THE SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF FULANI MUSLIM GIRLS IN THE FOUTA DJALLON REGION OF GUINEA: FORCES INFLUENCING THEIR RETENTION IN A RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL OF DALABA

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This dissertation entitled
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The evidence that people have access to education is that they take part in educational programs (Sutton, 1995). Equality of access to schooling is measured by participation rates for both men and women. In most of the sub-Saharan African countries schools are open to all, however, girls in their large majority, continue to be out of school (Commission on the Status of Women, 1995; UNESCO, 2002; World Bank 2000). Researchers have identified barriers to girls’ education in the sub-Saharan African region and categorized them into economic, socio-cultural, and school factors. The literature on the factors influencing Muslim girls’ education at the secondary level is however scarce. This study seeks to contribute ethnography of the forces behind the lack of retention of Fulani Muslim girls in a secondary school of Dalaba, Guinea.

A qualitative method of inquiry was utilized to gather the data. The data was collected in Dalaba, Guinea, over three months period. Eight Fulani Muslim girls and women took part in this study as well as their parents and some educational leaders. The hirde, a Fulani socio-cultural context, was a central instrument in the data collection process. Other data collection strategies included open-ended interviews, observations and review of policy documents.
The findings of the study suggest that dissemination and implementation of gender sensitive policies; the tradition, or finna tawaa; poverty; and school related factors were found impeding Muslim Fulani girls’ education in Dalaba. The ideology around curing and blessing helps the perpetuation of a social status quo that is oppressive to girls and women. The dichotomy between the informal socialization process and the formal education system and the practices of cultural norms in the school were central to informants abandoning their schooling. The language problem in school, administrators and teachers authoritarian attitudes, the lack of transparency and accountability in student grading system, and the disconnect between the school and the community are major issues that continue to hold back the potential of Muslim Fulani girl students.

This study provided a context for informants’ voices to be heard in educational discourses that very often deny them a voice and take place in contexts where informants do not have access.

Approved

W. Stephen Howard

Professor of Telecommunication
This dissertation is dedicated to Nèene and Papa, my sisters, our children, the late Hadja Adama Hawa Diallo of Mali Yimbering, and to all my Karamokos.
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May God Bless you!
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the small village of Brouwal Sounki, within the Telimele region located in the Middle Guinea province, Fouta Djallon, lives Mrs. Sory Binta Sow, a 39 year old Fulani woman. Binta, the mother of four children, is eager to share her life experiences with whoever is willing to listen. In June 2001, she told me and some Guinean journalists her story. Binta’s narrative made me more aware of and interested in the issue of Muslim girls and women education in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea.

Binta was forced into an early marriage, which interrupted her schooling after eighth grade. At that time, it was frowned upon for a girl to remain in school while entering puberty or “growing-up.” In her parents’ eyes, remaining in a mixed school setting could drive her to immoral behavior or, even worse, early pregnancy. Thus, Binta withdrew from school to join the household of a husband whom she barely knew. Despite this setback, the very intelligent young girl—who never repeated a grade—longed to continue her studies. Recognizing this desire, Binta’s husband sent her for on-the-job nursing training at the nearby village health center. She worked there under the supervision of senior staff members. Although Binta has worked at the health center around 11 years, still she feels that she has sacrificed much. Every day she regrets not having been able to continue her studies. At work, she has never been promoted despite her seniority and the quality of her work. Moreover, she must take orders from younger staff. Binta has often thought that if she had been able to continue her studies, she might today be the head nurse or even a doctor at the health center.
Binta’s story is the story of many Guinean women whose capabilities are undermined in order for them to fit within their cultural communities. Given differences in the period and changes that have taken place in the political, economical and socio-cultural fabric of the country, one should expect a significant difference in the education outcomes of contemporary Muslim Fulani schoolgirls.

**Background of the Study**

Today’s women’s illiteracy is nearly twice that of males’ illiteracy in Guinea. UNESCO (2001) report shows that 44.9 percent of men in Guinea are illiterate as compared to 73 percent of women. Literacy and formal education are interrelated which makes access to education a key factor for the acquisition of literacy (Ballara, 1991). Under colonial rule, few Africans had access to formal education. In “French” Africa, formal education was out of reach for many Africans (Kelly, 2000). Only four out of 1000 school-aged-children went to school. In the case of Guinea, out of 3.5 million people, only 45,000 were enrolled in French schools (Kurian, 1988).

With the acquisition of independence in 1958, the Guinean government realized that formal education was a key factor for development. On August 5, 1959, Guinea passed the *Ordinance 42/MEN* which stipulated that there was free compulsory schooling for all children up to age of fifteen (Kurian, 1988). Besides ratifying international documents such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which in article 26 states the right to education and at least the right to a free elementary education, and the *Convention for the Elimination of All the Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW)*, Guinean leaders have also adopted two other major educational policy documents: the

The last two policy documents were adopted after the evaluation of the state of Guinean education with the change of political regime in 1984. It was found that Guinean education lagged behind all the Francophone African states that had maintained the French model of education (Plessis, 2002). According to Bah-Diallo (1995), the former Guinean female minister of pre-university education, in 1980 the enrollment of children in formal schools was 33 percent and this percentage decreased to 27 in 1984. These figures called for major reforms that were undertaken in 1984 and 1989. The reforms focused on using French as medium of instruction, prioritizing the development of primary education, strengthening administration, planning and evaluation, providing more in-service training of teachers, and allowing parents to choose to send their children to either State or private schools; with state schools remaining free of charge at all levels of schooling (Bah-Diallo, 1995, p. 386).

Although these policies were adopted, they have not yet yielded significant results either in the educational access or attainment for girls, especially those leaving in the rural areas. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) /Guinea 1999 report shows relevant variations in the enrollment rate by both location and gender. In Conakry, the capital, the enrollment of boys were found to be 20 percent higher than the girls, while in Middle Guinea, the upcountry province which is the context of this study, the enrollment rate for boys was 24 percent higher than the girls. While this same institution found the overall percentage of those who pass the primary level exit exam
low, the percentage of male students who pass this exam was found to be 11 percent higher than the percentage of their female counterparts.

In the second Guinean Demographic Health Survey (GDHS-II) of 1999, the net attendance ratio at the primary level for boys was 40 percent higher than the percentage of girls. This gap increases as the education level increases. At the secondary level it was found that the net attendance ratio was 13 percent and this ratio was one percent at the tertiary (university) level. Marlow-Ferguson (2002) also determined the enrollment rate for all Guinean children at 54 percent at the primary level, 14 percent at the secondary level, and only one (1) percent at the higher education level. This author provided for the specific case of girls the following percentages: 41 percent at the primary level, 7 percent at the secondary level and 0.3 percent at the tertiary level.

In her analysis of educational attainment in sub-Saharan Africa, Stromquist (1998) observed that 16 percent of those who enter primary schools were likely to repeat a grade; of that percentage 23 percent were students of Francophone countries and 8 percent for those who were of Anglophone countries. This author also found that among children who entered primary schools in that region, no more than 61 percent are estimated to reach even the final level of primary schooling (sixth grade). This author concluded that there is evidence that sub-Saharan African governments have failed to address the issue of dropout or repetition according to ethnic, racial, and gender perspectives.

In analyzing quantitative data of girls’ education in Guinea through the lens of the student population location, the Guinean National Office of the Statistics and Planning (SPP, 2003) found that the enrollment rates of girls residing in Conakry was 40 percent
higher than the girls living in Lower Guinea, 33 percent higher than girls living in Forest Guinea, and 42 percent higher than the girls residing in Upper Guinea and Middle Guinea (Fouta-Djallon).

Regardless of the discrepancies in quantitative data and the criticism provided by Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1999) about its exclusive use in analyzing the issue of females’ education, Sutton et al. (1999) found that after more than forty years of political independence and educational reforms, access and persistence in formal education is still problematic for many Guinean children. Kouroumah (2003, September) further argued that this situation is more critical for the rural Guinean girls whose education not only lags behind the boys, but also behind those of their female counterparts living in the cities.

Most of the State and development partners (Non Governmental Organizations, ONG and Private Voluntary Organizations, PVO) efforts have been directed at improving the access to primary education (Sutton et al.; 1999). There seems to be a correlation between student achievement and enrollment; thus if those who enroll dropout or cannot find employment when they leave, there might be reticence from both parents and children in investing in education. Nonetheless why the educational gender gap persists remains a question yet to be solved. Many scholars and practitioners suggest that the reasons for the continuing gender gap vary from blaming the girls to blaming the problems that exist inside and outside the school system (Bloch et al., 1998; Byrne, 1990; Hill & King, 1993; Njeuma, 1993).

Byrne (1990) reconstituted the historical trend related to the reasons behind the problems with female education and concluded that: 1) there are structural and systematic barriers to girls’ education in many cultures, and 2) the cause of girls’ lack of
participation and educational attainment is not generic to girls, but to systems and cultures (p. 13).

Nonetheless, most of the reasons provided are based on socio-cultural, economic and school factors given as barriers to female education. Few studies, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa and specially Guinea, have focused on the policies, practices and community perceptions that impact the education of females from their own perspective. Furthermore, the reasons behind parents withdrawing their daughters from school have not been adequately investigated in the context of Guinea. The gap of studies of practices that take place in the school system that invoke parents’ fear for their daughters being at risk of abuses such as sexual harassment leading to unwanted pregnancies is significant.

Stambach’s (2000) study on *Schooling in Mount Kilimanjaro: Schooling Community and Gender in East Africa* is one of the few studies that examine the interplay between schooling and the community in sub – Saharan Africa. In her study, Stambach shows that schooling does not occur in a vacuum: it is influenced and influences the community in which it is located. This study highlighted different perceptions of schooling among generations of women in Northern Tanzania. These perceptions are important in the sense that they could promote support to girls’ schooling or weaken the support. In another study, ‘*Education is my Husband’: Marriage, Gender, and Reproduction in Northern Tanzania* (1998), Stambach investigated the relationship between Chagga’s cultural traditions and sociopolitical forces that influenced a community’s decisions and abilities to invest in the education of females. She found that unlike the older generation of that community, the younger generation of women seemed to turn away from marriage in order to continue their education which they believe is
their husband (replacing a husband’s income). However, besides the fact that the studies were conducted by an ‘outsider,’ they took place in East Africa (Tanzania) in an Anglophone country which can be seen as significantly different from Guinea, a Francophone country where the majority of the population is Muslim (85%).

Michelle Fine’s (1991) book *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public High School* contributes to this inquiry. In this book, Fine presents the school policies and practices that mystify student dropouts in a United States urban public high school. She found that equal educational policies designed to help all the students –mostly minorities- to overcome barriers to education, serve to justify and legitimatize student dropouts. Without much consideration to students’ socio-economic backgrounds, school authorities hid behind these policies to expel students. Hence, instead of benefiting students, the same policies that were meant to help them harm them. Fine’s study provides an interesting framework for the investigation of what occurs both inside and outside of a school system that leads to dropouts. While Fine’s study is urban Western-based, her research offers orientation to educational problems in regard to both genders.

In another study, *Chalk and Dust: Teachers’ Lives in Rural Sudan* that took place in one of the schools in Sudan (Tundub school), Howard (2000) investigated the relationship between students, teachers, and the community surrounding the school in a context of poverty. Howard’s investigation highlighted the significance of spirituality (in this case Islam) in helping build relationships between students and their teachers in such a way that students made connections between their schooling and their community’s life. An important aspect of this study is the description of the poor education facilities and
how teachers created economical avenues working as repair persons and engaging in farming to make ends meet. While Howard’s study investigates the interplay between school and culture in a poor rural context, it also offers information on gender issues and spirituality.

With the exception of the studies of: 1) Kamano (1995) on *Formulating Education Policy: Lessons and Experiences from Guinea*; 2) *Inside Guinean Classrooms*, by Anderson-Levitt, Bloch, and Tabachnick (1998); and 3) *A Girls’ Education Map to Context Analysis* by Tietjen (November 2000), there seem to be no other studies dealing with the issues of schools policies and practices in Guinea.

Kamano (1995) in examining strategic educational policy reforms undertaken by the second post independent government shows the relevance of political leaders’ involvement in designing and implementing public policy. His discussion provides a background of educational issues that lead to new policy formulation and how educational leaders participate in the decision making process. However, Kamano’s analysis focuses only on the centralized administrative level of education (traditional actors of education such as those at the Ministry of Education). People experiencing the problems have no voice during the definition and formulation of the problems and during the legitimizing of goals and programs. Kamano’s analysis marginalizes both the school community and women and girls’ voices. More importantly, issues of effective policy dissemination and implementation are not articulated in this study.

*Inside Guinean Classrooms* (1998) by Anderson-Levitt et al. exemplifies teachers’ negative attitudes toward girls’ persistence and achievement in school. Schoolgirls are viewed as commodities whose educational outcomes are not that
significant. Female students in the study experienced both negative stereotyping (know nothing or less attitude) and culturally gender based expectations from school authorities. Teachers considered girls to be sex-objects and they persisted in perpetuating cultural gender based attitudes in the school system. The study fails to investigate the interrelationship between school policies and practices nor did it investigate how school stakeholders such as the community supports or fails to support schools’ policies through its perceptions and actions with regard to girls’ education. It is as though schooling was occurring in a vacuum. The findings of this study did not lead to further investigation on major consequences negative school practices have on parental attitudes toward girls’ education.

Tietjen (2000, November) provides a map to serve as a context analysis on girls’ access, maintain and attainment. She argues that education of girls must be holistic and encompass three levels: local, regional, and national. At each level she defined actors and contributors (and barriers) to the education of girls. Even though not exhaustive and developed in a participatory manner, this map is interesting in the fact that it has a holistic approach to the issue of interest.

In her study on girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa, Hyde (1993) found that despite an abundance of data-collection in World Bank publications, there were not adequate comparable and useful data on gender differences to successfully address the quality and equality of education. Data on these educational issues tend to be more general than specific; therefore Hyde recommended that more specific data be sought in order to address specific needs of the targeted population.
Along the same line of reasoning, in her master’s research project Baldé (1999, November) argued that major literature dealing with factors preventing female formal education in sub-Saharan Africa is non-empirical; and there was a paucity of research done by insiders on issues affecting girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, she suggested supporting hypotheses put forward with some empirical evidence. In the case of the increase of girls’ education in Guinea as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, this study recommended that specific empirical research be undertaken in order to find adequate solutions to barriers related to girls’ formal education. She further suggested the necessity of the involvement of insiders in conducting such studies in order to bring not only different perspectives to crucial developmental issues but also a better and a more accurate analysis of outcomes to provide specific solutions to the girls’ education.

This current study was undertaken to address the gap in the literature and the recommendations of studies on gender and education. The interrelationship between school policies and practices, and community perceptions and actions that influence the education of girls within a Guinean rural setting were investigated. Specific forces behind the retention of Muslim Fulani secondary schoolgirls were investigated. This inquiry mainly targeted secondary level (lycée or high school) girl students in order to shift the discourses from the primary level of education to the secondary level.

The study operated within the feminist theoretical paradigm, specifically post-colonial. The purpose of such an approach is to provide a theory that “reflects the reality of women and avoids a monolithic view of women” (Houston, 1996, p. 218). According to Houston by endorsing a ‘hyphenated’ (p. 218) model of feminism, this provides a focus on women’s experiences rather than only women’s liberation. Hence, the decision
to give voice to the silenced group of women and girls while listening to their experiences takes into consideration both feminist concerns (Almeida, 1994; Houston, 1996; Varey, 1997). Experiences of Fulani Muslim women and girls who have left school at the secondary level are the core of this research project.

**Significance of the Study**

The interest of this study stems from the educational enrollment and attainment gender gap in Guinea. The gender gap between rural and urban areas is a result of low levels of schooling and educational attainment. In general, research and efforts undertaken in the sub-Saharan region are mostly concerned with the decision to enter or finish primary school; students (mainly girls) who enter and do not achieve at the secondary level at their highest capabilities are ignored. Therefore, this study aims to analyze factors behind secondary rural Fulani Muslim schoolgirls’ low persistence and achievement and then proposes suggestions to effectively address the specific problems that prevent better educational outcomes.

Findings of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding (using in-depth interviews and observations) on factors that impact Fulani Muslim girls’ education and how these factors operate. Additionally, this project seeks to contribute more in-depth and specific information to Guinea’s educational leaders, who are responsible for designing effective and efficient reforms that integrate the gender equity dimension not only in policy formulation but also in the culture of the community and classroom activities/dynamics; this with the support of the beneficiaries. Another most important goal of this study is to help the school community (school administrators, teachers, parents and students) and mostly the Guinean Fulani Muslim girl reflect, understand and
act upon educational issues that lead to girl dropouts at the secondary level of education, which in Guinea is situated between the primary and higher levels of education.

Statement of the Problem

The Guinean systems of education have not yet succeeded in bringing significant changes to girls’ education at the secondary level in its rural areas (Bah-Diallo, 1995; GDHS-II, 1999; Marlow-Ferguson, 2002; World Bank 2001 report). There are significant gaps in the policy statements and what takes place in the school context (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998; Kamano, 1995). While there exists a significant number of policy documents and strategies as how to solve the problems of girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Guinea specifically, these documents and strategies are very broad and fail to tackle specific issues pertaining to girls’ education (Kouroumah, 2003, September). Even though research (Hyde, 1993; Hill & King, 1993) has suggested that specific issues affecting girls’ education be investigated, in Guinea this recommendation remains in the domain of project. Additionally, answers are limited as it pertains to why Guinean educational policies regarding girls’ education have not been able to achieve their unintended aims yet. As a result, this study examines major forces influencing secondary Muslim schoolgirl dropouts in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea using their own voices. Educational policies are the lenses that are used to answer the questions. Accordingly, these lenses are used to critically examine what takes place inside and outside the school given the dialectical dynamics between the school and the community. These dynamics could shed light onto how school policies operate in empowering or disempowering the Muslim Fulani girls and women.
Research Questions

General research question.

How have the schooling experiences of Fulani Muslim girls in Dalaba / Guinea influenced their retention in a rural secondary school?

Specific research questions.

Specifically the research questions being addressed are:

1) What are the obstacles to the retention of Fulani Muslim girls in school?
2) What factors can account for the obstacles faced by Fulani Muslim girls in school?
3) What is the relationship between the existing educational policies and the obstacles?

Delimitation and Limitations

The focus of this study is limited to the Middle of Guinea (Fouta-Djallon) province and specifically, one of Dalaba districts. The study involves both the school and the community (district) where the school is located. The emphasis of this study is on how the societal and educational school system forces influence girls’ enrollment and retention at the secondary level (eleventh to thirteenth grades). Findings of this study concern education in Guinea in general and Dalaba specifically.

While the scope of this study is on girls and women education in Guinea, the library search for literature on girls’ education in Guinea –specifically in Dalaba- has not been productive. Therefore, the present study refers to similar studies in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world as background.
Definitions of Operational Terms

The purpose of defining the terms used in this study is to clarify any ambiguity. The terms are explained in cultural and educational contexts.

*Colanuts:* colanuts are yellowish-white seeds found within a large capsule from a tree (of the Sterculiacease Family) that is widely grown in West Africa. These seeds have particular uses in the social life and religious customs of some West African peoples such as the Guineans, Sierra Leonean, Malians, and Nigerians (Faucon, P. 2004, February 9).

*Colonial era:* is the period when Guinea, as well as other African countries, was under European colonial rules. In the Guinean case, the colonial era is from 1895 to 1958.

*Dropout:* refers to students not completing an educational program. This can occur either at the primary or secondary level of education (Fine, 1991).

*Fattu:* From Pulaar language meaning a person who is born out of wedlock or who does not have a family name because the father did not officially recognize her/him.

*Hirde:* a socio-cultural gathering organized to honor a guest with the objective of entertaining the guest. The *hirde* takes place after the *fagr/guetye* prayer.

*Hirobhe:* is a Pulaar word meaning persons/audiences who come for the *hirde*

*School policies:* official courses of action for handling school issues provided by the government (Ripley, 1985). Example of such a course of action could be how to handle student pregnancies.

*School practices:* tangible or intangible actions that take place within the school (Fine, 1991).
Tradition/culture: Finna tawaa or tawaagal are Fulani concepts meaning “what one finds himself/herself in” (Riesman, 1998). Tawaagal or Finna tawaa can refer to forms of social order maintained in the Fulani communities in Burkina and Guinea.

The post-colonial era: is the period beginning with the declaration of independence (28 September 1958) to the present time.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters. Chapter One, the Introduction, includes an introductory background, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, delimitation of the study, definition of operational terms, and organization of the study. Chapter Two, the Literature Review, summarizes the existing research of the major causes of under-enrollment and completion of school in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Guinea in particular as it relates to the research questions outlined in chapter One. Chapter Three, the Methodology, explains the method and instruments used to undertake the study as they relate to the research questions. Chapter Four, the Results, presents the main findings after the field research has been undertaken and completed. Chapter Five, Discussion, discusses the main findings as they relate to the theories. Finally, Chapter Six provides a summary, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for further studies.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Although the importance of educating girls has been highlighted by many researchers (Bah-Diallo, 1995; Ballara, 1991; Bloch & Vavrus, 1998; Kelly, 2000; Stromquist, 1998) the state of girls’ education in Guinea remains low and lags behind the education of boys. There have been many reasons explaining the prevalence of this situation. Besides educational policies and experiences before, during and after colonization, other major factors presented as barriers to women and girls education are economical, socio-cultural, and school system factors. This chapter of the study provides a critical review of these factors as they relate to the current research.

Educational Policies

Educational policies are courses of action in education ratified by the government that serve as official regulations and act as rules that must be followed in handling educational issues that emerge within a school (Ripley, 1985). This portion of the study deals with codified as well as un-codified educational regulations with regard to female education. In the sub-Saharan Africa region before colonization, there were no written regulations about provisions for education. Although education in the pre-colonial period was for the most part un-codified (not written), it had a strong effect on the life of the communities. For the most, the pre-colonial form of education aimed at developing males as heads of household and communities and women as wives and mothers (Coquery – Vidrovitch, 1997). To understand the education of women and girls it is necessary to
critically look at both past and present educational policies to see how they affected the education of women.

*Girls’ Educational Policies during the Pre-Colonial Era*

To understand the current state of women and girls education in Guinea, it is important to find out what provisions prior educational policies made for the education of Guinean women and how these provisions were implemented. Bray, Clarke and Stephens (1998) in their analysis of indigenous forms of education found that there were many forms of indigenous education, which made generalization difficult when discussing about the traditional African education systems. However, these authors pointed out those African indigenous education systems shared significant fundamentals in regards to philosophical and sociological features. Therefore it is essential that the indigenous forms of education in Guinea must be considered in pluralistic rather than singular dimension. Nonetheless, the purpose of this inquiry is not to investigate all the different forms of indigenous (there are 16 ethnic groups in Guinea) education in Guinea, but to draw on their similarities and differences whenever possible. The important issues here are to find out: 1) the general policies related to girls and women education and how they were implemented, 2) if women participated in the decision making processes, and 3) what educational opportunities they enjoyed.

Nwomonoh (1998) argued that traditional education in Africa had two functions: the realization of material needs and the survival of the culture. In the context of that region, learning was geared toward fostering a sense of collective cultural identity and communal responsibility. Mumford (1970) reported that before the arrival of the colonial powers, education in Guinea as elsewhere in Africa was informal and designed to prepare
children for responsibility in the home, the village, and society. In such societies learning took place anywhere and every adult was a potential teacher.

Touré (1969) characterized the education systems that existed in Guinea prior to colonization as feudal and esoteric. He argued that these forms of education were to reproduce the class structure of the society while true knowledge was hidden and communicated only to disciples who merited it through their docility. Touré’s characterization of the dissemination of knowledge is found in Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure* (1963). The main character of the book is selected by the teacher (the traditional *diallobhe* teacher of the Qur’anic school) to be the disciple who will take over after him. That specific disciple receives more attention from the teacher than any of the others.

Orality was also a major feature of the indigenous sub-Saharan African education systems. The oral character of these education systems is described by Reagan (1996) who found that in the indigenous systems of education learning relied heavily on oral communication through the use of proverbs, riddles, and puzzles. According to Egbo (2000), traditional African women excelled in such transmission of knowledge, becoming noted storytellers which made them important guardians and transmitters of knowledge within their community.

In addition to observation and imitation, initiation rituals were key elements in the indigenous education systems. Assie-Lumumba (1997) considered initiation ceremonies as “formal schools” with reference to *Poro* and *Sande* societies in some West African countries such as Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Guinea. Cutrufelli (1983) defined these initiation rituals as the “informal schools” (p.155) of the African traditional
societies. Both authors observed the gender orientation of initiation rituals. While female initiation ceremonies were preparations for their future roles as wives and mothers, male initiation ceremonies focus was on male solidarity against matriarchy. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) further clarified that a female’s value and status depended on her fertility, cooperativeness and ability to work, while courage and capacity of aggression were the criteria used to judge a man’s value.

Traditional African education systems teach social normative goals. Bray, Clarke and Stephens (1998) pointed out that “normative goals are concerned with instilling the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behavior” (p. 27). In the Fulani society, the norms for both male and female children are observed through some aspects of their life-cycle ceremonies such as naming ceremonies and rites of passage. In his ethnographical study on the Fulani societies of Guinea, Derman (1973) defined life-cycle as cultural aspects of a given society that had not changed significantly. This author observed that the birth of a Fulani girl did not carry the same weight as the birth of a boy; and this is still de jour. When a boy is born his birth is marked by solemnity while the birth of a girl is marked by joke. Continuing with his description, Derman further observed that in the Fulani society of Guinea, during a boy naming ceremony (which happens the seventh day after her birth), the child is carried around with a symbolic machete (meaning hunting, war, power, authority) and basket; while a girl is carried with a symbolic hoe (meaning agricultural activities performed for caring for the family) and basket (p. 205). Hence, from birth the difference between the social, economical and political expectations for girls and boys were established. On this basis the different provisions for education for the Fulani children were also set. Girls’ education centered
around such home activities as caring for children and husband, while boys were expected to achieve status and authority both inside and outside of the home environment.

Derman’s analysis is supported by Essie-Lumumba (1997) who noted that the type of education assigned to individuals was generally related to their sex role (gender division of labor) as well as their social class. She illustrated this by describing the apprenticeship and initiation ceremonies practiced by *Poro* and *Sande* societies in West Africa which have well-defined structures (rituals).

Islamic education is another important area to explore as contributing to gender based educational disparities. Current Qur’anic or Medersa schools are the results of the introduction of Islam in Africa during the ninth and tenth centuries by Arab traders. Islam introduced the Arabic script, and Moumouni (1967) argued that because knowledge of the Qur’an became an important religious requirement, Medersa schools developed in Africa. Derman (1973) observed that in the Fulani communities of Guinea, all children were required to participate in Islamic education. This education started around the age of six for both boys and girls. However, more attention was given to the education of boys, who were considered to be the future leaders of the family, the ones who bore the name and cultural identity of the family. Often girls’ Qur’anic education ended at the age of the clitoridectomy, which was usually twelve.

Although the African Medersa schools curriculum concentrated on the memorization of the Qur’an, it was through these schools that young African males were selected as potential leaders who could attend higher educational institutions in the Arab world (Egypt and Morocco’s Islamic Universities) (Moumouni, 1967). If at the beginning of its spread, Islam touched but a small fraction of the Guinean population, in the 18th
century, it has become an important tool for political and socio-economical power in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea. Islam was used in the establishment of the theocratic empire of the Fulani of Guinea and with it Qur’anic education developed because of the political importance attached to the Islamic knowledge. Leaders of the empire had to exhibit knowledge of the Qur’an. However, only males were elected as leaders of the empire due to the fact they had more Qur’anic knowledge than the females (Fouta Djallon Webpage, n.d., 2003).

The foundation of the African traditional education systems is based on the fact that every individual regardless of sex and age could expect a range of education (Derman, 1973; Essie-Lumumba, 1997). However, when analyzed this approach toward the provision of education discriminated against females since the values society held for them were obedience and passivity.

The study of Cutrufelli (1983) has also shown that even in the African traditional societies, some women held important positions, but generally speaking, in such cases their positions helped to increase the positions of the males. However Day (1998) undertook a different approach and posited that traditional educational organizations provided African women with skills to be central actors in their communities. Such organizations were “parallel sex organizations,” “age-grade societies,” and “market associations.” For Day these organizations were formal schools that taught vocational skills as well as social skills offering protection for women, family life, reproductive health, and the fertility of the land. She further observed that many communities in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast continue to rely on these institutions to educate their children. Women educated in such schools continue to play “significant”
roles in their communities. These roles might include issuing fines to male transgressors of community rules. Day’s contribution to this discussion is significant because she showed that women’s roles in traditional African societies were not exclusively confined to domestic roles.

However, Haw (1998) maintained that even in institutions such as the ones described by Day, females’ education was directed at pleasing and submitting to the will of husbands, and men in general. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) following the same line of reasoning about sub-Saharan Africa women stated that: “women reproduced, within the community of women, the same hierarchical relations that governed relationship between elders and their many dependents – younger people, women and slaves” (p. 16). This latter author emphasized the patriarchal character of the traditional societies where even males who were slaves expected the females of their household to kneel in front of them. In such societies, women did participate in the welfare of the society, but their freedoms or capabilities to fully make their own decisions and be who they wanted were very limited.

The utilitarian role of females’ education in traditional African societies is challenged by Sen’s (1999) instrumental freedoms. Sen distinguished 5 instrumental freedoms (political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities –education-, transparency guarantees, and protective security) positing that whenever one of these key freedoms is lacking there is dis-functionment in human capabilities (p. 38). In traditional African societies females participated in the provision for education for females, but with the expected goals held by males. This leads to the distinction made by Essie–Lumumba (1997) who, while analyzing African traditional education through the scope of equity
found that when the value of the contribution of both sexes in the development of a society is recognized, there exists equity among members. However, when one group of the society decides on what is or is not valuable and imposes this judgment on the other group, this might lead to the establishment of inequality and preferential treatment of one group in making decision for the other. The current “do nothing attitude” of rural women in many African countries seems to be a consequence of their perceived work value.

Another discriminatory factor of the indigenous gender-based education systems is found in the Medersa schools where the education of Fulani females is limited to the pre-excision years (Derman, 1973). While for Fulani males their education emphasizes their future leadership roles in political and religious areas.

**Girls’ Educational Policies during the Colonial Era**

According to the “*Bulletins de l’Enseignement des colonies Françaises de l’AOF*” [Education bulletins of the French colonies of West Africa] No. 45 of 1921 and No.74 of 1931, the purposes of French education in African colonies were:

To expand the influence of the French language, in order to establish the [French] nationality or culture in Africa (*Bulletin de l’Enseignement en AOF*, No. 45, 1921); … Colonial duty and political necessity impose a double task on our education work: on the one hand it is a matter of training an indigenous staff destined to become our assistants throughout the domains, and to assure the ascension of a carefully chosen elite, and on the other hand it is a matter of educating the masses, to bring them nearer to us and to change their way of life. (*Bulletin de l’Enseignement en AOF*, No. 74, 1931; Kelly, 2000; p. 17)
According to the official Guinean official website (2003, August), during the colonial era in 1895, Guinea was a part of the French colonies, ‘Rivières du Sud’ [South Rivers]. Guinean territory in 1904 became part of the French West African Federation whose headquarters were located in Dakar (Senegal). French educational policies for Guinea were common to all the other French West African Federation colonies. Conklin (1998) observed that the stated French policy of education before World War I aimed at providing an “adapted education” to its territories in Africa. The main goals of the education policy were the adaptation of the education to the local context in which colonized people lived and the provision of free education to all without discrimination.

The emergence of Republican ideas of civilization in France was the explanation given for the adoption of such policy of education by France. These Republican ideas were directed at French civilizing mission (mission civilisatrice) vis à vis “uncivilized” societies and the promotion of individuals through their merit rather than privilege attached to their social status. However, Conklin (1998) revealed that the hidden agenda of the French colonial education system was assimilation and education for very few Africans. The French educational policy was not concerned about educating females and lower class people. Rather, schooling was an instrument of dissemination of French culture to selected individuals. This hidden curriculum of assimilation surfaced after the war and became the official policy of French education in its African colonies.

In the period of interwar (1919-1939), the French educational policy was intended to marginalize students from their communities (Kelly, 2000). Kelly established that West African schools under French colonial rule uprooted students from their cultures and taught them to disregard their cultures, which were presented to them as backward.
This was done through three important steps: 1) the adoption of French language, education delivered exclusively in French; 2) the establishment of a system of boarding schools because the location of schools made it a necessity; 3) the limitation of students’ contacts with their families and communities to summer vacation (Kelly, 2000; p. 190).

Another important finding of Kelly is related to the access of French schools. She found that in West Africa only four out of every 1000 students could access to schools. Although there were slight regional variations (Senegal, 9.5%; Guinea, 4.4%; Upper Volta and Ivory Coast, 3.2%; and Niger, .95%), Africans’ access to education was very limited. There were also different school categories relative to the children’s socio-economical class. There were schools for Africans who were promoted to French citizenship (Gorée, Dakar, Saint Louis and Rufisque in Senegal); schools for the sons of traditional chiefs (Franco-Muslim medersas); and mass schooling. Those who were attending the first types of school were exposed to the same curricula taught in France and could continue their studies in France. The second category of schools had mixed curricula. Students in these schools were taught both religious and secular curricula in order to prepare them for their future roles in their society. The mass schools’ curricula evolved around teaching French, hygiene, and some agricultural skills. But, in general, the official curriculum (all planned activities that take place in school) was aimed at undermining local knowledge which was viewed as backward. In one of the textbook used during that period, a text reads as follows:

But the native farmers do not know how to make palm oil well: they throw the fruit into boiling water, then remove it, allow it to cool and crush it with their feet.
The oil is dirty; it is not good; it keeps badly and becomes acid. Children, if later you have a palm oil plantation, buy a machine called an oil pressure...

Davesne, (1934, p. 139).

The General Governor Roume of French West Africa praising French education policy in the colonies declared that: “Peut on ne pas faire comparer aux Noirs le passé instable et sanglant de leur pays avec le présent pacifique, tranquille et fécond?” [One cannot fail to compare to the Blacks the past instable and bloody characters of their countries with the current pacific, smooth and fecund] (Journal of AOF, No. 1024, May 1924).

With such education, students were marginalized in their society. They knew that they were different from French people, but at the same time they were taught to undermine their own history and culture. Abiola (1985) assessing the African education in general, found that instead of teaching students a better understanding of their environment, and how to assimilate the knowledge that would enable them to face the future with confidence and participate fully in the life of the community, the notions acquired in school lead many of the students who were not prepared to continue their education nor to engage in a profession, to break away from the rural community and go in search of their fate in the urban areas. Through the analysis of French general education policy in West Africa, the question of the education of females remains. How women were educated? Did colonial rulers preoccupy themselves with female education?

Egbo (2000) found that the purpose of educating females under French rule was: “to ameliorate the quality of private life for both husbands and children” (p. 64).

Callaway (1987) reiterated this opinion by highlighting the influence of the “educated”
mother in forming the character of her children. Thus, the ideal was for elite educated women to be “housewives” rather than to work outside the home. Badawi (1991) observed that those women who did work taught school or undertook sewing activities. Conklin (1998) drew similarities between the forms of education French women were provided in France and the ones that their counterparts were exposed to in West Africa. Assie-Lumumba (1997) characterized that kind of education as the Victorian one (p. 301) when women were thought of as both delicate objects for private life and dependent of males. She clearly pointed out that “education in the colonies [French] was taken over by a state which reproduced its own patriarchal traditions” (p. 303).

According to the Guinea’s Ministry of Pre – University Education (1997), the first Western school in Guinea was opened by the Holy Ghost Fathers at Boffa in 1878. In 1890, the school was moved to Conakry, where three years later the first girls’ school was opened by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny. The Holy Ghost Fathers opened five more schools during this period. By 1900, the missionary schools had a total enrollment of about 360 children. While Western education was introduced by missionaries as a medium for propagating Christianity, it soon became an essential tool for achieving the French political and economic mandate in Guinea. It was geared towards the training of a submissive male support staff (primarily low and mid-level civil servants), for sustaining the colonial administration. In the case of Guinea, because the focus was on training males, the first and only girls school was opened in 1893, fifteen years after the first boys’ school was established in 1878. This shows that French colonizers were not much concerned about women education who they viewed for private life. This view can be seen through the curriculum offered in girls’ schools: sewing, cooking, reading and
writing. This was a preparation for life society had defined for females which was both paternalistic and of less significance than that of males (Kelly, 2000).

Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) also remarked that the colonial administration ignored African women. The colonizers focused on men, from whom they expected taxes and the cultivation of crops they needed in order to gain cash for tax purposes. This attitude privileged men’s entry into the colonial monetary system. Kelly (2000) also showed that colonial officials made no effort to incorporate women into the emerging colonial administration instead they gave administrative positions and salaries to the males. Colonial laws and policies giving men greater access to the cash economy and formal education thus undermined women’s empowerment and autonomy.

However, towards the latter part of colonial rule concerns about the availability of skilled workers incited the colonialists to make concerted efforts towards increasing girl enrollments in school. Thus, the period just prior to independence was marked by some noteworthy educational expansions, which included tentative attempts at mass education for both males and females (Guinean Ministry of Pre-University Education, 1997).

Nonetheless, girls continued to be under-represented since the percentage of those in school as a proportion of the overall female population, was still much smaller than that of boys enrolled in school (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997). By the time Guinea gained its independence in 1958, women constituted only about five percent of the “literate” population. This was in great contrast to the situation, which characterized indigenous education prior to colonial conquest when everyone had access to a form of “education” (Guinean National Commission for UNESCO, 1979). Another explanation for this low literacy rate might be related to the religious connotation of the colonial schooling. At the
beginning of the colonial enterprise, most of the schools were operating under the umbrella of missionary institutions, which represented a threat to the communities (in Guinea, 85 percent of the population are Muslims) who were afraid that schools might “Christianize” their children (Doukouré, 1999, June).

Since colonial education focused more on men than women, women societies continued to provide “informal” education for girls. Day (1998) argued that because these female schools were so influential in social, political, and religious life in the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries went to considerable trouble to discredit and destroy them when they could.

Robertson (1986) observed that colonial education served as a tool to transform the power structure of the traditional society. The colonization form of education made the gerontocracy system obsolete by providing education to young Africans. However, if male children regardless of their religion, social, and economic status, could have access to school, gender remained a criterion for decision regarding access to colonial schools.

An overview of some important traits of the colonial education militate in drawing the following conclusions: the colonial education policies were decided by the colonizer without regards to the colonized needs (vertical – top-down decision making process); the French education system was that of assimilation for its colonies; it was aimed at marginalizing students from their socio-cultural environment; colonial education reinforced unequal access to education (different schools; masses schools, elites schools and girls schools); it reinforced patriarchal attitudes towards females; and colonial education transformed the socio-economical and political structures of the traditional societies. However, the most significant impact of colonial education was its
damage on the minds of the colonized. The former Guinean President Touré (1969) framed that impact as the “colonyzation of the mind [la colonizazion de l’esprit]” (p. 10).

Under colonial education African women as well as men had no voice about the vision and goals of education. But, if schools were open to men and oriented towards their entrée to the monetary markets, women had less access to Western schools and their education was tailored to fit their domestic roles. In such context, the capabilities or freedoms of the colonized were restricted. The restrictions of these human capabilities had and continue to have a great impact on the quality of life of Africans. However, it is important to observe that colonial education had a more damaging impact on women. Assie-Lumumba (1997) observed that in the 1960s when most African countries became independent, the power held by the European people in Africa passed on to those who were educated in their school systems. These new leaders being men meant that the power was passed from men to men pushing women farther away from the decision making processes.

**Girls’ Educational Policies in the Post - Colonial Era**

After Guinea became independent in 1958, important educational reforms were undertaken by its newly elected government. The Government declared through Article 44 of its Constitution of 1958 that every citizen of the Republic of Guinea had an equal opportunity to education. Following the adoption of the constitution, the government declared that education was compulsory for all children the ages of seven and fifteen and free at all levels from primary school through university (Ordinance 42/MEN of August 5, 1959). In addition, education was made secular. The secularization of the education caused the closing of religious schools –mainly church related schools- and their
absorption into the public system (Guinean National Commission for UNESCO, 1979). As already mentioned, besides ratifying all the international educational conventions and those concerning specifically females’ education, Guinea has also designed and adopted a national educational policy document: Declaration of the Educational Policy. In 1989 an office for gender equity –Comité d’Équité- within the Ministry of Pre-University Education was established. However, in spite of major educational reforms, the ratio of educational participation (access and outcome-achievement) and the quality of education continue to be low; and there is a gender gap in both educational participation and outcomes (Bah-Diallo, 1995; UNESCO, 2000; USAID, 1999).

Hence, after more than forty years of independence there is still no significant improvement in the Guinean overall educational outcomes and the educational outcomes of women and girls lag behind those of their male counterparts. To find answers related to the reasons behind these issues, both the process of policy formulation and policy implementation and other socio-cultural, economical, and school factors that operate in undermining girls’ education are investigated.

The problematic of current educational policies.

Ripley and Franklin (1986) define policy formulation as “the development of alternatives for what should be done in general to attack various items [issues] on the agenda of government [communities]” (p. 5). They also see policy implementation as the operationalization of policy. These definitions provide key elements (alternatives and operationalization) that help frame this inquiry.

Ripley (1985) in another discussion on policy analysis provides an interesting continuum framework for policy design, which tackles all the steps and actors involved
for better policy outcomes. His framework is based on five steps: 1) setting the agenda 2) formulating and legitimating goals and programs; 3) implementing the program; 4) evaluating the implementation; and 5) deciding the future of the policy program. Through this framework, one can see how participation of players (including beneficiaries) takes place—or fails to take place from the first step to the last. Each step is necessary to implement the next. The first step helps establish the agenda so that goals and programs can take place. The premise of this step being that for a true agenda to be produced there is a need to listen to the people experiencing the issue that must be addressed. The second step produces policy statements, which will necessitate the implementation of a program. The program implementation generates policy actions that will lead to the fourth step which is the evaluation. The evaluation of actions will lead to decision about the future of the policy (p. 49).

Kamano (1995) in a study on Guinean post independent educational policies found that the policies that took place after the change of political leadership in 1984 were more participatory than those instituted during the first independent regime. Using Ripley’s framework, Kamano’s analysis is straightforward showing that the strategic educational planning policy undertaken by the current Guinean government focused only on the centralized level of education (traditional actors of education such as administrative educational officers). However, his analysis failed to show the significance of the participation of non traditional (parents and students) actors in policy designing and implementation. Moreover, Kamono’s analysis of the second step of policy design where people who are experiencing the problems need to be heard is lacking. By adopting such methodology, his analysis marginalizes both school community and
women’s voices because they are not articulated. Discussing about the drafting of the educational policy proposal Kamano (1995) states that:

The proposed policy was drafted by a select group of officials from the Ministry of Education: the National Director for Primary Education; the Assistant Inspector General, the head of the Education Planning and Statistics Department, and other experts. (p. 92)

This quote indicates that education policy design undertaken by the second political regime was done by those who are seen as the “experts” while ignoring the other stakeholders such as the parents, students and teachers. Both Chambers (1983) and Freire (2001) invite those who work with or for communities to establish a dialogue with them and consider community members as key partners. Even though Kamano acknowledges the lack of community consultation, he explains the lack of community involvement in the policy formulation by the absence of elected people’s body. This seems unlikely given that within each Guinean community there is an APEAE (Association of Students’ Parents and Friends of the School) and an individual who considered to be the “owner of the land” (the male-head of the first family to settle in the area) who usually is consulted for all the matters by people who live in that area. This person is considered to have moral power over others and can call them to discuss and make decisions about all important matters related within the community. Howard (2001) however in his study on Strategies for Advancing Girls’ Education found the participation of non traditional Guinean actors in educational policy formulation important. He shows the importance of the involvement of non-traditional school leaders (religious, economic, and women
groups) in advancing girls’ education agenda, but in his proposed framework, the women who are represented among the group of non-traditional leaders are voiceless.

Discussing about the capacity building in developing countries’ public sectors, Grindle (1997) found that often what causes the lack of performance in policy implementation is related to political and socio-economical conditions than the persons responsible for carrying out the policies. Ake’s (1996) argument supports Grindle’s, pinpointing the political factor as being significant in the development of Africa. According to Ake, at the end of colonization most African leaders were not interested in designing a development approach that addressed specific socio-cultural and economical environments. The newly elected leaders were mostly preoccupied with the consolidation of political independence and catching up with the West. Hence, adequate development policy was absent from the agenda of African governments.

A review of policies undertaken by the first independent Guinean government illustrates both Ake and Grindle’s points. Guinean policies after independence were oriented towards series of reforms to excise all colonial aspects from the existing educational system without critically weighing the ramifications. Guinean education in 1960s was to be Africanized through the educational vision, language and materials. French was replaced with numerous vernaculars as principal languages of instruction; yet, material to progress toward this goal was only partly achieved by the 1970s (Kamano, 1995). Educational materials were Africanized principally in the social sciences such as history, philosophy and geography. The replacement of the foreign teaching staff was also undertaken with little attention given to the lack of qualifications of the new staff. The vision of education shifted from the French individualism to the communaucratism
(Touré, 1969). Kurian (2002) argues that the results of the overall educational reforms undertaken by the first independent Guinean State were poor. Without crediting all of his findings, there seems to be an agreement that the use of vernacular languages was a failure because there was no educational planning addressing these issues.

Examining reforms undertaken by the second post independent Guinean State, Kurian (2002) found that most of the policies are decided by the Executive Power (President) with a modest delegation of qualified professionals. This has been done without regard to the proclaimed decentralized administration. Under the new government two major educational reforms have been undertaken: Le Plan d’Action Intermediaire (Intermediate Action Plan) of 1984 and the National Educational Policy Document of 1989. The first reform took place when there was a political change at the death of President Touré. The Intermediate Action Plan stated the needs for: 1) implementing a national program of teacher training and in-service training; 2) allocating funding to build new schools and provide school-equipment; and 3) restoring French as medium for instruction at all the levels of schooling –primary through university (Kurian, 2002, p. 1503)

The second major educational reform, the National Educational Policy Document of 1989 assessed the outcomes of the first reforms and established new educational policies. The National Educational Policy Document of 1989 stipulates the need for: 1) an increase of the educational funding which needs to represent at least 20 percent of the national budget; 2) a 50 percent increase of the primary school access for the school-aged population to help reduce illiteracy; 3) an allocation of 40 percent of the education funding to primary education; and 4) a reduction of gender gap in both education access
and outcome (Kamano, 1995; Kurian, 2002). It is interesting to see that both educational policy documents were designed after an assessment of preceding policies; which shows a continuum.

Nonetheless, even though educational specialists were involved in policy formulation, beneficiaries were not. The voices of students and their parents, classroom teachers, and specially women were missing during policy formulation. This might indicate a prediction of policy failure since these groups needed to be embarked at the first stage of policy formulation because they were the ones that implemented policies and were supposed to benefit from them. Klees (1986) argues that generally the specification of objectives to the individuals who are in charge of implementing policies can have a psychological effect on the people affected by the policies, and that effect helps lead to the striving to meet the policies goals.

Additionally, the goals established in the policy documents are quite general in regard to gender equity dimension. The goals are very broad, while this can provide room for adaptation it can also lead to intangible outcomes. For example, the fourth goal of the educational policy presents the need to “reduce the gender gap in both education access and outcome,” but fails to provide any tangible outcome by which to assess this policy statement.

Overall, the reforms of the Guinean education system are lacking in some ways. The decentralization in place is directed more towards an administrative decentralization which maintains power in the central government while shifting responsibility and authority for planning, management, finance and other activities to lower levels of government or semiautonomous authorities. This type of decentralization can take place
without much involvement from those outside of the government (Fiske, 1996). According to Fiske (1996) when decentralization focuses on structure, transferring decision-making powers and responsibilities is the goal. On the other hand, when decentralization focuses on content, improved learning is the goal, and transferring power is the vehicle for reaching that goal. Thus it is necessary to design a decentralization structure that account for both content and structure.

Another important area for education policy reform has to do with the establishment of the National Office of the Guinean Equity Committee in 1990. Led by women, this office is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Pre-University Education with its main objective being to ensure that there is gender parity in access to education at the elementary level of schooling. However, that there are women at the decision making levels of this office is not a guarantee that they can have a significant impact on female education issues. Aubrey (1997) in her study on “Women” NGO Organizations in Kenya states that: “women’s NGO tend not to have particularly feminist consciousnesses, and do not necessarily push for changes that positively affect the condition of women” (p.164). The lack of consciousness of Guinean women leaders might also be a factor that prevents them from petitioning for changes that would be beneficial to them.

As far as education policies for females are concerned, the Guinean government has proclaimed free, compulsory and equal educational opportunities for all Guinean citizens until the age of fifteen and has established a national office in charge of gender and equity issues. However, there is still a gender gap in educational access and outcomes. According to Marlow-Ferguson and Lopez (2002) Guinean girls’enrollment rate decreases as the level of schooling increases. They found that in primary schools the
female enrollment is 41 percent, while in secondary and higher education the rates are respectively 7 percent and 0.3 percent respectively. These rates show that the slogan “education for all” is far from being reached by many Guinean girls and that there is a need for policy formulation that accounts for social and cultural conditions in areas where policies would be implemented. Gabriel (1991) highlights the necessity for developing policy approaches that focus on prioritizing the needs of the people affected by the policies.

In Guinea, education for females was viewed as an important step toward their empowerment. The first Guinean leader used to say that: “le premier mari de la femme c’est son métier” [the first husband of a woman is her job] but little has been done to efficiently assess the barriers preventing women from benefiting from the educational opportunities that would allow them to seek employment. Analysis of educational policies carried out during the second regime shows that the policies were less concerned about bringing in at the center of the debate women and other community stakeholders’ voices and concerns. Hence, most of the decisions regarding women continued to be taken without their participation.

Besides issues in educational policy formulation and implementation, research has found that the current educational gender gap in Guinea and sub-Saharan Africa has its roots in poverty, socio-cultural attitudes and school system (Ballara, 1991; Beoku-Betts et al., 1998; King & Hill, 1993; Njeuma, 1993). These factors are discussed in the next sections.
Economic factors.

Guinea is among the world’s poorest countries (UNDP, 2003). In the 2003 annual Human Development report, Guinea was 157th among the 175 countries assessed. Poverty is one of the most significant factors impacting the education in general, and the education of girls and women in particular (UN Commission on the Status of Women, 1996). The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (1996) observed that the annual cost per pupil for primary education in sub-Saharan Africa may be as high as a rural family’s annual cash income.

In addition, the economic crisis and measures for structural adjustment in the eighties had a significant impact on the educational systems of developing countries. The public expenditures for education maintained by developing countries are in general a proportion of their national income and, when that income is reduced, the whole system of public funding is undermined (UNESCO, 1998). Significant population growth with a low level of national incomes brought budgetary cuts in public expenditures on education that significantly weakened the educational opportunities of vulnerable people. Public expenditures on education per capita in sub-Saharan Africa fell by more than half between 1980 and 1989 (UN Commission on the Status of Women, 1996).

Beoku-Betts, Bloch, and Tabachnick (1998) found a decline ranging from 3.1 percent to 16.2 percent in sub-Saharan governments’ expenditure on education from 1970 to 1990. Njeuma (1993) argues that economic constraints prevent governments from giving special attention to females as a group separate from males. Mwomonoh (1998) observes that the increases in population from 2.8 to 4 percent between 1980 and 2000 and problems with external public debts are major factors preventing sub-Saharan
African countries from giving special attention to gender specific schooling. The potential for achievement offered by the available schools is a major factor influencing individual decisions to enter, stay in, or leave school. The higher the direct costs, such as tuition, and the indirect costs such as transportation, the more likely families are to choose education for sons over daughters (Sutton, 1995).

Although there has been a decrease in government investments in social services, much has been done to promote progress in girls’ enrollment. This progress concerns primarily elementary education where governments have received support from international donor communities (Beoku-Betts et al., 1998). Thus, the secondary level of education continues to be neglected; however, Beoku-Betts et al. argue that access is also measured using secondary and tertiary education enrollment rates. In Guinea, the government investment in education has increased from 14.2 percent in 1990 to 29.9 percent in 2000, which is still low in relation to the need. However, 64 percent of this budget is invested in pre-university education with more than the half (39 percent) of the pre-university education budget being allocated to the primary level of education. The remaining percentage (24 %) of the pre-university budget is allocated to secondary schools (National Planning and Statistical –SSP* - office, 2000).

Tietjen (1991), deconstructing the slogan “free access to education,” found that in Guinea, even though public schools are free from the primary to the university levels, there are hidden school fees that make schooling a luxury for many rural parents. This author found the cost of school construction, school supplies and materials, housing the director, donations for teachers’ sustenance and tutoring that must be provided by parents

* SSP: Services des Statistics et de la Planification
in order to compensate for the poor quality of education representing major burdens on underprivileged parents who are forced to choose among their children who could attend school.

Hypothesizing on the interrelationship between formal education and the level of female literacy, Ballara (1991) found the high level of illiteracy among women is caused by lower access to education. She further argued that the most essential reason for the plethoric number of illiterate women in developing countries is the non-satisfactory level of primary needs essentials (foods and shelters). Hence, for this author poverty is the most important factor that prevented women from being literate.

UNESCO (2002) observed that it is not only poverty that played a role in the education of girls, but also religion and culture were important influencing factors. UNESCO pointed out that recent studies in Ethiopia and Guinea have looked at some of the reasons for gender enrollment differences in schools and one of the major conclusions given was cultural practices rather than poverty itself. UNESCO findings are supported by the results of a 1999 community consultation on factors that prevented parents from enrolling their daughters to school. This consultation was undertaken by one of the NGOs working in Guinea on girls’ education issues: Strategies for Advancing Girls Education (SAGE). SAGE (1999) community consultation findings revealed that 64 percent of their informants feared their daughters would get pregnant if enrolled in school, and this prevented them from enrolling their daughters to school and explained the motive for withdrawing them. Most of the participants in the SAGE study (58 %) also cited economical factors (school related fees and household activities in which girls were involved) as barriers to female education.
Socio-cultural factors.

Most of the traditions in sub-Sahara African countries support the idea that a woman’s only role is that of wifehood and motherhood; thus women do not generally need to receive an education or enter the job market (Brock-Utne et al., 1998). In many developing countries the preference for males extends to access to health care and education. Boys are seen as the bearers of their family name who later will be heads of family. Girls are seen as providing service to their families, by staying home and helping their mothers with housework, child care, and low income-generating activities (Kinnear, 1997). Because of the importance of the contribution that girls make to the well being of their families, the education of boys prevails to their education (Brock-Utne et al., 1998).

Etta (1994) also argues that cultural norms such as those that take place at the death of a husband are other factors mitigating the education of females. She found that on a death of a husband, a widow must endure a number of restrictions, including isolation for extended periods. These long periods of seclusion (at least three months) during which women cannot engage in normal activity influenced attendance in formal educational institutions.

In Guinea, discriminatory patriarchal practices based on a traditional division of labor generally confine women roles to caring for her children and husband before engaging in any other activity. Cultural stereotypes regarding women’s traditional role being primary family care givers is still very strong in many Guinean families and is considered to be a major barrier to their formal education (Baldé, 1994; Baldé, 1999). Some parents worry that an educated daughter, particularly in nontraditional field such as formal schooling, has fewer chances of finding a husband, bearing a child, or observing
traditional moral values (Beoku-Betts et al., 1998). Following the same line of reasoning, the late Mariama Bâ (1982) in her novel _So Long a Letter_ highlighted a Senegalese local saying that: “school turns our [Senegalese] girls into devils who lure our [Senegalese] men away from the right path [socio-cultural norms]” (p. 17).

It is interesting to see the difference between un-codified patriarchal and gerontocracy systems and the codified legal systems in sub-Saharan African countries. Most of the sub-Saharan African countries still use oral culture which functions as the medium to transmit cultural norms. Brown (1999) considers African oral forms as “important means of social articulation” (p. 1). Reagan (1996) argues that “the oral tradition includes not only the history of the community, but also serves to ‘sustain morality, ritual, law, and sanctions against offenders’” (p 27). Since a girl child spends most of her time with her community, she is exposed more to the socialization process of the community than the state socialization process in the school. The unwritten rules of the communities are communicated through such tools as story telling, proverbs, myths and rituals that are part of the life-cycle events. These tools used to educate children are embedded through gerontocratic and patriarchal practices.

Gerontocracy is the rule of the elders. The assumption behind such rule is that in oral cultures, elders (because of their age) have more experience than the young people and that experience plays a significant role in making important decisions. Also because they are the ones that have lived longer, elders are supposed to know better the history of the families and the communities. In areas where writing is not systematically used to keep records, elders are: “la memoire de la communauté” [memory of the community] (Am pâté Bah, Senegalese writer, 1957). In discussing the significance of the role of the
elders in keeping the memory of the community, Bah (1957) linked an elder passing away in Africa as similar to the burning of a library. However, the gerontocracy system cannot be equated to equalitarian principles since those who are young and women, no matter their age, are excluded from the family and community decision making processes. Being elder and male comes with privileges including deciding for others and inheriting.

In researching the prevalence of gerontocracy and patriarchy systems in the Shona and Ndebele societies of Zimbabwe, Folbre (1988) found that these systems manifested themselves through the control male elders exercised both on the means of production and reproduction. The control of the land, cattle, marriage rules and traditional laws provided male elders with significant control over women and young men. However, while the young men could rise above such control through the marriage rituals which confers on them a different status, women could not escape the power of male elders. Folbre (1988) further stated that the independence of Zimbabwe has changed little in the situation of women since the new government holds an orthodox Marxism view which assumes that when women enter the new production system their subordination to men will diminish and ultimately end. The situation described by Folbre is very similar to the Guinean context where the government envisions the ending of women discrimination through their entry into the production system. This attitude seems utopian when analyzing the socio-cultural context of the Fulani communities.

In the Fulani communities of Guinea, the first born male of the family is considered the elder regardless of the existence of elder sisters. He is the bearer of the family name and is treated with respect by all the family household members. His mother and/or co-wives, father, sisters and brothers all show him respect. He is allowed to take
part in all the family decision-making processes and is given the best food, provided with the best place to sleep and the best education the family can afford. Generally, the males in most Fulani families do not clean, cook or wash their clothes. These activities are seen as the domain of the Fulani women (Baldé, 1999).

Ndukwe (1996) in his analysis of Fulani social life remarks the strict gender division in the Fulani society. He argues that while women are not involved in matters related to locating pasturages, the movement and sale of cattle, they are in charge of milking the cows and selling milk products while taking care of the household tasks. Growing up in the Fulani community of Guinea, this researcher is reminded of how the status of males was emphasized through the family settings and the community. It was very common to hear neighbors tell males who were found cleaning, cooking and washing that they were not supposed to do so as such tasks were women’s tasks. Baldé (1999) recalled arguments he had with his father and brothers about the way he was educating his children. Males of his family would tell him to pay no attention to the education of his daughters since they would be married and would not be able to work outside of their home environments.

In Guinean Fulani families, the male elders even decide on matters patterning the lives of their mothers. They decide who their mothers marry and where they could live. Diallo and Wolff (2003) describe such cultural features in their piece of work My Heart Will Cross This Ocean: My Story, My Son, Amadou. Diallo, the main author of the book, Kadiatou Diallo, recalls events that led her to divorce Amadou’s father and how she asks Amadou, her oldest son, to re-marry. The approval of Amadou for the re-marriage of his mother brought legitimacy (through blessings) to the mother’s new marital union. In the
Fulani communities of Guinea, it is very common that at the death of their husbands or after a divorce, the male elders decide on the future of the widows or divorced mothers. The eldest son is the one who inherits most of his father possessions; the other male children then share the rest. Usually, women inherit nothing even though the codified system argues otherwise.

The privileges of males are maintained through what Fulani in Burkina Faso call: “tawaagal” and those from Guinea call: “finna tawaa.” According to Riesman (1998) tawaagal means “what one finds himself/herself in.” Hence, tawaagal can be forms of social order maintained in the Fulani communities in Burkina and Guinea. Tools used to reinforce the tawaagal are proverbs, myths, and local sayings and the rituals that take place during live cycle events (Derman, 1973; Riesman, 1998). In the Fulani community males are the ones who carry important messages dealing with naming ceremonies, marriages and deaths. It is very common to hear a man says after visiting a family finding only women that he went to deliver the message to the family, but did not find anyone.

In discussing about the Fulani communities in Burkina Faso, Riesman (1998) found that male elders also had the privilege to insult. They could insult their wives, their children, their younger brother, but these groups of people could not reciprocate. He also noted that female roles were wife and mothers and their entire socialization process was focused on fulfilling those important roles. A childless woman was categorized as a witch. This is very similar to the Guinean society where childless women are called: mamaaree which has the same meaning as witches (Derman, 1973). Being called maamaare in the Fulani culture carries negative connotations and conveys rights to the communities to ostracize the individual or insult her. Folbre (1988) in her case study on the Zimbabwean
society, states that the vulnerability of childless women among the Shona is extreme to the extent that a barren woman can be replaced by her sister (p. 64).

As already mentioned, proverbs, myths and local sayings all contribute to reinforcing the power of the elders and male children. Generally, in Ghana as well as in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea, only male elders can be chiefs, decide for the naming ceremonies, the rites of passage, marriages and funerals. According to the former Officer of the Ghanaian National Commission on Children, Mrs. Margaret Sackey (personal communication, May 11, 2003), even some matrilineal societies, such as those of the Akwapem (south-eastern) ethnic group of Ghana, are maintained through the male born children system.

In her novel the Joys of Motherhood, Emechetta Butchi (1979) also shows the domination by males in the Nigerian Igbo society. She highlights how women were treated through the character of Enugu who even though she was the daughter of a chief was given in marriage without her consent. She was told on the day of her marriage that having been a good daughter, meaning she obeyed her father, she now needed to fulfill her second mandate which was to be a good wife. Enugu did not approve of the chosen husband, but was reminded to fulfill her role with him through local sayings: “a man is never ugly” and “the bride price ensures the ownership of the woman.” Hence, Enugu found strength through the local sayings to endure her marriage. She gave everything she had for her sons and died with nothing. In her desire to make sure that her sons were provided with the best, her daughters helped to care for them by selling food to support their schooling while at the same time these girls were denied formal education. The bride prices of the daughters were also used by their father.
Songs and local sayings are other mediums used to convey messages about women’s place in the society (Kapteijns, 1999). The Guinean cultures have a large repertoire of songs and local sayings. The songs and local sayings praise women who accept their conditions, who do not talk back to their husbands, and who with goodwill try to please their husbands (Baldé, 1999). In his literary work, *A Prodigious Mother: A Story of a Mother (1900-1984)*, Baldé posits that the good women of the Fulani Muslim culture are rewarded for their good behaviors through their children who would be blessed and become successful. He found that his mother’s submission and obedience to her husband’s will and her kindness toward underprivileged people earn her children blessings that led to their successful live situations. However, Baldé further remarks that women who rebel and argue with their husbands or parents are punished since their children and themselves would not succeed. Kapteijns (1999) found cursing and blessing *metaphysical sanctions* against disobedient Somali girls and women (p. 31). Besides excommunication from family and kin group, metaphysical sanctions communicated through the local sayings and songs were used in Northern Somali to maintain the status quo. This author concluded that during the era of 1899-1980, both local sayings and songs used in Northern Somali assigning cultural prescriptions for “proper girls” (p. 36). In the case of the Guinean Fulani Muslim communities, songs and local sayings are still oral expressions of socio-cultural norms.

The Guinean local sayings and songs provide examples for cases to identify with for the listener. It is important also to observe that the Guinean singers find their inspiration in proverbs and local sayings that convey the cultural norms of the community.
in which they live. Following are examples of Fulani local sayings that provide a glimpse about women status within the community:

Si debbo munyike bhibhe makko barkay [if a woman submits her children will be blessed]; Debbo diabotako moddi makko [a woman does not talk back to her husband].

It is essential to note that within African societies in general a wife- who has children- status improves and is called by the name of her children and has a right to her husband’s property (Baldé, 1999). Hence, it is through her children that a woman gains prestige or power. Accordingly the power of the mothers, sisters, and daughters have depended on the positions held by the children, brothers, husbands and fathers (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997). This political structure can also be categorized as a patriarchal structure. Nonetheless, wives who are ill treated by their husbands can resist by refusing to cook and clean for them. These wives can be backed up by women and men in their community. Therefore, even oppressed women have domains where they exercise a form of control over men.

Regarding the men’s and women’s domains where forms of control are exercised, Dwyer (1978) argued that in Morocco, the household and the street neighborhood were women domains and restricted to men during certain hours (day time). Generally, men were not welcomed in such areas before evening and tended to avoid them since there was an assumption that considered men’s association with women degrading for men. Nonetheless, women domains were used by women to discuss matters of mutual interest; they helped each other to accomplish household tasks and covered up for each other’s weaknesses (financial or sexual). Hence, Dwyer concluded that even if men wanted to
stay home, they were compelled to leave or restrict their movements within the
compound. Dwyer’s definition of the places where Morocco women articulated their
voices is supported by Hejaiej (1996) study on Tunisian women. Hejaiej found that
contrary to the opinion that Muslim women are oppressed and do not voice their opinion,
Tunisian women were speaking behind closed doors (within the homes). For this latter
author, most of the time, researchers do not take the opportunity to locate women’s
voices in the areas where they are expressed.

There are similarities between Dwyer’s analysis of the Moroccan men and
women’s worlds and the worlds of Fulani men and women. Fulani men are also secluded
to outside of the wuro, or living unit, during day time and the wuro is the women’s
domain during that period of time (Riesman, 1998). Fulani women use the wuro to
express their ideas freely while working together. Most importantly they use this forum to
design strategies to help them deal with men’s power. If a male adult remained within the
household unit during that period he is seen as less than a man and could be subject to
women mockery. These descriptions are supported by the Guinean writer Camara in his
literary work The Guardian of the World: Kouma Lafolo Kuma (1984). This author
shows that maninka women of Upper Guinea stayed home to attend to household
activities after men have left for fields or hunting and that the presence of an adult male
can be disturbing for women during the day time.

Religion has also influenced women and girls’ education. Etta (1994) addressed
the different positions of men and women in Christianity and Islam. In both religions
preference is given to men who perform the rituals. Etta (1994) argued that such attitudes
have contributed to the subordination of females. Islam considers wifehood and
motherhood to be the most sacred roles of women (Badawi, 1991). Further pursuing the implications of Etta’s argumentation, Badawi found that Muslim women can seek employment, especially in nursing, teaching and medicine because of the connection of these activities with caring/nurturing which characterize their natural roles.

Boeku-Betts et al., (1998) observed that in spite of variations between communities, Muslim communities, compared with other religious groups, tended to have more rigidly defined gender role norms and practices, which affected access and attainment rates for girls in the education system. Hyde (1993) argues that Islam actually prevented the schooling of girls in some Islamic societies such as those in Northern Nigeria. Such communities considered Christian missionary schools and Western schooling to be a threat to their tradition and culture. Girls in these communities were less likely to enroll in school and were the ones likely to spend time helping with economical activities such as selling food and handicrafts for their secluded mothers.

Nonetheless, Zakirai (1981) in his analysis of Islam’s impact on the education of Hausa women found that there was no agreement among the respondents of his study. While some participants in his study indicated that Islam does not object to women going to school, other respondents indicated Islam does object. Esmat (1991) indicates that women in some Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia are forbidden to work directly with men and men hold all decision making power in regard to the education of females. Haw (1998) found the presence of boys in the classroom had a distracting influence on the educational achievement of both girls and boys in strong Muslim communities.

In an unpublished article, Doukouré (1999, June), the team leader of the SAGE/Guinea home office, argues that Islam does not oppose educating females in
Guinea since the education of the female believers is prescribed in the Islamic Holy Book. However, he hypothesizes that the school system is a threat to female education since parents fear sexual harassment, rape and unwanted pregnancies that could tarnish the honor of the families.

Socio-cultural practices in Guinea and sub-Saharan Africa are patriarchal; men are the community leaders (King & Hill, 1993). Male children are considered the bearers of families’ names. They are the ones who will take care of their families later. Girls are viewed as future wives and mothers. They will marry and leave their families; so, they are not worth for any major educational investment, since their husbands, not their parents will benefit from their education. The current educational situation of women is here presented as a result of survival of traditional practices of patriarchy. By defining the sphere of males and females, the traditional system confined women at home where their primary role was to care for the family. The traditional society vision of an educated woman is the one that was docile and subordinate. No sanction limits a father’s power over his wives and daughters. Both colonial enterprise and post colonial states built upon the African patriarchy system by selecting males to play supremacy roles in the society through Western education.

School system factors.

The academy and the classroom itself are not mere sites of instruction. They are also political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by different empowered social constituencies. Thus teachers and students produce, reinforce, recreate, resist and transform ideas about race, gender, and difference in the classroom. Also, the academic institutions in which
we are located create similar paradigms, canons, voices that embody and transcribe race and gender. (Mohanty, 2003, p. 194).

Cultural attitudes are reflected in the school settings. These attitudes are reinforced by current school pedagogical practices. Student achievement is closely related to the learning conditions and environment. Sexual bias and stereotypes conveyed in textbooks act as barriers for higher female education achievement. School buildings, curricula, textbooks and teacher qualifications and commitment significantly impact on student achievement (Beoku-Betts et al., 1998). The following discussion is articulated around the impact related school factors have on the education of girl students.

Teachers’ attitudes are considered one of the key factors that influence students’ schooling experiences. Many children do not receive an equitable education because society teaches that there are genetic differences in aptitude, which in turn, determine the proper roles for each gender. Men supposedly are good at mechanical tasks and mathematics while women are better in art and nurturing. Those differences are emphasized in the schools. Joyce and Weil (1996) argue that the result of those beliefs shapes the process of learning and teaching in such a manner that 30 percent of children leave school without even completing their basic education.

One of the few studies concerning the classroom experience of girls in Africa is Biraimah’s (1982) study of secondary school girls in Togo. She observed that teachers had little regard for the ability, character, and potential of female students and that their messages emphasized a gender division of labor. Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998) found that inside Guinean classrooms teachers’ efforts to involve female students in the process of
learning were over shadowed with gender prejudice. One of the teachers in the study seems to care for girls’ participation in the learning process, but his comment ‘ha, a girl who wants to talk’ and laugh (p. 116) after the girl failed to respond appropriately, were in contradiction with his preaching. Generally, Guinean teachers fail to encourage girls’ participation in the process of learning and teaching. Teachers attribute more academic competence to boys than girls. In classrooms girls are often either ignored or ridiculed by teachers. Both situations have negative influence on girls’ education (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998). These authors argue that girls themselves carried these socio-cultural attitudes inside classrooms. Many girls, by themselves, have learned over the years to devalue their abilities, and they hesitate to participate in class. They are silent or hesitant for fear of being humiliated by their male classmates or the teacher; thus, they lose opportunities to learn and display success (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998).

The curriculum content and the way it is designed and implemented have a significant impact on student’s achievement. Guinean curriculum design is a centralized process. Official school curricula are designed by the Ministry of Education through the National Office of Pedagogical Actions (INRAP*). Curricula give little room for teachers input since each lesson title to be taught is clearly spelled out. The classroom teacher needs only to come up with the content of the required lesson and deliver it to students. Curricula are neither backed up by an explicit vision nor by a visible philosophy statement; but the goals each lesson is trying to achieve are provided. The vision of the education at each level of schooling is important for the school community that can clearly see the purposes of education. However, without a clear mission statement it is

* INRAP: Institut National de la Recherche et des Actions Pedagogiques
difficult for teachers, parents, students and administrators to have a common understanding on the type of education schools are providing.

Nonetheless, at the end of each school year, the National Office of Pedagogical Actions and Research is supposed to send forms to teachers in order to collect their input on curricula they have taught, but with little effect. In her report on Guinea’s educational reforms, Sutton (1999) argues that despite teachers’ suggestions to delete or amend certain references, the curricula and textbooks remain unchanged. For instance, this researcher taught for nine (9) years in one of the largest high schools in Conakry (the capital of Guinea) but was only asked once for her feedback about the Contemporary History curriculum. After filling the form and giving her feedback, the outcome of the feedback were not addressed the entire time she worked in that high school as a full time teacher.

Evans, Sack and Shaw (1995) argue that the goal of educational policy formulation process is not simply the production of a policy document. The most important goal is to create a social learning process so that key participants in education, including parents and students, come to understand the nature of the issues facing the existing resource constraints, and the kind of negotiations which will be needed to achieve the desired educational outcomes.

Another issue related to the curriculum design process is its content. Secondary education curricula are broad. It is practically impossible to teach all the lessons spelled out before the end of the school year, which is eight months in duration since the month of June is reserved for the national exams. However, given that teachers are required to teach all of the lessons; little attention is paid to students’ understanding and participation.
Teachers could also decide to teach some of the planned lessons with the fear of facing problems in case the Ministry of Education discovers it or students are given questions on lessons they have not been taught during the national exams. Either way, teachers face a dilemma, which is not easy to solve; such situation further points out to the controlling power curricula have on teachers (Sutton, 1998).

The fragmentation of curricula is yet another area that prevents students from making crucial connections between different subjects they are taught. In secondary schools, students are taught 11 subjects by different teachers. The subjects are: Math, Physic, Chemistry, Biology, French, English, Civic Instruction, Philosophy, History, Geography, and Geology. Each teacher is responsible only for his/her subject and there is no connections made between the subject and others students are taught.

There is also little connection between subjects taught and students’ environment which led Ohuche and Otaala (1981) to argue that African students are educated for a world that does not exist. In fact, more and more Guinean graduates are having difficulties finding employment because they lack the necessary skills for the few that are available and even in case they are suitable for the jobs they cannot make connections between their education and the job requirements This issue is presented as a barrier to female education since school would not lead them to employment (GDHS-II, 1999).

Another important area of curriculum concern is related to the methods of teaching used by Guinean teachers. Almost all the Guinean teachers use the traditional way of teaching which relies heavily on lecturing and memorization. This method of teaching negatively affects students learning processes. Joyce and Weil (1993) indicate that learning styles must accommodate the uniqueness of the individual learner in order
for learning to take place. Guinea’s classrooms learning environments adhere to the traditionalist vision of learning and teaching. They are organized with the goal of students acquiring a maximum accumulation of organized information and procedural knowledge. Teachers choose the materials students will learn from and organize student practice. Students’ efforts to organize learning activities for themselves play little role since the teacher is the expert who is supposed to know all and provide the knowledge to students who do not know. This system of education is characterized by Freire (1993) as the ‘banking system’ (p. 54) of education.

According to GDHS-II (1999) survey, failure and lack of interest are among the reasons given by students for dropping out of school at the secondary level. Lack of interest was given as the reason boys leaving school twice as often as girls. On the other hand, failure was the most common reason for girls dropping out of school (23 %). Sutton (1999) found that only 33 percent of primary girls who sat for the exit exam leading to secondary schools succeed, while 44 percent of boys pass the exam. In her study regarding Ghanaian girls’ access to primary education in relation to parent decision-making, Yeboah (1997) found the first four years of a girl primary schooling the years that determined her retention in school. According to this author the decision to keep the girl in school depended on both the quality of the school and the girl performance.

The lack of teachers has been suggested as an important barrier to girls (and boys) education in rural areas. In Guinean rural areas, the lack of teachers was cited by 19 percent of the GDHS-II (1999) study participants as a significant reason for leaving school. While double shifts have been used to deal with the constraint of classrooms in
urban areas, many rural classrooms go unused for teacher shortage reason. Sutton (1999) predicts that if all children began primary school on time, none repeated, and population continued growing at 2.8 percent a year, and student-teacher ratio remained at 50 to 1, then a total of 33,498 teachers would be required to provide universal primary education in 2006 – which would nearly mean tripling of the current teacher force. Under the leadership of the female pre-university minister (Hadja Aicha Bah-Diallo) there have been efforts made (between 1992 and 1995) toward redeployment of teachers from urban to rural areas with incentives provided to those who work in rural areas, but still the needs remain crucial. Communities have also been involved in contributing to teachers’ salaries, but their resources are limited. Multiple grade classrooms are considered to be possibilities for solving both the problem of teacher and classroom shortage. However, multiple grade classrooms raise the issues of quality of instruction.

School infrastructure is another factor that influences students’ educational outcomes. Kamano (1995) points out that classrooms currently in use were designed for a maximum of 40 students, but are filled with a minimum of 70 students. Most of the classrooms are crowded in such an extent that it is impossible to arrange the seats to make the rooms more conducive for learning. A teacher who has to deal with 70 students at the same time cannot give special attention to students who are experiencing learning difficulties.

Having no nearby school was a reason given by 28 percent of boys and 26 percent of girls in rural areas for never attending school (GDHS-II, 1999). Sutton (1999) findings substantiate the latter ones but she further argues that the lack of access to school is more severe for girls (less than 20 percent) than boys. It is estimated by the GDHS-II that on
average students in the rural areas spend 47 minutes to reach the nearest schools while those in urban areas spend 19 minutes in traveling to schools.

The language of instruction continues to be a relevant issue in the discussion related to education outcomes. The language problem needs to be addressed. In Guinea the current language of instruction is French, the official language for administration purposes. This language policy is implemented despite the fact that Guinea has signed the Linguistic Human Rights document. According to Desai (2001), *Linguistic Human Rights* are inalienable rights all human beings have to be able to express themselves in their own language which carries their cultural heritage and which ensure their full participation in their self and community development. These rights are also granted to every human being by the *1948 Declaration of Human Rights* in its article 2 which states that: ‘everyone is entitled to all rights (expressed in the Declaration) without distinction of any kind, such as color, race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.’ This implies that individuals have the right to use their language or the one that they understand best in learning.

Bamgbose (2000) stresses the fact that in most of African countries the language of instruction is a foreign language, which is the language of the former colonial master. Currently African children learn in English, French or Portuguese to the detriment of their own languages.

However, in former British colonies English is used for the first three years of schooling, which is different from former French colonies where French is used for all the levels of schooling. Bamgbose (2000) reports that comparison between dropout rates of the two groups of former colonies has shown that there is less dropout rate in the
former British colonies that use students’ mother tongue for the first year of schooling than former French colonies that use French only. Since school languages are different from students’ mother tongues, the majority of children have difficulties expressing themselves in school’s languages. Thiong’o (2000) argues that the difference between the school language and home language creates a gap between students’ socio-cultural background and the school culture. Results of this situation cause difficulties in learning since students hardly find connection between the two cultures.

Linguists (Bgoya, 2001; Jokinen, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) have found that children learn best when they are taught in their first language which is their mother tongue (or L₁). This because they escape the psychological trauma of using an alien language, the language they use has meaning to them and carries their socio-cultural background. Adoption of African children’s mother tongues as mediums of instruction improves their self-esteem which is an important aspect of their learning process. In addition to this significant finding, it has been found that many African teachers lack knowledge in European languages, which adds to the burden of communication problems in classroom settings. It is very common to find, in Guinea for instance, teachers who use the local languages to explain concepts or illustrate a point to their students. This is done despite the fact that the official medium of instruction is French.

School safety is another significant factor that influences girls’ participation to education. Sexual harassment is another factor that impacts girls’ schooling. Female students experience harassment from both their teachers and male students. Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998) found that, in Guinea, few teachers considered it normal to pressure students for sexual favors. In their observation, these authors found one staff member at
an urban college teasing his colleague for not finding a girlfriend among the students: “You have been here for 25 years and still cannot make up your mind and pick one. I wonder what you are waiting for (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998, p. 107).” The sexual harassment issue within the school system might be a determinant factor that explains parents’ fear of their daughters’ safety and this factor might be greatly contributing to the removal of girls from school after they reach their puberty. If this hypothesis is investigated it might help address girls’ safety issues within the school in more adequate ways.

Boeku-Betts et al., (1988) also argue that because women in sub-Saharan Africa are not protected from sexual harassment or violence against their persons their ability to fully use educational opportunities is compromised. Sexual harassment is common in school settings, and women often are not in a position to defend themselves. Boeku-Betts et al. found violence, political instability, popular strikes, and university closures in many African countries as other factors that reinforce lack of safety for women to persevere with their studies.

Mahaffey (1995) found incidents of improper touching, humiliation and intimidation as factors influencing girls’ education. She argues that when sexual harassment is treated casually, “both girls and boys get a damaging message: girls are not worthy of respect and that the appropriate behavior for boys includes exerting power over girls” (Mahaffey, 1995, p 39).

Emebet (1998) identifies school distance, harassment and unfriendly school environments as critical factors influencing female rural Ethiopian students’ enrollment and achievement. The predominance of male teachers in classrooms is another barrier to
female education, because parents prefer their daughters to be taught by a female teacher (UNESCO, 1998). The issue of girls’ safety within the school context is central to this study since the results of Guinean rural community consultations show that 64 percent of the parents fear school related pregnancies.

The influence of the time constraint factor on the attendance and persistence of rural girls in school has been highlighted by many researchers such as Gaudelli (2001) and Ballara (1991). Gaudelli found Kenyan secondary schoolgirls continuous involvement with family labor prevented them from having time to engage in schooling activities. The lack of a flexible time-table in regard to school attendance policies is found as hampering girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa. Ballara (1991) found the time factor to be a very important barrier for rural females wanting to gain formal education. From the perspective of this author, sub-Saharan African women are overburdened with work inside and outside the home. Ballara described the time table of these women as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.30 am:</td>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30-6 am:</td>
<td>Fetch water; prepare breakfast; attend to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 am:</td>
<td>Wash dishes; pound millet; collect vegetables or leaves for the mid-day meal; wash clothes; visit market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am-3pm:</td>
<td>Carry the meal to the field; farm on her plot of land, or help the man to till the fields, hoe, weed, plant or guide the plough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 pm:</td>
<td>Gather wood to cook evening meal; collect wild fruit or karite almonds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 pm:</td>
<td>Fletch water; pound millet; clean the compound; prepare the evening meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9 pm:</td>
<td>Card and spin cotton.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1  Ballara Table  Source  Ballara (1991, p. 26)
From this time table, deduction can be made that rural girls are involved in the accomplishment of the scheduled activities before the time to go to school and after they return from school. Girls are more likely expected to help carry the activities; this can be overwhelming and lead to a state of fatigue while they are in school and in doing their after school activities (homework). In addition, completing of the household activities can lead the girl student to be late for the school session. In Guinea, school sessions start at 8:00 in the morning and if a student is late after 20 minutes she is prevented from entering the classroom. And after thirty days of absence, the student is not allowed to remain in the classroom. Most of the time females’ students are the one that are punished by such policies since their male counterparts are rarely involved in the activities described in Ballara’s time table.

There are other hidden school factors such as the cleaning and school pregnancy policies that have been targeted as influencing girls’ education. In their study on Inside Classrooms in Guinea, Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998) found that teachers in Guinea expected girls and only girls to handle daily cleaning of the school property, especially sweeping classrooms and verandas. In Guinea the most common punishment for misbehavior in elementary and secondary schools is to keep the student after school, but girls who have to stay after school must sweep. This attitude might imply that school punishes girls simply for being girls (Anderson-Levitt et al., 1998).

The school pregnancy policies punish pregnant girls rather than schoolboys who impregnated them. Tietjen (1991) found that school policies dismissed pregnant girls from school settings with no readmission. Although policies call for the girl and boy responsible for the pregnancy, the boy rarely is punished. In a USAID study (1991) cited
by Teitjen, it was found that among girl dropouts, 56 percent of girls dropped out because of pregnancy and only 3 percent of the boys were expelled from school. However, there is no indication that the others 53 percent responsible for impregnating these schoolgirls were students.

In the Senegalese and Guinean education systems the pregnancy policies have been revised. These policies used to punish only girls for being pregnant. Bà (1982) argues about the Senegalese school pregnancy policy when she narrates the story of the main character of her novel, Ramatoulaye, whose daughter was pregnant. The explanations provided show that if the school authorities found out about the pregnancy of the girl she would be the only one who would be dismissed, but since then this policy has been revised in Senegal. In Guinea also before 1992, only the Guinean schoolgirl was punished by the school pregnancy policy, but this is no longer true. The new policy of 1992 dismisses both the pregnant school girl and the schoolboy responsible for the pregnancy and after the delivery of the baby, the new parents can return to school. Nonetheless this policy has some weaknesses because if the person responsible of the pregnancy is not a student, he could go unpunished and most of the time, schoolboys deny the responsibility of the pregnancy making it difficult to punish them. Also, there is no study done to support the impact this policy is having on girls’ education; there is no data tracing the return of former pregnant girl into the education system. Hence, the assessment of the impact of the new policy is problematic.

Girls’ attitudes are also seen as contributing to their educational outcomes. Gaudelli (2001) observed that generally when African girls reach adolescence they are under social pressure to prepare for motherhood, because their societies do not favor
single women. The social pressure pushes girls to focus more on fulfilling their community expectations than their schooling. In their study, *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement and College Culture* Eisenhart and Holland (1992) found the reason behind the failure of the women in their study related to the significant time they spent in developing romantic relationships. Instead of focusing on their academic works these women—who were successful during their high school studies, were driven into developing their attractiveness since that is the quality that ensures their prestige. Even though Eisenhart and Holland’s study took place in a college and in a different socio-economical setting, there might be some similarities between these US women’s line of reasoning and their female counterparts in Guinea who also might be lead to believe that is more important to develop their social capital (attractiveness) and find a potential husband than focus on their studies. Contrary to the US most of the Guinean girls engaged in marriage at the secondary level of education. Hence, the amounts of time girls spend in improving their social capital (attractiveness) might prevent them from achieving at the same level of their male counterparts.

**Conclusions**

The literature of this study reveals that there is a significant gender gap in Guinean primary as well as secondary schools; however the gender gap at the secondary level is more significant. Since independence, progress has been made in bringing more equity and quality in the educational realm. However, the sources reveal that there has been more concern about improving the primary level of education for girls than the secondary level. The legacy of past school policies, the current school policies and practices, and economic, socio-cultural and school system factors have been identified by
the researchers as representing barriers to girls’ formal education. One of the most important issues arising in the analysis of the literature is the discrepancy between the codified system of education and the un-codified (informal or unwritten) system of education in which students are socialized. This unexplored discrepancy seems to be a significant gap in the understanding of forces influencing girls’ education in Guinea in the 21st century.

**Summary**

This chapter provided background for this study by critically reviewing relevant literature about forces behind girls’ persistence in school. Each of the major factors was discussed in connection with the issue of girls’ underachievement in formal education. The factors as illustrated in **Figure 1** represent the main obstacles to the education of secondary schoolgirls. Methods used to explore the research questions of the present study are presented and explained in the next chapter.
Girls’ education: obstacles to their retention

Social and Cultural Factors
- Informal socialization
- Role and Expectation of Girls / women in the Community
- Role of women / girls within the religion
- Women’s attitudes vis-à-vis their roles and responsibilities
- Aspiration and self-image of women / girls

School Factors
- Type of school
- School policies
- Sexual harassment
- School Location
- Curriculum issues
- The language problem
- Exams
- School practices
- Teachers’ attitudes
- Students experiences

Economic Factors
- Country Economical Development
- Free versus fee education
- Cost of schooling
- Family income
- Returns to schooling
- Value of household labor

Figure 1 Summary literature review

Adapted from:
CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

Introduction

From the critical review of the literature, issues influencing girls’ education are found in the legacy of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial education policies and practices and are seen in the discrepancies between the codified educational policies and the un-codified norms of informal education. Chapter Two also illustrates the lack of studies dealing with secondary education for girls in Guinea and the gap of ethnographic studies focusing on the educational experiences of rural secondary Muslim Fulani girls. Ethnographic studies on Fulani women’s schooling experiences are absent from the repertoire of studies about African women and girls education. Therefore, the present study investigates how the schooling experiences of Muslim Fulani girls in Dalaba, a rural secondary school, affected their retention. The study’s aim is to contribute detailed information on the schooling experiences of Dalaba’s Muslim Fulani girls by investigating the obstacles to their retention and addressing the implications of the findings as they relate to the education of Muslim Fulani women in the Fouta Djallon province of Guinea. This chapter presents and discusses the methods used to answer the research questions, the theories that ground the present research, the research site, the strategies for data collection and analysis, and issues that emerged while the research was conducted.
Research Methods

The study’s research questions were appropriate for qualitative methods of investigation because, in qualitative methods, the emphasis is on understanding the particular as opposed to the general (Glesne, 1999). Within the scope of qualitative methods, the life-history method was used to conduct the present case study. According to Weinberg (2002) the life-history method of data collection is among the oldest methods used in qualitative research. Its recognition as a valuable research tool began in 1966 when Howard Becker’s essay entitled *The Life History and the Scientific Mosaic* was published. This essay was written as an introductory background to the life-history study *the Jack-Roller* of Clifford Shaw which was first published in 1930 (p. 75).

Weinberg defines the life-history method as “a source of data to be appropriated for social scientific analysis” (p. 63). The purpose of life-history is to provide in-depth details of informants’ own stories that can be used as potential cases in developing social theories. Becker (2002) argues that life-history is not conventional social science data in the sense that it does not use strictly defined “scientific methodology.” Becker further distinguishes life-history from fictional and autobiographical work. While fictional work is not concerned with fact and autobiographical work might focus on a part of the story leaving the other parts out, the life-history method is more concerned with the purposes of the study and fully rendering informant experiences while taking into account the context in which the informant lives (p. 79). Taking into account the context in which experiences happened is very important in providing a holistic perspective to the study. Patton (2002) posits that the holistic perspective in qualitative inquiry means contextualizing data. Patton urges qualitative researchers to be concerned with
contextualizing the physical, temporal, historical cultural and aesthetic context in which experiences happened (p. 63). It is the context in which experiences happen that give them meaning; without the context, experiences are only partially understandable.

By defining the purposes of the current study and giving voice to informant experiences, while acknowledging interpretation of the context in which they lived and where experiences took place, the present study borrows significantly from the life-history method and the holistic perspective. The present study focuses on Muslim Fulani girls who left school while they were attending Behanzin high school. Defining the focus of this study led it to a case study since only Muslim girls who dropped out of Behanzin high school were potential informants. According to Yin (1989), a case study is an empirical method of inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real context and uses multiple sources of evidence. Stake (1994), discussing the importance of case studies, found that they could help refine theory through reflection made on human experiences.

The research was conducted with individuals who fit the research rationales. From an initial group of ten main informants, I worked with eight girls and women. The other two women in the initial group of informants left the area for Senegal and Sierra Leone in order to be reunited with their husbands. It is from the eight remaining informants that in-depth information about their schooling experiences was gathered in order to address the current research purpose. By doing so, this present study fulfilled the purpose of a case study. Patton (2002) found that the purpose of the case study in qualitative inquiry is to “gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (p. 447).
Theoretical Framework

Denzin (2000) defines theory as the act of making sense out of a social interaction. The purpose of using theories in qualitative research is twofold. Theories are used as a framework for asking questions and discussing aspects of findings (Glesne, 1999; p. 23). The interest of this study is on girls’ educational experiences at the secondary level of education. This focus led the researcher to explore and describe theories that dealt with girls’ experiences at school and within their community. These theories helped to provide a framework to this study. The following theories helped to frame this inquiry: human capabilities approach theory, sociology of possibility theory, feminist and post colonial feminist theories, critical theory, humanist theory, and resistance theories.

The Human Capability Approach

Nussbaum (2000) found that the provision of education demands the cultivation of the capabilities of all human beings to use their senses, imagination, thinking and reasoning with the legal guarantee of the freedom of all forms of expression (p. 97). In the contemporary context, the provision of education has come to be seen more as a right that is measured through statistical data. While quantitative data dealing with the issues of women education has been useful in establishing the prevalence of the problem and contributing factors, individual’s experiences cannot be assessed using numbers and scales (Varey, 1997).

The ideas expressed by Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1999), who consider the education right as one of the substantive freedoms (Sen, p. 36) of human needs, seem to better assess the quality of life in a country than the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita or the presence of material resources (in this case the presence of policies). The
role of public policy is to ensure that people’s human needs are met. Meeting these needs is an important starting point that enables individuals to function in their society and have a quality and human life. Through the capabilities approach framework, this study investigated present educational policies in Guinea, as well as their formulation and implementation as they relate to female education. Issues that surfaced during policy formulation and implementation were analyzed in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses and ultimately make suggestions and recommendations to policy makers. It is important to understand the capabilities approach as an approach that posits itself against dominant approaches such as the utilitarian that centers its analysis on economics and fails to make connections between political, economical, and socio cultural aspects of people’s lives in assessing their quality of life. Nussbaum’s (1995) discussion about the capability approach clearly points out that:

Resources [policies] have no value in themselves, apart from their role in promoting human functioning. It [the capability approach] therefore directs the planner to inquire into varying needs individuals have for resources, if they are to become capable of an equal level of functioning. (p. 5)

In the implementation of the current study, quantitative data such as gender sensitive educational policies and statistics on girls’ access and persistence in the school system were consulted and analyzed, but with caution and intention of looking at how these data have influenced girls’ educational participation.

The Theory of the Sociology of Possibilities [Sociologie des Possibilities]

The framework of the sociology of possibilities (Howard, 2002) has been employed in order to explore future avenues concerning women’s education issues in
rural Guinea. Questions such as: 1) Why do things have to be this way? 2) Can we change the way things are? (p. 9) were guiding lights for this research. The sociology of possibilities method is based on the premise that the researcher is a learner who values local people’s knowledge and aptitude in finding strategies to tackle key development issues. This approach is aligned with the theoretical paradigm of Chambers (1983) and Freire (2000) who theorized that the researcher needs to engage in research reversal where the researched is the expert and the researcher a facilitator. This study could not have taken place if the researched was not the expert since the study was dealing with the lived schooling experiences of the researched. However, while conducting the present study, I was engaged with the researched in finding new possibilities that could bring about changes in the issues affecting girls’ education.

_Feminist Theory and Post-Colonial Feminism_

According to Houston (1996), the term feminism was coined in France by the sociologist Charles Fourier in the early nineteenth century and “feminism refers both to feminist theory and to social movements that advocate an end to the political, economic, social, and cultural subordination of women” (p. 215). Mohanty (2003) also hypothesizes that feminism is about struggles for economic and social justice. Mohanty envisions a world that is “pro-sex and woman” (p. 3). In another piece of her work, _Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism_, Mohanty (1991) argues about the tendency to lump non Western women into one single group, Third World, as though they formed a homogenous group of oppressed entity. On the same line of reasoning, Mikell (1997) found that African feminism recognizes colonial and neo-colonial links and hook (1990) further observes that for many African women, gender inequity does not always take
precedence over other forms of oppression such as racial, ethnic or class-related oppression.

In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks (1994) challenges the notion of learning in school settings which she observes is seen both by the traditional and radical educators as an activity that takes place in a *serious* environment. Through her school experience, that was mostly boring (cold), hooks tried to seek out a pedagogy that could lead to creating an environment of excitement in schools. The new strategy she advocates transgresses the vision of schools as places of boredom. Teaching to transgress is a pedagogical approach that aims at instilling the desire for “excitement” (enjoyment) in school settings by acknowledging the socio-cultural background of the students. hooks further observes that the existence of excitement in school does not mean the absence of academic engagement. The idea is to make excitement and academic engagement coexist. For this pedagogy to take place, the uniqueness of each classroom is highlighted and with this premise in mind “strategies must be constantly be changed, invented, re-conceptualized to address each new teaching experience (p. 11).” Besides the theory of transgression that has potential in the analysis of the Guinean classroom experiences, feminist theoretical frameworks which assumed that women experience oppression and exploitation (Glesne, 1999; hook 1990; Mohanty, 2003) were used as theoretical tools to investigate how Fulani Muslim girls and women lived their oppression inside and outside the school system.

However, the works of feminists from the sub-Saharan francophone region were at the theoretical core of this study. Such works are the ones of Aminata Sow Fall, Mariame Bâ, Werewere Liking and the Guinean Fulani Muslim women Kesso Barry and Sira Baldé. Through novels, poetry, essay and theater, these women give voices to their
female compatriots and discuss issues of patriarchy, economic, political, and cultural
dominations. By engaging in such discourses these francophone African women writers
engaged in social justice.

Hitchcott (2000) argues that Sow Fall’s writing is more directed at critically
analyzing the post-independent Senegalese society which is patriarchal and shifting from
its African values (solidarity) to individualism (capitalism). Almeida (1994) found that
Kesso Barry’s and Sira Baldé’s literary work addressed socio-cultural attitudes (female
circumcision and polygamy) that militate against Guinean Fulani women. The work of
the late Senegalese Mariama Bâ is similarly aligned, illustrating how patriarchy is
perpetuated in the African society of Senegal (Hitchcott, 2000). Through the framework
provided by these African post colonial feminists, one of the most important goals of this
study (bringing about awareness of the existence of forms of oppression) was reached.
Focus group discussion and individual open-ended interviews enabled most of the
informants to engage in discussion that led them to reflect on issues that they otherwise
considered to be natural features of their lives. It is my hope that informants will
significantly act upon these issues if not for themselves but for their children.

Critical Theory Approach and Education

The critical theory of curriculum has its roots in the ideas of Karl Marx. The
purpose of critical theory is to expose the “hidden curriculum” or underlying mentalities
taught in schools. The hidden curricula are believed to serve those in power at the
expenses of those who are disadvantaged (poor, racial minorities and women). Both
critical theorists (Eckert, 1989; Finn, 1999; Willis, 1977) and reproduction theorists
(Anyon, 1981) agree that the purpose of schooling is to serve the interests of the
dominant classes. However, the critical theorists emphasize the power of individuals to structure their own destiny and to ameliorate the oppressive nature of the institutions in which they live. Apple (1996), discussing about cultural politics in education, argues that the aim of cultural politics in education is not only about critically analyzing who benefits from the education system through the official curriculum and the vision behind it, but also about the resources used, or to be used in challenging the hegemony or preserving it. The re-conceptualist and critical theorists also apply social theory to curriculum in order to critically analyze it. Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), discussing about the impact of social theory on curriculum, found that:

When social theory confronted curriculum, the field’s inescapably political character was exposed; the relationship between economic structure and the study of education was revealed; the mystifications of bourgeois individualism that denied the interplay between individual and social relationships were uncovered; and the importance of social vision and commitment for both theorist and practitioner to social and economic justice was realized. (p. 19)

Fine’s (1991) method of inquiry, based on the demystification framework, was also a reference for the present inquiry since it dealt with educational policies implementation in the school system that might impact student persistence and achievement. Fine shows how texts that were meant to help bring more equity and equality in the education system served to justify and legitimatize student dropouts. Like the other critical theorists, Fine engaged in deconstructing school policies and practices that hindered student educational outcomes. Borrowing from strategies developed by the
critical theorists I was able to open new windows that help to visualize more issues concerning girl dropouts in the context of Dalaba.

*Humanist Theory*

Romano and Sidorkin’s ideas about developing social relations in classroom settings as a key factor for learning to take place informed this study. Romano (2000) found respect, understanding, and social interactions significant factors that impacted on students’ learning processes. Her pedagogy is based on ideas of reflection, imagination, showing care, and building an active community of learners; these concepts are the axis of her curriculum theory. Sidorkin (2002) also emphasized the notion of building relationships between teachers and students before engaging in any form of learning. For Sidorkin, this is a key element for students’ achievement.

Freire (1993) also provided powerful ideas about how curriculum ought to be in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He argued for a transformative pedagogy through which learning is tailored into learners’ experiences in order for them to be conscientized on issues of interest so that they could act upon them to transform their situation. Freire characterizes his pedagogy as a humanist and libertarian one since it helps end oppression and humanizes the oppressor. Freire’s ideas are similar to Finn’s (1999) concept of ‘literacy for empowerment.’ Finn claims that working class students are provided a lower quality curriculum that does not empower them, but makes them function and reproduce the same social status quo. Hence, he suggests a critical literacy that could help working class children reflect on their situations and act upon them to bring about positive changes. In the present study, arguments put forward by the humanists were used to assess informant in-school experiences. I was interested in finding out from informants of
about the nature of relationships they developed with their classmates, teachers and school administrators. Another area the humanist theorists helped me explore with informants was the empowering or disempowering aspect of curricula they were exposed to while in school and after they left school.

Theories of Resistance

Theories developed by Scott (1985) through his study about peasantry everyday forms of resistance in *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* and the study by Gaventa (1980) on *Power and Powerlessness* were used to locate and understand forms of resistance informants developed against the socio-cultural status quo. These theories also provided a framework to analyze the quiescence (Gaventa, 1980, p. 3) of informants toward the status quo. Scott argues that peasants, or the oppressed people, develop daily forms of resistance to the oppression they experience; however, these forms of resistance are generally overlooked because they do not fit the features of direct forms of resistance that are easily observable. Scott found these forms of resistance include foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, sabotage, and arson (p. 29). Even though they do not challenge systematically the status quo, these forms of resistance suggest that the oppressed people are not passive toward their oppression.

Gaventa also highlights the conditions that lead to passivity (quiescence) of the oppressed in a context of very tangible oppression. This author explains the lack of open conflict with the oppressors due to the fact that the oppressors have been able to take measures (mobilization of bias) that excluded the oppressed both from the decision making processes and voicing oppression issues. In his explanation of the second
*dimension of power* (p. 14), Gaventa found the factor that prevented the powerless from challenging the dominant power was the fear of sanctions; these sanctions included intimidation. Suggestions made by Gaventa and Scott were used in the course of the present study to examine how participants resisted or failed (accepted) to resist obstacles to their schooling.

**Research Site**

Holliday (2002) found that knowing exactly where, when and with whom the research would take place key factors in the research design process. In spite of difficulties related to the application of Holliday’s suggestions in a qualitative research, I tried to account for her suggestions in the design of this study. The present research took place in Conakry and one of Dalaba’s districts (Dalaba center) for a three-month period, September 3, 2003 to December 3, 2003. The Ministry of pre-University Education located in Conakry served to gain the necessary permission to conduct research in a school that is under the jurisdiction of the State. Educational policy documents were accessed in the Ministry of pre-University of Education and educational officers of the same ministry were also sought for interviews. However, most of the research was conducted in Dalaba where the chosen school of interest, Behanzin high school, was located. This choice was made because the main focus of the present study was on Fulani Muslim girls who dropped out of Behanzin high school. Other participants of the study were parents, religious leaders, teachers and school administrators.
Overview of the Context of Data Collection

According to the Fouta Djallon Website (n.d., 2003, September 23) the name Dalaba came from the Dialonka word daalaba meaning the big pond. The native populations of this town were the Diallonke and Diakanke who were believers of the traditional religions and practiced agriculture. It was during the 16th century that the pastoral Fulbhe (Fulani) came to Dalaba and settled. At the beginning, they had a peaceful relationship with the native populations, Diakanke and Diallonke. However, when the Fulbhe became Islamized, they started a series of holy wars against the Diakanke and Diallonke ‘nonbelievers’ who practiced traditional religions. These holy wars culminated with the victory of the Fulbhe in the battle of Talansan in 1725 (Ndukwe, 1996).

According to Ndukwe (1996), the Fulbhe established a theocratic empire known as “l’Empire theocratic du Fouta Djallon” (This empire had nine provinces and was ruled by a senior member of the two Fulani families, Alfaya and Soriya that were the first settlers in the region and assumed the leadership during the holy war. The investiture of the Almamy of the empire was organized in Fougoumba (the religious capital). After retreating in the Fougoumba mosque, the new Almamy was sent to Timbo (the administrative capital) to administer the empire for two years, after which the power was passed to another Almamy representative of the other family founder. The government of the empire was based on the principles of the Qur’an hence making the Qur’anic education a must (Marty, 1921). Under the theocratic empire, Dalaba was known through its Bodié province. This province was ruled by a senior lamdho (Chief) who was a
descendant of the Fulani family that participated in the Holy wars and had a significant knowledge about the Islamic religion (Fouta Djallon Website, n.d., 2003, September 23).

Even though the first President of Guinea abolished the practice of chieftaincy in 1958, the legacy of the social fabric of the theocratic empire of the Fouta Djallon is still strong in Dalaba. This can be observed through interaction among individuals. During the greeting ceremonials, the use of the family names is very common and praises are made about parents and ancestors achievements in regards to the former empire.

Derman (1973) and Marty (1921) identified within the Free Fulani social class six sub-classes which are the *Almamy* and his family; the *Lambhe* or Princes; the *Hooreebhe* or ministers and consuls; the *Moyyhubhe* or influent people such as *Karamokos* (teachers); the *Rimbhe* or aristocracy; and the *Bhaleebhe* or Rindhinaabhe who constitute the non-Fulani group of free people such as the natives who are assimilated with the Fulani. The social structure of the Fulani society remains very much the same. In his ethnographic study of the Fulani of Guinea, Derman (1973) observed that the former serfs considered the Fulbhe to be superior to them because they believed that the superiority of the Fulbhe came from *Allah*. They did not believe in the principle of equality presented by the leadership of the country (p. 247).

In Dalaba Socio-cultural problems are still solved by the senior descendant of the former *Bodié lamdho* (Prince or Chef Bodié) of whose opinion is respected and who is approached with deference. My host family told me that Government officials pay frequent visit to the *Bodié lamdho* in order to benefit from his moral authority. Hence, I visited the *lamdho* and complied with the cultural ceremonials that are performed when interacting with such an authority. It is expected of the visitor to take off shoes before
entering the compound of the *lamdho* and to greet him while kneeling down. The visit to
the *lamdho* helped me gain entry into the conservative Fulani groups with whom I had to
interact because some of my informants’ parents (Hawa, Aminata and Haby) were among
such groups. Through this visit, I became the adopted daughter of the *lamdho* who asked
Dalaba religious and administrative authorities to protect and help me achieve my
research goals.

According to the Guinean Ministry of Interior and Decentralization (2003),
Dalaba has a population of 132,802 inhabitants and is 3,400 square kilometers in size. It
is administratively subdivided in seven sub-prefectures: Mombeya, Kankanlabe, Bodié,
Kebali, Mafara, Ditinn, Mitty, Kaala, Koba and Dalaba –center. The population practice
subsistence agriculture, husbandry, crafts, and trading activities. The agricultural
activities involve growing maize, rice, and fonio. Women are specifically involved in
dying clothes, growing vegetables, crafting, and taking care of the herd (mostly milking
the cows). The revenues generated by these activities are used for foods, shelter, health,
children’s education and other important socio-cultural events such as marriage, naming
and religious ceremonies.

A key tourism site since the Colonial period, the Dalaba Mountain Resort is
believed to be a major therapeutic center, because of its fresh air. Set amongst lush
vegetation in the Fouta highlands, it is a charming town, with an average temperature of
10 degrees Celsius. Dalaba has a variety of original artists including shoemakers, who
make a wide variety of colorful sandals, and intricate leather work and other crafts made
from local materials (Guinean Ministry of Tourism, 2003). It is within this context that
the present study data was collected and its analysis began.


Reasons for Choice

My interests and relationship with the area were among reasons of choice. I am a Fulani from the Fouta Djallon region and I spent most of my school vacations in the region. As far as Dalaba is concerned, my personal connections with the area are through my father, Elhadji Mamadou Baldé, who taught in a school located in Kebali for four years and my elder brother, Dr. Baldé Alpha Saliou, who worked in Dalaba center as the State pharmacist and married a native of the area. Other reasons behind the choice of Dalaba are related to the location of Dalaba (rural area) and its cultural norms and practices. Researchers have suggested that these factors can affect students’ educational participation (Beoku-Betts, et al., 1998; Hyde, 1993; Joyce & Weil, 1996; King & Hill, 1993; Sutton, 1995).

According to the Fouta Djallon Website (n.d., 2003, September 23) Dalaba is a predominantly Islamic city; 99 percent of the populations are Muslims. This region includes one of the influential provinces of the former Fouta Djallon theocratic empire. Some studies (Boeku-Betts et al., 1998; Etta, 1994; Zakirai, 1981) have argued that religion, mostly Islam, can be a major factor in preventing women from engaging in and achieving their educational opportunities. Therefore, it was important that this study took place in a context where this religion was widely practiced. Traditional practices that discriminate against women embedded with Islam seem still de jour in Dalaba. Such practices are patriarchy, polygamy, female excision, and strict gender division of labor. Some of these socio-cultural practices are described and analyzed in the current study and found to corroborate in influencing Muslim girls’ education. Given the significance of the influence of the factors outlined in this portion of the study on the outcomes of girls'
education, it was important to locate this research in a context where these factors were significant.

*The Research and the Researcher*

The initial design of this study was flexible. Patton (2002) observes that in qualitative study, the researcher needs to be considerably open and flexible (p. 44). Discussing the ‘emergent design flexibility’ (p. 43), Patton remarks that in qualitative research, the design of the study is only completed during the fieldwork. While qualitative researchers could locate a focus and plan for observation and interview guides, they are limited in specifying their operational variables, hypotheses and/or their sampling formats. Patton’s observations were compatible with the present research because it was only when the research was implemented in Dalaba that the design was completed. For instance, the initial research design provided more room for individual interviews than group interviews, but the field situation dictated the contrary.

In qualitative data collection that involves participant observations, the researcher is instrument of the research. In such research, the whole attitude of the researcher comes into play and can influence the credibility and trustworthiness of the research if not dealt with appropriately (Patton, 2002). This includes the way the researcher dresses, introduces herself, and interacts with informants.

Warren (1988) summarizes four parts of gender role expectations in anthropological fieldwork: “1) distinguishing between what informants are actually communicating about how they expect the anthropologist to behave and what preconceived ideas the anthropology brings with her; 2) distinguishing between what informants expect of one another and what they expect of the anthropologist; 3)
distinguishing between aspects of gender roles that are crucial and cannot be broken, even by an educated foreigner [or local]; and 4) determining how to break or bend gender expectations to gain the freedom necessary to collect data” (pp. 60-61).

Reflexivity is part of the researcher’s role in a qualitative study in order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. Patton (2002) defines reflexivity as “a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (p. 64). My decision to use a personal notebook for my reflections about my experiences on the field helped me ponder what I thought I was seeing, hearing, and reading. I tried to continuously examine what I was finding and how I knew what I knew. I was fortunate to be in a family where I was able to discuss my findings with two women: a Peace Corps volunteer and a native of the area. These two women asked me many questions about my findings that led me to be more aware of new perspectives. Choices made to use the first person in the current study and to include my own cultural, linguistic, and social perspective in the design of this study helped me build the necessary self-awareness needed in conducting this qualitative inquiry. In qualitative research, Patton (2002) found the use of the third-person voice communicating a message about the focus of the study being on the research instead of the participants of the study (p. 63). In such cases, therefore, the research becomes the object of attention instead of the researched or informant.

_Strategies and Techniques for Data Collection_

The current study used different techniques to collect data: observations, analysis of documents, and interviews. According to Janesick (2000), using different strategies of data collection is a triangulation of techniques. The decision to use different techniques is
based on the objective to have in-depth understanding of the issues being researched.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) found that triangulation of techniques helps to ensure rigor in the inquiry. Hence, the purpose of the use of triangulation of techniques is dictated from a perspective to have more information from a variety of techniques.

Richardson (2000) also suggests the use of the term crystallization instead of triangulation when dealing with issues of credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research. He argues that the assumptions about triangulation are related to a triangle, with rigid, fixed points or objects while the term crystal has connotations of substance with infinite variety. For Richardson, crystallization provides “a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of a topic” (p. 934); an understanding that is based on the certitude that there are other possible understandings about the same topic.

Observations

Observation was a strategy used to gather information. Specifically, audio tapings, pictures, and note taking were used to gather information. Permission to take pictures and audiotape interviews was requested before the beginning of data collection. Observations involved observing (and participating in) meetings, teachers’ room, classrooms, recreational areas, and participants’ daily lives at home.

During the process of observation, participants’ interactions with spouses, parents, friends, relatives, and children were areas of investigation. Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied (Yin, 1989). Glesne (1999) suggests that while in the process of observing, the researcher uses all her senses and notes what she sees, hears, feels, and thinks. She also found that the role of participant observer begins with observing everything that is happening and then
focusing on patterns. One of the most important aspects of the observations is to make the “familiar look strange and the strange look familiar” (Glesne 1999, p. 46). Making the familiar look strange is more difficult than making the strange look familiar. For the familiar to look strange, the researcher needed to continuously interrogate her own assumptions and perceptions; while the strange became familiar through the process of understanding it (Glesne, 1999). Hence, throughout the process of observation notes and pictures were taken to capture the situation. I was also continuously reflecting on what I was seen and hearing, and I used a reflection notebook different from the notebooks used for description and analysis of daily observations.

**Review of Documents, Records and Artifacts**

Review of documents, records and artifacts is another strategy for data collection. This strategy helped bring insight in the topic being investigated. Glesne (1999) found that documents corroborated both observations and interviews, which brings more trustworthiness into the findings. Additionally this author observed that documents can lead to new directions for interviews or observations. From the perspective of Glesne, State educational policies, school regulation policies, students’ attendance and grade records, written reports, administrative documents, maps and charts of the geographical characteristics of the place, students’ bulletin boards provided a better understanding of questions being investigated. Most of the documents that were reviewed and analyzed in this study were on educational policies that were accessed through the Ministry of Pre-University Education in Conakry and other school documents provided by the school of interest and the Director of Dalaba education. From these documents, I made copies and took pictures and notes.
Interviews

Interviews were another important strategy used to gather information. Individual and focus group interviews with open-ended questions were used during the interview processes. The open-ended types of interviews required from me listening and note-taking skills. Wengraf (2001) argues that since open-ended interviews are not very structured, they require from the researcher much preparation before the session, more discipline and more creativity in the session, and more time for analysis and interpretation after the session.

Sharing the same gender with informants helped build relationship between the researcher and the researched while reducing the power relationship between the two groups during the course of the interviews. Varey (1997) found being a female researcher advantageous while conducting interviews with her female informants since the informants could relate to her through shared experiences. She also found beginning the interview session by asking demographic questions and ‘grand tour question’ helpful in making the informant comfortable and warming up the session. In the case of the present research, informants were able to culturally identify and relate to the researcher because they were from the same ethnic group and shared the same religion.

In the present study, the informants were eight Muslim Fulani girls and women, from 16 to 25 age-range group, who dropped out of Behanzin high school. Snowball or chain sampling, opportunistic sampling, and purposeful sampling were sampling methods used to select participants for interviewing (Patton, 2002). Participants of the study were selected because their cases provided rich information about the issues being investigated. I took also the opportunity to interview people who I did not plan to interview. Some
participants of the study were also selected because they were referred to me by some informants. I also interviewed key informants such as ministry of education officers, Prefectoral Director of Dalaba Education, religious leaders, Behanzin school principle, guidance counselors, and teachers. I was able to relate to these people because I was a former teacher and worked also with key educational officers on strategies for advancing girls’ education in a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project.

Issues of language and body language arose while administering interviews. In this case it was important for me to use both *Pulaar* (local language of the population of Dalaba) and French (the official language). The choice of the language used depended on the participant’s level of comfort with the chosen language. Nodding and eye contact (if appropriate with informant) were body language strategies used in order to gain more details on issues being discussed. Argumentative questions were avoided. Wengraf (2001) advises the avoidance of argumentative questions while administering interviews. Instead, he advises developing listening skills in order to understand responses and to ensure that questions are answered at the level of depth wanted.

Ethical issues such as permission to conduct the interview, objectives of interview and permission to use data were secured before the beginning of data collection process (see Appendix A). The scheduled time of each interview was ninety minutes. During the interview process, setting up the climate of the interview as well closing the session were crucial to the quality of data collection. I found that when informants were not greeted appropriately (in length) and time was not spent in asking about their family whereabouts it was impossible to have them focused on the subject of interviews. Closing the
interview sessions required me to accompany informants out; sometimes this led to continued discussion on the topic.

During interviews, audio taping and note taking were used to record data. Interview protocols (see appendix) were tested through an opportunity provided by the Prefectoral Director of Education (DPE). When I arrived in the field, on my very first meeting with the DPE, he wanted me to start interviewing informants he had selected for me. I had to use some tact in order to avoid doing interviews with informants that were neither aware of my research objectives nor given their permission to be part of my research. Hence I told the DPE that I needed more time to get acquainted with my informants and that I could later negotiate myself the timing of the interviews with informants.

However, the DPE was not satisfied with answers provided. Aware of the fact that the DPE represented a significant power in the education system and he could jeopardize the research, I decided to do the interviews. The selected informants were interviewed, but not for the purpose of finding significant data. These preliminary interviews with an opportunistic sample of informants helped test the interview protocol and identify other possible informants (snowball strategy).

As the research was progressing, I also realized that I needed to change my instruments for data collection: the recording. Informants were reluctant to talk with the recorder on; when the recording was on, they did not talk much and their speed pattern exhibited more of a monologue style. On the other hand, when they were not recorded or aware that the recording was engaged the conversation flowed more easily. It took me more than a week of conducting interviews to realize that informants were afraid to have
their voices recorded because of the political context of Guinea. The present research took place during the pre-electoral period for Guineans when the different political parties were campaigning for the presidential elections of December 21, 2003 and the government was suspicious of any form of gathering. Hence, informants did not want to be caught in the middle of the battle for the presidential seat and get in trouble. However, while overcoming this issue, I found a cultural context that helped me gather data: the hirde venue.

**Hirde as a Strategy for Data Collection**

The hirde in the Fulani land context takes place at sun set and is organized for the guest –*kodho*- who is visited by the natives and entertained through story telling, songs, and other narratives pertaining to the life of the community until the time when everyone realized that the guest is tired and ready for bed. The hirde became a venue for me to collect my data in a very informal context. After everyone (*hirobhe*-those who came for the hirde) was settled down with some snacks (fresh, grilled or boiled peanuts) and/or fruits, the strategy was to start a subject in which information was sought and leave the floor open to discussion. Informants talked about the issues brought to them and the communication was flowing from all sides; informants asked also questions to other informants when they could not understand what was being discussed. Also, the snowball strategy helped to access other informants since some of the informants provided leads on how to fill data gaps. During the day, I was able to follow specific informants in order to gain more insights on issues discussed during the hirde. In the implementation of the current study, the hirde became a significant research tool that can be suggested as a strategy for data collection in the Fulani land of Guinea.
The data collected for this study was mostly done through the hirde. As soon as the hirde was over, and the hirobhe were gone, I had to rush to my notebook and write down the evening’s events. The strategy for collection data through the hirde can be very tiring and cannot be used by a researcher who is not willing or able to sacrifice almost all the nights collecting data, recording it, and following up leads early the next day. One has to bear in mind that this is a rural community where activities (mostly female) start as early as 5:30 in the morning. The stories that are found in Chapter Four are from the present research hirobhe. These selected hirobhe (8) were females whose age ranged between 16 and 25 and who dropped out of school at the secondary level at Behanzin lycée of Dalaba centre. The hirobhe were: Aminata, Binta, Dialikatou, Dienabou, Haby, Hawa, Kadiatou and Mariame. These Fulani Muslim women and girls dropped out of school at eleventh and twelfth grades and their dropout period ranges from one to five years.

Data Analysis

Although not the preeminent voice, the researcher’s voice must be clearly heard in the intricate fabric of interpretation; a clear voice rather than merely a behind scenes puppet master or quote assembler. (Farmer II, 1999, p. 114)

Varey (1997) found the analysis of qualitative data challenging because of the vast amount of data generated through this method of inquiry. Therefore, she found it crucial that data be reduced. Data gathered in this study was analyzed using the Huberman and Miles (1994) technique. This technique involved data collection, data reduction, data display, and making conclusions through drawing and verifying. It was important that data collection be processed until data saturation was reached (Punch,
This happened when the researcher realized that the information was repeating itself.

The data reduction was done through coding and memoing. Coding is the act of sorting, defining and giving codes to data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As suggested by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) coding of the data of the present study involved two levels: the first level was descriptive with less inferences and the second level of coding was more interpretative and required making inferences beyond data. According to Beebe (2001) this second level of coding involved abstraction. Description and explanation of data were done through the use of informants’ thoughts but also the researcher analysis. Holliday (2002) found the analysis section an agency of its own, where extracts of data act as evidence to support arguments. While voices of informants are heard in the results section of the study, interpretations of result constructions focused on the researcher voice (Farmer II, 1999).

The analysis of data collected for the present study started during the fieldwork which saved time and ensured accuracy of thoughts. After séances of data collection I transcribed and translated it and started codifying it and reflecting on it. Data collection and analysis were overlapping; this is a data analysis technique advised by Beebe (2001). However, the analysis of data continued after the data collection step when I came back to Ohio University. There was a massive amount of data collected at the end of the data collection. This data consisted of audiotapes, pictures, personal notes on observations and reflections, and educational documents. After the data was transcribed, it was presented as it was, then coded, compared, and interpreted.
Stambach (2000) and Punch (1998) made me aware of the value judgment that might occur during data interpretation. Stambach (2000) clearly points out that “gone are the days, if ever they existed, when an anthropologist [researcher] sees her analysis as completely objective” (pp. 25-26). Discussing and interpreting data is not value free judgment. Furthermore, recommendations for action that are related to the research have value judgment (Punch, 1998). Eckert (1989) found it also important for the researcher to voice some major problems that she might encounter doing participant-observation in her own culture:

Doing ethnography in one’s own culture brings obvious problems… my responsibility as an ethnographer was not to forget my own story, but to know it well and to refer to it constantly to make sure that it was not blinding me to what I saw or focusing my attention on only some of what I saw. Careful articulation of my previous beliefs about school and adolescence was interleaved with a constant questioning of every observation and every interpretation. (p. 27)

Hence, research is not value free and this research did not depart from that perspective. Therefore, it became significant to discuss the issue of values pertaining this research in order to bear them in mind and constantly question findings and their interpretation.

**Strengths of a Native Researcher**

As a Muslim Fulani woman who has been through the socialization processes of both Islamic and Fulani cultures, I kept in mind these experiences and constantly questioned my observations and interpretations (Eckert, 1989). However these characteristics helped me fit into the culture of participants since I could relate to the
different ways the Fulani culture is expressed (Kiluva-Ndunda, 2001). I was able to relate
to the language, dress code, and other rituals. Most importantly, I could understand the
proverbs and idioms which characterized the language of the people of Dalaba. In Fulani
culture for instance, when people meet they must share some food or a cup of water. It is
a belief that a host does not ask for a story of their guest before he or she welcomes them.
The welcoming process involves making sure that the guest is given a comfortable seat
and some foods. The welcoming ritual took place during the hirde and frequent
unplanned informant and researcher visits.

Since interviews were conducted in Pulaar and French, knowledge in these
languages and the researched culture were crucial for the credibility and trustworthiness
of data. Translations of interviews were done in English. English being my fifth language,
help was sought from specialists of the Ohio Program of Intensive English (OPIE) to
ensure accuracy of translations and interpretations. Interpretations lead to value judgment.
To reduce the subjectivity issue, first drafts translations and their interpretations were
submitted to informants for validation before leaving the field. I also used the expertise of
two Guinean Muslim Fulani graduate students, Diallo Youssouf and Diallo Oumar, to
validate her translation prior to analyzing the data.

Point of Entrée

As a Fulani Muslim woman, I considered myself as an insider in the Dalabaen
culture. However, since I did not spend my schooling and life there, I was an outsider too.
I considered myself as being in between which gave me a better opportunity to relate to
my informants and at the same be able to reflect on data collected. As Farmer II (1999)
pointed it out when addressing the relationship between the researcher and the
researched: “I maintain links to the culture and am known there; yet, having never lived there, I was not caught up in the routine experience of participants in a way that would hinder my discrimination of finer nuances of cultural practices” (p. 122). Holliday (2002) found approaching appropriately the research setting involving interaction between the culture of the setting and the culture of the research. Another strategy advised by Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) to use when learning about informant cultures is to stress commonalities, which was a part of my approach strategy.

My intention during the data collection process was to be visible and to try to give back to the researched community something useful. I did not only ‘mine for data’ but was visible and helpful during the whole process of data collection (Chambers, 1983). Besides babysitting informant’s children and helping them cook meals, I also engaged in teaching. I taught Qur’an to one of my informants and two of my informants’ children; I taught basic computer skills to another informant. These activities were helpful in building trust which is necessary to informants’ openness. Farmer II (1999) found such strategies valuable in leading to the acceptance of the researcher into cultures that are traditionally suspicious of outsiders. The activities in which I was engaged helped me also to significantly reduce the power relation between informants and researcher. One of the informant’s parents told me that if all the educated women behaved like her, he would have sent all the women of his household to school and supported their education.

**Ethical Issues**

Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict. (Stake, 1994, p. 244).
There two ethical issues that are significant in qualitative research: codified ethical issues and un-codified issues. The codified ethical issues are related to the legal ethical issues set by recognized institutions such as the academia and governments. The un-codified ethical issues are those ethical issues that previous researchers have dealt with in similar situations and that might be helpful to keep in mind. In the case of this research the codified ethical issues are related to the compliance to the Ohio University regulations (Institutional Review Board, IRB form) and Guinean regulations (see appendix). Besides providing the participants written and oral information related to the research, its future purposes, and confidentiality of informant’s identities, I provided adequate translation of consent forms (Pulaar and French) to the informants so that they could decide knowingly to take part in the study. The other ethical issues pertaining to researcher conduct are related to previous ethical issues raised by qualitative researchers in conducting research in similar situations and specifically in Muslim communities.

In her study conducted in Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, Stambach (2000) brings into light some ethical issues concerning “covert” or “overt” research. She views research as open. However, Stambach implied also that a compromise (situational ethic) is advisable because of cultural norms of the society being studied. Kiluva-Ndundu’s research points out the issue of politic in most of developing countries. She illustrated how doing field research that involved meetings with women of the Kilome (Kenya) region brought suspicion about soliciting votes from the group being interviewed. Kiluva-Ndundu (2001) observed that: “The local member of parliament and his stalwarts could not believe that my research was not a cover-up for soliciting votes” (p. 51).
Holliday (2002) also found entering any government institution as a researcher necessitates security clearance. In Guinea, the socio-political context was subject to suspicion of any kind of meeting. This was exacerbated by the tension with Liberia and the instability of the whole sub-region. So, I asked for a security clearance from the political authorities before conducting my research. I was able to meet with officials at the Ministry of Pre-University Education to explain the objective of my research and I took the opportunity to participate in workshop organized on *Gender and Education* by the political leaders of the country. The participation to the workshop helped me build strategic political relationship that made my research safe.

*Research Issues in a Muslim Socio-Cultural Setting*

Guinea is a predominantly Muslim country (85 percent of the population). The area of the research, Fouta Djallon, is considered as a part of the *creuset de l’Islam* (origin of Islam) in Guinea and where Islamic religion penetrated other regions of country (Derman, 1973). The Fouta Djallon has a reputation of holding very important Islamic values embedded with strong socio-cultural ethics. In such settings, it is crucial to know how to relate to people because there are rigid gendered expectations one must follow.

With the exception of a few studies such as the one of Clyne (2001), most of the research done in Muslim settings fails to address significant issues arising in conducting research in such area. Clyne’s field research with Muslim communities in Australia provides significant information on issues one might encounter in such settings. She found that in a different culture the researcher’s gender, age, religion, and status or political beliefs may be very important and may facilitate or restrict access to community
being researched (Clyne, 2001; p 2). This author also observes that there are considerable challenges awaiting a researcher in Muslim communities. Such challenges might be related to the observance of religious requirements –prayers and Ramadan- the use of alcohol, eating pork, or/and socializing with opposite sex. Her strategy to negotiate her point of entrée and build trust with informants made her seek for information about Islam and Islamic culture. This led her to develop a common ground (p. 8) which is to create awareness to how Muslims might act or how they would respond to specific situations.

As already mentioned, as a Muslim Fulani woman who has been through the socialization processes of both Islamic and Fulani cultures, these experiences helped me fit into the culture of participants since I could relate to the different ways this culture was expressed. Such cultural expressions might be related to knowing with whom to shake hands among the opposite sex, when to speak and how to address the informants, and participating in religious prayers. These were very important factors in establishing contact with informants, and failure to do the right things might have resulted in alienating key informants.

**Summary**

To implement the present ethnographic case study, I used a combination of different techniques of data collection. This triangulation of techniques of data collection based on observations, review of documents and records, and interviews helped ensure the crystallization of this study. However, one of the most important data collection tool this study benefited from is the hirde. Not only did the hirde helped reduce significantly the power relationship between the researcher and the researched and the researched and researched, but the hirde also brought informants together through discussion of issues
that mutually affected them. During the course of the hirde interaction, informants (hirobhe) discussed and sometimes argued about problems of the present study. Overall, the hirde, individual interviews, observations and the review of documents helped the present study achieve its goals.

In this chapter, the procedures I used to gather data for this study were both outlined and described. Techniques developed to analyze the data of this study were also discussed. Processes I employed to select the site of the study, obtain entry to the site, my role as instrument of the research and the issues I confronted on the field were presented and discussed.

I had exciting learning experiences while collecting data of this study. My learning experiences are two-folded: social and intellectual. I was able to learn from and build social connections with categories of individuals I never dreamed of knowing and counting as my friends: economically and socially deprived women and men, and very orthodox religious people (lamdho of Bodié). These individuals touched my humanity to the extent that leaving the field became a very emotional experience for informants and me. However, my hope is to convey in the next chapters the most important parts of what I learned from informants. Through the retelling of their stories, I hope to be more than a kodho (guest) who is considered tyawa (dew), but one of the bidho (children) of the people of Dalaba.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The Context of Fulani Girls and Women’s Retention in School

Introduction

Data for this study emerged from educational documents, interviews, and observations of eight Fulani Muslim girls and women (16 to 25 years old) who dropped out of school at the secondary level (lycée of Dalaba), their families, and key education leaders. In the preceding Chapters One and Two, I illustrated the need for this research through a critical review of existing studies on the factors leading to girls dropping out of school. References were made to Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998), Hill and King (1993), Hyde (1993), Kamano (1995), Njeuma (1993), Nwomonoh (1998), and Stambach (2000) who found that economic, socio-cultural, and school factors influenced girls’ educational attainment in sub-Saharan Africa.

The review of the literature also highlighted the paucity of research targeting the schooling experiences of Muslim girls in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Guinea in particular. Studies by Badawi (1991), Boeku-Betts et al. (1998), Etta (1994), Haw (1998), Hyde (1993), and Zakirai (1981) found that Muslim communities tend to have more rigidly defined gender norms and practices, which affect access and attainment rates for girls in the educational system. While all of the referred studies shed light on some of the factors that tend to influence girls’ education, most of the studies focus on primary school girls. The studies also do not provide adequate comparable and useful data on gender differences to address the equity of education for boys and girls in Africa in general and
in Guinea in particular. Hence, the main question of this study was to investigate the schooling experiences of Fulani Muslim girls in Guinea’s Fouta Djallon region with the aim to contribute detailed information in understanding specific factors that influenced their educational attainment. The three research questions asked specifically about: 1) the obstacles to the retention of Fulani Muslim girls in school; 2) the factors that account for the obstacles faced by Fulani Muslim girls in school; and 3) the relationship between the existing educational policies and the obstacles faced by Fulani Muslim girls.

Chapter Three outlined the methods used to collect data, the context of data collection, and other pertinent issues related to the implementation of this research with eight main informants. Because this study was an ethnographic life-history case study, its intent was not to generalize findings but to contribute more in-depth and specific information on the issues influencing Fulani Muslim girls’ education in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea. In spite of targeting eight informants, this study has the possibility of assisting in the design of solutions to practical issues affecting the education of Fulani Muslim girls and women. Studies such as the ones of Willis (1977) Learning to Labor in England and Anyon (1981) Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work in United States drew attention to specific and practical issues affecting the education outcomes of students in these two countries. Hence, implications of their studies helped rethink perceptions and interactions with minority students. The current study is not without problems, yet its ultimate goal is to contribute to the understanding of specific forces that influenced Dalabean Muslim Fulani girls’ educational outcomes.

Themes influencing informants’ educational attainment that emerged from the analysis of the data of this present study include the problematic of current girls’
educational policies; differential effect of economic factors on gender; effect of the socio-cultural discourses and practices; effect of school factors; self image of girls who have dropped out; and girls’ resistance to the status quo.

In the next sections, these themes are presented using informants’ pseudonyms and voices. The choice to use informants’ voices was guided by the effort to make their individual voices more accessible and to provide analytical insights in the terms that they provide. Information is occasionally added in brackets to clarify quotes or to translate them. Original quotes in Pulaar, the language of the informants, and French, the official language of Guinea, are provided in the appendix section of this work.

The Problematic of Current Female Educational Policies

The first major areas of interest of this study were the educational policies. This study was designed to investigate the relationship between educational policies and girls who dropout of school in the Fouta Djallon region of Dalaba. In response to this research question, two major issues emerged: policy dissemination and implementation.

Since independence, Guinean governments have stated their commitment to the education of all Guinean citizens, specifically the most vulnerable groups, women and the economically underprivileged. This study found that the State’s commitment to education was based more on policy formulation, ratification, and declaration rather than effective policy dissemination and implementation. The most important current policy documents, the Declaration of Educational Policy of 1987 and 1989, and the Schoolgirl Pregnancy Act of 1992, are not disseminated to the beneficiaries and implementers. In Dalaba, where this research was conducted, neither the proviseur (high school principal) of Behanzin high school nor the beneficiaries (the students and their parents) knew about
these policies. Hence, the proviseur and his staff were, and still are, implementing policies that were designed during the first post-independence regime (1959-1984). The impact of these policies was most profound on the schoolgirl.

The former policy Acts of 1959 and 1987 stipulate that when a schoolgirl is pregnant she “be expelled from the school system with no provision of returning.” The current policy documents, the Declaration of Education Policy of 1989 and the Act No 728/MEN/CAB/1992, supersede the former ones and provide regulations for the new vision of education for all Guineans. Benchmarks such as the amelioration of equity, the percentage of girls who have access to school, and student dropout or repeater rates are among the criteria outlined in the Declaration of Education Policy that assess the overall performance of education. Most importantly the revised Schoolgirl Pregnancy Policy Act provides new instructions on how the issue of pregnant girls must be handled in the school system (Kouroumah, 2003, September). This policy, known as Act No. 728/MEN/CAB/1992, is related to the organization and procedures of the secondary schools and stipulates that:

- Pregnant girls are allowed to remain in school provided their conditions permit it.
- School-age mothers, regardless of marital status, are allowed to return to school following the birth of a child (see appendix for the original French version)

However, the policy currently being implemented in Behanzin high school is the former one which character is punitive, and clearly states in Article 36 that any pregnant schoolgirl will be:
a) Expelled from school if she is not married. The father of the baby will be expelled too if he is a student. The administrative and judiciary levels of punishment vary according to whether the father is a teacher or a non-teacher;
b) Given a maternity leave if she is married after the presentation of the marriage license. The matrimonial situation of the girl has to be officially known before she gets pregnant.

Even though some researchers (Sutton, 1998; Tietjen, 2000) have found that Guinean school directors and authorities tended not to adhere to the new policy, in this case it seemed as though the lack of dissemination of policy documents also contributed to the non-implementation of policies that are gender sensitive.

Outcomes of interviews with one of the informants, Haby, of this present study showed that she was expelled because of her pregnancy. The father of her baby, her cousin, who at the time of the event was a high school student, did not get punished. The family of the girl could have also prosecuted the boy, but in this case they ‘chose’ not to. Asked about the reason behind her decision not to incriminate her cousin, Haby declared that: “when I became pregnant and was expelled from school, I was told by the proviseur to denounce the father of my baby so that they could expel him also. But, I could not do such a thing because he is my cousin and if I did that I would had been ashamed of my conduct in regards to my aunt [the mother of the boy].” This finding is echoed by Teitjen (1991) who argued that most of the time it is only the girl that got punished under the former school policy act since she did not normally incriminate the father of her baby to school authorities. However, Tietjen did not investigate socio-cultural reasons behind such attitude. In a socio-cultural context where kinship ties take precedence over
anything else, it is very difficult, even impossible, for the pregnant girl to incriminate the father of her baby because by doing so she would alienate herself the whole family group and be ostracized. If the father of the baby needed to be punished, it is the family that decides the type and method of punishment.

The new educational policies also make a provision for the assistance of needy students (‘at risk students’) through the School Counselors (SC). However, in reality students who needed assistance were left to fend for themselves in the school system. In a case where a student is pregnant she is supposed to be assisted by the SC, who has to provide her with information on her rights and opportunities that might help her in decisions she will ultimately have to make due to her situation. In fact, Article 16 of the school regulations Act outlines the responsibilities of the SC. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Constantly and clearly informing parents on studies and their professional outcomes along with their children’s physical and intellectual aptitudes;
- Guiding and advising students on their choice of studies that are convenient for them; and
- Developing strong relationships with students’ parents in order to gather all the information regarding the living conditions of the student in the family unit (Act No 728/MEN/CAB/ of the 10th July 1989).

None of my informants or their parents were provided with useful information regarding opportunities they had either for returning to the regular school system or for undertaking studies in technical training. For instance, none of the informants of this
study knew that there was, and still is, a NAFA* center (école de seconde chance - second chance school) located in Dalaba in a place called Bodié. This lack of information was detrimental to informants’ educational opportunities since they could have been motivated to continue their interrupted schooling in the second chance school.

This study also found policies that led to the design and implementation of second chance schools were not monitored and evaluated. The lack of monitoring and evaluation has resulted in issues related to their functioning. With the exception of a few, the centers lack both equipment and teachers, which made them useless. Arguing about the NAFA centers, the Director of Conakry Education remarked that these centers do exist, but are not achieving their goals.

Success stories about the NAFA centers have been highlighted in the sub-region by development partners [USAID/Guinea] as a path to be followed in order to provide educational opportunities for girls who missed their chances to attend or continue their schooling. But the truth is that in Guinea, where this idea originated, these NAFA centers are not functioning. The vision behind their creation is fine, but there has not been efficient follow-up to make them realities. (Mr. Camara, 2003)

The remarks made by the Director of Conakry Education are important because they point to possible discrepancies between and within policy formulation/ratification and policy implementation. However, although the centers are lacking equipment and teachers, and odds against girls coming back to school were found to be very significant, students have the right to know about the existence of the second chance centers and

* NAFA in major Guinean languages (Maninka, Pulaar, and Sosso) means benefit or interest.
issues affecting their functioning need to be made public for solutions to be found. Being aware of their schooling opportunities can affect girls’ choices to pursue their schooling. According to Sutton (1998) it is very difficult to track down the percentage of girls who became pregnant and returned to school. One of the informants of this study who became pregnant while in school was not thinking of returning to school, but contemplating the option of getting married:

I think that I have to find somebody who could marry me and perhaps he could help me regain my parents’ trust. I do not expect to be a first wife because of what I have done and know that I will have to try hard to earn my future husband’s trust as well…(Haby, 2003).

Even for informants who got pregnant after their marriage, coming back to the mainstream school was not an option. They were either contemplating working to provide their children with better opportunities or enrolling in professional schools. Among participants of this study, four would like to enroll in professional school, two were training for a job (one has mastered in hairdressing), one was engaged in providing basic needs for her children, and another was contemplating marriage.

Another issue affecting girls’ persistence in school at the policy level is the lack of preventive policies. The school legislators did not make any provision for how to prevent girls from having unwanted pregnancies. This is underlined in one of the educational leaders’ reflection on the situation of pregnant schoolgirls:

Girls who are pregnant have difficulties staying in the system [school] because they feel ashamed of their condition and stop coming to school because they do not want to be made fun of by their classmates or professors. I think that there are
few who remain in school till their delivery periods; those are really very
courageous and need to be congratulated. As for the many others who are
 ashamed of their situation, it is important that their partners and husbands abstain
from putting them into situation where they have to choose to leave their studies.
(Behanzin Proviseur, 2003)

The official high school curriculum does not address the prevention of
pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (INRAP, 2003). There is a unit in the
biology curriculum that deals with human reproduction system, but the teacher is not
required to deal with issues of how to avoid pregnancies and sexually transmitted
diseases. In Guinean schools, the curriculum is detailed to the extent that every lesson is
spelled out by the office mandated by the Ministry of Education, National Institute of
Research and Pedagogical Actions. Teachers follow guidelines provided to them and do
not go beyond the materials they have to cover. One teacher in Dalaba high school argued
that he did so because he must deal with heavy curricula, large classes, and the lack of
didactic materials:

I cannot do something else that is not required by my program of study. I am only
responsible for achieving my program. If students study their lesson that is their
problem, my responsibility vis à vis the authorities is on lessons I have to teach,
which I try to do. How could one be able to reach out to all the students in my
class and achieve such a very long program? I have to teach classes that are filled
with about 100 students; when I hear about new pedagogies to be used to reach
out to individual students, I wonder how they can be implemented in such context.
(Teacher, 2003)
The lack of policy diffusion and implementation was found to have contributed to impeding girls’ education. The girls in this study who dropped out of school did not know about the new school policies nor did the administration that was in charge of implementation know about them. Hence, if these individuals did not know about the policies they could not have implemented them.

Forces behind Girls’ Retention in School

The second major area of focus of this study regards the factors that accounted for girl dropouts. The specific research question was: what forces caused girls to leave school? Three major themes emerged in relation to the research question. The first theme, the differential effect of economic factors on gender, presents the gendered effect of economic constraint on informants’ education. The second major theme, the socio-cultural discourse and practices, describes how tradition, wifehood, and motherhood influenced informants’ education. The third theme, effect of school factors, shows how the location of school, perceptions of schooling, attitudes and behaviors of the school population, the language of instruction, the form of students’ assessment, and the relationship between the school and its community contributed to undermining informants’ opportunities to stay in school.

Differential Effect of Economic Factors on Gender

Besides factors related to policies that affected girls’ schooling, this study indicates economic factors as obstacles to informants’ retention in school. Informants’ involvement with household responsibilities as daughters, wives, and mothers had a significant impact on their retention and persistence in the school system. In addition,
constant financial and material demands on the parents to their children’s education often resulted in their daughters leaving school.

We here, we have too much contributions to make. We not only have to worry ourselves about providing for socio-cultural ceremonies and food, shelter, health to our families but also we have to worry about our children’s schooling. At school each day there is something to contribute for. One who has a child attending school nowadays is anxious. (Parent, 2003)

This description provided by this parent is coherent with the findings of GDHS-II (1999), SAGE (1999), and Tietjen (1991). The GDHS-II (1999), in its exhaustive survey on expenditures on and contributions to schooling, found that 36 percent of the interrogated Guinean mothers reported having difficulties paying school contribution. While 23 percent of rural women found expenses related to school uniform the most difficult to pay, most of women found the overall expenses difficult to pay. In another community survey on barrier to female education undertaken by SAGE (1999), 58 percent of the respondents found contribution to school a hindering factor to girl persistence in school. Tietjen (1991) observed two different categories of expenses Guinean parents made for their children’s education: non-required and required expenses. There are parents –those who are educated and have the economic capabilities- who choose to supplement their children’s education by hiring tutors. The quality of education being poor, most parents who can afford expenses related to hiring tutors do so. However, no matter the economic resources of parents, they are required to provide their children with school uniforms and school supplies, and make other contributions to school. The latter categories of contributions are in the forms of school construction and/or
maintenance, cleaning materials, financial, and in-kind donations to teachers (food and clothing items).

The contributions parents make to school are in contradiction with the stated policies of the Guinean education reforms. Post independence education policies made education free in public schools for all Guineans. This vision is found to be realistic in the context of such harsh poverty. According to the World Bank (2000) report on poverty reduction, Guinea is a poor country where the percentage of people living below the poverty line (less than $300 per year) is very significant (40.3%). More than the majority of poor people (80%) live in the rural area; among them, 53.3 percent are women. The World Bank also found that the northwest (Upper Guinea) and northeast (Middle of Guinea or Fouta Djallon) of the country are poorer than the Atlantic coast and Southern part.

In the Fouta Djallon region, where the present study took place, the World Bank (2000) report indicates that the incidence of absolute poverty (less than $100 a year) is 51 percent as compared with 33 percent in Forest Guinea (Southern part) and 7 percent in Conakry. Hence, parental income is very low in rural Guinea, mostly in an area such as Dalaba. Most of my informants’ parents were engaged in subsistence activities such as farming, trading, and teaching in informal Qur’anic schools. Only two out of eight were civil servants: those of Dialikatou and Kadiatou’s parents. The activities in which the ‘non-educated’ informants’ parents were engaged did not generate substantial revenue that could help them take care of their large and extended families while providing for socio-cultural ceremonies (marriage, naming ceremony, and religious ceremonies).
Through participant observations, it was found that women devoted more time in helping care for the family. The girls were the ones whose contribution was most sought. They helped their mothers cultivate gardens, they cooked and sold foods and/or they undertook their mothers’ household activities while the latter were busy selling foods, vegetables, fruits, and clothes at the local markets.

Boys also contributed to the economic wellbeing of the family by helping their fathers’ farm, care for the herd, and write and teach Qur’an to their fathers’ students. While both boys and girls helped outside of the home, the boys’ contribution was not sought inside the family compound. Girls were found to be the ones whose help was required in performing household tasks. Boys did participate in helping teach Qur’an, but they were not required to do so. The required contribution of girls in performing survival activities points to possible effect on educational outcomes. These activities took time and energy to be performed, energy and time that could have been devoted to studies.

From observations, it was found that incomes generated from agricultural and trading activities were used for food, shelter, health, socio-cultural ceremonies and education. Interviews also illustrated that educational expenses were generally made to support male children whose education was believed to benefit all the members of the family. The following excerpt from an informant interview shows the differential effect of economic hardship on gender:

My brother is studying at the University of Conakry; he has been supported all the time by my father. My father never failed to encourage him to study or buy his school uniforms and textbooks. He even did beat him for his schooling. He never asked my sister and me about our studies and when we dropped out he did not
bother to do anything… I do not remember any time when my father asked me about my schooling. I remember that he was always angry when I asked him about buying books or providing some school contribution on my behalf. But, each day after the evening meal he would ask my brother about his schooling and we would hear him say: ‘you need to study hard to help me take care of this family.’ (Mariame, 2003)

From this excerpt, it could be argued that the value attached to the education and work performed by females seemed not that important in this family. Men’s work is the one that is valued because the father did not make reference to his wives and daughters’ contribution to the survival of the family. He only acknowledged his work and the value attached to his son’s education. This vision can be very important in the parental decision making process to support their daughters’ education. If parents do not see a direct benefit from schooling their daughters, they might not be eager to invest in it.

In the Fulani communities of Dalaba, after men and women have spent the day in the fields, it is customary to find women and girls busy preparing for dinner and tending to other domestic tasks while men are reading the Qur’an or entertaining guests and waiting for the food to be ready. Observations that took place at informants’ homes supported this description. In informants’ family compounds, this scene was present and cut across all the categories of informants, as well non-informants. The scenarios depicted mothers and daughters engaged in performing household and economic activities such as sewing and dyeing clothes, cooking and cleaning while their brothers and fathers were either engaged in educational or recreational activities. Regarding the impact
such activities have on informants’ schooling, interviews with Hawa yielded the following:

I am always busy helping at home. So when it is time to go to school I am involved in accomplishing one of the numerous household activities such as fetching water, pounding grains, cooking meals, and caring for my younger siblings. When I am finished, the learning period has passed. It is like the tasks never end, it is not that today I have washed the clothes and tomorrow there will not be any dirty clothes to be washed; and I am the elder, my sisters are very young, so if I do not help my mother, who will? People think that I am not intelligent since I am a girl and nobody understands the situation. This is why I found myself out of school. I was always late mostly the two years before I left school. Those years were very difficult for my mother who was left by herself to care for us while she was pregnant. My father took a second wife and abandoned us. I have to take over everything at home. Since I was repeating my grade and was behind the learning materials, it came to a point that I found it useless to waste my time at school. So I stayed home and continue to this day to help my mother. I know that if I had not stopped my schooling, my twin brother and now my younger sister Mariame would not have been able to study… (Hawa, 2003)

Hawa’s situation represented a common pattern in the region. Informants were found to be busy almost all the time. In fact, most of the interviews took place while informants were engaged in some form of activities (washing and ironing clothes, cleaning the compound, cooking meals, tending to siblings, and selling food). The descriptions provided in this part of the study show that economic hardship is more on
girls whose schooling is compromised since they lack the necessary time to engage in schooling activities. Overwhelmed by their occupations, most of the time girls similar to Hawa, arrive at school late and too tired to engage in learning activities.
Effect of Socio-Cultural Discourses and Practices

In addition to economic factors, the socio-cultural discourses and practices participated in undermining girl chances to remain in the school system. These factors represent the backbone of the Dalabaen socio-cultural system and are based on what Fulani called *finna tawaa*. The ideology carried by *finna tawaa* helps maintain the status quo of the Fulani communities. The *finna tawaa* ideology is based on the concepts of: blessing, *barki*, and cursing, *kouddi*. In the Fulani culture, children fear their parents’ and teachers’ curses; consequently they strive to meet their expectations. Deference and obedience to parents, elders, teachers, and husbands are the factors that can lead to blessings. These blessings are supposed to help the blessed person have a better life situation. According to informants, the lack of blessing can prevent an individual, no matter her qualifications, from having a successful and happy life situation. The informal education system based on orality reinforces these two concepts. Through songs and local sayings the tradition is disseminated to the Dalabaen girl and boy. The following are examples of recorded local sayings that highlight the Fulani communities’ perceptions of their females:

- *a woman is the one who submits;*
- *a woman will enter heaven only when she submits to her husband’s will;*
- *submission yields rewards;*
- *if a woman does not submit, her children will not be blessed;*
- *when the father speaks and the mother shouts, the child will be a mute (meaning his/she will not succeed);*
- *a woman is the one with a wrapper not a pant;*
a woman does not inherit;

the first job of a woman is her husband;

a woman does not have brain – meaning she is emotional;

do not listen to women.

(Gawlo Sow, 2003)

The above local sayings show the vision the Dalabaen Fulani community has with regard to its female population. It is through orality that this vision is conveyed. In each of the places I visited, I heard these sayings used to highlight a point in a discussion or solve problems between couples or people. For instance, one day I was asked to take part in a meeting to reconcile Aminata (one of the informants) with her in-laws. Aminata’s father was using the above local sayings in order to make his points and make Aminata understand her position within her husband’s lineage. He told her that whatever happened between her and her in-laws or husband, she needed to ask them for forgiveness because she was ‘the egg and they were the rock.’ He concluded his speech by saying: “Amy si hidha fala yo bhibhe ma barku a teddinay moddima e yinbhemako bhen; debbo ko mumyidho…” [Amy, if you want your children to be blessed, you need to respect your husband and his family; a woman is the one who is tolerant].

It is important to note that when such discussion was taking place, the elders and men, as well as younger brothers, were the ones who led the conversation and made decisions on whether or not the woman was guilty based on the tradition. In such fora women did not voice their opinions unless they were specifically asked to do so. In the case of Aminata, she wanted to speak and tried, more than three times, but was denied the
permission. At a point her father became very angry and said to her: “I see that you do not respect us; if you try to interrupt us again I will beat you.”

The above findings are inconsistent with the Guinean written public policies that argue for the participation of women in decision making processes that affect them. If women are not allowed to participate in family forums, there is a small chance that they could participate in public forums such as the school. In her study, Lessons from Mount Kilimanjaro: Schooling, Community and Gender in East Africa, Stambach (2000) found that schooling does not happen in a vacuum and is not value free. The school community, students, teachers and school administrators carry in school the norms of their community and often these norms are embedded in the hidden curriculum.

As already stated, songs are also used to educate children in the Fulani communities of Dalaba. These songs are informal mediums of education children are exposed to. One can hear girls and their mothers sing all day long while engaged in household activities. The following recorded songs illustrate the covert and overt purpose of Dalabean community values and expectations regarding their children:

they will marry you [the Fulani girl] and take you to where you do not have a father and a mother; where you do not know anybody, but your husband; thinking about it makes me cry, the bride is gone, bride mates know that the seleli [marital clothes] separate you from your friend… thinking about it makes me cry, the bride is gone, the ten colanuts [nuts from a tree used for cultural ceremonies] can bother women, the bride is gone. Bride mother, bride father, come out to see the bride leave;
we come to wash and iron if you could care for us, we come to bring the bride; yes bride’s aunt here we come, we come, we have come, here we come bride’s mother and father, in-laws, and siblings, we come, here we come to wash and iron if you could take care of us. (See the appendix section for the Pulaar version of these songs)

Both the local sayings and songs highlight the patri-focal, patrilineal and patriarchal aspects of the Fulani society and the social division of labor. Generally, in the Fulani community of Guinea, men are considered ‘first class citizens’ who decide the fate of females -second class citizens or fattubhe- whose most important roles are that of obedience, wifehood and motherhood. The Puular root for fattuubhe is fattu, meaning a person who is born out of wedlock and/or a person whose father has not recognized him/her. This word is applied figuratively to Fulani women to highlight the perpetual changing of their family names. Before marriage, girls bear their fathers’ names, while during marriage they are called by their husbands’ names and after having their children, they are called by their children’s names. These changes of names make them seem like children whose fathers have not recognized them. One of my informant’s fathers explains this situation more clearly:

There is a huge difference between male and female children because the males are the ones who would carry the name of the family and take care of the family including their sisters, while female children are fattubhe within their father’s compound. They do not belong to their father’s line neither their husband’s unless they give birth to male children. Hence, their family name is nothing because they
would be called by the name of their children; *neene en Lamine* [Lamine being the name of the child] for example. (Informant Father, 2003)

It is important to note the discriminatory aspect of the word *Fattu*. The *fattubhe* (plural of Fattu) in Fulaniland are stigmatized by the society who discriminate against them based on socio-cultural standards. The society considers such children as bringing bad luck to the family and later on sending their sinful parents to hell. The tradition also praises and rewards those who follow the social rules. A woman who obeys the will of her parents and husband is always praised and rewarded either personally or through her children. Most of the time, when parents are saying blessings to their daughters, the emphasis is on getting a good husband, hence making marriage a very important aspect of the culture.

You are blessed Hawa because you have submitted to the will of your parents; Allah –God- will give you a good husband and peace (*A barkini Hawa bhayru a dhoftike mawbhe ma; Alla okkortee moddibho moddyo e bhutu bherdhe*). (Hawa’s mother, 2003)

Socio-cultural discourses have a differential effect on gender since they give a preferential treatment to male children. There are discrepancies between the written regulations and the society’s unwritten norms (songs and local sayings). Children are exposed more to their society’s unwritten norms that they carry out in other public arenas such as schools. If female students do not voice their opinions at home, they might have difficulties doing so in school for two reasons: they are not used to it, and they do not see it as suiting their feminity.
Wifehood.

Socio-cultural discourses are enacted through wifehood and motherhood practices; these socio-cultural practices emerged as important factors that affected informants’ schooling. Marriage was found to be a very important socio-cultural institution in Dalaba. The following quotes from informant parents show that this social institution seems more valued than schooling:

Even if she [referring to her daughter Hawa] studies, she will not find time to work outside of home. Hawa has been a good girl and I wish she could find a nice husband who will not mistreat her. She has my blessings for helping me with her siblings while at the same time devoting much of her time working in the garden… (Informant Mother, 2003)

A girl shouldn’t remain unmarried after her becoming adult [hellifadho]. She has to be married and study under her husband’s umbrella. (Informant father, 2003)

Most of the informants left school for marital purposes. However, during this study, it was impossible to find a boy who was married at his secondary level of education; all the informants’ elder brothers were found to be at school. Even in a case where a boy gets married, it is less likely that his marital situation would affect his schooling as it might happen with his female counterpart since his education is believed to be important to earn a living and support a family. Furthermore, societal norms do not require him to stay home and care for children or devote his time to household activities.

The chances of the married schoolgirls to continue their education are undermined by their wifehood responsibilities. Girls who get married soon become mothers and their home responsibilities increase. When this happens, they lack the necessary time to
engage in learning activities. Hence, they fail to attend school and pass their classes; this leads them to abandon their schooling. Two of my informants dropped out of school because of marriage. When Aminata and Binta were married they found themselves trapped in responsibilities that prevented them from attending school.

I dropped out of school because I had to obey (*dhoftagol*) my father’s decision, which was to accept an arranged marriage with my cousin. This decision was taken while I was enjoying my school break at my older sister’s place… Each day I regret leaving school, because I see my classmates who persisted attending the university. I would have loved to be one of them; however, I could not because of my duties as a wife and mother. (Aminata, 2003)

I dropped out five years ago because I had to get married as a second wife to my mother’s co-wife brother… I did not know my husband but I had to obey my parents; mostly I did not want to make my mother cry because if she does I will not be blessed… In our *tarika* [culture] *bhidho wulinta mawbhe mum sihina ndhun o barkinta* [a child does not make her parents cry; otherwise she will not be blessed]. (Binta, 2003)

This study learned from informants that when a girl is not married, she could bring dishonor to her family by getting pregnant. Parents live in fear of girls getting pregnant out of wedlock. This fear might be a contributing factor to early marriages, which, in turn, lead to school dropouts. Guinea’s has regulations (dating from 1959) that prohibit parents from coercing their daughters to marriage. The law is very specific in that matter and before the couple signs the marriage license, the civil servant who represents the State always makes sure to ask if the bride has not been coerced by her
parents. Articles 281 and 284 of the *Guinean Civil Code* deal with the marriage age and its consent. The minimum marriage age is 17 with parental consent and 21 without it; in regard to the consent it is a must for both spouses (CEDAW/Guinea, 2001).

Through this study, it can be seen that parents have subtle ways of coercing their daughters. The fear of curses or *Kouddi* is so powerful that most of the time girls ‘agree’ to their parents’ will without questioning the principle of the tradition that underlined it. Unless girls know their rights and a deconstruction process takes place, these girls will continue to perpetuate a tradition that undermines their rights to decide on what they want to be. This is very clear in the case of Binta where she still strongly believes in the power of blessings even though currently they do not seem to have benefited her.

As it has been already mentioned, there is a dichotomy between community norms and the State regulations. From the findings of this research, it appears that when the two do not coincide, the community’s norms tend to supersede the State’s regulations. The lack of penalties for non-compliance to State guidelines might also be motivating factor for non-obedience to policies.

*Motherhood.*

Data from this study point to motherhood as a significant asset in a Fulani girl’s life. Either within or out of wedlock, motherhood emerged as a contributing factor to informants leaving school. In spite of the importance of motherhood, the tradition in the Fulani society prohibits pregnancy out of wedlock. A girl who becomes pregnant before marriage is a shame to herself, her family and relatives. Fulani schoolgirls who become pregnant before marriage are ostracized by both their family and the school system. One of my informants, Haby, was abandoned by her parents and had to find refuge at her
aunt’s place where she became “la bonne à tout faire” (maid who does everything). Haby recalled the events related to her pregnancy out of wedlock:

I knew that all our neighbors were aware of my condition [pregnancy], but my parents. Finally, it was my elder brother who asked me about my way of dressing and I had to tell him. He told my mother and she cried and told me to leave for my aunt’s place. I stayed with my aunt and had a baby girl who died after three months. My father did find out about my pregnancy when I left and was very angry at my mother; since then I have not seen him and he still does not want anything to do with me. I heard that as far as he was concerned, I do not exist and if my mother or my siblings try to see me they will have to leave his house. (Haby, 2003)

Haby had to hide her pregnancy from her parents and the school authorities because of fear of the consequences. When her parents found out about her pregnancy they cast her out of the family. Most importantly, during her pregnancy she had to endure a trauma because she feared for her life. In fact, her father had stated that he would kill any of his daughters who will dishonor his family. At school, the fear of being discovered was very present in the informant’s life. About this traumatic situation at school, Haby said that:

It was only when I was 3 months pregnant that I knew that I was pregnant; from then on I had to try to hide my pregnancy both to my parents and teachers who were very fond of me. I was a model student and daughter. I did everything I was told in school and at home. At school I was always among the first ranked students and was recognized as an honor student. My pregnancy was a hell
because I knew that as soon as the school would find out I would not only be
expelled from school but be gossiped about. I knew also that my father would try
to kill me because he is from the Fulani aristocratic families that avoid dishonor…
My father use to say to us [his daughters] that he had a gun and he would shoot
whoever got pregnant among his children.

At school the major outcome of her pregnancy was to be expelled from school,
even though the new regulations of the Ministry of Education stipulated the contrary.
Recalling how this event unfolded, the informant had the following to say:

What happened was that our history teacher used to stare at me all the time she
was in our class and I used to avoid her because I sensed that she wanted to ask
me something. But one day after her class, she asked me to stay because she
needed to talk to me about my grades. After everyone left she asked me what was
happening, what I was hiding and I replied nothing. And then she said if you do
not tell me I will recommend that you see a doctor or your father to come to
school. So I started crying and told her everything. After I was finished she told
me how disappointed she was and left me crying in the classroom. (Haby, 2003).

Parents also are judged by the community through the behaviors of their children.
Hence, if a girl gets pregnant, parents are blamed because their education was not strong
or good enough to prevent such matters from happening.

I have lost my parents and my teachers’ trust; I have brought shame to my family
and do not know what to do to regain it; I wish I had died. I am the first daughter
who became pregnant in my family. My father is ashamed by my behavior; his
moral authority within the community has diminished… If I go back to school I
do not know if I could make good grades like I used to and I think also that I am too old to restart at the 11th level. I will be in the same class with very young people who could make fun of me… (Haby, 2003)

In order to protect the honor of their families, parents make decisions to marry their daughters as soon as they reach puberty; this happens usually at the secondary level of education. By taking such measure, safeguarding the girls’ moral behavior is shifted from parents to husbands and husbands’ families and relatives. An informant father has the following to say about the measures taken to safeguard the honor of the girl:

A girl should not remain unmarried after her becoming hellifadho (after her first menstrual period a girl is considered adult). If she has to continue studying, she has to be married and study under her husband’s umbrella. That way, the family could avoid dishonor [pregnancy] that can surely happen when the girl is not married. A girl who becomes hellifadho is like a tree whose fruits are ripe. One cannot prevent the birds from eating the fruits. (Informant’s father)

From this parent’s perspective, when a girl menstruates she becomes vulnerable to sexual advances. However, the girl who is attending school should not be exposed to any harm at least in school since school is supposed to be a safe place for all students. Moreover, school has some regulations (Internal Codes of Conduct) whose purposes are to protect the student population. Hence, if these regulations were efficiently implemented they might reduce parental apprehension with regards to their daughters’ safety so that they would not be tempted to withdraw them from school. Another problem with the school regulations is that they are not known to the school community.

There is another significant problem that awaits girls who become pregnant before marriage: they are enslaved by their relatives and extended families. These girls perform all kinds of work for their host family without any form of remuneration. They work more than anyone in the family, eat less and sleep in uncomfortable conditions (example: Dialikatou sleeps on a cold floor). Because they feel that their host families are doing them a favor by accepting them while they were rejected by their own families, they strive to please their hosts. In such situation, the host family takes advantage of them. Informants who were living under such situations, did not complain of mistreatment even though they were not provided with any form of assistance to continue their schooling or engage in activities that could directly benefit them. Both Dialikatou and Haby, who became pregnant out of wedlock, were found to be living in very harsh conditions, but never complained. Even though Dialikatou became pregnant after leaving school, she was also ostracized by her parents and found refuge at her aunt’s place where she became the maid who does everything.

During my visits to Dialikatou I always found her busy either cleaning, cooking, washing or ironing clothes, and tending to children; this was happening while her aunt and her children were either playing or doing their school work. I also found out that she sleeps on the floor with her baby who is malnourished… I do not understand how everyone in this family seems to accept this situation.

(Observation logs, 2003)
Discussing Dialikatou’s contribution to the welfare of her aunt’s family, her aunt remarked: “I am relieved that my niece is staying with me because I could concentrate on my retail activities without worrying about my household activities.” While the host families of Dialikatou and Haby appear to benefit from keeping them, these young mothers seem to have very little hope for future education. Talking about the future of her schooling, Haby was able to pinpoint potential factors that might have represented barriers: approval by school authorities and how to deal with school supplies.

I do not know if they will take me back to school and if they do, I have to think about how to find school supplies because my aunt cannot afford to help me; she has already so much to care for and does not have a job. (Haby, 2003)

This discussion indicates that wifehood and motherhood are more important than schooling for the Fulani community of Dalaba central region. The fear of pregnancies out of wedlock represents a factor that led to early marriages. This outcome is partially supported by the SAGE (1999) survey which found that 64 percent of the rural parents who do not send their daughters to school did so to prevent “immoral conducts” leading to wedlock pregnancies. The present study suggests that even after girls are sent to school, both marriages and pregnancies contribute to their leaving Dalaba Behanzin high school.

The preceding themes of this study focused on forces that took place within the community and at the centralized level of education. The following themes that are addressed emerged more within the school itself than outside of it.

**Effect of School Factors**

Forces related to the school that seem to militate against girls’ persistence are: perceptions of the school, mystification of the existence of girls dropping out of school,
existence of patron-client relationship in school, teachers’ attitudes, forms of student’
assessment, language of instruction and the relationship between the community and its
school.

_Perceptions of schooling._

Sending children to formal schools is not a tradition rooted in the Fulani culture
and data of the current study suggest likewise. Fulani parents give preferential value to
Qur’anic education, which is seen as fulfilling temporal and spiritual needs of human
beings (Baldé, 1999). Most of my informants’ parents and guardians (6 out of 8) viewed
formal schooling as ‘French.’ School seemed to be an alien institution informants have to
deal with because of its existence and it might yield employment. This explains the
reason why Hawa and her twin brother were sent to school: it was _à la mode_. Hawa’s
father said that he made the decision to send his children to school based on the local
saying: “_ko naage yaltuge wo liilante_” [one exposes his body depending on the kind of
sun that comes out]. The meaning of this local saying is that one has to accommodate to
changes and in this case the new changes are sending children to the French school.
Hawa’s father believes more in providing a Qur’anic education to his children than any
other education. Therefore, he sent his children to the Qur’anic school first and then the
French school. But even in the Qur’anic school, Hawa was behind in the materials
(struggling to learn the basic surates) while her twin brother had already memorized the
Qur’an.

Further, both Hawa’s mother and Aminata’s perceptions of schooling tended to
undermine its value in the lives of informants. Talking about her daughter’s schooling
Hawa’s mother remarked that:
Even if she [Hawa] studies, she will not find time to work outside of home. Hawa has been a good girl and I wish she could find a nice husband who will not mistreat her. She has my blessings for helping me with her siblings while at the same time devoting much of her time working in the garden and at the local market selling foods or vegetables.

Aminata argued about the relationship between schooling and employment and did not see any benefit related to schooling. Reflecting on schooling’s outcomes, Aminata had the following to say:

Why go back to school if you know that you will not find a job at the end of a long period of schooling? I think that when I see the violence [the presence of gangs in school] that is going on in school, I do not want to go back. Both teachers and weak students are scared of members of gangs…

Aminata’s reflection also shows current issues affecting Guinean schools: violence perpetuated by gangs. Even though she was not exposed to these issues while she was attending school, she was aware of them through her friends’ and siblings’ experiences. When students come back from school, it is very common that they share their school day experiences with their friends or sisters and brothers.

Another theme that emerged through this study is the mystification of girl dropouts by the school authorities. From the analysis of interviews and observations, the school’s attitude seemed to be a protective barrier against accountability toward donor agencies such as USAID and the Guinean government.
Mystification of the issue of dropout.

School authorities in Dalaba were in denial of the existence of the issue of girl dropouts at the secondary level. Interviews with Dalaba educational authorities pointed to cover up attitudes about the issue of secondary schoolgirls dropping from the region schools. The Prefectoral Education Director and the proviseur of Dalaba lycée clearly told me that there was no such phenomenon in Dalaba. The statistics they provided show no female dropouts in the region’s high schools. However, data provided by the Ministry of Education National Office of Statistics and Planning show that girls are indeed dropping out from Dalaba’s high schools. According to the SSP (2003) report, Dalaba has 135 primary schools and 9 secondary schools. Two of the secondary schools are high schools or lycées and the 7 others are middle schools or colleges. The high school starts from grade 11 to 13 while the middle school begins with grade 7 and ends with grade 10.

According to the SSP report, there are currently 14,944 enrolled children –from 7 to 12 years- in Dalaba; among them 5,809 are girls. The school where this research was focused is Behanzin High school, which is composed of fourteen classrooms and two offices for the school administrators. The student population in that school is 399 with 86 female students (September 2003 statistics).

It is interesting to hypothesize from data provided by the SSP report that from a female student population of 195, who enter the first grade of secondary school (7th grade) only 7 students reach the last level of secondary level of education (13th grade or Terminale). A significant question that comes to mind is what happened to the 188 girls. This is important since both the DPE and the proviseur claim that there are no girl dropouts at the secondary level.
The SSP provides a number of 77 female students who dropped out from the secondary school of Dalaba (SSP, 2002-2003 school year). This number might be underestimated given the fact that in Dalaba, of the fifteen families visited by the researcher, she could not find any that did not host at least one or two girls who had dropped out from school. In addition, in its 2003 report on Human Development, the UNDP is conscious about problems within the data used in the estimation of gross enrollment ratio in Guinean schools. This institution observed that the data used for calculation are subject to further revision (Human Development Report, 2003). In view of these issues, the question then becomes: why are the school authorities covering up the exodus of females’ students? Discussing this question with Ms. Aissata Traoré, the Coordinator of Gender Equity at the higher education level, she observed that:

Educational authorities tend to cover the realities of student dropouts because they have been receiving monies from the international communities to solve the problems; hence their strategy is to show improvement due to their interventions. Besides, girls’ education is a political issue that is used by donors to assess how well a country is doing. Hence, there is a tendency also at the government level to show improvement, even if there is not any.

The contradictions within the quantitative data raise the issue of reliability of data and the use of other quantitative methods in investigating development issues. Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1999) criticize the sole reliance of development planners on quantitative data to determine actions or activities to be undertaken. These authors argued for the use of non-quantitative data in assessing the degree of freedom or capabilities individuals
enjoy in regards to fulfillment of their rights. Besides the quantitative data, the qualitative data will help provide a fuller picture of the realities. If decisions dealing with important development issues such as education are made based on what the statistics show, in Dalaba the issue of girls’ dropout would not be have been addressed. Hence, the statistics exhibited in Dalaba’s schools were found to have contributed to mystifying the issue of girls’ dropout.

*Patron-client relationship within the school.*

Another factor that was found to be a barrier to girls’ education is the labor that students performed within the school system. It was expected that for socio-cultural reasons, in the community children, mostly girls, should contribute greatly to the survival of their family, but not within the school system. Informants recalled how their schooling was affected by labor they needed to perform for their teachers. This labor included cleaning, washing, ironing, and cooking for their teachers (mostly female teachers). While other students were busy learning in class, some girls were busy performing household activities at their teachers’ homes. The reward these girls expected from such labor was twofold: blessings and passing marks. The following quote from one informant illustrates how she felt while performing multiple tasks for her teachers:

The professors who asked us to work for them were women and almost all the girls participated in performing these labors except those whose parents were in the public or private administration. I could say that we were even happy to perform the tasks because we could get passing grades with the teachers. We used to wash, iron their clothes, take care of their babies, cook for them and braid their hair and that of their children and relatives. (Aminata, 2003)
Grades obtained through labors helped Aminata remain in the school system even though she did not master the learning concepts. In Aminata’s case, using grades as a form of benefit that could be obtained through labor created a client-patron relationship between students and teachers. Aminata and other students used their physical skills to acquire grades from teachers who used the grades as goods to be exchanged against labor. This situation took place at the expense of the schoolgirls who were performing the labor because they could not master the learning materials and had they remained in school, they would have accumulated lots of learning gaps. Hawa was very aware of these learning gaps because of the way she assessed what she had learned:

Only God knows how I was able to pass my classes and the two national exams [at the 6th and 10th grades]. You yourself [addressing the researcher] have seen how difficult it is for me to read or write in French; I have not learned much in school.

Parents supported students’ labor because of their belief that blessings ensure future success of their children’s lives. This helped the ideology around blessings to be conveyed, maintained, and perpetuated in the school system. Parents and students believed that when students respect, obey, and work for their teachers they would be blessed. These blessings would help them have a better life situation. It is the local belief that the lack of blessings can prevent the best students from succeeding in life. In fact there is a rooted tradition of students in Qur’anic schools working for their teachers. In the Fulani dudhe or Qur’anic schools, students or talibabhe work for their karamokos (teachers). During the rainy season, they cultivate their karamoko’s fields. At other times, they are involved in caring for his herd, fetching firewood and water, pounding grains,
cooking, cleaning and washing clothes. These activities are performed with the
knowledge of parents who support them because they strongly believe that when their
children work for their *karamokos* they could attain *baraka* or *barki*.

The more schooling is difficult, the more the student, if he perseveres, would
become knowledgeable and at the end would find an important job since he would
have the *baraka* of his master. The *baraka* is everything in life; its lack or
possession can make a significant difference between two individuals. (Informant
Father, 2003)

However, informants also were conscious about the distractive effect of this labor
on their schooling. Some of them were able to critically assess the situation. During a
group discussion, one the informants said:

How could one be able to perform well in school if while other students are
engaged in learning, we girls were busy doing chores? In addition, after school we
were always busy with the same chores at homes which left us without any time
to study. I think that if authorities and parents want girls to be educated they must
change their attitude and behaviors toward the way they treat us. It is not
important to send girls to school if school authorities and parents show
preferential treatments to male children who are provided with all the support
necessary to study while we girls are left to ourselves. (Aminata, 2003)

Nonetheless, the practice of students working for their *karamokos* in the *dudhe* is
also accepted based on the fact that this is a form of remuneration teachers get because
they do not receive salary per se from the work they are performing. This is consistent
with the findings Bray et al. (1998) on Islamic education in Guinea and other sub-
Saharan Africa countries. These authors highlighted the fact that teachers in Qur’anic schools understood to be paid through the labor performed by their students and small donations made by their parents. Given the low salaries provided by the government for their teachers, the practice of using students to perform tasks for their teachers might be something the community is giving back to the teachers. Finding that female teachers were largely behind the perpetuation of schoolgirls’ labor was significant as they are generally expected to be role models and change agents for the rural girls and their community as a whole. These women teachers’ role in perpetuating patriarchal values and practices is contrary to many research expectations.

*Teachers’ attitudes.*

From the perspective of informants, Dalaba’s teachers have been found exhibiting inappropriate behaviors – seeking sexual favors, using derogative language, and developing clientelism through students’ labor in school. These findings are consistent with the study conducted on inside Guinean classrooms by Bloch et al. (1998). This research exemplifies other studies (Anyon 1981; Biraimah, 1982; Fine, 1991) that found teachers’ inappropriate attitudes and behaviors to significantly impact student achievement.

Informants in this study expressed their knowledge about teachers who were involved in romantic or sexual relationships with their female students. They also voiced their concern about the preferential treatment of girls who were involved with these teachers.

This particular teacher and two of his colleagues who were teaching us had their girlfriends in our class and these girls were treated properly. They were never
punished and did not answer questions in class, but got good grades. (Mariame, 2003)

Informants reported that they were sought by their teachers to perform household tasks while school was in session. This took place even though the school policy addresses this issue and prescribe punishment for failure to comply with the policy. Article 18 / Title II of school regulation states that: activities leading to students selling food for professors and/or performing household activities for them are strictly forbidden.

Another area this study brought to light is the authoritarian relationship between students and school authorities. In Behanzin high school, informants indicated that male teachers and administrators were verbally abusing students. This seemed also to perpetuate the community’s hierarchical, gerontocratic, and patriarchal cultural norms in the school system. These communal norms prevent a child (or younger person) from talking back to elders or being right when dealing with them. Such situation is described here by Mariame:

Everything was going well up to the 12th grade when I met a school teacher who was particularly tough on students. This particular teacher used to insult us and tell us how stupid we were. He used to ask us to give answers to questions we never addressed in class and then complain that we were not doing well. He also used corporal punishment against us. He used to intimidate us and say ‘monno falla wo yo jangu, minimi lanni jangudhe’ [whoever wants to study, needs to study because myself I have finished studying]. We tried to have the school authorities get involved and help end the situation, but in vain. The proviseur told us that he believed that his teacher was doing the right things, we [students] were only lazy
and liars, whoever wants to leave school could do so, but those who would remain
have to obey or accept school regulations [meaning punishments].

The Proviseur and the Prefectoral Director exhibited very strong negative
opinions about students. They viewed most of the students as liars and delinquents.
Trying to find out why the proviseur was shouting and insulting a student, he said:
“Madame [referring to the researcher] you do not know these students, they lie all the
time. Never believe what they tell you. The good students are always on time and very
polite, but the others who do not comply with the regulations, are always trying to find
excuses which I do not allow in my school.” The proviseur also used derogative words
when addressing students who were either late or being punished for non compliance to
rules. One could hear him shout: “Chien [dog], imbecile, bâtard [bastard]…” when
addressing students.

*Forms of student assessment.*

Another force that seemed to be behind informant dropouts was the form of
student assessment. One of the informants (Kadiatou) dropped out of school because of
the way her work was assessed during the baccalaureate exam. According to the National
Office of Exams (2003) in Guinea, the responsibility of grading students is in the hands
of teachers. Each teacher is responsible for providing two grades per month to each
student registered in his/her course. The grades are oral and written. At the end of each
semester, students take a semester exam in each discipline taught. There are two
semesters in the school year and students have to score average in order to pass their class.
In the calculation of the mean score obtained by students, the grades obtained during the
two semester exams count two times more than the grades obtained during in-class regular tests.

When students sit for the national exams, the responsibility of grading students is shifted from the school to the Ministry of Education. This office becomes the organizer of the exam and hence decides on the choices of subjects in which students are tested. During national exams such as the baccalaureate, students are assigned numbers so that people involved in the testing process cannot recognize them and be tempted to cheat. When students finished taking the exam, teachers who teach the same course are responsible for grading students work in an area and time chosen by the Ministry of Education office of National Exams. Students’ copies are locked and accessible to teachers only when they are grading them. Upon the completion of grading of all of the papers, the Ministry of Education has a commission that is in charge of the calculation the grades. In averaging the scores, grades obtained during the exam count for 75% and the remaining 25% are taken from the grades obtained by the students during regular in-class test and exams.

In the National Office of Exams (2003) point of view, this process is designed to avoid cheating and subjectivity in grading. According to the information provided by this office, the problem with this system is that students cannot access their exams’ copies when they want to find out how they scored, but only their grades. Therefore, most of the time, when students fail the exams they blame themselves because they do not know what else to do. It is also uncommon for rural parents to pay the transport fare in order to come to the capital and confront a system such as the Ministry of Education. This is what happened to Kadiatou, a girl who dropped out because of the baccalaureate exam.
I knew the answers to all the tests and was confident about my result. I cannot explain what happened and my friends either. So when I did not find my name on the list of those who have passed the exam I was surprised and still am. I tried with my parents to find out what happened at the Ministry of Education but in vain. After spending money to go to Conakry and staying there more than ten days, we could not have access to my exam copies. I wanted to see how I scored and the mistakes I made. This was very important to me to accept the situation. The official who met us told us that we cannot see my copies, but he could try to find out what my grades are. But for that we had to come back after a week. After the meeting my parents were frustrated and wanted to go back home, so we came back to Dalaba without any result. I was so disappointed by what happened that I could not go back to school. I was crying all the time, could not eat well or sleep well.

Kadiatou ultimately stopped going to school even though discussions were made to have her resume her schooling:

My parents, friends and teachers tried to convince me to go back and I did go back, but after a week I stopped because I was in pain. Whenever I saw my classmates who were attending the 13th grade I was hurt and could not focus on my studies.

Discussing Kadiatou’s situation with a member of the National Exam Office, he remarked that:

It is unfortunate that a good student failed her exam, but I have witnessed such cases where the best students at their schools failed the baccalaureate
exam. You [referring to the researcher] have to know that many things can affect students’ performance during the exam period. They can be affected by stress or miss the question that was asked and answer something else. That is why we [referring to his colleagues and himself] try to minimize such issues by providing them advice before we start. I know of a classmate who failed the exam because she had her menstrual period the very day we were starting the exam. She dropped out of school and everyone was surprised. It was only after more than ten years that we knew the truth. (Official, National Exam Office, 2003)

School location.

According to the proviseur (principle) of Behanzin high school, the school is located in the place called ‘quartier des chargeurs,’ an area that was occupied by the Europeans when Guinea was a French colony. Because of its climate, the French used to store their food and spend their vacations there. One can still find vestiges of the colonial period: colonial engines, houses and churches that are in ruin (see appendix). The school was built in 1963 as an extension for Labé’s lycée, which was overcrowded. But, presently the school is independent from Labé and is considered for the Dalabaen children. The school is surrounded by the bush, which makes it unsafe after 6 pm. The proviseur told the researcher that there are poisonous snakes around the school because of the bush. There is no electricity, running water, or restrooms in the school building. Current female students told the researcher that the lack of restroom was a burden because they had to leave the school in search for restrooms in the neighborhood.
The school is also very distant from the center of the city (one or two hour walk) and the roads are very slippery during the rainy season which adds to the travel time – thirty or more minutes at least. When school reopened around the end of September, the researcher observed how difficult it was for students to reach school. The rains had made the soil very slippery, people were falling while trying to reach the school; in certain places it was safer to crawl. By November and December it became very cold there, and students had to struggle with another major issue: the winter solstice. During those two months, it was foggy in the mornings and evenings and windy during the rest of the day. To cope with the cold, students developed a strategy: carry hot stones to hold and pass over their bodies to fight against the cold on their way to school and inside their classrooms. The school administration told me that during the month of May they could not hold classes because it rained in the classrooms.

The researcher was able to experience both the cold and the travel distance to the school. Hence, she asked the proviseur about how the school dealt with the regulations pertaining to the scheduling of classes. He replied that they only allow 5 minutes to late comers after the official time (8 am) for the beginning of class-sessions. This seemed unrealistic given the areas of residency of most of the school population; some of the students live 7 to 9 kilometers from the school. In such conditions, it is very difficult to comply with the school’s regulations.

Relationship between the school and its community.

Listening to the radio show “Ecole Guinéenne” each Thursday on the Guinean National Radio and Television (RTG), one could be sure to hear about issues related to ‘developing partnership’ between the schools and their communities. Developing
partnership between the school community and the parents is at the frontline of all the political discourses delivered by either the government officials or its development partners (Non Governmental Organizations). However, along with school policies, this sounded just like another politically correct agenda which could help gain community or donor support. The reality in the field was very different from the political discourses. It seemed as though Behanzin high school administrators and teachers were not aware of their social surroundings. There was no dialogue between the school and it community. Parents and students were not given information that could help them understand and participate efficiently in the school’s life. When informants were dealing with issues affecting their studies, the school failed to provide them with information on their rights (policies) and other opportunities (Second chance schools-NAFA centers). The school acted as the sole decision maker and students and their parents had either to accept and obey the regulations or withdraw from school. In the school, the SC had –and still continues to have- more responsibility than anybody else to develop partnership relations between the school and its community, but this is not occurring. Confronted about this issue, the response of one of the counselors was:

I have to care for so many students, I do not have any space to conduct private counseling sessions. I have to teach because the school needs a math teacher. I do not have any means of communication to reach out to parents or students in need. Hence I could help only those who come to me. (High School Counselor, 2003)

Besides issues such as space and means of communication (telephone and car) the problem with the school counselors’ position is that students do not know their raison d’être. This finding is echoed by the Director of the Education who argued that school
counselors were just doing clerical jobs in school and teaching. They were not accomplishing the tasks for which their position was created. For the Director of the Education:

> It is sad that school counselors are not living to their expected mandates which were to help us [meaning administrative officers] deal with parents and students who are in need. During my frequent visits to the schools I always find them either teaching or filling out student dossiers (in French *livrets scolaires*) of students. I would like to see them help us build a relationship with the community [students’ parents], but they are not. Whenever I asked them about what is preventing them from doing their job, they always replied that they do not have the means to carry out their responsibilities. They talked about telephone, car and other equipment. But, they have to know that this is a poor country where each of us needs to try to find strategies to work and change the situation. If we all keep complaining, I do not know how we can improve.

Informants’ parents experienced difficulties relating to school. They saw the school as an authoritarian institution where they come only if they have to. This usually happened when their children were in trouble or they had to make contribution to the school. Among participants of this study only two girls are from educated schooled parents; the others did not attend school. This group of unschooled parents viewed school as an alien institution; this was based on the language spoken at school and their interaction with the school’s community (teachers and administrators). Mariame’s father had the following to say about his interaction with the school:
I do not go to school because I do not understand *Faransi* [French]. I only went once when my boy was expelled from school because he misbehaved against his teacher. When I went to meet the teacher I had to wait two hours; it is only after the break [at 10 am] that I met him. I could not talk to him directly because I could not speak *Faransi*. So, we had to find a translator who explained to me what happened. I apologized to the teacher and he agreed to drop the case. After I came back from that meeting I told my boy that if something happened again at school because of him, he should not expect me to go back there because I felt humiliated by the situation. Now, it is my schooled children who are the intermediates between the school and me. They tell me what I need to do and I do it if I can; otherwise I leave it.

This parent’s experience with the school has been a factor militating against his relationship with the school. He is not willing to go back to school because he feels that he cannot be understood there. Since the school administration does not try to reach out to the community, the relationship between the two institutions is at a dead end. The lack of dialogue between the two institutions –family and school- affects student persistence; this is what happened in the case of Dialikatou, for example. Dialikatou was asked to come with her parents to school after she argued with a teacher. She failed to comply and because of that she could not come back.

*Language of instruction.*

In the Guinean classroom the language of instruction is French. Hence, both students and their teachers have to express themselves in French even though one could often hear them use the local language as well. In Dalaba, children speak *Pulaar*, the
language of their parents or mother tongue. This language can be heard spoken by both adults in educational offices, and students in the schoolyard. In many instances the President of the country himself delivered his speeches in *Sossokui*—his mother tongue—or in a combination of *Sossokui* and French. Nonetheless, the official language of communication in class is French. Mastering this language is difficult given the children language of socialization. All the informants of this study except the school officials, spoke *Pulaar* to the researcher. The lack of proficiency in the language of instruction was found to be leading to school wastage.

Dienabou is a Fulani girl who with her family fled the civil war in Sierra Leone and came to Guinea. A Fulani, Dienabou could speak *Pulaar*, but she could not understand or speak French. Recalling her experiences in Behanzin high school Dienabou said:

I was sent to the public school where I had to adjust to the school language [French]. In Freetown we use English in school while in Guinea I had to use French. My father provided me with a French tutor but this could not help much since I was trying to learn the language at the same time I was doing my academic work at school. I had a very tough period because I was adjusting to my new environment and school as well. I was hungry almost all the time and did not know how to relate to people. At school it was worse. I had to sit there and listen without understanding anything. I always participated in class [Sierra Leonean] and here I was like a very stupid girl. So, after staying three years in school without making progress, I decided to dropout of school at grade 11.
Dienabou dropped out of school and became a hairdresser. Overall, all the factors discussed in this chapter represent obstacles that emerged while informants were in school. These obstacles represent the leading forces to their abandoning school. An important aspect of these obstacles is their interrelationship; it is very difficult to isolate each of the obstacles. Hence, the obstacles should be read with a holistic perspective. Yet, through informants’ narratives, other themes emerged that are related to informants’ after school experiences and the forms of resistance they developed against the obstacles to their educational attainment. These themes, which are discussed in the next sections, are: the self image of girls who dropout and their resistance to the status quo.

*Self - Image of Girls Who Have Dropped Out*

How girls who dropped out of school perceived themselves is a theme that emerged through interviews, observations and the body language of informants. All of my informants did not want to go back to school because they “feel ashamed” to be in the same classrooms as their younger siblings who they believe will “make fun” of them. These attitudes were found to be signs of low self-esteem. One of the informants said: “I will not go back to school because I am too old and have missed so much. I think that I will try to continue with the Qur’anic school and learn how to sew” (Hawa, 2003).

It was difficult to interact with Dialikatou. At the beginning of researched-researcher relationship she was very introverted; she spoke less and in a very low tone and never smiled. I thought that Dialikatou was intimidated by me, but observing her, I realized that this was the way she behaved and interacted with almost everyone. It was only when I started providing her with basic computer training skills that she saw her smile and talk more easily. As far as going back to school is concerned, Dialikatou’s
opinion is clear: “I would like to go back to school, but not in a school where I will be studying with young people who will be making fun of me.”

Aminata also echoes Dialikatou’s opinion and thinks that she cannot go back because she would have to wear the same school uniform color (white and blue) as her youngest brother; this would constitute a shame because her brother’s friends would make fun of her and she cannot handle that kind of treatment.

Informant who has many family responsibilities is clearly in a position where school attendance is improbable. Binta, the mother of three children, observed that: “I have too many children to care for and this prevents me now from thinking of any type of schooling.”

Kadiatou still wants to go back to school, but she provides the following assessment:

I cannot go back to school since my classmates are now at the university level. I feel ashamed to go back and be in the classroom with my younger brother. I regret not continuing my studies and I am willing to apply to a professional school.

Haby, the young woman who became pregnant and lost her baby, is not only concerned about how the community viewed her, but also how she could earn back her father’s esteem. She feels that she needs to prove to her future husband that she is a ‘good girl’ so that he would help her reconcile with her father. Because of her pregnancy out of wedlock she also feels that she does not deserve to be a first wife.

I think that I have to find somebody who could marry me and perhaps he could help me regain my parents’ trust. I do not expect to be a first wife because of what
I have done and know that I will have to try hard to earn my future husband’s trust as well.

All of my informants emphasized how they are judged by their families and community. Their fear of being negatively judged and in need of regaining respect by complying with social expectations made them view their age as a significant factor preventing them from restarting their studies from the level where they left their schooling.

**Girls’ Resistance to the Status Quo**

Another significant theme of this study is girls’ resistance to the forces behind their drop out. While some informants were not able to understand the situations that led them to drop out of school, others were able to partially understand the problem and make the connection between prevalence of certain forces and their educational failures.

When leaving the field, I left Binta still struggling with the concept of blessing and cursing. She still believes that her blessings will come through her children. She does not know that if she does not break the cycle, her children too will suffer from the same force that led to her leaving school. Binta’s daughter is her only child who was found helping her sell food at Dalaba Education office. She does not seem to understand that involving all the children in the survival of the family will reduce the burden on her daughter because this will give the daughter more opportunity to focus on her schooling.

Aminata was able to clearly see through the system by pinpointing forces such as student labor, wifehood, and motherhood as barriers to her education. She went further in her analysis to show the connection between schooling and employment. According to
her, schooling does not lead to employment; thus, she thinks that schooling is not the answer for her.

Mariame found school and the lack of support from her father as barriers to her schooling. She was able to see how the preferential treatment of male children can lead to their success in school while female children are deemed to abandon their education. She tried harder to escape her situation, but without success. Unfortunately the person she felt could have helped her was her sister, a woman who in such society does not have much power because she is a fattujo.

Hawa also is another informant who found out about the interplay between her schooling and her family’s expectations. Because she had to provide support –moral and material- to her mother and siblings, she could not keep with the pace of learning at school. Understanding that she could not be efficient in both tasks, she abandoned her schooling. By so doing she is perpetuating the cycle of oppression, but she is helping her younger sister Mariame (not the informant of this study) focuses on her studies.

Haby, who was expelled from school because of her pregnancy, is blaming herself for everything. She does not try to find any other person who could share the blame. She thinks that she is the one to be blamed and who needs to think of a strategy to reconcile with her family and teachers.

The resistance to the system can be seen through the consciousness of Hawa, Mariame, Aminata, Kadiatou and Dienabou regarding the forces behind their schooling experiences. On the other hand, Dialikatou, Haby and Binta are taking the blame for their school failures.
Summary

This chapter has presented the themes that emerged from observations and interviews with eight main informants, their parents and school authorities, and educational documents analysis. Findings connected to the research questions were discussed thematically and supported with quotations from policy documents, observations notes, informants and relevant research findings. It emerges from this study that not only socio-cultural, economic and school factors influenced informants schooling outcomes, but informants also influenced their educational outcomes through the forms of resistance they exhibited. Informants’ participation in influencing their educational outcomes is an important finding of this study. Most of the studies dealing with girls education in sub-Saharan Africa are content to locate and discuss outside factors that lead to school wastage; it is as though girls themselves were passive actors in either transforming, or maintaining and perpetuating the status quo.
Interrelated factors

Gender Sensitive School Policies
- Policy definition
- Policy dissemination
- Policy implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation of NAFA centers
- Unfavorable cultural context of policy implementation

School Factors
- Perceptions of schooling
- Mystification of girl dropouts
- School location
- Patron-client relationship: sexual advances and student labors
- Authoritarian relationship
- Relevance of curriculum
- Forms of assessment
- School and community relationship
- The Language of instruction
- Students and teachers’ socio-cultural experiences

Fulani Muslim girls’ education: forces influencing their retention in Behanzin high school

Socio-cultural discourses and practices
- Tradition “finna tawaa” Cursing Kouddi and Blessing Barki
- Local sayings and popular songs
- Wifehood
- Motherhood
- Discrepancies between unwritten and written norms

Economic Factors
- Country Economical Development (SAP)
- State of Dalaba’s economy
- Family income
- Value of girls and women household labor
- Indirect cost of schooling: cleaning materials, gifts to teachers, school uniform and textbooks
- Returns to schooling

Resistance to the Status Quo
Consciousness of barriers to education and how they operate
Emergence of forms of resistance to the barriers

Figure 2 Results
CHAPTER FIVE
Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

Chapter Four of the current study provided a description and explanation of the obstacles that influenced the educational outcomes of eight Fulani Muslim girls and women who were the main informants of this study. A critical look at the Guinean educational policies revealed that the country has passed legislation that supports equal educational participation for both women and men, but with insufficient implementation. The current study supports other studies undertaken by Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998), Bah-Diallo (1995), Hill and King (1993), Hyde (1993), and Tietjen (1991) who found that equal educational participation did not mean parity in gender enrollment and achievement. On the one hand, according to legislation, Guinean girls and women have the same right to education as their male counterparts and their enrollment in school has increased, but on the other hand, the current study shows that Fulani girls’ participation in education at the secondary level significantly lagged behind boys’ participation. Further, these data show that there are significant barriers that continue to impede Fulani Muslim girls’ educational participation in Behanzin High School.

The analysis of the data indicates that Fulani Muslim girls who left Behanzin high school were “hidden” from the public. This conclusion can be drawn because Dalaba educational authorities did not want to discuss the issue of girl dropouts, which for them did not exist. The data also showed that parents’ material contributions to their children’s education were found to be constraining factors to the persistence of girls in school. The
economic burden of contributions made for schooled children and to school in the forms of textbooks, school uniforms, and school maintenance and cleaning materials led parents to prioritize whom of their children would remain in school. Parents were forced to choose whose education to support because most of the parents of the current study were poor and could not afford to make the required school contributions for all of their schooled children. The analysis of the data also implied that the group of unschooled parents of the study envisioned the school as an alien institution. Interview with an informant’s father suggested that he sent his daughter to school to follow a trend.

It was observed through comparative analysis that there was a significant discrepancy between the two forms of education systems, namely formal education system and informal education system. The informal education system, in which the Dalabean Muslim girl was socialized, tended to take precedence over the formal. The informal education system, based on the tradition or *tawaagal* (Riesman, 1998), was maintained through the ideologies of cursing and blessing. Even though most of the informants were able to explain obstacles that led them to abandon their schooling, the ideologies of cursing and blessing around the traditional norms prevented them from systematically resisting and overcoming the status quo. The following sections discuss the main categories of obstacles preventing educational attainment. These categories are discussed both in conjunction with the existing literature and as they relate to the research questions.

*Discussion of Findings*

The significance of this study stemmed from its stated objectives which were to explore the schooling experiences of Fulani Muslim girls as the experiences were related
to their retention in a Dalaba rural secondary school. This study was to specifically address forces that represented barriers to their educational persistence, and to understand the implications of the findings as they related to Fulani Muslim girls’ education in the Fouta Djallon region. As explained in Chapter Three, the present study is an ethnographic life-history case study, hence its intent was not to generalize findings but to contribute more in-depth and specific information on the issues influencing Fulani Muslim girls’ education in the region of Dalaba in the Fouta Djallon province. Therefore, implications of this study need to be read taking into consideration that the data are based on interviews and observations of eight Muslim Fulani girls and women ranging in age from 16 to 25 who attended and dropped out of Behanzin High School which is located in the center of Dalaba. From the data of the present study obstacles behind the retention of girls in secondary school are found within four related main categories: educational policies, and socio-cultural, economic, and school factors.

_School Policies_

Through the analysis of the available school policy documents, it was found that the gender sensitive policies that were meant to improve the educational outcomes of girls were not disseminated and implemented in Behanzin high school, where the participants studied. Dalaba school authorities were implementing old school policies which were not beneficial to participants. For instance, the old school Pregnancy Policy Act of 1987 had a punitive character with regards to schoolgirls who became pregnant. Although the latter policy stated that the boy who fathered the baby must also be punished, during the fieldwork period, no schoolboy was identified who was punished by the policy.
Despite the fact that the school must have been implementing the new school Pregnancy Policy Act of 1992, one of the informants of this study, Haby, was expelled from school because of her pregnancy. This event took place because from the time when Haby left school to the implementation of the present study, the school was implementing the old policy of 1989 which, contrary to the 1992 policy, did not allow pregnant girls to remain in school until their delivery or require them to take a pregnancy leave.

Based on the policy as implemented, it appeared as though the socio-cultural context in which the policies needed to be implemented were not accounted for during the design process. For instance, in a cultural context such as Dalaba where kinship ties are very strong, it is very difficult for a girl like Haby to take the responsibility for the expulsion of her cousin - who was the father of her baby. Her cousin is like her own brother; consequently he is a close family member. Should she have talked about him to the educational authorities, she would had been held accountable by her family for her cousin’s educational failure. This would have meant more problems for her in regard to her family and extended family who would have ostracized her. Kapteijns (1999) supports this line of reasoning in her study focusing on Northern Somalia. Kapteijns found that the fear of excommunication from family and kin group prevented Muslim Somali girls and women from rebelling against oppressive cultural norms (p. 31).

In Haby’s culture, communal values are more honored than individual values; Haby’s first loyalty is to her family and kin group before herself and anyone else. The characteristics of such communal cultures are portrayed by Abiola (1985), Camara (1955), Kane (1963), Ndukwe (1996) and Riesman (1998), who describe how children in such
cultures are nurtured by all the members of the community, making it difficult for them to advance individualist aims and goals.

The narratives provided by informants revealed that school counselors (SC) were found not fulfilling their responsibilities. Some of the most important responsibilities of the SC as outlined in the official educational policies (1987 and 1989) were to assist needy students such as Haby, Dialikatou, and Mariame and build relationships with their parents while providing them with useful school related information. Informants articulated concerns about the SC who were neither assisting students nor building relationships with their parents. Most of the informants of this study did not benefit from any counseling from the SC when they needed it. Instead, the SC were performing clerical tasks and filling teaching positions. Through interviews conducted with one of the high-ranked educational leaders, I found that he was aware of the situation regarding the SC, but he did not seem to be concerned with finding strategies to overcome it.

The same laissez-faire attitude is exhibited about the NAFA centers (second chance schools). The rational behind the establishment of the NAFA centers is to provide a second educational opportunity for girls who have dropped out of school and those who were not enrolled in school (Bah-Diallo, 1995). It was under the leadership of Madam Bah-Diallo, former Minister of the Guinean Pre-University Education, that the NAFA centers as one of the key programs to increase girls’ participation to formal education were implemented. These centers are supposed to provide second schooling opportunities for girls and women to study in an informal school setting at a pace that accounted for their specific needs. The current study found that the NAFA centers were not operational. The second chance school located in Dalaba was lacking equipment, and
was largely unknown to my informants. At the time when most of the informants left school, Dalaba school administrators failed to provide them with information about the existence of a NAFA center located in Bodié, one of the sub-prefectures of Dalaba.

Issues such as the ones described in the preceding sections that influenced effective policy implementation and the dichotomy between policy formulation and implementation have been highlighted by many scholars such as Ake (1996), Grindle (1997), Kamano (1995) Ripley (1985), Sutton (1999) and Tietjen (1991). Ripley (1985) observed that whenever the beneficiaries of the policy are excluded from its definition and formulation this predicted a policy failure. Furthermore, Kamano (1995) found that when the policy is formulated without strong centralized leadership and reflection on its implementation this could be barriers to implementation. From Kamano and Ripley’s perspectives the exclusion of beneficiaries, the absence of a strong central leadership, and the lack of reflection on the implementation procedures could be factors that prevented the effective implementation of the new gender sensitive policies.

Grindle (1997) linked failure to policy implementation to the socio-economic and cultural environments in which the policy needed to be implemented rather than the policy itself. The current study crystallized Grindle’s concerns because the old policy of 1989 that had been implemented in Behanzin high school concerning the expulsion of schoolboy fathers is not culturally appropriate.

In his discussion of the political context of post-independent Africa development policy formulation, Ake (1996) came to the conclusion that the political environment and leadership play a significant role in both effective policy design and implementation. Ake’s arguments concur with the results of the current study. The present study points to
a significant gap between the Ministry of pre-University Education’s policy monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Aligned with the findings of these authors, the present study also suggests that it is not only issues related to policy dissemination and implementation that led to the informants dropping out, but also the political, economic, and socio-cultural environments in which the policy was implemented. This study argues that the favorable context in which school policies that were gender sensitive needed to be implemented was lacking in Dalaba. Most importantly, this study takes the problem further and points to the dichotomy between the formal educational policies and the informal socio-cultural norms as a significant obstacle that prevented the implementation of educational policies favoring informants’ educational participation. A supportive socio-cultural environment in which the educational policies were to be enacted was missing in Dalaba. Informants of the present study were, and still are, socialized in a socio cultural tradition that is rigid and considers women as the *second sex* (Beauvoir, 1983) and *fattubhe*. In the next section, the socio-cultural factors are further discussed.

*Socio-cultural Factors*

The data of the present study suggest that although by law there is equal access to school for all in Guinea, female informants could not achieve at the same level of their male counterparts because of the *finna tawaa* and socio-cultural attitudes which perpetuated gender inequality. The modes of transmission of the *finna tawaa*, or tradition, are songs and local sayings. These songs and local sayings convey community expectations for women and men. Through the analysis of Northern Somali songs and local sayings from 1899 to 1980, Kapteijns (1996) found that these forms of orature
conveyed the social norms and served as a “diagnostics of power inequality” (p. 76). It could be suggested from the Dalabaen songs and local sayings recorded in this study that there is a clear-cut line between what a Fulani Muslim boy and a Fulani Muslim girl should do. Fulani girls and women in Dalaba are considered as the second sex. Dalabeans social norms define the role of women as wives and mothers; therefore their primary role is to take care of their husbands and children. Activities that could interfere with women’s wifehood and motherhood roles are neglected or avoided.

The Dalabean tradition is transmitted orally. Even though the tradition is not written it appears much respected by the people of Dalaba. The oral character of the sub-Saharan African informal education systems is also described by Reagan (1996) who found that it sustained morality, law and rituals, and sanctioning offenders. Thus, through informal education, African men and women are socialized about their positions in their community. Analysis of the Muslim Fulani culture of Dalaba is similar to Reagan’s analysis of patrilineal, patri-focal and patriarchal traditions. According to Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997), in such cultures, descendants follow their fathers’ kinship lineages and live with their fathers’ kinship and the decision making power is largely held by males. In Dalaba, it was found that children bore their fathers’ surnames and lived with their parents, mostly their fathers. Informants of the current study who were married were called by their husbands’ names and those who had children were called by their children’s names and lived with their husbands or husbands’ families (Aminata and Binta). Informants who were not married were called by their fathers’ names and lived either with their fathers or their fathers’ extended families (Dienabou and Hawa). One of
the informants who became pregnant out of wedlock was found living with her mothers’ family; this was the case of Dialikatou who was living with her maternal aunt.

Girl children were considered *fattubhe* who would leave their fathers’ lineage after marriages and develop new lineages related to their husbands. This situation makes the position of girl children within their fathers’ kinships similar to a guest position, which is impermanent. The belief is that because girl children leave the family it is not worthy for parents to invest in their education, for it would neither be beneficial to the family nor the girls themselves since girls’ ultimate roles in society are to remain home and care for husbands and children. Counter-narratives about the importance of girls’ education provided by informants’ parents (Hawa’s mother for example) support this social belief. Descriptions of the sub-Saharan African cultures of Senegal, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso provided by authors such as Ba (1982), Butchi (1979), Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997), Derman (1973) and Riesman (1998) are aligned with the Fulani culture of Dalaba. In these different sub-Saharan African cultures, women were the second sex and their roles to provide care for husbands and children dominate even when they work outside their home environments. A women’s role as caregiver takes precedence over professional activities she is involved in.

Dalabean men have a great deal of decision making power. They decide on major socio-cultural events such as weddings, marriages, religious ceremonies, and education. All informants of the present study were sent to school by their fathers or fathers’ brothers and sisters. The Dalabaen Fulani culture, as most of the cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, has beliefs and practices that silence its women. For instance, Aminata, one of the informants of the current study, was silenced by the men of her family whenever she
wanted to voice her opinion and she was even threatened with corporal punishment if she dared to interrupt the men’s discussion. The silencing of women is in contradiction with Human Rights principles that grant free speech to all. Participatory development paradigm proponents such as Chambers (1987) and Freire (1993) advocate the contribution of individuals in development (educational) processes that are beneficial to them. In the case of my informants, their tradition made them voiceless regardless of humanitarian principles and ideas developed by advocates of participatory development paradigms.

The perpetuation of discriminatory socio-cultural practices in Dalaba is based on the notions of blessing (*barki*) and cursing (*kouddi*). Obedience to the socio-cultural norms is tied to the individual’s need for blessings and avoidance of curses that can lead to the lack of success. Kapteijns (1999) found both cursing and blessing present in Northern Somali local narratives; she calls cursing and blessing *metaphysical sanctions* (p. 31) that are contributing factors to Somali girls’ obedience to their fathers’ will.

Informants of the present study were found to be aware of the impact that cursing and blessing has on their future life situations. Informants such as Binta and Haby have internalized the cultural principles of the community to the extent that they considered them as natural and never questioned their underlying principles (who defined the principles? who benefits from them?). Nonetheless, Gaventa’s (1980) analysis of how *power* and *powerlessness* operates, suggests that informants such as Binta and Haby might be *quiescent* to the status quo because their community has succeeded in shaping their consciousness about the legitimacy of the status quo (p. 21). Thus, a portion of the explanation of the lack of Binta and Haby’s action toward ending their cultural
oppression might be related to the fact that these two women know that they cannot end their oppression. Other informants such as Aminata, Dienabou, Hawa, and Mariame exhibited an understanding of obstacles that led them to abandon their studies. While this group of informants could not change the outcomes of their education, they have developed a more acute consciousness about the problems that led them to leave school.

From the data provided in Chapter Four, early wifehood and motherhood emerged as obstacles that prevent informants’ persistence in school. Two informants, Aminata and Binta, were married without their consent while they were in school. Because of their responsibilities as wives and mothers they could not continue their studies. Aminata and Binta’s narratives suggest that girls are married earlier than boys and the practice of arranged marriages is common in Dalaba. This concurs with the observations of Butchi (1979) and Folbre (1988) regarding the Nigerian and Zimbabwean communities that practiced for the most part arranged marriages for their female children. In the current study, none of the informants’ brothers were found married while they were at the secondary level of their schooling. Through the analysis of observations conducted on informants’ daily activities, it emerged that married girls’ duties toward their husbands and children were very demanding and did not leave them enough time to concentrate on studies. Authors such as Ballara (1990), Brock-Utne et al. (1998), and Kinnear (1997) have posited that the lack of time due to girls’ and women’s involvement in performing household activities represented a major barrier to their educational participation.

The fear of pregnancy out of wedlock emerged as a major factor that influenced parents’ decision to give their daughters to early marriage. In the Fulani culture of Dalaba, premarital pregnancies are regarded as socially deviant behavior, which must be punished
by ostracism. Haby and Dialikatou, who became pregnant out of wedlock, were ostracized by their parents and were forced to find refuge with their parents’ extended family. This supports other studies that showed that early pregnancies due to marriage and the fear of pregnancies out of wedlock influenced girls’ educational attainment in sub-Saharan Africa (Beoku-Betts et al., 1998; Njeuma, 1993; SAGE, 1999; Sutton, 1998; Tietjen, 1991).

Beoku-Betts et al., Njeuma, Sutton and Tietjen investigated sub-Saharan African socio-cultural traditions and found them to significantly affect girls’ and women’s access to and persistence in education. These authors’ findings are consistent with the story of Binta Sow from Brouwal Sounki that is narrated in the introduction of the present study. More than twenty years ago, Binta Sow was withdrawn from school because at the time she was growing up the Fulani culture did not allow a girl to remain in school when entering puberty. It was felt that she could get pregnant or engage in immoral activities. Hence, she was forced to interrupt her schooling and marry a man she did not know. The story of Binta Sow is very similar to the stories of the majority of the informants of the present study who interrupted their studies because of cultural expectations. Informants of the present study were not withdrawn from school when they entered puberty, but they were given to marriage, which in the present case yielded the same outcome: interruption of schooling. Nonetheless, there is a sign of social change in the vision of the Fulani community regarding the education of girls. In the case of informants schooling, because they were left in school when they reached puberty, this attitude could be argued as a sign of progress in the attitude of the community toward girls’ education.
The Strategy for Advancing Girls Education –SAGE- in its 1998 community survey found that 64 percent of Guinean rural parents reported that they did not send their daughters to school for fear of pregnancies. In the case of the current study, parents’ fear of their daughters getting pregnant influenced the decision they took to marry them. Therefore, it appears that the fear of pregnancies is not only a determining factor for girls’ access to school, but it is also a criterion factor for girls’ persistence in school.

Observations of religious activities were not found to significantly prevent girls’ access to or persistence in education. In this study, the education of girls and women was found to be accepted by the Islamic religion practiced by informants. Doukouré (1999) argues that the education of Guinean Muslim girls and women is not only accepted by the Islamic religion, but also mandated. The present study contradicted the studies by Badawi (1991), Etta (1994), and Hyde (1993). The latter authors found that Islamic religious requirements prevented its women followers from pursuing formal education. Even though practicing Islam, informants of the present study were not secluded and prevented from mingling with males. They attended a coeducational school where they freely interacted with their male teachers and colleagues and at home they related to the men of their families. Therefore, the data of the current study suggests that it is a combination of the informal education system based on ideas concerning tradition, wifehood and motherhood that restricted most of the Muslim informants’ participation in education, rather than the practice of Islam itself.

Economic Factors

Even though public schooling is free of charge in Guinea, parental contribution to their children’s education in the form of school uniforms, textbooks, and school cleaning
materials influences their daughters’ schooling. Most of the informants’ parents are poor and are engaged in performing subsistence activities (farming, trading, and teaching Qur’an). Out of the eight informants’ families, only two families are composed of educated parents who are holding offices in the public sector. These were the parents of Dialikatou and Kadiatou. In the cases of the other six families, because of harsh economic constraints, women and girls were significantly involved in helping make ends meet.

Informants performed many tasks to help their parents cope with the survival of the families. Their contribution to the survival of the family was more sought than their male counterparts who, for the most part, enjoyed a certain level of freedom they used to study. Because of their constant participation in performing household activities, the majority of the females in this study could not focus on their studies. Hawa, Aminata, Mariame, and even Dienabou left school for the purpose of helping out at home and the lack of financial assistance in school. Domestic labors are found by Appleton et al. (1990), Hill and King (1993), and Sutton (1998) as factors preventing girls’ educational persistence and attainment in sub-Saharan Africa. The SAGE (1999) and GDHS-II (1999) surveys’ findings support the data of the current study. While the SAGE survey found 58 percent of rural parents’ decisions to send their daughters to school were influenced by poverty, the GDHS-II found expenses (school uniforms) related to school difficult for most of the rural mothers of the survey to pay.

Data from this study suggest that revenues obtained from parental and children’s labors were used to support boys’ education because of socio-cultural beliefs that considered boys as future leaders of the family whose education would benefit the whole
family. Despite the fact that the girls and women of the current study were actively involved in performing activities for the survival of their families, their involvement was not given the same value as their male counterparts. The social construct gives a preferential value to work performed by men. This is illustrated by Assie-Lumumba (1997) and Butchi (1977), who observed the lack of importance attached to the economic contribution of sub-Saharan African women by their male counterparts. These authors found the lack of value a basis for gender inequality, which generally leads to the subordination of women.

The data of the current study seemed to indicate that informants were not discriminated against with regard to access to school, because access to public educational facilities is “free” in Guinea. However, UNESCO (2004) argues that the problem of access to school is a complicated one; it is not only related to the availability of educational facilities, the cost of schooling, the school system, but also parents’ commitment to send their children to school and the economic opportunities they have to support their children’s education. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) make it difficult for a developing country such as Guinea to allocate money toward improving educational facilities and specific educational programs targeting girls and women (Beoku-Betts et al., 1998; Nwomonoh, 1998). Hence, parents are more and more required to share or assume educational charges.

Overall, students’ parents in Guinea are required to build or maintain the existing educational facilities; they have also to pay for textbooks and uniforms (Tietjen, 1991). With burdens related to health, food and housing costs, parents prioritize who among their children will attend or remain in school because they cannot assume educational
costs for all of their children. Ballara (1991) found such a situation causing the withdrawal of girls from school. Similar situations were described and lived by the informants’ parents of the present study who complained about charges they had to assume for their families’ survival and the schooling of their children. Sutton (1995) found the higher the indirect costs to schooling, the more likely families are to choose education for sons over daughters. However, poverty is not the only determinant of gender educational inequity because there are poor countries such as Niger, Tanzania, and Zambia that appear to have achieved gender parity in the provision of basic education (UNESCO, 2004). Generally, inequity in educational participation and outcomes is reflective of broader social inequalities.

**School Factors**

Schools are often considered the main vehicle for achieving individual and collective social progress (Apple, 1996). However, as Anyon (1981), Brock-Utne et al. (1998), and Mohanty (2003) point out, schools play a crucial role in maintaining dominant class and gender ideologies through both curriculum content and teaching practices. The data of the present study exemplify the arguments put forward by these authors. Informants such as Aminata argued about unwritten practices that took place within the school that affected her participation and that of her female counterparts. Informants discussed their withdrawn from school while classes were in session to perform multiple labors for their teachers. Informants performed the labors because they believed (and their parents as well) that these labors would generate blessings necessary for future success. From informants’ narratives, women teachers were found to be more engaged in the practice of student labor than their male counterparts. This finding is in
contradiction with the belief that women teachers could act as role models for rural schoolgirls. Even though educated, these women teachers were lacking gender awareness consciousness as discussed by Aubrey (1997). Aubrey argues that the lack of feminist consciousness prevented Kenyan women leaders from petitioning for social changes needed for their efficient participation in development programs.

Behanzin high school is also seen as an alien institution by informant parents. The disconnect between the schools and the communities they are supposed to serve has been also observed by scholars such as Ohuche and Otaala (1981) and Abiola (1985). These authors have remarked that the curricula African children are exposed to in school educated them for a world that is beyond their reach. Informants of the current study whose parents were uneducated sent their daughters to school without much conviction about the benefits education could yield. These parents’ attitudes were aimed at complying with new social norms and political discourses about schooling girls. SC whose responsibilities included building relationship between the school and its community did not try to change the mindset of schoolgirls’ parents. This failure attributed to the SC, but which is also imputable to the other school authorities, seems to have contributed in reinforcing parental vision about the school. If the school develops relationships that accounted for its community realities, the school would affect the vision of the parents about it and perhaps this could have led to more supportive actions towards girls’ education.

Howard (2000) found building connections between school activities and the daily life of students in the community to have contributed in developing special bonds between teachers and students in a Sudanese rural school. Sidorkin (2002) also urges
teachers to develop relationships with their students before engaging in learning. For Sidorkin, the relation between students and teachers are crucial for the outcomes of learning. An interview with a participant teacher of the current study showed that he is not concerned with building relationships with his students because he feels overwhelmed by the curriculum he has to teach. In addition, the disrespectful language used by the school authorities might be a contributing factor for the lack of relationship among the Behanzin school community. Romano (2000) and hook (1994) found developing an environment of care and respect is conducive to learning.

hook (1994) argued for an education that leads to freedom. Such form of education advocated by hook is based on the elimination of boredom in classrooms and it substitution with excitement. hook observes that bringing excitement in the classrooms encompasses building relationships that account for students’ (and teachers) background. In Behanzin High School, the education that informants were exposed to did not free themselves from issues that they were dealing with both in the school and within the community. On the contrary, the form of education they received in school reinforced the informal education that oppressed them. The learning theory (pedagogy of the oppressed) developed by Freire (1993) is aligned with hook theory. Freire posits that traditional top-down education is not appropriate for learners’ cultural action; this analysis supports the education experienced by informants. In addition to the issues discussed within this portion of the study, distance to school, the language of instruction, and the forms of student assessment contributed to informants abandoning their schooling.

Analysis of the observation and interview data point to distance to school, forms of student assessment, and the language of instruction among other significant barriers to
informants persistence in school. Behanzin high school was found to be distant from student homes and because the regulations about the beginning of school sessions (at 8 am) were not to be changed even when the weather changes suggested otherwise; students were late and could not access to classrooms. Most of the time, informants because of their occupations (fetching water, cleaning compounds, pounding grains, milking cows, and cooking breakfast) at home were the ones that were late. One of the informants of the present study, Hawa, found it very difficult to comply with school regulations and left school. The lack of flexible school time-table have been highlighted by ADAE (1995), Ballara (1991), GDHS-II (1999), and Nwomonoh (1998) who found taking into account the concerns of students and their parents while designing and implementing school regulations can help with compliance.

The official language of instruction (French) prevented Dienabou, one of the informants of this study, from pursuing her study in Dalaba. French was a factor that affected the relationship between unschooled parents and the school teachers and administrators. In an area where Pulaar is the lingua franca, it is paradoxical that the school cannot provide services in that language. When the school does not speak the language of its community, effective communication cannot be established between the two social institutions. Researchers have stressed the importance of teaching students in the language that they best understand. They argued that doing this not only contributes to complying with the Linguistic Human Rights of the students, but also helps in reducing student dropout rates (Bamgbose, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Thiong’o, 2000). Guinean post-independence language policy is perpetuating French colonial language policy for its colonies. Nonetheless, implementing students’ mother tongues in
school requires a long terms commitment from the government as well as funding.

Guinea’s first independent government’s experience with the use of its local languages in school was a failure because of the lack of resources, textbooks, and teacher training, to undertake the implementation process of the language policy (Bah-Diallo, 1991; Kamano, 1995).

Narratives from Kadiatou show that while most of her teachers and classmates agreed that she was a very good student, they could not influence the results of her baccalaureate exam. Instead of being judged on her past and current school performance (grades obtained during regular tests and exams), she was judged with a single exam. This exam affected her whole schooling experience. She dropped out of school and both her parents and the school did not help her overcome this setback. This finding suggests that not all the students who fail the national exam do so because of their learning weaknesses, but because of a system that relies only on one exam to judge student performance. While Yeboah (1997) found the retention of a Ghanaian girl in school is played out during the first four years of her schooling weighing the quality of the school and her performance, this current study suggests that girl students are vulnerable no matter the level of schooling they are in as well as their school performances. In addition, the lack of transparency in the student grading system is a barrier to accountability. The government, through the Office National Exams, is the authority that controls who could pass or fail. The authoritarian practices of the government disempower good students like Kadiatou.

Sexual advances that could potentially take place within and outside the school were found to have also influenced informants’ schooling. Informants’ parents were
aware of this kind of situation and took measures to avoid its consequences. Parents opted to give their daughters to marriage so that their husbands would be responsible for their moral conducts. By doing so, they tried to avoid out of wedlock pregnancies which are regarded as socially deviant behavior (Bâ, 1982; Hyde, 1993). Behanzin high school policies are silent about punishment regarding sexual advances and harassment. Anderson-Levitt et al. (1998) have argued about the necessity to have a strong sexual harassment policy in school because this could lead to better educational environment for Guinean girls.

Mariame, another informant of this study, explained how some of her female classmates were engaged in relationships which provided for them preferential treatment from the teachers. It could be implied from Mariame’s explanations that sexual favors were used to obtain passing grades by girl students. Teachers and students who engaged in such acts were performing patron-client relationships, and these relationships affected the quality of learning and teaching. However, the present study does not provide enough ground to argue about the existence of sexual harassments in school since girl students who participated in sexual acts did so “willingly.” In the case of this study, the appropriate term that could describe the practices that took place in Behanzin High School is sexual advances.

Two informants, Dialikatou and Mariame, found teachers’ antagonistic attitudes to have affected their schooling. Both Dialikatou and Mariame experienced teachers’ negative attitudes through derogatory language. Teachers’ negative attitudes were sustained by the principle who did not accept dialogue with students. Chambers (1983), Freire (1993), hooks (1994), Howard (2002), and Sidorkin (2002) theorize about the need
for establishing dialogue between the learner and the teacher (or facilitator). These authors found valuing the learner’s contribution to knowledge building very significant. Nonetheless, data of this study suggest that both the school and the male members of informants’ families acted as the experts on all the matters pertaining to informants’ lives.

Informants also discussed about the economic outcomes of education. One of the informants of the current study, Aminata, observed the lack of connection between schooling and employment. This weakness of the pre-colonial and post-colonial sub-Saharan African education systems have been observed by Abiola (1985) and Kelly (2000) who argued that these education systems marginalized students from their society. If education cannot yield employment nor has an empowering character (Freire, 2001), it is very unlikely that students would be motivated to remain in school and their parents would support their schooling. It is a reality that without education, it is difficult to aspire to employment, but currently national economic constraints have made it difficult to create new jobs and the government is no longer the major employer. The attitudes of the Fulani Muslim girl and women informants of the current study are different from the attitudes of Stambach’s (1998) Northern Tanzania schoolgirls. Informants of her study, *Education is my Husband: Marriage, Gender, and Reproduction in Northern Tanzania*, tried to persist in school because they believed that their educational outcomes (school diploma) represented their husbands. In the case of the informants of the current study, most of them did not see strong correlation between schooling and employment.

Educational authorities in Dalaba were in denial of the existence of the issues of female dropouts. They strongly argued that the dropout phenomenon did not exist in Dalaba’s secondary schools. However, the statistics provided by UNESCO (2003), the
Guinean Ministry of Education, and observations conducted in the field were in contradiction with statements made by Dalaba educational authorities. If decision to pursue the current research project was based on quantitative data provided by Dalaba educational authorities, this project would not have taken place. Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1999) caution researchers engaged in development matters about problems related to the exclusive use of quantitative data and argued for an analytical approach that accounts for both the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Another important finding of the current study is related to the forms of resistance to the status quo exhibited by the informants. Some informants of this study exhibited forms of resistance to the economic, socio-cultural, and school forces that were affecting their education. This is important since, most of the time, studies related to the sub-Saharan African region focused more on finding out barriers to the education of girls and women, not on strategies women develop to resist these barriers.

Aminata, Dienabou, Hawa, and Mariame were informants who understood barriers to their education. Aminata found labor performed at school and home preventing girls from pursuing education. Mariame and Hawa were able to explain reasons that led to their dropout through the lack of economical support. While Mariame’s father did not support her schooling by providing for her school needs, Hawa had to help her mother perform multiple tasks for the survival of the family because her father did not fulfill the provider role. Dienabou, was able to understand that the language of instruction could not have led to her success in school, hence she left school.

However, Dienabou acted upon her situation by learning how to braid hair and becoming a hair dresser. Through this activity she is able to take care of herself and her
family as well. The significance of the attitudes of Hawa and Dienabou is that their attitudes and actions are helping female siblings continue their schooling. Hawa’s actions are leading to the schooling of her younger sister making her school failure not vain. In addition to providing for her family needs, Dienabou is thinking of setting up a training school for girls who dropout of school so that they could engage in activity that can generate revenue for them.

Aminata is conscious about the situation that led to her dropout, but is not doing much about it. However, Aminata is eager to support her daughter’s schooling. As for Binta and Haby, they seem to have a fatalistic attitude and consider their dropping out to be normal. Kadiatou, whose education was supported by her parents and was doing well in school, did not fulfill the expected outcome of her education. She understood the forces that led to her dropout, but she “failed” to change her schooling outcomes. Kadiatou’s case implies that even with the best support, some girls fail to persist in school.

Nonetheless, by engaging in discussion related to the factors that led to their dropout, most of the female informants of this study engaged in social critique or critical consciousness. Fine (1991) argued that when students who drop out engage in discourses aimed at understanding and describing conditions of school failures, they are engaging in forms of social critique and have a critical consciousness. Also, when informants of this study argued with the school authority represented by the teachers (Mariame and Dialikatou) or the school policies (Dienabou and the language of instruction; Kadiatou with the baccalaureate) they performed what Scott (1985) framed as the Weapons of the Weak (p. 29) and Anyon (1981) framed as the Capital Conflict or Potential Conflict.
Relationship with Capital (p. 88). These forms of conflict do not lead to significant changes in the social status quo, but they show that the oppressed or powerless develop forms of resistance to the oppression. It is interesting to observe that students with low socio-cultural status develop forms of resistance to power hierarchies represented by the Dalaba’s mainstream of schooling, even though these forms of resistance did not significantly challenge the status quo.

With regards to the discussion of the data of the present study, there are significant forces that are behind the lack of persistence of Fulani Muslim girls and women in secondary school. These interrelated forces are found within the community, in the school, and in educational decision making processes. Most of the informants of the present study are burdened by a heavier workload at home, they lack role models of successful schooled women, and they hear people disparage women and their intelligence. Hence, these informants have fewer reasons than their male counterparts to hold an image of future success at school. Obstacles that prevent informants from pursuing their formal education are embedded in school policies, socio-cultural, economical and school factors. These obstacles are interrelated and cannot be dissociated from each other. In the next chapter, this study will be summarized. The chapter will also provide conclusions, recommendations, as well as recommendations for practice and further studies.
CHAPTER SIX
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations For Further Studies

The problem and main purpose of this study “The Schooling Experiences of Fulani Muslim Girls in the Fouta Djallon Region of Guinea: Forces Influencing their Retention in a Rural Secondary School of Dalaba” were two fold. First it was to contribute an ethnography of obstacles that constituted major constraints in rural Fulani Muslim girls retention in a secondary school of Dalaba. Second, the study was to address the implications of the findings as they relate to the girls and women education in the Fouta Djallon province. This chapter summarizes the present study and provides conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Summary
Chapter One, the introduction of this study, provided a background on experiences related to the education of women and girls in Guinea, in sub-Saharan Africa, and other parts of the world, while addressing the study’s problem and its significance. The first chapter also offered the delimitation and limitation of the study, the definition of important terms, and the organization of the study. It was noted in Chapter One that while there was a plethora of studies that targeted barriers to girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa, there was a gap of studies that focused on Guinea. There was specifically a significant gap of studies that centered on Guinean secondary level of education. Previous studies lacked the context where Islam was the predominant religion, poverty was harsh, and tradition was strong. Therefore, this study was undertaken to contribute literature on the subject of Fulani Muslim girls’ education at the secondary level.
There were three research questions guiding this study:

1) What are the obstacles to the retention of Fulani Muslim girls in school?
2) What factors can account for the obstacles faced by Fulani Muslim girls in school?
3) What is the relationship between the existing educational policies and the obstacles faced by Fulani Muslim girls in school?

Chapter Two, the Review of Literature, provided a critical review of relevant literature on factors influencing girls’ formal education in Guinea specifically and sub-Saharan Africa in general. The review of the literature addressed the informal education system girls were exposed to within their community. The literature of this study revealed that since independence, progress has been made on girls’ and women’s formal education, but there were significant gender gaps in the secondary level of education. Sources revealed that there has been more concern about the primary level of education for girls than the higher educational levels. Unlike primary enrollment, secondary school enrollment and persistence show few positive trends. School policies, economical context, socio-cultural, and school system factors have been pinpointed as representing barriers to girls and women educational attainment.

The educational policies were reviewed from a historical perspective: before the French colonization, during the French colonization, and in the post colonial era. The critical review of these three main eras highlighted factors that led to Guinean as well as African women and girls lower state of education. The review of the literature also showed how the different systems (informal and formal) of women and girls’ education both contradicted and supported each other. It was found that the gender sensitive educational policies developed after independence could not be efficiently implemented
because of unfavorable socio-cultural, economical, and school factors. Through the critical review of the literature, it was revealed that literature targeting the education of Guinean Muslim Fulani girls and women was absent from the plethora of studies on women and education in sub-Saharan Africa. The gaps of studies were highlighted, hence providing niche to the present study.

Chapter Three, Methodology, comprised the theoretical framework of the study, the research methods, tools used to collect and analyze data, and issues that emerged during the implementation of the study. The methods used in this study emerged from the questions addressed by the study and were based on what Patton (2002) calls “emergent design” (p. 43). Data of the current study was collected during a three-month period. Chapter Three also described and explained the context in which data was collected and how I dealt with the issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the data. More importantly, the methodology provided descriptions and explanations of how the socio cultural context of the hirde became a valuable tool for the collection of the data of this study, and issues that emerged in conducting this research in a Muslim setting.

Chapter Four, Results, presented the major themes that emerged from the collected data. Themes presented as obstacles to higher educational attainment were interrelated, hence making it difficult to dissociate them. Nonetheless, an attempt to isolate them was made for the purpose of providing structure to the study. Obstacles that led to informants leaving school were found to be related to school policies, unfavorable socio-cultural environment and economical context, school culture factors, and informants’ attitudes. Issues within the gender sensitive policy design and implementation, and discrepancies between the gender sensitive policies and socio-
cultural environment, were found to have hampered informants’ schooling. The current study suggested that the favorable socio-cultural environment in which the gender sensitive policies were to be implemented was lacking in Dalaba. The tradition, or finna tawaa, embedded with the ideologies of blessings and cursing and early marriages and pregnancies undermined informants’ education. Behanzin high school culture contributed also to informants withdrawing from school. Data suggested that the vision of the school, teacher and administration attitudes, the language of instruction, the forms of student assessment, and school regulations undermined informants’ opportunities to continue their studies. Indirect contributions to school in the forms of school uniforms, textbooks, school cleaning materials, and gifts to teachers provided ground for poor parents to choose whose schooling to support among their children. Poverty emerged as a significant factor that led to informants continuous involvement with labor that generated revenue for the survival of their families. Time spent in performing labors impacted informants schooling.

Chapter Five, Discussion of Findings, discussed the major themes outlined in Chapter Four and related them more closely to the research questions and the existing literature. Chapter Five provided the contribution of the present study to the existing literature by highlighting the forms of resistance to the status-quo developed by informants and suggesting the lack of strong connection between the practice of Islam and informants’ schooling. The discussion of the findings suggested that the metaphysical sanctions of blessings and cursing helped maintain and perpetuate a tradition that was oppressive to women and girls and discriminatory toward girls and women’s opportunity to have a formal education.
Conclusions

Since independence, increasing numbers of Fulani Muslim girls have gained access to a primary level of education in Dalaba specifically, and Guinea generally. This is a result of a combination of political will, national and international donors’ development agendas, the schoolgirls and their parents’ contribution as well. However, this combination of factors seems to be absent from the secondary level of education. A major conclusion that can be drawn from the current study is that informants’ current educational situations are rooted in inadequate educational policies, poverty, discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes, and poor quality of school system.

The discrepancies between the formal and informal education systems represented the greatest barriers in informants’ higher educational attainment. Analysis of these discrepancies dominated the present study. It was found that the informal socialization process of Muslim Fulani girls contradicted the formal socialization process which took place in school. While the formal socialization process stated the existence of equality and equal educational opportunities, the informal socialization process (traditional norms) considered girls and women as inferior to boys and men. Dalabean girls and women were considered as the second sex or fattubhe. Informants of the present study endured the social norms of their culture which disparage women’s intelligence and capabilities to succeed. Quiescence to cultural norms was reinforced through the ideology around cursing and blessing. The fear of metaphysical sanctions and ostracism prevented most of the informants to challenge the status quo.

Poverty was another barrier to Fulani Muslim girls’ education. In a context where informants’ primary needs (food, shelter, and health) were not met, it was difficult to
invest in education. Parents’ economic status influenced informants’ education.

Informants of the current study were required to help their mothers care for their siblings, undertake household tasks, cook and sell foods. These relentless labors prevented informants from focusing on their studies.

Socio-cultural practices *de jour* in Dalaba were found to be patriarchal. Male children were considered to be the bearers of families’ names and the future leaders of their community and family, hence their education was privileged. Girls on the other hand, were viewed as future wives and mothers whose ultimate role was to stay home and provide care for the family. Since girls would marry and leave their families they were not worth major educational investment. Early marriages and pregnancies prevented informants from continuing their education. In the culture of informants, pregnancies out of wedlock were shameful to the whole family members, therefore girls were married early to prevent such event of taking place. These early marriages led to pregnancies and contributed to schoolgirls’ lack of persistence. Both out of wedlock and wedlock pregnancies had the same effect on informant schooling, they had to leave school. Socio-cultural attitudes were reinforced by the school practices.

Students’ achievement is closely related to the learning and teaching conditions. At the time the informants were attending Behanzin high school, the school learning environment was not conducive to informants’ persistence. The school’s time-table, the authoritarian school administrators and teachers attitudes, student labors, the language of instruction, and student methods of assessment all point to failures to address informants’ needs. With regard to the magnitude of the inside and outside school problems faced by informants while they were schooled, they had few chances to remain and persist in
school. However, through their participation in the present study, I hope that their educational experiences could benefit their girlfriends, siblings, and children.

**Recommendations**

The data from this research indicated that secondary Fulani Muslim girls and women of Dalaba receive an inequitable amount of the State’s, teachers’ and parents’ attention. Girls are viewed as inferior to males, and that neither the new gender sensitive educational policies being implemented nor the school practices are encouraging schoolgirls to persist in school. The implications of the data are clear: the system and parental attitudes must change. The Guinean nation cannot ignore the potential of girls and young women to the development process, when empowered by formal education. Women represent more than the half of the country’s population and whether one looks at the issues from economic, political, or social perspective, women participation is needed and can significantly impact on the nation’s development. Changes must therefore take place in educational policy design process, within the community and family, and within the school system.

**Policy Design Level**

To overcome discrepancies between policy formulation and implementation it is important to involve those who are supposed to benefit from new policy formulation. Their involvement should start from the early stages of the process of definition of problems the new policy will address. In the case of the present study, findings indicate that informants and their parents were not involved in the design of the educational policies (school pregnancy policies, NAFA centers) that were beneficial to them.
Teachers and the school administrators were also left out during the design process. These people needed to be also embarked because they are the implementers of the policies. The inputs of beneficiaries and implementers are crucial for effective policy formulation implementation. Research has shown that when these groups of people are embarked in the process of policy design they strive for the realization of the policies (Fiske, 1996; Klees, 1986; Ripley & Franklin, 1986).

The government should provide a strong leadership through the diffusion and implementation of the gender sensitive policies it has designed. These policies should be monitored and evaluated for re-orientation purposes. Government policies formulation structures such as the Ministry of Education should involve the beneficiaries (parents and students) in the overall process of policies design. This will help avoid issues such as those found in the present study.

The government could designate a specific office within the Ministry of Education that would be responsible for school policies design and implementation. Such office would include people who have the expertise in policy design. These resources people could begin by reviewing the existing educational policies, making recommendations and ensuring the follow-up of the recommendations. Then, this group of people could undertake the task of designing new policies in the light of the current ones.

**Community Level**

Changes must also take place within the community and the family where the informal education takes place. Socio-cultural attitudes have been observed as influencing informants’ educational outcomes. In this regards, religious centers such as
the mosques can be places to sensitize the community to become gender sensitive and support the education of the daughters. Religious leaders such as the Imams and Ulemas (group of Muslim theologians or scholars), and community leaders (Bodié lamdho) could play the role of facilitators during sensitization meetings. The Imams and Ulemas hold a moral power within their community and because of that they are strong opinion leaders. Celebrations of marriages, naming ceremonies, and religious ceremonies, can be venues to deliver messages about supporting girls’ education.

In addition to the role of religious and community leaders in helping bring about the needed social changes, local Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) and the Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA) could play major role of intermediate between the school and its community in involving parents in school matters. The NGO can help generate revenues from activities that could be used to cover the indirect cost of schooling and improve the quality of education. Women’s local associations such as *l’Association des Educatrices de Guinée*, could be used to promote girls’ education by providing role models for schoolgirls.

*The School Level*

Teachers must help girls develop positive views of themselves and their futures, as well as an understanding of the obstacles women must overcome in a society where their options and opportunities continue to be limited by gender stereotypes and assumptions. School curricula should deal directly with issues of power, gender politics, and violence against women. Better-informed girls are better equipped to make decisions about their futures as well as family matters.
Administrations and school counselors must be prepared and encouraged to bring
gender equity and awareness into every aspect of schooling. This group of people should
be evaluated on the level to which they promote and encourage gender equity in school
curricula and extra-curricula activities. Counselors should play a very important role in
encouraging girl students to develop positive views of themselves and helping them cope
with their physiological development and socio-cultural burdens.

The school administrators should provide flexible scheduling of classes or
tutoring classes so to respond to informants’ domestic responsibilities. School also needs
to be culturally appropriate to parents. Responding to parental concern about pregnancy
can help reduce the risk of girls being married early. Strong policies against sexual
harassment and favors must be developed. These policies must be enforced by all school
personnel.

Government, with the help of NGO s, should enable and encourage young
mothers to complete school without compromising the quality of education these students
receive. Childcare for children of teen mothers should be an integrated part of all
programs designed to encourage young mothers to pursue or complete educational
programs. Furthermore, government should develop adequate employment policies in
order to alleviate the growing number of employment. Educational policies must include
the job market orientation. There must be adequate policies in relation to employment
opportunities in order to sustain students’ and their parents’ dedication to education.

**Significance of the Research and Further research Avenues**

This study gives voices to Eight Muslim Fulani girls and women whom cultural
traditions consider women as the “second sex.” Even though these persons represent a
very small fraction of Guinean women and girls who have experienced the phenomenon of school dropout, their stories provide us a significant glimpse into obstacles faced by Muslim Fulani girls in their search of better educational outcomes. This study also highlights that girls are not passive recipients to their socio-cultural oppression, but they develop forms of resistance to their oppression. Most significantly, this study by providing to the informants a voice breaks their silence in the family, the school system and the community. The giving of voices is a movement in the right direction for this group of girls and women to tell their side of the story about their dropout so that solutions that center around their experiences can be found. It is the hirde that serves as a context for my informants’ voices to be heard.

Essential data of the current study was collected through the hirde venue. The hirde as a tool for data collection has proven –at least for this study- to be a significant instrument for data collection in the context of Dalaba. In such a context where political authorities are suspicious of official form of gathering, the hirde provided an informal gathering that suited the researcher and the researched. Through the hirde, informants were not only at ease to discuss issues related to the research, but they were not placed in positions of powerlessness. The family context and other public places such as the school could have affected the reliability of the data in the sense these places do not provide informants with a voice. Voices heard in the Muslim Fulani family forums and public places are males. The hirde is a place where women and girls can be heard. Therefore, this data collection tool could be implemented in other Guinean rural settings to test its external validity or generalizability.
In terms of recommendations for further studies, a study on non-Muslims and non-Fulani girls and women would be interesting to undertake. Those women’s and girls’ educational experiences in regards to the research questions of the present study most probably would differ significantly from the experiences of the main informants of this study. Hence, new studies targeting non-Muslims and non-Fulani girls and women would provide insight into the issue of girl dropouts in Guinea. Another avenue for future research would be to focus on the educational experiences of Fulani Muslim girls and women who have not dropped out of school; this in order to explore strategies they have developed to remain and succeed in school.

The present study discusses some intervention programs such as the NAFA centers targeting girls who have dropped out of school. Even though the data of this study point to operational issues of the NAFA centers, a study focusing on girls and women who have attended the NAFA centers would be useful to assess their effectiveness and the most effective ways to help girls continue their formal education.

Finally, it would be interesting to define variables related to the barriers preventing educational attainment for secondary Muslim Fulani girls and conduct a quantitative method of inquiry. Using quantitative methods tools, researchers could access larger populations and draw comparison between those who had experienced school dropouts to those who had not.
Concluding Thoughts

I stand on the tiny piece of my knowledge to contemplate larger pieces of shadows

(Thierno Samba Mombeya, Chaikou of Fouta Djallon, 1850)

This quote from Thierno Samba Mombeya, who was a Fulani Muslim scholar and poet, exemplifies my feelings after conducting this research. This research project was a learning experience for me. While I have confidence in the findings reported in the present study, I still have much to learn about conducting qualitative inquiries. Conducting this study, I tried to make it transparent by discussing its delimitations and issues I encountered conducting the research. Despite my efforts to make the study trustworthy, this research -like all of its kind, is biased and has limitations. The primary limitation of my research deals with my own inexperience conducting such a qualitative inquiry. I hope to take the tiny pieces of knowledge from this study and use them to contemplate the larger pieces of shadows in Guinea, Africa, and beyond.
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Internet sources:


Appendices
Appendix A

Authorization letters to conduct the research
AUTHORIZATION

Authorization has been granted to Madam Aissatou BALDE to engage in research activities and data collection on girls’ education issues in the prefectures of the Middle Guinea - Fouta Djallon (Labe, Mamou, Dalaba, Pita, Tougue, Mali, and Koubia).

These activities are aligned with her dissertation and will last a period of 6 months (September 2003 to February 2004).

The assistance of the authorities at all levels in facilitating Madam Aissatou BALDE mission will be highly appreciated.

Conakry, the 17th of June 2003

Signed by the Department Chair

EL Hadj Mamadou Dian Gongore DIALLO
Appendix B

Samples of Participants’ Consent Forms
Adults’ Consent Form

I ______________________, agree that I would like to take part in Aissatou Balde’s research project, and I would like to state that she explained to me the objectives of her research as well as what my rights are as a participant in the study. Further, she assured me that data collected from this study will be ONLY used for the stated research purposes.

___________________[signature]

Date: ______________
Students’ Consent Form

I ________________________, agree that I would take part in Aissatou Balde’s research project, and I would like to state that she explained to me the objectives of the research as well as what my rights are as a participant in the study. My parent/guardian also knows about my participation in this project and agrees that I take part in this study.

_________________ [student’s signature]

Date: __________________

___________________ [parent/guardian signature]

Date: __________________
Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Interviews questions are semi-structured and unstructured. Given the culture of the people in this area, it is not appropriate to have a structured form of interview. The beginning of a conversation is very informal. It is only at middle and end of a conversation that important matters are discussed. However, questions that need to be addressed were designed ahead of time so that the researcher could direct dialogue with participants towards seeking specific responses related to the research questions of the study.

Demographic information

What is your age?
What is your marital status?
Do you have children?
What is your occupation?

Research related questions

*Girl who dropped out*

At what age and grade level did you leave Behanzin school?
Could you explain the circumstances that led you to abandon your schooling?
Marriage; occupations; pregnancy; exams, failure to pass the class; lack of motivations, problem with teachers; do not understand what was taught; school uniform, textbooks, others...
How did you persist in the school system until the grade you were at when you left school?
Do you regret leaving school? Why?
Do you have suggestions on how to improve the schooling of girls?
Teachers

What discipline do you teach? What grade?
What is the average number of students in the classrooms?
Are there as many male students as females?
How do students perform in your class?
Do you have an idea about the number of students that dropout?
What are the main reasons behind their dropout?
Are there school policies that focus on solving the issue of school dropouts?
How these policies are designed and implemented?
Do you have strategies to share on how to overcome the issue of student dropouts?

School authorities

Please tell me your position in the school/education system?
Could you please explain the responsibilities related to your function?
Are you familiar with the issue of student dropouts?
Do you have an idea about the number of students who dropout at the secondary level?
Are there more schoolgirls who drop out than schoolboys?
Could you explain the reasons that led them to leave school?
Do you know school policies that are designed to address the issue of girl students who abandon school?
Do you know of the current educational policy documents of 1989 and 1992?

What do you know of the NAFA centers?

Do you have any suggestions on how to overcome the problem of girl dropouts?

Parents/community leaders:

Do you have children that are enrolled in school?

What are the reasons that led you to send them to school?

Do you have children/family members that dropped out from school?

At what grade did they drop out?

Do you have an idea about the number of students that dropout out of Behanzin high school?

Do you think that girl students are the ones that mostly dropout?

Are there any important reasons for their dropout? School fees; distance to school; marital reasons; marriage or pregnancies; cultural norms; religion; lack of motivation, school personnel attitude…

Do you have any suggestions on how to overcome the issue of school dropout?
Appendix D

Map of Dalaba where Data was Collected
Appendix E

Pictures from the Research Sites
A view of the town

Ruins of the French housing during colonial era – *Quartier des Chargeurs*–
Office of Dalaba Prefectural Education Direction

Behanzin High School
Church from the colonial era

A view of Dalaba
Dalaba schools map
Appendix F

Data in Pulaar and French
*Les filles en état de grossesse sont permises de rester à l’école si leur état le permet.

Cette disposition concerne aussi les filles qui ne sont pas mariées. Toute fille qui sollicite revenir à l’école après naissance de son bébé est permise de le faire

*Toute fille en état de grossesse est:

a) licenciée si elle n’est pas mariée. L’auteur de la grossesse sera également licencié s’il est élève. Il encourt des sanctions administratives et judiciaires à des degrés ascendants selon qu’il est enseignant ou non enseignant;

b) mise en congé de maternité si elle est légitimement mariée; après présentation de l’acte de mariage. La situation matrimoniale de la fille doit être officiellement connue avant son état de grossesse

*Les emplettes et travaux ménagers s’effectuant au domicile des professeurs par les élèves sont et demeurent proscrits

*Menen dho ittu ittu on no dhudhi. Yo men annu fii no bhenguredji amen nyamira, walora, sellira, fedyinira hajudji, men anna kadi fi lekkol paykkoy amen. Ka lekkol nyandeyo nyande ko ittu. Mono marri paykun lekkol hun hande, haray no maapi

*Debbo ko dhoftidho

Debbo naati alijanna wo si o dhoftike modi makko

Munyal rimay nyale

Debbo si munyaki bhibhe makko barkata
Si baaba wowli, neene sonki, bhidho wonay nbobo

Debbo ko mo wuddere hina mo duhol

Debbo mara geebhal

Mettye debbo arano ko modi makko

Debbo mara hakkil

Debbo hedhetake

*Bhe jombhe bhe nabhe ka a ala neene, bhe jombhe bhe nabhe ka ala baaba; hara a anda goto sihina modima mi mijitoto tun mi wulla, jomba yehino, fewdibhe fewdibhe jombede seleli sendi gorebhe jomba yehino Fewdibhe fewdibhe jombede seleli sendi gorebhe jomba yehino,… mi mijitoto tun mi wullu, jomba yehino, goro sappo no sonja debbo, jomba yehino

Neene jomba baaba jomba yalte ndaron kori jomba yehino

Men ari wuppa bula pasa si on waway dankade, men ari addugol jomba men arile yo yaaye, men arile arile, men arile arile, men ariyole lele neene jomba arile, baaba jomba arile, bhe futubhe arile, bandirabhe arile, men arile arile, men arile arile, men ari wuppa bula pasa si on waway dankade