

Ghanaian Men and the Performance of Masculinity: Negotiating Gender-Based Violence in Contemporary Ghana

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Abstract : Masculinity studies have gained much purchase globally in recent decades, especially the sense in which they have produced discursive space for interdisciplinary investigations. In the light of this, there is increasing consensus among commentators that different masculinities co-exist within a particular social space. There is also a growing recognition and awareness of the merits in examining the conceptual underpinnings of masculinity (especially hegemonic masculinity) its variously contested meanings, and values, and how it contributes to violent behaviours by men. The consequences of hegemonic masculinity and its violent and traumatic impacts on men and women have been evident. The emerging call to imagine more egalitarian and complex masculinities among men has been at the centre of various discussions on the fight against violence. Some theorists argue that this violence emanates from men's drive to live up to impossible ideals of "masculinity." Seeking to make the connections between masculinity and gender-based violence, this paper discusses the imperative and possibilities of engaging men/boys as key actors in the campaign against violence. It is worth re-examining the ways in which men's embodiment and performance of dangerous masculinities contribute towards violence. This paper therefore argues that empowering men to understand the implications of certain behaviours is the key in an attempt to arrest violence and its traumatic cost. This paper is situated within the thesis that there is a relationship between men's embodiment and performance of dominant forms of masculinities, on the one hand, and violence against women and other men, on the other. Based on research conducted in northern Ghana on domestic violence, it is the argument of this paper that in order to contain violence against women, conditions of gender construction need to be problematized in a manner that will transform fundamental understandings of gender relations in society.

Keywords : violence against women, masculinities, Ghana, gender

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