Contestation and Compliance: Adolescent Girls' Attitudes toward Domestic Violence in Ghana

Ashley E. Frost
Department of Sociology
Population Research Institute
The Pennsylvania State University
907 Oswald Tower
University Park, PA 16802
afrost@pop.psu.edu

F. Nii-Amoo Dodoo
Department of Sociology
The Pennsylvania State University and
Regional Institute for Population Studies,
University of Ghana
913 Oswald Tower
University Park, PA 16802
duf2@psu.edu

Man 35, beheads wife over Easter convention
Apr 18 2006

The Independent

A 35 year old man Kwaku Asamoah from the Asunafo district of the Brong Ahafo region has beheaded his wife Afua Tawiah, 30 on Good Friday.

Sources close to the Independent newspaper say the couple who have been married for five years and are members of the Assemblies of God church were preparing to attend an Easter Convention at Wamanafo, a village about 10 kilometres from Biaso where they live.

The suspect Kwaku Asamoah changed his mind somewhere along the line.
His wife still wanted to go for the convention but Kwaku Asamoah refused to let her go and a quarrel ensued between the two.

The deceased on the eve of Good Friday informed her husband of her intention to attend the convention but again Kwaku Asamoah refused.

On Friday Morning according to sources Afua Tawiah raised the issue again and again her husband re-affirmed his refusal to allow her to attend.

At one point Kwaku Asamoah became so infuriated and entered their room.

Some of the people around thought he was tired of quarreling and was trying to stop it by leaving the scene but they turned out to be wrong when Kwaku Asamoah according to sources rushed outside again wielding cutlass.

He set on his wife and by the time he was through with her Afua Tawiah's head was severed from her body.

In the spring of 2006, a man in rural Ghana commits a horrific act of violence—beheading his wife during a heated argument—and sends families and communities into shock. He makes the local and national news, and is treated as a rogue male who has committed an incomprehensible crime. However, even though his actions are both atypical and extreme, there is more to be gleaned from this news story than simple deviance. Male domestic violence against women is both pervasive and invisible in sub-Saharan Africa, and while the murder of wives by beheading is thankfully rare, this man's actions are situated on a continuum of male dominance. As Connell argues in regard to rape, violence against women is "deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy. Far from being a deviation from social order, it is in a significant sense an enforcement of it" (1987:107). What connects this crime with the day-to-day interactions of Ghanaian couples is the sense of entitlement that many men feel over their wives—the sentiment that through the process of customary marriage (and the exchange of bridewealth payments from a man to his wife's family) men 'purchase' rights over their wives, and can treat them as they like (Bowman 2003).

We cannot be sure of the prevalence of domestic violence in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent, for women are often compliant with the 'discipline' wives receive from their husbands and do not report it. Attention to the issue often brings victim-blame and ridicule; many families would rather their daughters accept abuse than divorce and bring disgrace to the family (Ofei-Aboagye 1994). Data on the topic are also extremely difficult to collect. In an effort to bring light to the experiences of women who have suffered from domestic violence in Ghana, one study attempted to interview the 200-plus clients who had suffered from domestic violence and were receiving assistance at the Legal Aid

Clinic of the International Federation of Women Lawyers in Ghana. Even after significant assurances of anonymity, only 50 women agreed to participate—only those who felt as if they had "nothing to lose" from voicing their experience (Ofei-Aboagye King 2000:318).

It is within these constraints that I examine domestic violence in Ghana with the data available to me—29 in-depth interviews with Ghanaian girls between the ages of 10 and 15. These data present a unique opportunity to explore what girls have already learned about male dominance, marriage, and domestic violence even before entering into their own romantic relationships. As observers of gender inequities in their own homes, communities, and schools, respondents express well formulated ideas and opinions, many of which exceed in detail what would be expected of such a young age group. Conducted in two rural towns in southern regions of Ghana in 2001, respondents were strategically chosen to insure a breadth of attitudes was captured. The responses reveal that very few girls (even among those who fully reject violence) question the omnipotent structure of male dominance present within marriage in Ghana. Violence is seen as a tool (among many tools) to control women.

BACKGROUND

In sub-Saharan Africa, domestic violence in marriage receives little public attention and evokes few sanctions. However, a national study conducted in 1998 gives some idea of the widespread nature of the problem in Ghana. Coker-Appiah and Cusack (1999) found that one in three women had been slapped, beaten, or physically disciplined by a current or most recent partner, and only 5% had reported their injuries to the police or other public authority (Bowman 2003).

Compliant attitudes toward violence are prevalent in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent. In the survey of women seeking services through the Federation of Women Lawyers in Ghana, most respondents agreed that a certain level of physical violence was acceptable as long as women were not left with a visible injury (Ofei-Aboagye King 2000). A study of seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa found that as many as 89% of women thought violence was acceptable in at least one of the following situations: if a wife burns a meal, neglects the children, argues with her husband, leaves the house without notifying him, or refuses sex. Men's acceptance of such discipline was consistently lower in all six countries, with no more than 75% of men condoning violence in one or more of these scenarios (Rani et al. 2004). Compliant attitudes toward violence have also been internalized by younger generations of Ghanaians; a survey of 704 youth found that 73.4% of males believed there were legitimate reasons for men to beat their wives, and fully 72.7% of girls also felt the same (Glover et al. 2003).

Types of Domestic Violence

Much research has been done in the US to understand the gendered nature of domestic violence. While nationally representative surveys in the US have found that both men and women are perpetrators of violence against their spouses and partners, qualitative investigations of shelters and other social services for victims have argued that the vast majority of perpetrators are men. In an effort to reconcile these differences, Johnson and Ferraro (2000) describe four different forms of domestic violence, asserting that large surveys (for which there are significant refusal rates) are more likely to tap into the phenomenon of situational couple violence. Perpetrated by both men and women, situational couple violence stems from the specific circumstances (high levels of tension,

emotion, and anger) of an interaction between couples. However, studies conducted in shelters and through social services for victims access the phenomenon of intimate terrorism, in which one partner attempts to implement general control of the other through physical violence (Johnson and Ferraro 2000). Perpetrated almost exclusively by men,[1] intimate terrorism is supported by a male dominant framework that legitimizes the subordination of women.

Because most respondents in this study have not yet experienced romantic relationships (or partner-inflicted violence, for that matter) these data cannot bring light to the presence of situational couple violence versus intimate terrorism in Ghana. However, what is noteworthy is respondents' familiarity with violence as a means of control; nearly all respondents understand domestic violence as a strategy used by husbands to regulate and control their wives' behavior. As Johnson (forthcoming) explains, most Americans think of intimate terrorism when discussing domestic violence, as do these respondents.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Domestic Violence

Afke Komter (1989) argues that Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemonic ideology manifests itself as the "result of a slow social process in which consensus is developed between dominant and subordinate groups" (191). Subordinate groups adopt and accept the "values, symbols, beliefs, and opinions" set forth by the dominant group, internalizing the needs and interests of those in power as their own (Komter 1989:191). According to Van den Brink (1978), Gramsci's hegemonic ideology has three characteristics: the ideology is part of daily thought, the interests of the

[1]This generalization concerns heterosexual relationships. There is little good data for same-sex relationships.

dominant group are seen as the interests of all, and, finally, inconsistencies within the ideology are not generally noticed or acknowledged (as interpreted by Komter 1989). As Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) describe it, a hegemonic form of masculinity can be so omnipresent that it in fact becomes "mute," leaving few individuals to question its legitimacy (29).

Gender attitudes in Ghana adhere to these concepts; men and women alike accept that "men are infinitely superior to their wives and thus can treat them as they wish" (Ofei-Aboagye 1994:930). The hegemonic ideology surrounding domestic violence in Ghana frames the issue in the following terms: women 'misbehave' and need 'punishment,' while men's physical violence is necessary to gain control of their wives. Even though women suffer the significant consequences of violence, most do not question its presence in marriages and families. Therefore, Gramsci's concept of hegemonic ideology is a useful framework for examining Ghanaian attitudes toward domestic violence.

Another contribution that Gramsci's theory of hegemonic ideology makes to the discussion of domestic violence in Africa is linking inequities in the private sphere to the structural inequality established by the traditions and customs of marriage (Ives 2004). The concept of hegemonic ideology brings to light the social and cultural structures that reify gender inequality, much like the work radical feminists have done connecting culture, the institution of the family, and gendered power systems. However, due to a dearth of research in Africa by Africans, many of the cultural structures that reproduce gender inequality are placed in a 'black box,' and left untouched by research and theory

(Green 1999). Gramsci's theories provide a framework to explore the impact of culture on gender inequity in Africa.

The widespread acceptance of domestic violence in Sub-Saharan Africa among both men and women presents an opportunity to explore the impact of hegemonic gender ideology on the attitudes of youth. As discussed above, evidence suggests that a majority of both Ghanaian boys and girls hold accepting attitudes towards domestic violence (Glover et al. 2003). While Ghanaian boys may foresee additional power in adulthood through endorsing hegemonic gender ideology, Ghanaian girls stand to lose rights and autonomy as married women. For girls, the adoption of dominant group interests becomes a relinquishment of future personal power. Therefore, this paper explores the impact of hegemonic gender attitudes specifically on Ghanaian girls through the issue of domestic violence.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In the summer of 2000, Francis Dodoo (Penn State University) and Adomako Ampofo (University of Ghana) conducted a set of focus group discussions with male and female Ghanaian youth to explore their conceptions of gender throughout the life course. The University of Ghana team then developed a survey that was administered to 524 Ghanaian girls and boys attending junior secondary school (the equivalent of middle school) in the towns of Akropong and Mampong in the southern region of Ghana.[2] While Akropong is considered matrilineal (inheritance is passed through mothers) most families in Mampong practice patrilineal inheritance (where resources are passed through fathers). The towns share the same language and cultural attributes, and are located close enough

[2] The majority of respondents were from the Akan ethnic group, which comprises approximately half the population of Ghana. Because most Akan are matrilineal, this ethic group is often differentiated from other predominant groups that inherit patrilineally.

to the capital of Accra to be influenced by the urban environment, yet still retain many rural characteristics, including agricultural economies. Most respondents lived in one of these two towns, although some lived in smaller surrounding villages, traveling to Akropong or Mampong for school.

Responses to the survey were used to classify students into different gender-attitudinal categories. Utilizing 18 key survey questions[3] which addressed decision-making in marriage and dating as well as permission-seeking[4] for wives and husbands, respondents were organized as expressing gender-equal or male-dominant attitudes. Respondents who assigned women greater decision-making ability and asserted fewer differences in husband and wife permission-seeking were classified as gender-equal. Respondents who advocated strict differences in male and female decision-making as well as permission-seeking were considered male-dominant. An equal share of each attitudinal group was selected for in-depth interviews, and the sample included 28 boys and 29 girls.

In the summer of 2001, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the 57 selected students. The current study reports on the 29 interviews[5] conducted with the female respondents.[6] The interviews included a variety of topics, such as physical and intellectual differences between boys and girls, the distribution of household chores

[3] The original survey contained approximately 200 questions which respondents were able to complete in about one hour.
[4] Permission-seeking in this context included seeking spousal permission for: starting a new business, attending church, visiting friends and relatives, taking a child to the doctor, visiting a family planning clinic, and buying land with personal money. The survey treated each scenario individually.
[5] Interviews lasted about one hour, and were conducted in private on school grounds; only the respondent, interviewer, and notetaker were present. This protected both confidentiality and the comfort-level of respondents.
[6] Interviews with girls were conducted in local language by Adomako Ampofo (University of Ghana), and transcribed directly into English by a graduate student at the University of Ghana. Transcripts range from 10 to 30 pages in length. The boys were interviewed by a male interviewer.

between boys/girls and men/women, attitudes toward friendships and romantic relationships, differences between dating and marital gender roles, and the power dynamics and negotiation processes that occur between males and females at different life-stages. Respondents first discussed the gender dynamics they encountered in their daily lives, and then were asked to hypothetically consider their future romantic and marital relationships, and how they anticipate interacting with prospective boyfriends and husbands.

Age differences are important in Ghana; children do not frequently assert their opinions to adults, and sensitive topics such as sex and dating are not commonly discussed between generations. To insure that these cultural forces did not inhibit the interviews, the interviewer employed a strategy to reverse the power differential created by the adult interviewer/child respondent dynamic. When the interviewer had difficulty eliciting a clear opinion about domestic violence, she asked the respondent to role play a scenario in which she was a mother and her daughter was experiencing violence from her husband. Respondents then gave advice to their 'daughters,' speaking with greater authority than that afforded by their age. In accordance with feminist methodology (Naples 2003), this technique worked to dismantle the inequality between interviewer and respondent, and should be taken in consideration when reading the sections of text below.

All participants were interviewed at the end of their first year junior secondary school, and equivalent to the 6th grade in the United States. While 77% of girls in Ghana attend primary school,[7] only 32% of girls have the opportunity to attend secondary school (Colclough 2005). By nature of their secondary school attendance, this sample of

[7] This percentage is a gross enrollment rate; girls who are over- or under-age for their grade are included in this measure.

respondents has received more education than the majority of girls in Ghana. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 15 years (because of school disruptions, such an age distribution for this grade level is not uncommon in Ghana). Interviews were conducted with this age group because, while respondents had well-formed gender attitudes, peer influences on these attitudes were not yet a pervasive force. As a result, the data likely capture the familial (rather than peer) effects on the gender attitudes of girls.

Analysis was done in the tradition of Grounded Theory (Creswell 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Lofland and Lofland 1984). Interviews were first coded using the open coding technique, where interview text was organized by topic through a system of numerical, nested codes. Once the open coding process was complete, transcripts were imported into the qualitative software package, Nud*ist 6, and coded text was analyzed.

FINDINGS

As a result of the sampling technique, respondents reflect a wide range of attitudes toward domestic violence. Out of 29 respondents, 12 assert that men should never use violence against their wives or girlfriends. An additional group of 15 respondents believe that men may beat their wives under certain circumstances, which range from having an affair to not cooking dinner.[8] Although respondents can be divided into those who contest violence and those who support it, the differences between these two groups are remarkably indistinct. Among respondents who reject the use violence, all present additional strategies—from speaking with a wife's family to offering insults, threats and intimidation—for men to obtain obedience from their wives. Thus, even though respondents differ in attitudes toward domestic violence, none openly question

[8] Two respondents did not discuss domestic violence in their interviews, and therefore are not included in this analysis

male authority in the household. In the subsequent analysis, we will first explore the separate perspectives of those who accept violence and those who reject it. Then we will discuss how respondents as a whole view gender power dynamics in marriage. In conclusion, we explore respondents' understanding of the family influence on violence; some girls argue that parents want their daughters to be beaten by their husbands for the purpose of 'discipline,' while other parents refuse to condone such behavior.

Respondents Who Acceptance Violence

The group of 15 respondents who accept men's use of violence against their wives reflect an internalization of subordination as characterized by Gramsci. Through an unquestioned acceptance of male dominant norms, these respondents endorse violence against other women and, to some degree, accept the possibility of violence in their own future marriages. Although respondents have most likely adopted attitudes about domestic violence taught by their families and communities, the ubiquitous nature of the prevailing gender ideology leads some respondents to feel as though acceptance of violence stems from one's own personal beliefs. This respondent holds a strong opinion about violence even though she has never had a personal experience with it:

Re: If the wife doesn't respect, then he can beat her.
In: Is it okay to beat her?
Re: Yes.
In: Are you sure?
Re: Yes.
In: Who taught you that?
Re: I knew it by myself.
In: Have you seen a man beating his wife before?
Re: No. (id 161)[9]

Respondents who condone violence do not see such actions as a choice made by husbands, but rather a given response to women's 'misbehavior.' This respondent

[9] Respondents retain their id numbers from the original survey and range from 0 to 524.

characterizes beatings as a result of men's anger, which supersedes men's decision-making. She substantiates this with evidence that men often return to their wives with apologies after violence has occurred:

In: Those married, if the woman does not respect the man, can he beat her?
Re: No, he doesn't have to beat her, he should go and tell her mother and the mother will call her and advise her.
In: But why is it when she goes in for another man, he can beat her and would not go and tell her mother?
Re: Sometimes, he can get very angry so it will make him beat her.
In: Is it right or not right?
Re: Madam after he's beaten her, sometimes he will beg her.
In: He the man will beg the woman?
Re: Yes. (id 421)

On a more personal level, these respondents have their own calculated strategies as to how to condone the use of violence without becoming the victims of it themselves. The respondent below, after advocating violent control of women, asserts that she will not provoke her husband with disobedience. At the age of thirteen, her future behavior is already conditioned for the confines of marriage:

In: Can he beat her?
Re: Yes
In: I see. So if your husband beats you that way will you agree?
Re: I will not agree. So I will not do something that will make him beat me. (id 021)

This group of respondents who supports male violence is certainly not monolithic; while some assert that violence is only permissible as a last resort when a wife has been notified of her transgression repeatedly, others argue that first-time offenses permit violence. Generally however, respondents are more apt to accept violence when women have shown disrespect to their husbands or 'taken another man' (had an affair). For smaller issues such as not cooking or washing laundry, most respondents agree that women deserve to be warned multiple times before violence is used. This respondent

demonstrates the deference to husbands required in marriage for women to avoid violence:

In: Is there something that when the woman does it, she deserves to be beaten by the man?
Re: Yes.
In: What has the woman done to deserve that?
Re: She doesn't listen to what the man tells her.
In: If the man talks to the woman, and she doesn't listen?
Re: Yes.
In: The man can beat her?
Re: Yes. (id 440)

The following respondent explains that 'keeping too long in town'[10] is also a transgression worthy of a violent reaction; the following quote reveals the constraints placed on women's behavior as a result of the marriage process:

In: Is there something that when the woman does it, the husband can beat her?
Re: Yes.
In: Like what?
Re: Like when she goes for another man without his knowledge.
In: Okay, so when she does that, the man can beat her?
Re: Yes.
In: And what else?
Re: When she keeps too long in town.
In: The man can beat her?
Re: Yes.
In: Is it right for him to beat her?
Re: Yes.
In: Why?
Re: Because she is a married woman and has stayed too long in town. (id 421)

Respondents Who Reject Violence

The 12 respondents who do not endorse violence in marriage offer a range of strategies that men can employ to gain control of their wives. While the majority propose that men should speak with their wife's family when she does not obey (a more egalitarian strategy because wives could do the same when having difficulties with their

[10] 'Keeping too long in town' refers to a woman leaving her house for a public place, such as the market, and not returning within a time frame deemed appropriate by her husband.

husbands), other respondents suggest that men use calculated techniques of control and domination. The following quote demonstrates the more innocuous means for men to gain control; this respondent (one of the most adamantly against violence) gives a paternalistic explanation that men can in fact teach wives how to show respect:

In: So a man must not beat the wife?
Re: No.
In: Or there are some things that the woman does that the man can beat her?
Re: He should not beat her.
In: He should not beat her full stop.
Re: Yes.
In: Even if she does not respect he must not beat her?
Re: You have to tell her that, you have to show her how to respect. (id 172)

In contrast, the following respondent has a frighteningly detailed idea of how men control women even without the use of violence. For a girl of only eleven years of age, such empathy for male control suggests that she has an intimate understanding of husbands' power over their wives:

In: So if he says something and the woman does not listen and he says it again and the woman does not listen, what can the man do?
Re: He should correct her.
In: He corrected her and the woman did not listen.
Re: Then the man can frighten her and tell her that if she does not take care he will beat her.
In: He has to tell her that?
Re: That he will beat her and he should get close and insult her then she will be frightened.
In: So he can beat her?
Re: No he should not beat her but he should frighten her. (id 285)

Male Power in Marriage

Regardless of their acceptance or rejection of violence, all of the respondents in this sample express an implicit understanding that within marriage, women are 'under' their husbands. For example, in one girl's rejection of violence, she argues that: "the man married the woman to help him [with housework] he did not say he was marrying her in

order to beat her" (id 287). Even within this contestation of male power, she endorses women's obligations regarding household labor. The following respondent demonstrates the strong contrast between violence in dating and marital relationships; while a wife can be beaten for not cooking, a girlfriend can go after another man without violent consequences:

In: Okay, if the man comes home and the [wife] has not cooked, can he beat her?
Re: He may warn her not to repeat that again … but if she does not comply to it … if he warns her and she repeats it, then he has the power to.
In: To beat her when she repeats it?
Re: Yes.
In: Is it right?
Re: It is right.
In: So if your husband does that, will you like it?
Re: Because that is why I married him.
In: That is why you married him?
Re: Please yes.
In: So those who are not yet married but are in a relationship, if they've never had sex but the man gets wind … that the woman has gone to have sex with another man, can he beat the woman?
Re: He cannot beat her.
In: Why?
Re: Because he's not married her yet so he has no control over her.
In: He [doesn't have] control over her?
Re: Yes.
In: But once he marries her, he can do it?
Re: Yes, he has control.
In: Whatever he likes, he can do to her?
Re: Yes. (id 327)

What imbues marriage with such significance? As argued by Fortes (1962), bridewealth payments in Africa play a significant role in transferring power over women from their natal households to their husbands. As this respondent explains, men have little power over women they have not married:

In: So if the [wife] doesn't cook and wash for the man, he can beat her?
Re: Please yes.

In: Okay, lets assume they are not yet married, they have plans to marry but the man has not yet performed the customary rites. In this case, too, if the woman does not cook or wash for the man, can he beat her?
Re: Please no.
In: Why?
Re: Because he's not yet married the woman so he cannot touch her. (id 501)

The Familial Role in Marital Violence

Respondents not only point to marriage and bridewealth payments as a justification of male violence, but also explain how extended families facilitate violence. As described in the methods section, in order to flesh out the attitudes of respondents, the interviewer utilized a role playing technique through which respondents pretended to be mothers of girls who were being beaten by their husbands. This strategy not only helped the interviewer to assess whether respondents condoned violence or not, but also gave great insight into the roles that mothers (and families) play in their daughter's marital struggles. For this respondent, as a mother she would advise her daughter to be completely submissive in order to avoid violence from her husband:

In: So if it is your daughter whose husband slaps her, will you allow her to divorce the husband?
Re: I will not let her divorce the man; I will let relatives talk to the man.
In: What if he slaps her again next time?
Re: I will still let him be talked to.
In: And if number three, he slaps her again?
Re: Okay, if number three he slaps her again and something happens to her . . .
In: Nothing happens to her.
Re: Nothing happens to her?
In: Her ears become red.
Re: If nothing happens to her, I will advise her not to do anything to provoke the man. (id 174)

Another respondent explains how she would pacify a violent situation that involves a daughter who was not cooking for her husband, but condones a violent punishment if her daughter were beaten for having an affair:

In: So if it was your daughter, and she didn't cook and the husband beat her, what would you do?
Re: I will ask my daughter why she did not cook for her husband.
In: Yes.
Re: I can also give her money and everything to cook for her husband.
In: She says she is feeling lazy.
Re: I will also apologize to her husband [and say] that he should forgive her and if she does anything like that again he should not mind her but should come and report her to me.
In: But he should not beat her?
Re: Please I will say he should not beat her.
In: But if your daughter sleeps with another man and her husband beats her, that one you will not say anything?
Re: Please I will not say anything. (id 324)

This respondent explains how parents and family can act like gatekeepers for husband's violence; once parents have given permission to their wives' husbands, violence can be uses as a means of control as the husband sees fit:

In: Is it right for him to beat her?
Re: Please it's not right to do that.
In: It's not right to do what?
Re: It's not right to beat the wife.
In: But you said if she does not respect, he could beat her?
Re: He has to go and inform the wife's parents first.
In: And if the parents give him permission to beat her, he can beat her?
Re: Yes the parents can say that if she does it again, he can do anything he likes to her. (id 407)

During the role-playing of mother's perspectives, respondents once again express empathy for the husband's dominant standpoint, in adherence with Gramsci's hegemonic ideology. Even among these girls who are soon to be wives themselves, some respondents seem to have an easier time conceptualizing the perspective of a husband trying to control his wife than a wife who is attempting to rebel:

In: So, if your daughter marries and the husband comes to tell you that he's beaten your daughter because your daughter does not listen to what he says …
Re: There must be a reason for beating her.
In: Pardon?
Re: Maybe she's done something that really hurt him and that is why he beat her.

In: So?
Re: So I will call my daughter and speak to her for her to stop.
In: So when she does it the second time, can the husband beat her?
Re: Please yes. (id 440)

Families Contest Violence

Within these data, however, there is some evidence that families can offer women protection from violence. They can refuse husbands the right to beat their wives, suggesting that there is some larger social control on men's violence:

In: If they are married, can the man beat the wife?
Re: He must go and tell the wife's family.
In: But he shouldn't beat her or he can beat her?
Re: He must go to tell the wife's family otherwise if he beats her and the wife goes to tell her family, it might bring trouble. (id 240)

There is evidence that families not only contest violence during the course of daughters' marriages, but they can also be influential in building daughters' own personal beliefs surrounding violence. For this respondent, one of the most empowered and outspoken in the sample, her mother disavows violence inflicted by husbands, but contests women's violence as well.

In: So as for beating, the man has no right to do that?
Re: Yes please. My mother has told me that even in marriage the man has no right to beat the woman and the woman has no right to beat the man. If he beats her, she can report to her parents and they will advise him. (id 443)

DISCUSSION

Utilizing 29 in-depth interviews with Ghanaian girls between the ages of 10 and 15, this paper explores girls' attitudes toward domestic violence and the social structures that support and inhibit violence in marriage. Two groups of respondents emerged in this sample; fifteen respondents accept domestic violence as viable part of marriage while 12 respondents contest domestic violence in marriage. Remarkably, the differences between

these two groups are overshadowed by respondents' nearly universal endorsement of male power in marriage. Due to the strategic recruitment of respondents utilized for this study (respondents were individually selected to insure a broad range of gender attitudes were present in the sample) findings cannot be generalized to a larger population of Ghanaian female youth. However, the purposive nature of the sample becomes the strength of the research; among both groups of respondents none explicitly question the power that men hold over women within marriage. Even those who consistently reject domestic violence recount detailed strategies that men can use to gain control over women. Therefore, in this context, violence is seen as a tool (among many tools) for achieving control over women.

Respondents also discuss the role that families play in preventing and facilitating violence. Families are central to domestic violence; parents can give sons-in-law permission to beat their daughters, leaving women virtually no means of escaping violent relationships. On the other hand, if parents are against the use of violence, they can exercise some authority over their daughter's husband and prevent the behavior.

Employing Gramsci's concept of hegemonic ideology in this discussion of domestic violence reveals internalization of dominant interests among a majority of respondents who agree that violence can be used if a wife 'misbehaves.' The significant minority who contest violence may reflect the unique sampling strategy, or in fact suggest that violence in marriage may be moving outside the purview of the dominant ideology with this new generation of Ghanaian youth. Further research is required to make this distinction. More interestingly, however, is respondent compliance with male power in marriage, which remains unquestioned by all respondents. These young girls

anticipate relinquishing autonomy and rights when entering marriage and they do not contest this process. Therefore, male dominance in marriage adheres to the tenets of hegemonic ideology set forth by Gramsci, Komter (1989) and Van den Brink (1978).

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