

DENNIS PUORIDEME

Aalborg University

puorideme@hum.aau.dk

**Abstract**

*Previous studies of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes employed an ethnographic approach to investigate the gendered impacts of these programmes on women in different contexts and found that these programmes reinforce gender inequality and burden women. This paper investigates a CCT programme by focusing on the intersecting gendered practices of the LEAP CCT programme authorities in Ghana alongside the gendered practices of the programme community focal persons (males and females) in the specific context of the Asante matrilineal society. The paper uses an ethnographic-based critical discourse study methodology inspired by Foucault's notions of discourse and power and Fairclough's approach to critical discourse studies. Thus, it draws on modality and interactional control features to investigate the accounts of social actors in the domains of the programme and the specific local community. The analysis demonstrates that the LEAP CCT programme reproduces unequal gender power relations in Asante matrilineal society and that women community focal persons in the Asante matrilineal society reproduce and assert unequal gender relations in the CCT programme within Asante society. In addition, it reveals that the reproduction and assertion of unequal gender relations in the translation of the CCT programme excludes the voices and articulations of men in specific contexts.*

**Key words:** Power, gender, discourse, CCT programme, matrilineal society

**1. Introduction**

There are many studies about public social protection programmes, particularly conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes in developing countries. Among these studies, many have focused on documenting the impacts of these programmes on poverty reduction (Barrientos 2014; Devereux 2002). In addition, many studies have documented the positive (Bonilla et al. 2017; de Brauw et al. 2014; Scarlato et al. 2016) and negative impacts of these programmes on recipients, especially women (Bradshaw 2008; Bradshaw and Víquez 2008; Molyneux 2006). Other recent studies have focused on the impact of the practices of programmes on female caregivers (Cookson 2016; Corboz 2013; Gil-García 2016; Nagels 2016). However, only a few studies, such as that of Farah Quijano (2009), examine the impact of these programmes on gender equality while explicitly taking into account the specific socio-political context. As a result, the socio-political and cultural contexts of the locations or communities in which these programmes

are translated, and aspects of power are often barely addressed. Thus how these programmes are implemented, and the practices of programme authorities and men and women in specific cultural settings, such as matrilineal societies, are under researched. In such societies, the assumption of male power and authority in traditional social relations and settings is problematic (Puorideme 2019).

As many studies of social protection CCT programmes document the gendered impacts of these programmes, I would like to contribute to this field of study and provide understanding about power and gender discourses by investigating the language use and meaning-making practices of men and women – programme authorities and community focal persons – in the translation of these programmes in a matrilineal society. Specifically, this article examines the practice of constituting women in the translation of the programme in Asante society. Thus, the main question this article addresses is, how do the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) CCT programme authorities and community focal persons of the programme constitute and privilege women in the Asante matrilineal society? This article argues that the concrete practices of the LEAP CCT programme authorities and the community focal persons (men and women) shape gender discourses and practices in the situated context.

The article begins with an overview of the LEAP cash transfer programme and a description of the cultural context of the Asante matrilineal society of Ghana. I then review existing studies about gender and CCT programmes, explicitly positioning this article to fill the gap in research. Next, I detail the theoretical point of departure based on Foucault's notion of discourse and power and Fairclough's approach to discourse as practice, elucidate the ethnographic-discourse study methodology (Krzyzanowski 2011, 2017; Smart 2007) and describe the analytical framework. The analysis of data is organised in two parts. I analyse the accounts and practices of the programme authorities in the first part and the accounts and practices of the community focal persons in the second. The article ends with a discussion of the findings and conclusion.

## ***2. Translating the LEAP CCT Programme***

The LEAP cash transfer programme of Ghana is a government social protection CCT programme that focuses on providing cash grants, and recently health insurance, to extremely poor persons in poor households across the country. In CCT programmes, the recipients must comply with certain conditions tied to the receipt of the cash grants (Barrientos 2014). The LEAP programme began in 2008 and is currently ongoing. It uses both community targeting and proxy means test (PMT) mechanisms to select poor persons and households (Kidd 2017) as recipients. The programme authorities initiate and complete the process of selecting poor persons and enrolling their carers or caregivers in the programme to receive the cash on their behalf. In doing so, the authorities of the programme interact with the caregivers of poor persons and households in local communities directly, through visits, and indirectly, through the practices of the programme secretariat at the national level (Puorideme 2018).

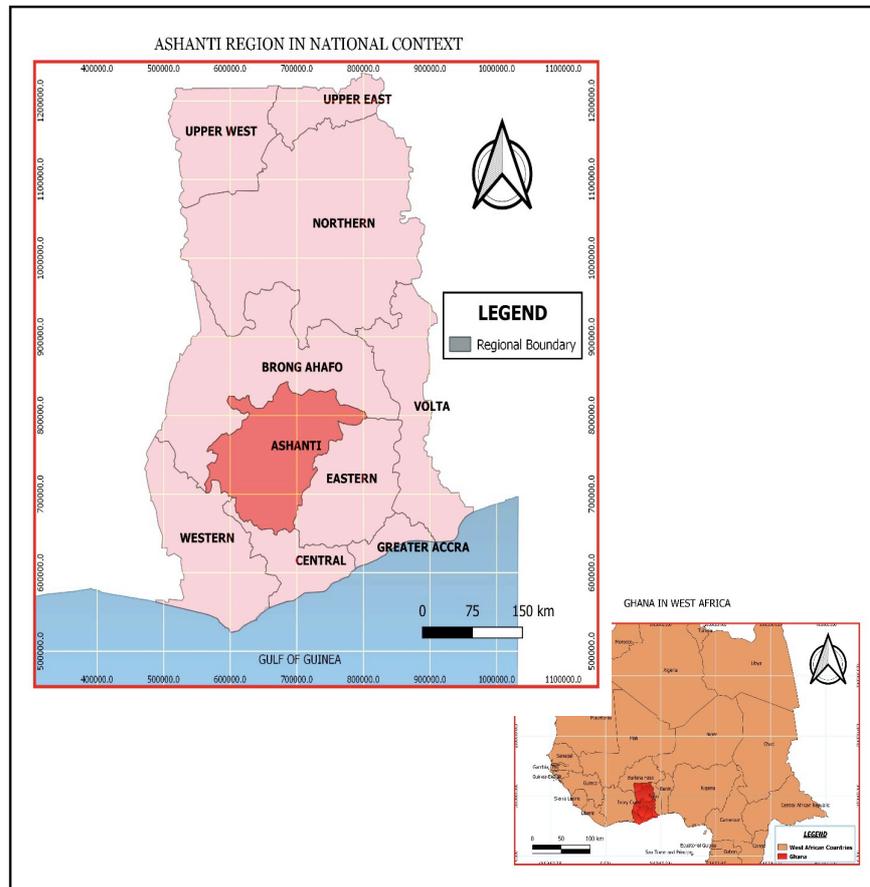
Consequently, the practices of the programme authorities at the national level intersect with the practices of men and women in the communities at the local level. Ghana's society is complex and multi-ethnic, in the sense that western social organisation and values intersect with traditional social relations, values and structures, such as kinship and family systems (Nukunya 2016; Puorideme 2018). With 'multi-ethnic society', I refer to the ethnic groups and cultures through which local communities are organised. In these local communities, the practices of men and women are contingent on the structures and values of kinship and family systems. In Ghana, the organisation of social life in local communities is based on the values and practices of kinship systems, and in large cities, traditional kinship relations persist and influence social relations (Nukunya 2016). One of these unique ethnic groups and societies in which the government translates the LEAP CCT programme is the Asante matrilineal society in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

### **3. Contextualising the Asante Matrilineal Society**

The Asante ethnic group is made up of Twi-speaking people of the Akan meta-ethnicity located in the Ashanti region of southern Ghana, and has a centralised traditional political system in which the king and chiefs exercise authority over their subjects (Nukunya 2016). The matrilineal descent system in this society is noted for its role in the organisation of economic and socio-political relationships. Even though this practice has been 'subject to intervention and qualification by competing claims of patriliney' (McCaskie 2002: 167), accession to the throne of traditional political leadership is governed by the practices of matrilineal descent and kinship relations (Nukunya 2016). Thus, in the local communities of Asante society, is 'the system through which the Akan "realized" novel social relations of production based on agriculture' (McCaskie 1981: 483). Thus, for McCaskie (1981), the Asante matriliney is an ideological construct that seeks to enforce and maintain the ordered structure of social relations and to foster economic efficiency through material accumulation and appropriation. Consequently, 'residential and financial arrangements attached to marriage, parenthood and matrilineal kinship has remained a consistent characteristic of the Asante family system' (Clark 1999: 66). Figure 1 below is a spatial illustration of the Asante society in the Ashanti region of Ghana in the West African subregion.

In the Asante matrilineal society and family system, individuals are born into their mother's family (*abusua*), and the belief is that the woman passes her blood (*mogya*) to the child while the father passes his spirit (*ntoro*) to the child (Clark 1999; Nukunya 2016). In that way, blood relations are traced through the mother's family, and even though individuals may have close relations with the maternal kin of their fathers, these relations are not obligatory (Clark 1999). Thus, 'A father is only a husband, and husbands come and go; they are passing winds bearing seed. They change, they disappear entirely, and they are replaced' (Armah 1970, quoted in Clark 1999: 72). Relationships between mothers and their children are stronger, and the intense negotiations between men and women in the spheres of lineage and social relations reveal and affirm the value of the matrilineal descent system in contemporary Asante society and family (Clark 1999; Puorideme 2019). Even

though the matrilineal system assures loose relations between children and their fathers, the maintenance and care of the children is the father's responsibility. Within households, Clark (1999) observed that husbands and wives negotiate daily maintenance fees, which are paid to the women to take care of the home while the man pays for other expenses related to education and health.



**Figure 1.** A map of Ghana and West Africa, highlighting the Ashanti region where Asante people live

#### **4. State of the Art**

As mentioned above, there are a growing number of studies in the field of social protection CCT programmes in developing countries. However, in this study, the review of existing studies on social protection CCT programmes is limited to those studies that address gender and power issues in the translation of CCT programmes in specific contexts. Many studies have addressed the issues of gender in social protection CCT programmes, including Molyneux (2006), Bradshaw (2008), and Holmes and Jones (2013). In the context of this paper, the most relevant studies are the following: Cookson (2016), Corboz (2013), Gil-García (2016), Nagels (2016) and Farah Quijano (2009). These five studies are relevant because they are not only related to gender, but they are also explicitly ethnographic-based studies, matching the methodology of this paper, with the exception of Nagels (2016) and Farah Quijano (2009), who broadly characterised their work as

qualitative studies. Thus, the review of these studies is important. It is focused on the practices of CCT programmes and gender (men and women) in specific contexts.

#### 4.1 CCT Programmes and Gender in Specific Contexts

CCT programmes and gender have been discussed widely, but very few studies address context-specific issues. In this section, I detail the methodologies and the findings of the five studies listed above. Although they all used ethnography, specifically, and qualitative methodologies in broader terms (Smart 2007), the application of the specific method varies in these studies. Drawing on Smith (2005), Cookson (2016: 1192) argues that institutional ethnography is 'well suited to research on CCTs because they are top-down interventions'. In her work, she uses participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and textual analysis in the broader sense. For Cookson (2016: 1193), institutional ethnography and these specific methods allowed her to connect policy decisions with the actions of programme managers 'and the experiences of CCT recipients'.

Gil-García (2016), on the other hand, combined participant observation and structured and semi-structured interviews with surveys, and studied the *Prospera* programme's gender equality impact in La Gloria, Mexico. In a similar ethnographic study, Corboz (2013: 64) used storytelling to explore 'the everyday realities of poor single mothers' in the squatter communities of Uruguay who are the recipients of a CCT programme. Several other studies, such as Nagels (2016) and Farah Quijano (2009), have used ethnographic or qualitative methods in one way or another. Although Nagels (2016: 480) and Cookson (2016: 1192) broadly mention 'discourse analysis' and 'textual analysis', respectively, as complementary methods, their studies demonstrated minimal discourse or textual analysis and did not outline any specific analytical framework. Therefore, the ethnographic-based critical discourse study methodology and analytical framework of this paper is a novel way of researching CCT programmes in relation to gendered practices and power in specific socio-political contexts.

The studies mentioned above have documented the practices and consequences of CCT programmes for the recipients of the cash grants, particularly women. Cookson (2016: 1201) argues that the imposition of 'shadow conditionalities' on women participating in a CCT programme in Peru reinforces inequality and creates new forms and moments of exclusion for women. Not only are women excluded, the conditionalities of CCT programmes limit 'some women's participation in civic and public life' and reproduces women's dependency on men (Corboz 2013: 64). Similarly, Gil-García (2016: 447, 462) points out that the *Prospera* CCT programme in Mexico uses coercive practices to mute women's voices, which 'reinforces gender and racial hierarchy, and fosters community division'. He suggests that the practices of these programmes lead to the reconstitution and realignment of local norms and practices in line with the programme. The oscillation between traditional gender norms in specific contexts and contemporary notions of gender (Farah Quijano 2009), particularly the notions of the female's role as caregiver, and the conditions of these programmes tend to 'reinforce maternalistic and coercive practices' (Nagels 2016: 479). Adding to

the findings of the studies above, this paper investigates the ways the LEAP CCT programme authorities and the community focal persons constitute and privilege women and shape gender discourse within the socio-political context of the Asante matrilineal society in Ghana. In the following two sections, I detail the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this paper.

## **5. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical point of departure of this paper is Foucault's conception of discourse and power (Foucault 1980, 1982, 2002b). In this section, I give an explanation of the concepts of discourse and power as the theoretical underpinnings of the article. These concepts provide theoretical anchorage and illuminate the ways in which regimes of practices (Dean 2010), such as the LEAP cash transfer programme, produce subjects at the intersection of forms of knowledge (Death 2013) and translate governmental rationalities through these subjects (Miller and Rose 2008; Puorideme 2018).

Many scholars have defined and described the concept of discourse in many ways (Fairclough 1992; Foucault 2002a; Gee 2014; van Leeuwen 2008), making it unnecessary to reiterate them. For purposes of illustration, Gee (2014: 47) describes discourse as 'a characteristic way of saying, doing, and being' and makes a distinction between "'big D" Discourse' and 'little "d" discourse'. According to Gee (2014: 222, 226) the 'big "D" Discourse' refers to 'ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity', whilst the 'little "d" discourse' refers to 'any instance of language in use or any stretch of spoken or written language'. For Fairclough (1992: 62-63), discourse refers to 'spoken or written language in use' and 'a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables'; thus, 'discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as mode of representation'. It is of considerable relevance in this article to revisit and bring to bear Foucault's notions of discourse and power. Foucault (2002a: 54) defined and described discourse in many ways, including his notion of discourse as signs and 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. For Foucault (2002a: 131) practices are discursive, thus he uses the discursive practice concept to refer to 'a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space'.

However, Fairclough (1992) has criticised Foucault's notion of discourse as one-sided and for neglecting practice and struggle, which have the capacity for social change or transforming society. For Fairclough (1992: 57), practices 'mean real instances of people doing or saying or writing things'; thus, he argued for a textually oriented analysis of discourses towards social transformation. Fairclough (2003: 23) points out that discourses are 'social events' and 'social practices' embedded in the structures of every human society. There is a considerable and fertile connection among discourse, language and power (Fairclough 2015; Foucault 2002b) in terms of how social actors perform and accomplish actions and practices in everyday life.

Power traverses the spheres of social life, but ‘there is no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter’ (Foucault 2002c: 340). For Foucault, power is not necessarily destructive, but is a productive resource for disciplining and regulating individuals’ actions and practices in society (Foucault 1980, 1995). According to Foucault (1980: 39) ‘power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives’. In its relational form, Foucault (2002c: 337) argues that power operates through an ‘ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one another’. Similarly, Foucault (2002c: 340) points out that ‘power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures’. Thus, power is produced and made visible in a relational form, in which an individual or groups of individuals act on the conduct of others within regimes of practices. In that way, a relation of power implicates resistance and counter-conducts or struggle between social actors and creates opportunities for social transformation (Fairclough 1992). Foucault (2002b) coined the term ‘governmentality’ to refer to the techniques and calculated practices of institutions that make possible relations of power in order to shape their conduct. In a nutshell, discourse and power construct and constitute social relations and social reality (Fairclough 1992) in the sense that ‘power and knowledge directly imply one another’ (Foucault 1995: 27).

To sum up the discussion above, this paper does not draw distinct boundaries between ‘big “D” Discourses’ and ‘little “d” discourses’ (Gee 2014); rather, Foucault’s (2002a) notion of discourse and Fairclough’s (1992) descriptions of discourse as language in use and as a form of social action are useful for constructing an analytical framework to investigate the constitutive aspects of discourses and situated meaning-making practices. The combination of Foucault and Fairclough’s notions of discourse is important to maintain a balance between the constitutive role of discourse and the analysis of concrete instances of practices and language in use. Thus, this paper incorporates a textually oriented analysis of accounts and practices of the programme authorities and the community focal persons of the LEAP CCT programme in Asante matrilineal society.

## **6. Methodology**

Many existing studies of social protection CCT programmes have broadly characterised their methodologies as qualitative, but only a few, such as Cookson (2016), Gil-García (2016) and Corboz (2013), have explicitly characterised their research as ethnographic studies. The methodology of this study is an ethnographic-based critical discourse study (ECDS), which is novel in the literature of social protection CCT programmes in developing countries. An ethnographic-based critical discourse study as a methodology draws on the complementarity and synergy between ethnography and critical discourse studies and explores problem-oriented practices such as power and contestations or struggles in specific social contexts (Krzyżanowski 2011). The methodological focus of an ECDS is not necessarily only the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of ethnographic studies in situated contexts, but also combines the

ethnographic ‘how’ with the ‘how’ of critical discourse studies (CDS) in order to explore social relations and practices in a situated context (Krzyżanowski 2011). An ethnographic critical discourse study approach is applicable to policy-making and political organisation contexts as well as settings concerned with the ‘production of regulatory meanings’ (Krzyżanowski 2017: 246). By this, I refer to meanings that arise on the basis of social actors’ ‘discursive practices’ and co-production of meanings in specific contexts.

Thus, rather than drawing a dividing line between participant and non-participant observation and using either of these two ethnographic methods, Krzyżanowski (2011: 233) identifies ‘ethnographic observation’ at the intersection of the two methods as a key method of ECDS-oriented research. The ethnographic observation method embraces many ethnographic methods of data collection, such as in-depth interviews with individuals or groups, focus group discussions, and audio and video recordings of naturally occurring interactions in specific contexts, among others. The data in this paper is taken from the data I collected for my PhD project in Ghana in 2017.

The specific data for this paper comprises conversation and interaction from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and video recordings of naturally occurring interactions. In this paper I use one of the in-depth interviews I conducted with a programme officer in Accra, as well as one of the focus group discussions I had with eight community focal persons (two females and six males) in a local community in the Ashanti region. In addition, I followed programme officers to a local community to do video recording of an interaction between programme officers and a community focal person. The data excerpts were selected on the basis of relevant thematic chunks. By this, I refer to data excerpts that are rich in aspects of gendered practices and power struggles embedded in the actions of the programme authorities and community focal persons at the level of the programme and the socio-political context of Asante society. The community focal persons are the liaisons between the LEAP CCT programme and the caregivers of households in the local community who are the recipients of the cash grants. The transcription of conversation and talk-in-interaction is done in the style of a conversation analysis in order to open up the talk and interaction to detailed investigation of the discourse features. Conversations in the native language are transcribed in two lines, that is, a transcription of the indigenous language in the first line and the English-language translation beneath it. The native language in the local community is Asante-Twi.

The analysis in this paper focuses on the accounts, actions and meaning-making practices of the programme authorities and the community focal persons at the intersection of the programme and the gender discourse of Asante society. Power and discourse construct social identities, relations and systems of knowledge. For Fairclough (1992: 64),

These three effects correspond respectively to three functions of language and dimensions of meaning which coexist and interact in all discourse – what I shall call the ‘identity’, ‘relational’, and ‘ideational’ functions of language. The identity function relates to the ways in which social identities are set up in discourse, the relational function to how social relationships between discourse participants are enacted and negotiated, the ideational function to ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations.

This paper draws on *modality*, *evaluation* and *interactional control* (Fairclough 1992, 2003) as analytic features to investigate aspects of power relations and gendered discourse within CCT programmes and practices. In line with the theoretical framework presented above, according to Fairclough (2003: 164, 172), *modality* involves the commitment people make in their text or talk ‘with respect to what is true and what is necessary’, while *evaluation* refers to statements about ‘desirability’ or ‘undesirability’, and ‘good’ or ‘bad’. He identifies two types of modality (‘epistemic’ and ‘deontic’) that are important in the context of this study. For Fairclough (2003: 167-168), ‘epistemic’ modality refers to an ‘author’s commitment to truth’, and ‘deontic’ modality refers to an ‘author’s commitment to obligation/necessity’. In addition, Fairclough (1992: 158) notes that modality is a dimension of grammar, ‘which corresponds to the interpersonal function of language’, and includes the identity and relational functions of language.

The features of interactional control are important in the structure of text or talk-in-interaction in the sense that they ensure the organisation of interaction, making it possible for interactional control to be exercised collaboratively by participants. According to Fairclough (1992: 152),

The interactional control conventions of a genre embody specific claims about social and power relations between participants. The investigation of interactional control is therefore a means of explicating the concrete enactment and negotiation of social relations in social practice.

Fairclough listed and stressed the importance of a number of interactional control features participants can exercise in the organisation of text or talk-in-interaction, but in this paper, I focus on *turn-taking*, *formulation*, *topic control* and *ethos* (Fairclough 1992). In this paper, these features are relevant for analysing data excerpts from naturally occurring interaction and focus group interviews to account for the production of power relations, the reproduction of gendered discourses and contestations in CCT programme practices in the situated context.

## **7. Analysing Power Relations and Gendered Practices**

This section focuses on analysing aspects of power relations by investigating the practice of constituting women at the intersection of the LEAP CCT programme and the gender discourse of the Asante matrilineal society. In doing so, it aims to make the relation of power and struggle at the intersections of the gendered practices of these two domains explicit. The analysis is divided into two parts. First, I analyse the gendered practices of the LEAP CCT programme; second, I analyse the gendered practices of the community focal persons in relation to the practices of the programme and the gendered discourse of the specific context in which they live.

### **7.1 Gendered Practice: ‘People Have Advocated We Use Females’**

In this section, I analyse the concrete account of a programme officer (PO) in relation to the discursive practices of the LEAP CCT programme from an in-depth interview conducted at the programme secretariat by the researcher

(R). The discussion in the interview centred on the gendered practices of the programme and on privileging women caregivers in the translation of the LEAP CCT programme in communities across the country. The excerpt below relays the account of one of the interviews I did.

### Excerpt 1

1 R: do you prefer any of them  
2 like you prefer female to be a caregiver or male  
3 PO: there have been instances where  
4 people have advocated we use females  
5 HAHAHA  
6 R: fnot you but people  
7 PO: fye:s  
8 R: who are those people  
9 PO: er er well our past minister was advocating that=  
10 R: the minister  
11 PO: =yes(.)the past  
12 R: the past one  
13 PO: yes  
14 R: that you must use  
15 PO: we try and get females like the women  
16 R: okay  
17 PO: to be caregivers ok but then like i said  
18 when we go we do: not like ask  
19 we do not erm put it on you  
20 that we want a female to be a caregiver  
21 we just ask you  
22 who do you want to be a caregiver  
23 so based on your answer male of female  
24 we are ok with it we do not try to er force you  
25 to maybe get a male or female as a caregiver  
26 but we do not try to er sway or force you  
27 to get a male or female as a caregiver  
28 R: and looking at the er the er cultural settings  
29 PO: yes  
30 R: like you rightly mentioned are there any issues  
31 apart from the minister's insistence that  
32 you use er er females=  
33 PO: >actually<  
34 R: =taking the north and the south  
35 because [of the cultural ] dynamics  
36 PO: [okay actually with]  
37 actually from investigations and then fieldwork  
38 as well as interaction with the households  
39 we realised that the women manage the money better  
40 than the men  
41 R: uhuh(.)from your monitoring reports  
42 PO: yes(.)from my reports we realised that  
43 the women really manage the money  
44 better than the men ok(.)so i believe  
45 that is how come the minister was advocating  
46 that we may we try and then maybe  
47 let them use females or the women as caregivers  
48 i'm sure that is the angle she was coming from  
49 R: okay  
50 PO: yeah

As social relations and reality are products of discourse, a close observation of the transcript excerpt above shows how the programme officer (PO) sets up relations of power by constructing, enacting and representing social actors in the domain of the programme, and in relation to the gendered practices of the programme. In doing so, the PO refers to the 'people' (line 4) of authority such as 'our past minister' (line 9) who decide which gendered categories (males and females) should be the caregivers of the LEAP CCT programme households in the local communities. Thus, the utterance of the PO suggests the minister exercises power and control in a relational way that appears to constitute the females as the caregivers (Foucault 2002c). In addition, the minister's actions and decisions are not dependent on the gender discourse of the Asante matrilineal socio-political context in the sense that the minister serves the interest of the government. However, the minister's decision to constitute and use women as conduits for translating governmental rationalities is a motivated macro-political action and the programme's discursive practice (Foucault 2002a) has micropolitical consequences for shaping gendered power relations and discourses in Asante society.

In constructing and establishing social relations (Fairclough 2003) imbued with power, the PO uses pronouns and determiners to distinguish between himself as the programme officer being interviewed ('i'), the programme authorities ('we' and 'our') and the members of the programmed households ('you', 'they' and 'them'). The use of these pronouns appears not only to establish asymmetrical social relations, but to constitute and signify different social domains of power – the relation between the government and the people who are the recipients of the government's programme. It is important to recognise that the programme officers and community focal persons constitute the networks and capillaries (Foucault 1980) through which the constitution of the female caregiver as a category for shaping the actions of the households' members is accomplished within the programme. It is interesting to observe the ways the PO mobilises epistemic authority, for instance, 'the women manage the money better' (lines 39), to evaluate and to justify the constitution of women as caregivers (Fairclough 2003). Thus, the practices of the programme authorities produce women or female caregivers in the domain of the LEAP CCT programme as 'good' managers and governors of the households (Foucault 2007). Furthermore, such utterances and actions reproduce unequal gender relations in the matrilineal social context. In this way, the reproduction and exercise of 'modern' political authority appears inimical to struggles towards social change (Fairclough 1992) related to gender discourses in the Asante matrilineal social context. It appears that the programme authorities have reproduced traditional gender relations and differentiations using the apparatus of the programme. Thus, there is the tendency for the programme to reproduce power asymmetry and struggles between men and women in the local context. In the next section, I analyse the gendered practices of the programme authorities in a naturally occurring interaction.

## 7.2 Gendered Rvaluation: ‘We Are Always Happy to See Women Doing This Work’

The analysis in this section focuses on the gendered actions and practices of the programme authorities in a naturally occurring interaction in the local community of the Asante region. The data was taken from an interaction between the programme officers (G and J) from the national secretariat, the district social welfare officer (SWO) and the community focal person (W). Among the programme officers (G and J), G is the senior and leader of the team from the programme secretariat. The SWO is the liaison between the programme authorities and the community focal person. As mentioned above, these social actors serve as the networks and capillaries of power (Foucault 1980) through which the central government programme (the LEAP CCT programme) is translated in the Asante local community. The interactional exchanges of these social actors occurred in a local community. The interaction is transcribed and represented in the transcript excerpt below.

### Excerpt 2

```

1 SWO: this is our focal person
2 J: ooh(.)ok
3 SWO: for kojokurom
4 ((name of a village))
5 J: kojokurom
6 [(shakes hands with W) ]
7 [mepa wo kyew yefre wo sen]
8 please(.)they call you how
9 W: amina anane
10 J: amina(.)oh(.)ok
11 G: >we are always happy to see women doing this work<
12 SWO: ye:s
13 J: ye:s
14 ((smiling))
15 G: when you go anywhere
16 it's just men[men=men=men
17 SWO: [men=men=men
18 J: ((smiles))
19 SWO: †she is an iron lady
20 G: ye:s
21 W: <huhuhu>

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In the above excerpt, we observe an SWO setting up relations between the social actors in the interaction; the term ‘our focal person’ (line 1) distinguishes the SWO and the caregivers of the community from the national programme authorities (G and J). Thus, the SWO places the actors differently, and each of them act in relation to the positions set up in the interaction. In line 11, G expresses how she evaluates the participation of female community focal persons as positive and desirable in the translation of the programme (Fairclough 2003) in the local community. It is important to note that G’s formulation and epistemic commitment (Fairclough 1992) in line 11 explicitly acknowledge the programme’s preference for women caregivers and community focal persons as conduits for exercising power (Foucault 1980) in the local community. In addition, the SWO’s description of the community

focal person as ‘an iron lady’ (line 19) follows from the actions of G in lines 15 and 16, which are informed by the discursive practices of the LEAP CCT programme.

Two reasons may account for the description of the female caregiver (W) as ‘an iron lady’. First, the actions and utterances of G in lines 15 and 16 suggest that men are often the ‘relays’ of the central government’s authority (Foucault 2007) in the domain of the programme, which suggests that any female focal person must be ‘an iron lady’ to be able to participate in the male-dominated network of central government authority at a distance. Second, the ‘iron lady’ identity suggests that the subordination of a male-dominated network of power is peculiar in the Asante matrilineal society. As G is a programme official from the national programme office, ‘we’ (line 11) does not suggest the inclusion of W as a member of the local community. The ‘we’ pronoun suggests the authority of the programme officers and the apparatus of the national programme and the ‘yes’ responses from the SWO and J suggest they are part of this ‘we’ in the utterances of G. Apart from the interactional control features we observe in the interaction, which appears to be unequal – for instance, the extended utterance of G (line 11) and the slower utterance of W surrounding the interaction (line 21) – the interaction highlights the central government’s reliance on women in the specific local community in translating the LEAP CCT programme. Thus, the practices and actions of the programme authorities reproduce the gendered practices and discourses of the Asante matrilineal society, in which women are the focus of Asante sociocultural and political organisation (Puorideme 2019). As turn-taking rights are not equally distributed among participants in an interaction or conversation (Fairclough 1992), W did not have the opportunity to adequately contribute to the interaction, let alone challenge the ‘iron lady’ identity the SWO offered.

However, in the following sections, the analysis focuses on the actions of the community focal persons (men and women) in relation to the gendered practices of the programme in the situated context. In these sections, I analyse the accounts of the community focal persons given in a focus group discussion in the Ashanti region. The participants of the focus group are drawn from eight local communities, and each participant represents one community. Thus, there are eight participants, including two females (CW3 and CW6), represented in the transcript excerpts, along with six males (C1, C2, C4, C5, C7 and C8) and the researcher (R). The two females are the only active female community focal persons in the district in which the focus group was organised. In the sections below, I organise and analyse the transcript excerpts from the interaction under two main headings; first, the gendered formulation ‘All the children are on the woman’, and second, the gendered contestation ‘It is not like that’. I begin with the first heading below.

### **7.3 Gendered Formulation: ‘All the Children Are on the Woman’**

This section’s analysis focuses on how female community focal persons reproduce the ways the LEAP CCT programme constitutes and privileges at the intersection of the programme and the specific context. To do so, I focus on analysing the gendered relations of power in the interaction in relation to the gender discourse of the Asante matrilineal society. By gendered relations

of power, I refer to the everyday power struggle between men and women in the sociocultural and political context of Asante society (Puorideme 2019). Here, the discussion is about the privileging of women caregivers and women community focal persons discussed in the previous sections.

### Excerpt 3

- 1 C8: **yekuta nnipa {ninety-six}**  
*we have ninety-six people*
- 2 **eheh(.)butwohwe mu a**  
*but if you look at it*
- 3 **mmaa no nko ara {take} beye {almost seventy percent}**  
*only the women are about seventy percent*
- 4 CW3: **((osere bokoo))**  
*((laughs quietly))*
- 5 R: **↑saa::**  
*so::*
- 6 C1: **MMAA NO DOOSO**  
*THE WOMEN ARE MANY*
- 7 C2: **MMAA NO DOOSO**  
*THE WOMEN ARE MANY*
- 8 R: **aden na akoba saa**  
*why is it like that*
- 9 CW3: **se ebi wo ho a barima ne obaa no agyae awaree**  
*in some cases the man and the woman have divorced*
- 10 R: **uhu**
- 11 CW3: **enna wogyae awaree nso a**  
*and if they divorce*
- 12 **na nkodaa no nyinaa akosum obaa no so**  
*then all the children are on the woman*
- 13 CW3: **na barima no dee okotena ne baabi=**  
*and the man goes to stay somewhere*
- 14 C8: **[enna bio ]**  
*also*
- 15 **[((oma ne nsa so na ohwe R)) ]**  
*((raises hand and looks at R))*
- 16 CW3: **=nti kyere se obaa no na ohwe nkodaa no**  
*so it means the woman takes care of the children*
- 17 **a wowo efie ho nyinaa=**  
*that are all in the house*
- 18 C8: **[dee nti a ema no baa sa ara ne se]**  
*what made it so is that*
- 19 C7: **[((ohwe C8)) ]**  
*((looking at C8))*
- 20 CW3: **=nti na eye se mmaa no dooso kyen mmarima**  
*that is why the women are more than the men*
- 21 R: **mm**
- 22 CW3: **eko yee se awaregyae ne nneema basabasa keka ho**  
*it is like divorce and irresponsible behaviours*
- 23 **nti MMAA NO TETERA enna wohwe nkodaa no**  
*so the women actually take care of the children*
- 24 C8: **enna ebi nso=**  
*and some also*
- 25 C8: **=ye ye ye-**  
*we we we*
- 26 R: **↑mmarima wo ha oo**  
*men are here oo*
- 27 Cs: **hahahaha**
- 28 CW3: **↑aane mmaa no**

- 29                   ↑yes the women  
**yen=yen=ha deɛ mmaa no hahaha**  
*our our place here the women hahaha*
- 30 CW6: **[ɛmmarima no koraa] wɔntumi nkasa**  
*the men cannot even talk*
- 31 C8: **[ye ye-                   ]**  
*we we*

The transcript excerpt above demonstrates how female community focal persons reproduce the privileging of women caregivers in the translation of the LEAP CCT programme in the specific context. It appears that the gendered practices of the programme as observed in the previous section lead to the increased participation of women caregivers (lines 6 and 7) in the Asante society. Thus, the discursive practices of the programme appear to shape gendered participation and discourses. However, the formulation of CW3 in lines 11, 12 and 13 points to gendered power relations and practices in the local context that appear to engender women's privileged position and participation in the programme. In doing so, CW3 appears to repeatedly make explicit epistemic accounts; for example, in lines 16, 23, 28 and 29, about gendered practices in the local context, CW3 appears to construct men as irresponsible by saying 'and the man goes to stay somewhere' (line 13), thereby reproducing gender power relations peculiar to the Asante society. In the Asante matrilineal society, there appear to be power struggles between men and women over the authority and control of children even though the discourse of matriliney favours women (Nukunya 2016; Puorideme 2019).

In this way, constituting and privileging Asante women in the domain of the LEAP CCT programme reproduces and reinforces traditional gendered discourses that appear to relegate men in the Asante sociocultural and political organisation. It is in this light that the epistemic accounts and formulations (Fairclough 1992) of CW3 enact unequal power relations between men and women, which engenders resistances and contestations in relation to such formulations and interactional control (Foucault 1980, 1995). Thus, we observe the struggle of a male community focal person (C8) in line 14, who tries to take a turn to contest the way CW3 constructs men in the local community, as a manifestation of power struggle. It is also clear that CW3 sets the 'topic' in the above excerpt (Fairclough 1992) – 'the women actually take care of the children' (line 23) – in relation to a pre-determined gender discourse and practice in Asante society. Indeed, the discursive practices of the programme in relation to the constitution of women as a privileged category afford women a space in traditional gender discourse to assert unequal gender relations and power struggles. Undoubtedly, the actions and utterances of CW3 'model' the 'iron lady' identity offered to women in the previous sections. In the next section, I analyse the way the male community focal persons contest CW3's formulation and construction of men in the specific context in relation to the gendered practices of the programme and the gendered discourse of the Asante matrilineal society.

#### 7.4 Gendered Contestation: 'It Is Not Like That'

The transcript excerpt I analyse below is taken from the interaction of the participants of the focus group introduced in the previous sections. (The

participants have not changed from the group highlighted above.) The following interaction shifts towards a contestation of the gendered practices and ethos of CW3 in relation to the programme and the traditional gendered discourse in the specific context as observed in the previous section, which appear to construct unequal gender power relations between men and women.

#### Excerpt 4

- 1 CW3: **wɔn adane agu mmaa no so**  
*they have left them on the women*
- 2 C1: **ooh yen deɛ yen ha deɛ**  
*ooh as for us as for this our place*
- 3 **ente saa**  
*it is not like that*
- 4 C2: **communities no deɛ mmaa no na wɔdɔɔso**  
*as for the communities(.)women are many*
- 5 C4: **mmaa no na wɔdɔɔso**  
*women are many*
- 6 C1: **mmaa dɔɔso**  
*women are many*
- 7 CW3: **mmaa no ara na wɔhwɛ wɔn mma**  
*women normally take care of their children*
- 8 **woyi w'ani ↑pɛ**  
*you take your eyes off ↑immediately*
- 9 **wo mma no nyinaa bebɔ asesa**  
*your children all will become wayward*
- 10 R: **saa:**  
*so:*
- 11 CW3: **wode w'ani to ɔbarima no so a**  
*you rely on the man*
- 12 **wo mma nyinaa bebɔ asesa**  
*your children will become wayward*
- 13 C1: **((ɔdane ne ho na ɔhwɛ CW3))**  
*((turns and looks at CW3))*
- 14 **seesei deɛ mmarima no aye responsible-**  
*as for now the men have become responsible*
- 15 C7: **>dabi dabi dabi<**  
*>no no no<*
- 16 CW3: **enne yi na aye se**  
*it is today it looks like*
- 17 **seesei deɛ aye se**  
*as for now it looks like*
- 18 C7: **seesei deɛ seesei koraa ɔbarima biara nni ho**  
*now as for now indeed there is no man*
- 19 **a ɔbeyi n'ani se ekom de ne mma-**  
*who will not care when his children go hungry*
- 20 C1: **↑dabi o seesei deɛ mmarima no aye responsible**  
*no: as for now the men have become responsible*

The transcript excerpt above demonstrates how CW3 continues to maintain and reinforce her formulation and construction of men – ‘they’ – in the local context (line 1). These constructions do not usually go unquestioned or uncontested. Thus, in lines 2 and 3, a male community focal person contests CW3’s formulation, but, drawing on the traditional and cultural gendered practices of the local communities in the district (lines 7, 9 and 12), CW3 rejects C1’s contestation. CW3’s action is evident in how she points out the

implicit contextual norms and shared knowledge (Fairclough 1992) of the Asante matrilineal society in which the children belong to the mother's lineage (Nukunya 2016). She highlights it by drawing on epistemic statements, saying 'their children' and 'your children' (lines 7, 9 and 12), which refer to 'women' in line 7. The traditional gendered discourse appears to give women the authority to take control over the children when dealing with men in the local context. Thus, the discourse and power relation (Foucault 1980, 2002b) in the context sets women apart from men, even in governmental programmes such as the LEAP CCT programme, which appears to reproduce the formulations of CW3 as observed in the transcript excerpts above.

However, as discussed, the male community focal persons contest (line 3) the formulations of CW3 and the traditional gendered practices that privilege women to have 'absolute' possession and authority over children. In doing so, men appear to challenge the unequal gendered practices of the programme and the locality while negotiating responsibility (Clark 1999), asserting that 'it is not like that' (line 3), and that 'the men have become responsible' (lines 14 and 20). These contestations are practices of 'undoing' the reproduction of unequal gender relations in the CCT programme and the Asante society.

## **8. Discussion and Conclusion**

The analysis of the data demonstrates three key findings worth discussing in relation to previous studies outlined in sections 4 and 4.1 above. The three key findings are first, that 'people' in authority – politicians and CCT programme authorities – construct and privilege the women caregivers and women community focal persons of the LEAP CCT programme; second, women community focal persons in the matrilineal society reproduce and assert unequal gender power relations at the intersection of the LEAP CCT programme and the traditional gendered discourses of Asante society; and third, the male community focal persons of the LEAP CCT programme contest the gendered practices of the programme authorities and the concrete actions and practices of the women community focal persons that reproduce unequal gendered power relations at the intersection of the LEAP CCT programme and the local sociocultural context. A more detailed discussion of these findings is provided in the paragraphs below.

CCT programmes are primarily governmental interventions, which adopt a normative top-down interventionist approach (Cookson 2016) to translate these programmes in local communities in developing countries. The study demonstrates that the 'people' of authority, such as ministers of state and programme officials, make decisions at the top, including imposing conditionalities and 'shadow conditionalities' (Cookson 2016: 1201) that reproduce inequality, for instance, unequal gender power relations in specific local contexts. In this way, the practices of the LEAP CCT programme reproduce gendered power relations as they privilege women caregivers of local households and shape a form of gendered social relations that exclude men. Thus, the LEAP CCT programme in the specific local context not only reproduces gender inequality by imposing 'shadow conditionalities', as noted in Cookson's (2016) study, but also excludes men and reproduces traditional gender practices and unequal gender power relations in the context of the

Asante matrilineal society. Such practices may tend to be coercive (Gil-García 2016) in how they emanate from the top (the 'people' of authority) and are translated at the bottom (recipients in local communities).

The study reveals that women community focal persons in the matrilineal society reproduce and assert unequal gendered practices at the intersection of the LEAP CCT programme and the gendered discourses of Asante society. Therefore, the findings do not suggest that the LEAP CCT programme limits women's participation in public life, reproduces women's dependence on men in the local context (Corboz 2013) or reproduces the notion of keeping women in caregiving roles in the households of local communities (Nagels 2016); rather, women assert their independence on the basis of the privileged position the LEAP CCT programme and the Asante matrilineal discourse afford them. In doing so, these women reproduce the traditional gender difference between men and women in the local context (Gil-García 2016).

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the male community focal persons in the specific context contest the reproduction of unequal gender practices and relations embedded in the translation of the LEAP CCT programme and the unequal gender relations in the Asante matrilineal discourse. Thus, unlike similar existing studies, which background the voices of men in the local context, this paper reveals the voices of men who struggle to articulate their concerns about unequal gender power relations in the translation of the LEAP CCT programme in a local community.

Consequently, the findings of this paper suggest that an empirical critical study of discursive practices (Foucault 2002a), language use and meaning-making practices (Fairclough 1992) of CCT programmes in specific contexts is crucial for an in-depth understanding of these programmes in relation to the reproduction of power and shifting gender inequality as well as for understanding the gender power struggles and contestations of men and women in the local communities. It appears clear that the unproblematic top-down rational and interventionist approach to studying the translation of CCT programmes, which excludes aspects of power and the voices of recipients (men and women) in local communities, is inadequate.

To conclude this paper, I summarise the implications of the findings and present brief theoretical and methodological reflections below. First, the three key findings above suggest the design and translation of CCT programmes in specific contexts cannot be taken for granted as neutral in the reproduction of aspects of power struggles and gender discourses. Thus, the translation of CCT programmes must not be seen as 'ideal' practices in all contexts; specific contexts call for innovations in CCT programme design and translation to address power struggles and the reproduction of gender discourses in specific sociocultural and political contexts, such as the Asante matrilineal society. Second, integrating a textually oriented discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992) with Foucault's notions of discourse and power (Foucault 1980, 2002a) enables the analysis of programme authorities and community focal persons' concrete actions and meaning-making practices in relation to the discursive practices of CCT programmes and gendered discourses of Asante society. Thus, the empirical textual analysis in this paper is based in context, as recent critical discourse study moves towards 'contextually-bound studies which relate fieldwork and ethnography to detailed analyses of "situated" linguistic

and other communicative practices' (Krzyzanowski 2017: 243). In order to reap the benefits of context-based critical discourse, this paper employed an ethnographic-based critical discourse study and implemented an ethnographic data collection strategy with videography to adequately grasp and access naturally occurring data and analyse aspects of power embedded in CCT programmes and the specific local context.

As much as the theoretical and methodological approaches enhance an empirically based analysis and the findings presented above, they do not amount to a comprehensive analysis of the cultural discourses of the Asante society. In addition, it is difficult to generalise these findings across contexts using the above theoretical and methodological approach; thus, the application of different research approaches in the future, which may encompass a wider comparative study of CCT programmes across different local contexts, could yield more broadly generalisable findings.

### ***Appendix: Transcription Notation***

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
[[	: Utterances are simultaneously linked.
[text]	: The start and end of overlapping utterances.
=	: Latching utterances without noticeable pause.
(.)	: A micro pause of less than 0.2 seconds.
(number of seconds)	: A timed gap of utterance in tenths of a second.
–	: A short untimed pause within an utterance.
:	: An extension of a sound or syllable.
:::	: A prolongation of an utterance.
↑	: A rising shift in intonation.
↓	: A falling shift in intonation.
Underline	: Emphasis on an utterance.
Capital letters	: An utterance louder than surrounding talk.
°	: An utterance quieter than surrounding talk.
(( text ))	: A description of non-verbal activity.
( text )	: A transcriber's doubt of an utterance.
( )	: A space mark of an indecipherable utterance.
>text<	: A more rapid utterance than surrounding talk.
<text>	: A slower utterance than surrounding talk.
£	: A smiley voice.

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