotations marks and underlined script (e.g. "<u>example</u>").[158] It is important to note that in some instances, particularly in the case of the material presented in chapter 4, these particular quotations are mostly paraphrased accounts of the translations provided.[159] In such cases I have adopted what I think is a very wide anthropological convention of writing them out in a fuller

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[158] In addition, I have used single quotation marks (e.g. 'example') when quoting material from secondary sources.

[159] In addition, as detailed in chapter 4, my account of the ASCW event in Twegoasi also relied on a subsequent transcription and translation, incorporating material and quotes (occasionally reworded) from this.

format, so that they are easier to read. However, as a result they are not necessarily, nor do they claim to be, an accurate account of the exact words used by informants or the translator.

Ethical considerations

There were a number of particular ethical issues related to my research, many of which were accentuated due to my specific focus on organisations (Bulmer, 1988); a setting which can give rise to concerns not necessarily faced in other research (Hirsch & Gellner, 2001). Indeed, research on organisations can necessitate a re-assessment of traditionally agreed principles set out in ethical codes, and ultimately lead to a questioning of their applicability and relevance to all research situations (Harper & Jiménez, 2005). I focus here specifically on the (related) issues of informed consent, the ethical principle of 'causing no harm', and anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed consent

It is generally agreed, and deemed to be a fundamental aspect of good ethical practice, that researchers should gain informed consent from those they study. This involves providing 'participants with a broad outline of what the research is about, the sorts of issues you will be exploring, and what you expect from them' (Dowling, 2005:21) and giving them the option to participate, or not, with the option of withdrawing at any time. In the case of my research this included gaining the consent of both the organisations (as institutions) and also specific individuals and staff within these.

As detailed above, the Executive Directors of the two main organisations that I focused on (along with other organisations that I researched) were consulted during the early stages of my fieldwork in order to inform them about my research, negotiate access, and seek formal consent for me to research their organisations. However, while consent was given and access to the organisations granted, it was also necessary to gain consent directly from all those involved, including individual staff and volunteers (ASA, 2007; Davies, 1999; Wilson, 1993). Indeed, as Miller and Bell point out, while gatekeepers (in this case the Directors) 'are in a position to 'permit' access to others' (2002:55), and might make it difficult for those who have been 'volunteered' (2002:67) to choose not to take part, it is important not to confuse this access with consent.

Consequently, I informed individual staff about my research and my purpose within the organisations,[160] and sought their individual consent, on occasions using formal consent forms to facilitate this. However, while such efforts were made, there were many instances in which the boundaries between my access to organisations and the consent of individuals were blurred, for instance during organisational meetings and at events. However, it often seemed clear when individuals did not want to talk to me about certain issues or have their comments recorded, and I respected this, aware that the granting of consent is an ongoing process that needs to be negotiated throughout the research, and may come and go depending on the particular situation (Hirsch & Gellner, 2001; Miller & Bell, 2002).

Aside from the challenges detailed above, consent appeared to be a fairly straightforward process and on the whole readily given – both by organisations and individuals. However one must also always be mindful of the potential difficulties inherent in the 'informed' element of 'informed consent' – the need to communicate to participants (including both individuals as well as organisations) what the research is about and what it will mean for them. This is something that researchers themselves may even be unclear about, especially during the early stages of the research (see Akeroyd, 1984; Davies, 1999; Miller & Bell, 2002). Whilst I was honest and open about the nature and focus of my research, it was often difficult to explain this to participants in a meaningful way, and for the participants, 'lacking the researcher's knowledge and background' (Abbott & Sapsford, 1996:320), to fully comprehend what my research was about and what it would involve.

This was particularly the case in relation to the anthropological nature of my research; indeed, most of my informants seemed to equate research with the more 'formal' activities and processes of interviews and questionnaires. It was therefore necessary for me to be explicit, and frequently remind people, about the focus of my research, the nature of my methods and the extent of my research interest and activities. However, despite my best efforts, comments from staff on a number of occasions highlighted to me their difficulty in understanding the nature of my research. For example, on one occasion, nearing the end of my fieldwork, the Director of one the organisations commented to me that she couldn't quite work out how I was going to produce a thesis from the varied and eclectic data that I appeared to have gathered. However, I must

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[160] This was also important since the presence of other non-Ghanaian's (often young white individuals from the global north) as volunteers and interns, meant that I was often mistaken, and introduced, as such.

admit, that being relatively new to the discipline of anthropology myself, I too shared her concerns and was unable to provide a clear explanation.

Potential risks and benefits to participants

Another important ethical consideration is the potential benefits and risks to the organisations and individuals taking part in my research. In negotiating access to organisations, it was important for me to be clear about what I was able to offer (or not) in return. As pointed out above, as part of the process of participant observation, I was eager to get involved in the work of the organisations and assist in various activities – often involving fairly superficial and practical day to day tasks. However, my positionality as a white, Western researcher from Britain, might have led staff and organisations to imagine other assistance that I might be able to offer through my potential (if not actual) 'links into overseas networks of information, finance and logistical support' (Adams & Megaw, 1997:219). Indeed, there were a few occasions in which staff indicated that they thought I might be able to assist in some way with access to funding. I was therefore explicit throughout my research, including crucially while negotiating access, that I had no links to funding institutions and that I was unable to provide or access such support (see Laws et al., 2003; Sidaway, 1992).

On the flip side of this, a related concern is that of the potential of actually, or being perceived as, causing harm to those involved in our research. As the controversy surrounding the publication of Mosse's (2005) ethnography of a British aid project in rural India illustrates, this can be of particular concern in research concerning organisations and that focusing on development policy and practice. In this instance a vehement opposition to and criticism of Mosse's analysis and account was expressed by 'a number of key actors' (Mosse, 2005:ix) involved in the project, which was accompanied by a concern that it 'would seriously damage the professional reputation of individuals and institutions, and would harm work among poor tribals in India' (Mosse, 2006a:935). For those who rely heavily for work and funding on their reputation and how they are represented, such as organisations and also staff, this poses a particular concern (Mosse, 2001). While Mosse refuted such claims in relation to his own work, he also argued that: 'Surely it is the hope of most anthropologist writers that their books will provoke the discomfort of novel reflection', further contending that 'many aid professionals look to anthropologist for critiques that highlight problematic contradictions and offer support to their internal negotiations' (Mosse, 2006b:23).
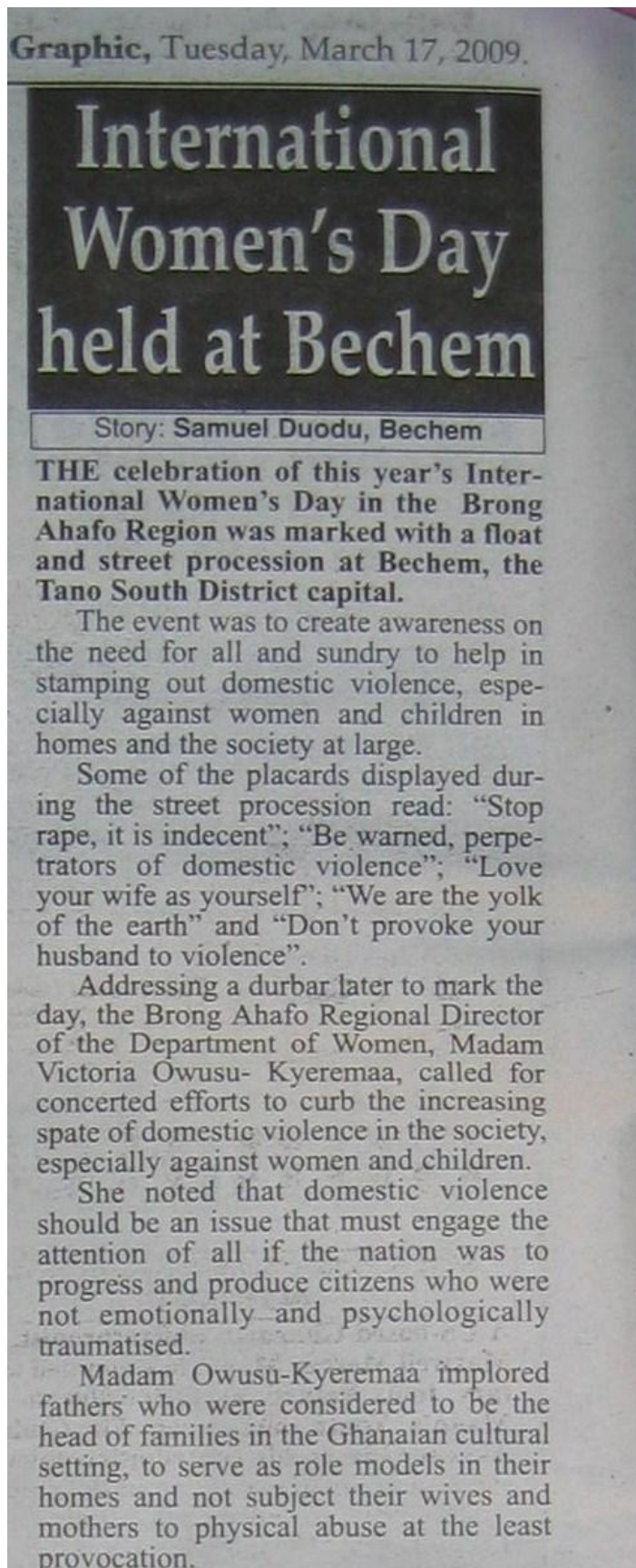
As I hope will be clear throughout this thesis and my analysis, it was not my aim within this research to critique the work of Ghanaian NGOs and to highlight problematic contradictions in gender work, but rather to uncover and outline 'emic understandings' of such work, and how this influences practice, in order to gain a deeper understanding of this work. Indeed, my aim is not to suggest, or point out ways in which, organisations have deviated from some external assessment of what they were 'meant to be doing', or how they have 'consent[ed] to dominant models – using the authorised scripts given them by projects – [and then made] of them something quite different' (Mosse, 2004:645). On the contrary I aim to uncover and respect the specific ways in which organisations, and individuals within them, understand the gender work that they are engaged in.

As such, it is hoped that my research will not actually, or be seen to, pose any harm or threat to the organisations and staff in question. However, there is nevertheless the potential that those of whom I write might object to and disagree with my analysis and conclusions, and be unhappy about being directly linked to these. There is also a risk that those reading my thesis might assume or infer some element of criticism which is not intended. For these reasons, amongst others, I took the decision to anonomise the organisations and staff involved.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Throughout this thesis, along with other outputs related to this research, I have taken steps to anonomise the organisations and individuals concerned; using pseudonyms and changing certain details relating to the organisations and individuals where necessary. However, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality is no easy task. While it is my hope and aim that the organisations and specific individuals concerned are anonymous to most, ensuring complete anonymity is likely to be a difficult, if not impossible task, as organisations and staff members are likely to be identifiable at the very least to others within this context and to others within the same organisation (an issue facing much research, see for example Davies, 1999; Sheenan, 1993). Steps have therefore been taken to ensure, as much as possible and feasible, confidentiality and anonymity; for example through the use of multiple pseudonyms and references to general staff positions, and slight alterations of stories. It could be argued that such an approach prevents a 'truthful account'. However, the details changed do not in any way affect the analysis, and were felt to be important in order to disguise those involved,

maintaining, where possible, their anonymity both within and outside of the organisations.

Appendix B: Daily Graphic Newspaper Article

Graphic, Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

International Women's Day held at Bechem

Story: Samuel Duodu, Bechem

THE celebration of this year's International Women's Day in the Brong Ahafo Region was marked with a float and street procession at Bechem, the Tano South District capital.

The event was to create awareness on the need for all and sundry to help in stamping out domestic violence, especially against women and children in homes and the society at large.

Some of the placards displayed during the street procession read: "Stop rape, it is indecent"; "Be warned, perpetrators of domestic violence"; "Love your wife as yourself"; "We are the yolk of the earth" and "Don't provoke your husband to violence".

Addressing a durbar later to mark the day, the Brong Ahafo Regional Director of the Department of Women, Madam Victoria Owusu- Kyeremaa, called for concerted efforts to curb the increasing spate of domestic violence in the society, especially against women and children.

She noted that domestic violence should be an issue that must engage the attention of all if the nation was to progress and produce citizens who were not emotionally and psychologically traumatised.

Madam Owusu-Kyeremaa implored fathers who were considered to be the head of families in the Ghanaian cultural setting, to serve as role models in their homes and not subject their wives and mothers to physical abuse at the least provocation.

She appealed to civil society groups and the various religious bodies to use their platforms, pulpits and forums to speak against domestic violence, which was gaining roots in the Ghanaian society in recently .

Speaking on the international theme for the celebrations: "Women and men united to end violence against Women and Girls", Madam Owusu-Kyeremaa advised women, especially wives to desist from subjecting their husbands to verbal abuse which had been the causes of physical abuse by some men.

She further advised young ladies to refrain from wearing provocative dresses that exposed the vital or sensitive parts of their bodies in order to avoid being a targets of sexual abuse and harassment.

Madam Owusu-Kyeremaa said last year, the Regional branch of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) recorded 18 defilement cases with all the perpetrators being men.

The Regional Minister, Mr Kwadwo Nyamekye-Marfo also bemoaned the inhuman treatment meted out to women who had lost their husbands, and called for a halt to such dehumanising cultural practice (widowhood rites) against women in the region.

He noted that as much as some men were guilty of abuse of women, he equally called on women to do away with all negative behaviours or acts that sometimes had been the root cause of violence against them.

Source: Daily Graphic 03/17/2009, pg 20 (Duodu, 2009)