“I Want to go to School, but I Can’t”: Examining the Factors that Impact the Anlo Ewe Girl Child’s Formal Education in Abor, Ghana

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This dissertation titled

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Abstract
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This study explored factors that impact the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal educational outcomes. The issue of female and girl child education is a global concern even though its undesirable impact is more pronounced in African rural communities (Akyeampong, 2001; Nukunya, 2003). Although educational research in Ghana indicates that there are variables that limit girl’s access to formal education, educational improvements are not consistent in remedying the gender inequities in education. In essence, this research inquiry contributes literature on the subject by examining factors impacting the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal educational outcomes in Abor, Ghana.

I employed a qualitative method for this research to inform the ethnographic case study approach in order to answer the research questions. Data was collected in Abor, Ghana, for a three-month period. Data collection strategies included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and analysis of Ghana government education policy documents. The interviews of Anlo Ewe girls, parents, teachers, administrators, opinion and traditional leaders, elders, and clergy on factors that impact girls’ formal educational outcomes were analyzed.
The findings of the research revealed four major factors that contribute to Anlo Ewe girls formal educational outcomes. The factors included the context of government policies and girl child education initiatives; school environment and administrative structures; socio-cultural; and economic challenges. In the Anlo Ewe socio-cultural milieu, the socialization process is significant in understanding uncodified policies within the home, community, and school that places the girl child in the role of subordination to males; hence, these uncodified policies were essential to why girls drop out of school.

The dilemma of male teachers and school administrators in positions of power, the behaviors towards girls in schools, and the local patriarchal sociopolitical structures are major issues that hinder the educational, economic viability, and employment potential of the Anlo Ewe girl child.

The mosaic of voices used in this study provided the data needed to draw a larger picture that explains why girls in this study say, Medibe mayi sukuu gake, nyemate ŋui o [I want to go to school, but I can’t].

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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Associate Professor of Educational Studies
Dedication

I give thanks to God, from whom all blessings flow.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
Norma Jean Goodwyn and the late Charles Alfred Grooms, Sr.
who taught me to believe that if I could dream it, I could achieve it.

and

To my forebears whose names are both known and unknown.
Their hard work and sacrifices are indelibly etched in my memory. Through their sufferings, they had hope that one day their posterity would be free.
I am that posterity of their faith.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

There are gender dynamics in the schooling experiences of girls in African communities that merit serious consideration (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007; Mensch and Lloyd, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2003; Okugawa, 2010). Although a growing proportion of young girls in Africa are spending some time in school between puberty and marriage, little research is focused on socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal belief systems of the community that influence the girl’s education especially in developing countries (Makwinja-Morara, 2007; Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2003). Mensch and Lloyd (1998) and others have argued that in Africa, as well as other developing countries, the phase of the life cycle between physical and social maturity typically defined as adolescence is lengthening due in part to ever-larger school enrollments of adolescents. As a result, the school is an increasingly important institution in the socialization and training of girls who are part of the next generation.

In pre-colonial African society, training and preparation for adulthood were exclusively a family and community affair. The onset of puberty was often the occasion for sexually segregated rituals to signal the beginning of adulthood, at which time information about sexuality, reproduction, and adult roles was shared between men and boys and between women and girls. Today, children are likely to be in school at the time of physical maturation and, therefore, exposed to non-familial attitudes, information, and ideas emanating from teachers, peers, and a centrally designed curriculum. Understanding what happens to the girls within the home, the community and school
environment, therefore, becomes critical to comprehending factors that affect the education of the girl child in contemporary times.

Gender biases in education are not exclusive or limited to Ghana alone. Although education is central both to the economic success and social mobility of individuals and societies, nevertheless, over 100 million children worldwide do not have the opportunity to attend school (Oxfam, 2005). Out of this figure, about 55 percent are reportedly girls. The disparity and inequity in female and girl child education is, therefore, a global concern, and its undesirable impact is often more pronounced in African rural communities (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007; Baldé, 2004; Nukunya, 2003; Unterhalter, 2007). This introductory chapter, which laid out the background for this research, is set in Abor in the Volta Region of Ghana. The study explored factors that impact the formal educational outcomes of girls in the Abor area. It further provided an overview of the challenges facing these girls – challenges that often led to their inability to complete their courses of study in the junior and senior high schools thereby limiting future opportunities.

According to a table provided by a Ghana 2000 Census Report (Afrobarometer, 2008), there is higher proportion of illiterate females (50.2%) than males (33.6%). Additionally, when it comes to the rural-urban dichotomy, females have higher illiteracy levels in urban areas (34.2%) and in rural communities (64.5%) than males in the urban areas (19.2%) and in rural communities (46.4%) of Ghana (Afrobarometer, 2008). The report suggests that differences in access to economic opportunities, reinforced by some cultural practices, are likely to be responsible for the much higher illiteracy rate of
females in rural populations. Although educational research in Ghana indicates that the government is making efforts to bridge the gap in gender inequalities in educational outcomes, there remain variables that limit girls’ access to formal education. Literacy and formal education are interrelated, which makes access to formal education a key factor for acquisition of literacy. To this end, in Ghana educational improvements have not been consistent in remedying gender inequalities in education (Agbemabiese, 2009; Annin, 2009; Obeng, 2006; Yeboah, 1997).

The frequent questions about what impedes Ghana’s government to embark on concerted efforts to establish concrete and purposeful direction aimed at enhancing access to education for females always arise among stakeholders in education (Obeng, 2002). Education in Ghana is seen, and continues to be seen, as the key to unlocking human potential, assisting individuals to develop their talents and abilities without being held back by differences associated with their backgrounds (Grossman, 1998). Education, construed in this way, enables all individuals, male and female alike, to contribute their ideas and energies towards building their own futures as well as the future of the society as a whole (Grossman, 1998). Equalization of access to education would reduce the great disparities in educational attainment between boys and girls.

Although various studies have been conducted on gender and formal education in Ghana, not many have emphasized the understanding of combined economic, political and the socio-cultural aspects that influence girls’ formal educational outcomes in a rural patriarchal community (Annin, 2009; Obeng, 2006, 2002; Yeboah, 1997). This study reveals that there is lack of an understanding of how factors such as the socio-cultural and
political structures of a rural community continues to impact girls’ access to education even in the face of educational reforms. The role of traditional belief systems that influence the education of girls despite educational reforms formed the basis of this study. This study examined factors that have an impact on gender disparity in retention and access to formal education in Ghana, in particular, the rural town of Abor located in the Volta Region of Ghana. It further provided an overview of the socio-cultural challenges confronting the girl child in her effort to receive education in Ghana.

**Background to the Study**

In Abor primary and secondary education fails to provide many female students access to higher education, better jobs, higher wages and future success (Kpemlie, 2005). According to Kpemlie approximately 50% of female students who go through the junior and senior high schools do not qualify to proceed to tertiary institutions. Some encounter the impersonal atmosphere of schools and get lost in the shuffle. Others have personal, social and economic problems, while some skip school, or quietly fade away without any concerted intervention by the school. Female students are mainly those who do not graduate from senior high school. Although by number they are the minority in secondary schools, they make up a large proportion of those who later remain unemployed or earn lower wages (Kpemlie, 2005).

In a report presented to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at a meeting in Abor on July 22, 2005, Kpemlie, the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy at that time, stated that there was a despondent pattern in terms of education of girls in the Abor area of the Volta Region. In his report, he acknowledged that many women in the Abor area
do not have formal education and that on average these women’s “median education attainment in the age group from 15 to 24 is less than two years of senior secondary school” (Kpemlie, 2005, p. 3). Mr. Kpemlie drew attention to how negative customary practices and obsolete traditions thwart female access to education, female emancipation and their ultimate empowerment (p. 3).

Although education more than any single initiative has the capacity to foster development, awaken talent, empower individuals and protects their rights, it is evident in Ghana, especially in rural areas, that girls continue to drop out of school at higher rates than boys (UNICEF, 2009). Nationally, the dropout rates for the past 12 years remain unchanged for girls; therefore, the rate for girls transitioning from junior high school (JHS) to senior high school (SHS) is lower than that of boys. Statistics indicate that girls make up 47% of enrollment at the JHS level, but enrollment of girls is only 35% at the SHS level, and much lower at 24% at the tertiary institutions (Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, & Hunt, 2007). As a result, this leaves women at a disadvantage in communities like Abor, because women from the Abor area have low educational attainment. Consequently, they experience higher levels of illiteracy rates in comparison to men (UNICEF, 2009).

The assertion of Kpemlie (2005) indicates there is a gap between males and females in education, and as a result, many women in Abor are not exposed to the “advantages that are attached to being educated such as social mobility, social stratification, self-empowerment, and economic productivity” (Tanye, 2008, p. 45). The situation described by Kpemlie (2005) indicates that data on education in Abor shows
that girls enter schools in equal or greater numbers than boys, yet, at the same time girls drop out of school more than boys. Although governmental efforts are being made to provide equal access to educational opportunities in Ghana, there still exists a widened rather than narrowed gap between males and females in educational attainment (Ofei-Aboagye, 2004; Tanye, 2008). According to the UNESCO (2009) report, 44.9% of African men are illiterate as compared to 73% of women. As various studies have revealed, when provided education leads to “lower infant and maternal mortality, improvement in health, nutrition and well-being of families, and ensures better prospect of education for children” (Gachukia, 2004, p. 5). Without education, females in Abor are therefore disadvantaged in the areas mentioned above.

This study, therefore, concerns itself with some broad issues on girl child education in Abor which include though not limited to,

1. The nature of the social order of Abor community that impacts the girl child being educated in the formal school, the values undergirding this social order, and the distinctive features of the basic institutions that make up that social order.

2. The extent to which education is viewed primarily by inhabitants of Abor as a means of enriching the capabilities of the girl child.

3. The extent that education planners can engage the socio-cultural, economic, and political structures of Abor, in order to impact equal access to education while ensuring the preservation of socio-cultural aspects of the Abor community.
The broad issues listed above that concern girl child education in the Abor area assisted me in addressing the research questions.

In a close study of the experiences of different Ghanaian women that have obtained formal education in only junior high schools, Houston (2003) observed the factors that challenged the educational success of women included financial support, psychological/ emotional support, gender ideologies, and lack of role models. In another study, Sutton (1995) found that despite many years of political independence and educational reforms, access and persistence in formal education is still problematic for the African rural child. Sutton (1995) further argues that the situation is more critical for the rural girl child whose education not only lags behind the boys, but also behind those of their female counterparts living in cities. The discrepancies between the numbers of girls who have access to formal education in the cities, as against those in a rural setting, raises the question of patriarchal gender dynamics and formal education in the rural sectors of Ghana.

During this study it became obvious that a critical appraisal of socio-cultural issues and how they impact educational outcomes based on gender in Ghana needs to be addressed. The practice and predominance of socio-cultural factors in the rural setting raises questions about the impact of customs and traditions on the formal education of the individual girl child. Traditionally, Ewes educated and socialized their children through strict methods. The home, which provides children with their earliest educational experiences was and still is dominated by parents and other adults in the community (Rankin and Aytaç, 2006). Instruction is dogmatic and children are expected to receive
information about what to do or not to do in a docile manner. There is very little room for questioning or challenging the authority of parents or adults in the community. The same is true at initiation schools for the passage from childhood to adulthood. This environment was compatible with the early methods of instruction used by the British when they brought formal education to Ghana (Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, 1994).

Unfortunately, this is still very true in Ghanaian schools today. Most teachers still ascribe to the old methods, where students are expected neither to “talk” back nor challenge the teacher in the classroom (UNICEF, 2009).

One thing critical in Ghana’s education system is the issues of gender gaps in retention of both boys and girls (Quist, 2003). Some researchers mention the impact of teenage pregnancy, issues of socialization, and household-level influences on education. Additionally, researchers have mentioned the effect of meager family resources on the education of the girl child, and the purpose of education in empowering the individual (Birdsall, Kelley, & Sinding, 2001; Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004; Ofei-Aboagye, 2004). These factors have devastating consequences on the girl child more than boys. Ofei-Aboagye (2004) found that among the obstacles that need to be overcome for women to participate in education and public offices are the low level literacy rates and problems of socialization.

In an interview with Agenda, a South African journal on empowering women in Africa, Moletsane and Manuh (1999) state that, “where patriarchy which is a cultural norm is deeply entrenched, the girl’s education does not appear to be a priority. As a result, girls in Ghana don’t quit school by choice” (p. 86). Sudarkasa (2002) asserts that
there are profound differences in the availability of education to women as opposed to men. Sudarkasa (2002) further notes that in developing nations, such as Ghana, the delivery of a Western educational system is directed mainly toward the development of males. As such, women partake in formal education in fewer numbers than men. In effect, differences in economic wealth or division of labor by gender are manifested through educational outcomes, which are directly correlated to gender roles and occupations in a given society (Sudarkasa, 2002). This sets up to a cyclical system where the social norms provide more education to boys that leads men to greater economic success, which in turn reinforces patriarchal ideas that hinder girls’ educational opportunities. As such, cultural attitudes and practices have strong influences on the education of the girl child. To a large degree, it is arguable that traditional gender ideology reduces the educational attainment of girls. In a patriarchal society like in the Abor area, the father, who is the head of the family, is also the sole decision maker regarding the life attainment of the family; when it comes to the children's education, traditional beliefs about the girl’s role in society determines the father’s choices.

These go to show that socio-cultural belief systems in a community affect the educational attainment of both sexes and traditional cultural practices reinforce gender inequality in education. The observations of Ofei-Aboagye (2004), Quist (2001) and Sudarkasa (2002) indicate that in Ghana patriarchy continues to dominate power relations, and yet, little to no attention in educational research has been paid to interventions that address the alienation, oppression, marginality, and exploitation of women (Dei, 2004). In many situations, gender relations in schooling have not been
carefully analyzed by scholarship in terms of how patriarchal ideologies embedded in customs and traditions permeate the process of educational delivery (Dei, 2004). Gender biases in course selection, such as boys taking math and science courses while girls are made to take home economics at the JHS and SHS levels, puts the girl child in a precarious place of domesticity. As boys study mathematics and science courses, they are provided an avenue for economic stability from the onset (Obeng, 2002). Because of low educational attainment, girls then become susceptible to unemployment and poverty, since education in many ways is a crucial element to the economic achievement of individuals and societies.

Despite initiatives of Ghana’s government to improve the education system since the reconstruction efforts of the 1980s, concerns of gender inequities in Ghana’s education system still persist in the 21st century (Dei, 2004; Gachukia, 2004; Obeng, 2006; Tanye, 2008). Given the important role of the female in the community, the consequences of under-educating females may continue to leave Ghana behind in the development goals established for the year 2015 (Annin, 2009; Dunne, 2007). Although Ghana has initiated efforts to improve attendance and achievement of the education of girls, there still remains a precarious predicament of the lack of schooling for girls, especially for girls in the rural areas (Bhola, 2000).

Women form the majority of Ghana’s population, yet, there are substantial gender differences in literacy rates. I have earlier stated that a Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2003b) report have indicated that in Ghana 6 out of every 10 males are literate as compared to 4 out of 10 females. Within these statistics is the urban/rural dichotomy
showing that literacy rates for females in rural areas are much lower than those in the urban areas. GSS (2003b) also report that in rural areas a little over two-fifths of females are literate while male literacy rates are higher at two-thirds in rural areas. The aforementioned gender disparity in literacy rates in Ghana demonstrates the need for further investigation of why girls, especially in rural Ghanaian communities, continue to lack formal education. The disparity also puts girls at the low end of the economic, political, and social milieu, even in the face of girl child education initiatives.

Aggrey, a Ghanaian scholar and educator, identified the female as one of the cardinal instruments in a country’s educational agenda, as well as the socio-economic and political development of a community (in Ephson, 1969). Aggrey asserted that, “No race or people can rise half slave, half free. The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women” (in Ephson, 1969, p. 105). In speaking of the formal education of both boys and girls in Ghana, Dei, Asgharzadeh, Bahador, and Shahjahan (2006) argues that:

They need to have equal education so that they can develop equally. Because of inequality, the rich are getting [richer] and the poor are getting [poorer]. Such things cannot be good for the country (p. 93).

As such, according to Aggrey “to educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family” (in Ephson, 1969, p. 105), for it is in the development of both males and females that a society can realize its full potential as a community and nation.
The situation for girls becomes even worse when one considers perceptions of the community regarding the role of boys and girls in the society. Why the gender gaps exist or persist remains a vital question to be solved. Scholars and stakeholders in education suggest that reasons for the continuous existence of gender gaps in education vary from blaming the girls to blaming the problems that exist inside and outside the school or education system (Byrne, 1990; Hill & King, 1993, Bloch, Beoku-Betts, & Tabachnick, 1998). Examining factors that exist or permeates continually on the education of girls in rural Ghana is the focus of my research.

Significance of the Study

This study was motivated by my desire to enhance the understanding of women’s roles and statuses in relation to improvements in their educational and employment opportunities. Indeed, the prevailing gender disparities of the girl child’s formal educational outcomes is a concern in Ghana (Chapman, Emert, & Osei, 2003; Tanye, 2008), and its undesirable impact is more pronounced in rural communities in Ghana (Baldé, 2004; Fentiman, Hall & Bundy, 1999). According to Tanye (2008), “There is considerable evidence that the education of women has a direct impact on various aspects of the social, economic, and political well being” (p. 168) in the community that women exists. Indeed, a mother’s educational level directly influences the economic productivity and the level of her daughter’s education (Tanye, 2008). This presents another compelling reason to understand and then improve girls’ opportunity and success in their education.
Research findings show that the education of females may be the most cost-effective measure a community can have to improve the standard of living in a community as a whole (Donkor, 2002). Yet, what constitute barriers to female education remains unsolved. Few studies that concentrate on female education in Africa have focused on educational policies without seriously looking at practices and community perceptions that impact female education. Byrne (1990), reconstituted the historical experiences of Africa, in relation to reasons behind problems associated with female education, and concluded that:

1. There exist structural and systematic barriers to female education in many African cultures, and

2. That the cause of a girl’s lack of participation and educational attainment is not generic to girls, but to systems and cultures. (p. 13)

This ethnographic case study of Anlo Ewe girls in the rural setting of Abor area of Ghana examined factors that influence girl child formal education. Findings from this study may be used to suggest ways to effectively increase girls’ educational outcomes as a means to contribute positively to her economic productivity in not only the Abor area of Ghana, but also other communities that are either uniquely similar or different in context to Abor. It is anticipated that results of this study will provide a more in-depth understanding of factors that influence the formal education of Anlo Ewe girls in the Abor area of Ghana, as well as other areas of Ghana. It is with expectations that the findings of this study will become resource information for the advancement of knowledge on the forces that contribute to the low educational outcomes among girls in
Ghana, as well as facilitate an increase in the understanding of concepts about the roles of women in Anlo Ewe society.

In this study the data analysis derived from interview guides, observations, and interviews of girls, teachers, opinion leaders, religious leaders, and administrators can contribute to the development of strategies to improve and enhance girl child education by examining socio-cultural, economic, and political factors affecting the formal education of the girl child. In the end, it is most important that the results of this study will benefit the community of Abor, by bringing to the fore information concerning issues that could bring positive changes to empower girls in order to increase their educational outcomes.

**Statement of the Problem**

Research on girl child education in Ghana has been numerous and it continues to be of interest into the 21st century because there continues to be a gender gap in enrollment and retention. At the national level in Ghana, several major interventions have occurred to improve gender gaps in education (Dei, 2002). In Ghana, “interventions at schools and at district levels include teacher training, scholarships, provision of bicycles for girls living far away from school, the provision of materials to schools, construction of toilets and provision of water to some schools, among other things” (Dei, 2002, p. 1) as a means to improve girls’ enrollment, retention and performance. Yeboah (1997) also states that:

Females have not been ignored in the governments’ attempts at raising the rates of enrolment and educational attainment.… Attempts have been made at the national
and local levels to bring schools closer to girls, to make schools culturally appropriate and to help girls learn (p. 6).

However, numerous studies suggest that gender disparity continues in Ghana schools, and that girls in Ghana continue to drop out of school at higher rates, especially at the Junior and Senior High School levels than boys (Sutherland-Addy, 2002; Tanye, 2008; UNICEF, 2009, Yeboah, 1997). This in turn gives credence to the fact that there is a need to study the dynamics associated with girls and seek means to examine what factors influence their educational outcomes even in the presence of governmental policy initiatives at both the national and local levels in Ghana’s education system.

I have earlier stated that in Ghana, females make up more than 50% of the entire population; however, there is a gender disparity in favor of boys, at all educational levels, with the gap widening at higher levels. In fact, census statistics of 2000 show that at the primary level boys make up 52% of the population, while girls make up 47.2%. By JHS boys make up 54.7% while girls only make up 45.3%. In SHS boys make up 57% and girls make up 43%. Finally, males make up 63% of university students in Ghana, while females only comprise 37% at this level (Folson, 2006). The existence of a gender gap is obviously based on this data.

Therefore, this study aims at filling the gap in the literature by examining forces that influence and impact Anlo Ewe girls who have dropped out of school in the Abor area, in the Volta Region of Ghana, by using the voices of the girls, parents, husbands, teachers, chieftaincy leaders, religious, and opinion leaders. Gaining access to multiple voices for this study allows for a critical examination of perspectives and perceptions
found both inside and outside of the dynamic of girls’ lives. The mosaic of voices used in this study provides various data needed to uncover narratives to draw a larger picture that explains why the girls say, *Medibe mayi sukuu gake, nyemate yui o* [I want to go to school, but I can’t].

**Research Questions**

This dissertation focused on girl child education among the people of Abor, an Anlo Ewe community in Ghana, and examined factors that have an impact on the formal education of the girl child in the Abor area. The central questions for this research are:

1. What factors impact the formal education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana?
2. How do such factors affect the education of Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?
3. How can the effects of such factors be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

These questions illuminated the context and socio-cultural structures that contributed to the reason why the girl population in schools are low in the Abor area. In essence, this study examined issues such as, to what extent do rural socio-economic and political factors impact girl child education (as distinct from the urban context), and what strategies are in place within the traditional social milieu to improve girl child education.

**Delimitations/Limitations of the Study**

The study focused on gender in education with specific reference to the impact of issues of socio-cultural, economic and political structures of Anlo Ewe girls’ access to
education in the rural community of Abor in the Volta Region of Ghana. The fact that this study is restricted to one rural community limits the applicability and generalization of results though there can possibly exist regional and cultural similarities to other areas in Ghana. Because of cultural conventions around communication and the socio-political nature of the study, the researcher envisaged some politically correct answers from the informants.

In addition, as an African American female researcher from the United States (outsider) undertaking research in a patriarchal community, as well as having limited in-depth knowledge about the culture of the people, these dynamics may impact the outcome of data analysis. However, I as an interpretive-bricoleur exist in a world of values; thus, I confronted this world through the lens that a scholar’s interpretive perspective provides (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This approach was important because data as “cases” to be analyzed, “whatever kind or form they take, are about specifics…and inevitably about context in which the specifics are embedded” (Gideonse, 1999, p. 2). In the process of analyzing the data, I became actively involved in the learning of the data provided by the informants. In the course of reading and analyzing the data I was also testing my “own understandings and perceptions of the data provided” (Gideonse, 1999, p. 3). As an interpretive-bricoleur in an interpretive case study, I received a first hand account of the situation under study, and when combined with paradigms of data analysis, I became grounded to pursue an interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated (Merriam, 1988).
My study was conducted in Abor, an Anlo Ewe speaking community whose language of communication is not English, but a dialect of Anlo Ewe. For this reason a language barrier existed between myself and non-English speakers, and made me rely on interpreters. Fortunately for me, most of my participants spoke the English language with British accent or vocabularies, thereby, minimizing the need for interpretation to some extent. Financial constraints were also other limitations to this study. Despite the financial constraints, I spent seven weeks in Abor and its environs, interacting with my subjects, spending much time in their homes to know more about them, while at the same time collecting data in the field. I also visited the Regional Education Office at Ho, and consulted with coordinators of girl child education in the Volta Region of Ghana to gather information related to my study. During my visit to these institutions and organization, it became apparent that literature review materials on Anlo Ewe girl child education in Ghana were incomplete and, as a result, the literature reviewed in this study is limited. To assist me in this study, I had to rely on similar studies done elsewhere in Ghana and other areas in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, the use of renewal of connections strategy that involves going back to crosscheck with the informants after initial meetings minimized the problem.

The reference to language in the earlier paragraph is that no two languages can precisely express the same idea. Being an outsider coming from the United States and learning the Ewe language, there are certain nuances that someone who is not versed in the language may not easily grasp. Unique to this study is the ability not only to use both English and Ewe languages to communicate, but the ability to hone in on nuances of
participants and community members, which were unfamiliar. Initially, the language barrier posed some challenges to me as an outsider doing research in the Anlo-Ewe area. The situation was quickly mitigated when I started to take courses in the Ewe language and could converse and communicate with my subjects.

I continuously undertook member checks, as well as received mentorship in the study of the culture from knowledgeable individuals who are indigenous to the Anlo-Ewe culture. The member checks included my research assistants who were Anlo Ewe and from Abor. The research assistants who assisted me with this research study were all knowledgeable about the dynamics of the Abor community. Regardless the limitations, my outsider view should shed light on the examined issues, reveal “gaps and blind spots” present in the data collected on the subject of girl child education in the Abor area.

**Overview of Theoretical Framework**

Glesne (2006) states that theories are employed in research as a framework for asking the research questions. Theories provide opportunities for a researcher to make sense out of his or her social interaction with data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As a qualitative study, I employed a multi-theoretical approach utilizing a post-colonial feminist theory of social justice and womanhood (Mohanty, 1991), and Gramsci’s notion of hegemony (Morton, 2007), for this study’s theoretical framework. As noted by Oyewumi (2007), when critically applied to an African context, a postcolonial feminist approach addresses cultural dynamics, histories, family relations, and the social organizations. In the rural community of Abor, Ghana, women are disproportionately undereducated, which poses many difficulties in their social, political, and economic
empowerment. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, postcolonial feminist theory is essential to understand issues of girl child education as it allows for the exploration of lived experiences of females in an African patriarchal society.

This research study also utilizes the concept of hegemony as a central concept for understanding why and how socio-cultural factors are designed in patriarchal systems to institutionalize gender differences. According to Gramsci (1971), “hegemony springs not only from the explicit ideological, moral, and philosophical underpinnings of power but also from less fully conscious, transparent realms of thought—the experientially insistent world of common sense” (p. 421). As I have observed in this study, amongst Anlo Ewe people of Abor, Ghana, a patriarchal society, gender differences are socially constructed. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) observe that:

Within these gender differences there are widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave, and this is a central component of their daily lives. (p. 511)

Since this research investigates the extent that socio-cultural, economic, and political factors impact the education of the Anlo-Ewe girl child of Abor, Ghana, it is essential to apply the concept of hegemony as a very important element in understanding the inequity observed in girl child education in this area of Ghana.

**Researcher Positionality**

As a qualitative researcher it is important to acknowledge my position as a Westerner in a non-Western region and culture in order to complete my research project. Creswell explains, “Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain world
view that guides their inquiries” (2007, p. 74). Not acknowledging that I bring my worldview to this research study could be damaging to the process, because attributions may be made that are not representative of the cultural context. In doing so, I could unwittingly superimpose my own interpretations on their statements, through both the process and interpretation of data.

As a researcher, I cannot shed my identities as an African American female citizen of the United States. Each aspect of my identity could have also had an impact on the collection and analysis of my data. Conversely, my identity as an “outsider” can have a positive impact on this research process as sometimes an outsider sees things that are invisible to members of a given culture, because cultural practices and beliefs have become so naturalized to those living with them.

d beliefs have become so naturalized to those living with them.

Conducting international fieldwork in Africa involves being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalization, and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control. It is, thus, imperative that ethical concerns should permeate the entire process of the research, from conceptualization to dissemination, and that researchers are especially mindful of negotiated ethics in the field. As an African American female, coming from the West, and going into a patriarchal environment to explore how gender difference and patriarchal conceptions of gender permeate the education of the girl child, my presence could be viewed as bringing feminist structures to confront substantive content of dominant forms of knowledge in a patriarchal society.
I am aware of the deep-seated and prevalent character of gender biases in patriarchal societies. I am also aware of how it poses difficult problems for foreign researchers who seek to understand it within the academy. I was fortunate to have faculty who are knowledgeable in patriarchal conceptions of gender and provided guidance to me on how to balance reason and emotion, rationality and irrationality, objectivity and subjectivity, and how not to be disruptive of other cultures. By following their advice, I paid greater attention to issues of reflexivity, positionality, and power relations in the field (Abor). Further, their advice on how to undertake ethical and participatory research in the Abor area helped relieve my subjects of their anxieties about my identity as a Western female, whose presence and ideas they might have assumed would be problematic, foreign, and disruptive of their customs and traditions.

One of the ways that I mitigated my position as an “outsider” was to, in this cultural context, keep the dynamics of my position of an outsider at the forefront of my awareness as I entered into this community and completed my data collection. In order to mitigate these impacts, I first constantly acknowledged and reminded myself that I brought a unique world-view to the research, and then responded to that. In particular, on a daily basis I added to my field notes a questioning of how my positionality may have influenced or might affect my data collection. A secondary method of mitigating my positionality was through the research design itself. Given that I interviewed numerous people, all of whom have their own points of view, these multiple interviews served as another check by providing multiple perspectives from the people of the culture wherein I researched. A third method of responding to my own positionality was to informally
check-in with particular members of that culture who were considered “insiders.” Without compromising anonymity, I discussed in very general terms some of the questions that occurred about the cultural context and practices.

To assist in the research process, I used a personal notebook to reflect on my daily experiences encountered throughout the data collection period. Thereby, I was able to continuously examine my findings and personal feelings on a daily basis. Occasionally, I would discuss my findings with the woman and children in the house where I was staying. Many times, the woman of the house and her two daughters would also question me on some of my findings; thus, my reflections allowed for me to become more aware of growing insights and perspectives on my collected data.

An interesting point to make here is that I recognized in the community that there were issues of status, age, and religion/spirituality. In the Abor area age, class, and religion, are very important in the community. The dynamics of these aspects of identity posed problems for me from the onset. However, after months of interaction with people of the Abor area, I realized that a people's relationships are characterized by social ordering. The importance of social structure to this social ordering, that is the interweaving of people's interactions and relationships in recurrent and stable patterns cannot be underestimated.

The respect that an individual commands or his/her class position in Abor area depend on a combination of factors in the social structure, such as age, status, family connections, religion, specialized skills, and ability to communicate linguistically in the
Ewe language. Most important of all these factors is the family. The family is the cornerstone of Abor society.

During my stay in Abor, I lived with a family that commands respect royally and religiously. The head of the family is an opinion leader in the community. His status in the community locates him within the social structures and his status carries with it a set of culturally defined rights or privileges and roles. By virtue of living with this family, challenges were eased that might have confronted others in my position. My age was another factor. Being considered an elder in the community and married within the culture registered my trust in the ethnic customs and beliefs of the people. Seeing me, the researcher, as an educated female, equal in age to some of the women and married in the culture, revealed to the people a role model for their daughters, a guardian for their children; and as a mother, it registered the social importance of marriage. All these helped my positionality in the research.

Over time, when the community got to know me more, not only for my age, but also that I am also a mother, I enjoyed social honor, which is a social status within the community. I took part in their communal activities, visited homes, and took part in their chores. This enhanced the social honor conferred on me. The prestige or the approval, the respect, the admiration or the deference that I was able to command by virtue of my imputed qualities or performances in the community assisted me in the collection of my data. On the contrary, because of my outsider status and the social honor that was bestowed upon me, in addition to “children should be seen and not heard”, this may have negatively affected my ability to harness an open relationship, most especially, with girls.
As I have observed throughout my research study, girls in the Abor area are very shy towards adults. There is also the issue as noted previously of hierarchical positions of respect as it relates to gender, age, and status in life such as class.

As I immersed myself in the data collection process, I remained cognizant of the fact that there could be some blind spots in my research since it would be difficult for me to be aware of all the intricacies of this society that is outside the realm of my Western world. At the same time, I acknowledge that I have a partial understanding of the culture and their practices given that I have spent time in Ghanaian communities, have studied the language, and I am married to a Ghanaian man. Throughout my educational experiences, I also have studied the history and culture of Ghanaian societies. All of these experiences have provided more than a superficial glimpse and understanding of the culture in the area of my research. Given that I cannot remove myself from my worldviews, bringing an awareness of my own positionality in research is a critical step.

**Definitional Terms**

This section includes the definitions of operational terms to clarify any ambiguities. In order to set the parameters for this study, the definition of terms are explained in cultural as well as educational contexts. In many instances, the constitutive, formal denotation of a term is presented, followed by an operational interpretation of how the term is used in this study.

1. **Abor area**: In this study, Abor area is defined as a large geopolitical area comprising towns and villages in the neighborhood of Abor, and is
characterized by its homogeneity in culture, language, and socioeconomic environment.

2. **Colonial era**: The period when Ghana was under British rule from July 24, 1874 to March 06, 1957.

3. **Drop out**: A “drop out” in the study is defined as a child who has not completed the required years of basic education (between JHS and SHS), but withdraws unexpectedly due to diverse factors.

4. **Gender gap(s)**: In this study, refers to the unequal gender balance between boys and girls in the community of the formal education system.

5. **Ghana Education Service (GES)**: A branch of Ghana’s government that administers pre-university education in Ghana.

6. **Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)**: Is an association of all teachers from pre-school through to K-12 level. The Ghana National Association of Teachers is a service organization for teachers and is concerned with ensuring better conditions of service for its members who are drawn from pre-tertiary levels of the educational system (i.e. from public and private primary, junior and senior high schools, teacher training colleges, technical institutes and offices of educational administration units).

7. **Illiterate**: For this study it means the inability to read or write a simple letter written in English or in a local Ghanaian language that one is most proficient.
8. *Junior High School (JHS)*: Is the new name for the Junior Secondary School education program that replaced the old education system and was initiated by President J. A. Kufuor’s administration in 2005.

9. *Junior Senior Secondary School (JSS)*: In this study, refers to Junior Secondary School, a term introduced by Dzobo Commission on Ghana’s education reforms in 1972, but now is represented by the Junior High School as noted above.

10. *Literacy*: For this study literacy means the ability to read or write a simple letter written in English or in a local Ghanaian language in which one is most proficient (GSS, 2008a).

11. *Opinion Leader*: Someone who is well versed in the socio-economic, political, and cultural knowledge of a community. He/she is an individual who is in a leadership position and is a speaker for the community. His/her ideals or opinions are accepted by the community. The opinion leader must influence his/her followers, and filter ideas and information within the community.

12. *School Policies*: Official courses of action for handling school issues provided the government (Ripley, 1985). Example of such a course could be how to handle pregnant students who drop out of school.

13. *School Practice*: Tangible and intangible actions that take place within the school system (Fine, 1991).
14. Senior High School (SHS): The new name for the Senior Secondary School education program which replaced the old education system and was initiated by President J. A. Kufour’s administration in 2005.

15. Senior Secondary School (SSS): In this study, refers to Senior Secondary School, a term introduced by Dzobo Commission on Ghana’s education reforms in 1972.

16. Socio-cultural: The word “socio-cultural” in this study is a concept that encompasses knowledge that is culturally obtained by an individual through the socialization process of the community (Dei, 2002). Embedded within the concept (socio-cultural) are certain beliefs, customs, and practices arising out of the home, extended family and community. It can be explained, according to Dei (2002), as an indigenous knowledge arising from a “long-term occupancy of a place” and “accumulated by a group of people not necessarily indigenous, who…develop an in-depth understanding of their particular place in their particular world” (p. 6).

17. The postcolonial period: The period beginning with the declaration of Ghana’s independence from Britain, (March 06, 1957, to contemporary times or the present.

18. The pre-colonial period: Is the period long before the arrival of Europeans in Ghana as well as other African states. It was a period when the administration of Ghanaian communities was in the hands of the chiefs and elders of the community.
19. *Traditional belief system*: Refers to all cultural ideas and practices that are held true, factual or real, and expresses the values and purposes of the community and are used as a means to make sense of their experiences. It is handed down by the elders from the past to the present and used to organize and order the community’s essential resources.

**Summary**

This study constitutes an attempt to understand the educational experiences and factors that cause girls to drop out of school in Abor area. It further provides an outline of the challenges facing the girl child, which often led to their inability to complete their courses of study in the junior and senior high schools. In Ghana, education is a means to an end and this has challenged educators to initiate alternatives that could provide individuals with survival skills. However, differences in access to economic opportunities, reinforced by some cultural practices are likely to be responsible for the much higher illiteracy rate of females in rural populations.

What compounds the issue is that Anlo Ewe by tradition educate and socialize their children through strict methods. Since home provides children with their earliest educational experiences and parents and other adults in the community dominate the process, strict adherence to customs and traditions are rigidly enforced. This environment was compatible with the early methods of instruction used by the British when they introduced formal education to Ghana. The study is expected to raise some consciousness within the leadership, teachers, and other stakeholders in education, especially in
addressing girl child education. It is my hope to contribute to the research literature in Ghana, and the world at large.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews research literature that are concerned with the problem of girls dropping out of school in Ghana as they relate to the current research. Though the significance of educating the African girl child has been emphasized by many scholars, the state of girl child education in Ghana continues to lag behind the education of boys (Annin, 2009; Dei, 2005; Obeng, 2002, 2006; Tanye, 2008; Thompson & Casley-Hayford, 2008; Yeboah, 1997). The review of research literature on girl child education in this research encompasses this concern and provides a critical review of the factors as they relate to girl child education among the Anlo Ewe of Ghana. This chapter provides educational practices in Ghana from the pre-colonial period through the colonial to postcolonial times. The chapter also provides a section on the socio-cultural aspects of the Anlo Ewe in the Volta Region of Ghana. And, in concluding the chapter, the theoretical framework used to guide this study is presented.

Education during Pre-colonial Period (Before 1592)

The first area of this literature review examines the indigenous educational systems during the pre-colonial period. Before the advent of colonial education, around 1592, there existed the oral or what is often referred to in scholarship as informal educational system among African communities. In order to understand the current state of girl child education in Ghana, and in particular the Anlo Ewe girl child, it is important to find out how the oral education system provided functional skills for the Anlo Ewe girl child or her community before the advent of colonization. Traditionally, the Anlo Ewe of
Abor educate and socialize their children through authoritarian methods. The home provides children with their earliest educational experiences and was dominated by parents and other adults in the community (Schapera, 1943). Instruction was therefore dictatorial, and children were expected to receive information about what to do or not to do in a docile manner. There was very little room for questioning or challenging the authority of adults. The same is true at traditional initiation schools of passage from childhood to adulthood (Mautle, 2001).

According to Bray, Clarke, and Stephens (1998), there were many forms of indigenous educational systems within African communities before colonization, making generalizations difficult about traditional African education systems. Bray et al. point out that African indigenous education systems shared significant fundamentals in regards to philosophical and sociological features. Indigenous education systems in Ghana were, and in many instances continue to be pluralistic in nature. In Africa most of the education that a child received was through the socialization process, which informed the child how to operate within the social, political, and cultural realms of the society (Adekunle, 2000; Nunkunya, 2003). This process was holistic in nature, and included the physical and spiritual nature of the child’s upbringing (Adekunle, 2000). In contrast, in Western education, the tendency is to be book taught and somewhat divorced from the life and culture of the wider community (Bray et al., 1986). In the Western education system, the child usually goes to a formal school and acquires knowledge in one specific location, whereas the African child was made to go through the socialization process to acquire
knowledge in all fields of endeavor (Adelunke, 2000; Bray et al., 1986; Dei, 2005; Nukunya, 2003;).

**Pre-colonial Indigenous “Schools” (Before 1592)**

Pre-colonial educational system in African communities can be referred to as indigenous educational systems that existed before the advent of colonization. During this pre-colonial period, indigenous communities educated their children through oral narratives and rites of passage (Bray et al., 1998). The indigenous education “classroom” was the home, the market square, or the community space, and teaching was mainly through a socialization process (Bray et al., 1998). Adelunke (2000) pointed out that African traditional education was “acquired for life in the community through a continuous and consistent process and for the continuity of the society” (p. 60). Since the entire community is involved in the education of the individual, the indigenous African educational system served the overall needs of the entire society (Adelunke, 2000). And since learning generally involved training on the job, this allowed everybody to be gainfully employed in the community.

Before the coming of Western civilization and colonialism in 1592, most children on the African content were raised by the community and educated in his or her culture and traditions of his or her people through oral means (Dei, 2002; Nukunya, 2003). The child was seen as an asset of the community in whom the community maintains a stake. Every member of the community contributed to the upbringing of the child whether the child was an offspring, family relative, extended family member, or simply another member of the clan (Dei, 2002; Nukunya, 2003; Nwomonoh, 1998). In each community,
the child’s intelligence was measured by several factors including the child’s ability to reason among his peers, the child’s ability to meet the challenges of his age group, the child’s ability to obtain or go through the initiations of emancipation to adulthood faced by his age group (Adelunke, 2000; Nwomonoh, 1998). The physical and emotional tests taken during rites of passage were built into the community’s social and cultural structure. Embedded in the process of taking such tests and passing (or failing and retaking) them, are most of the essentials needed by the child to mature as an individual and as a valuable member of his or her society (Nukunya, 2003; Nwomonoh, 1998).

In pre-colonial African societies, indigenous ‘classrooms activities or learning’ took forms other than the ones operational today (Nwomonoh, 1998). There were several avenues synonymous with a modern classroom curriculum. For instance, in some communities, whenever the moon was out, children would gather according to age groups to sing, joke, play games, and tell and share stories (Anyidoho, 1997). Almost all African cultures utilized oral transmission of ideas, information on their histories, origin and identity to their children through physical interaction, and visual education. Other forms of indigenous educational activities in early African societies included sharing of expressions through festivals, ceremonies, games, and artistic performances such as dancing, singing, drawing, and rituals, among many other (Adelunke, 2000; Anyidoho, 1997; Bray et al, 1986; Egblewogbe, 1975).

Nwomonoh (1998) has argued that indigenous education in Africa had two functions. The functions are the realization of material needs and the survival of the culture. In the context of the Anlo Ewe, it was geared towards fostering a sense of
collective cultural identity and communal identity. The goal of indigenous education in an African society was to prepare the youth for adulthood and equip them with skills to lead productive adult lives in their society (Mautle, 2001). All the skills were transmitted from one generation to another not only by words of mouth, but also through rites of passage for both boys and girls (Nukunya, 2003).

The indigenous instructional tools included compliance with the norms of society, particularly obedience to taboos, traditions and customs, sex education, agricultural activities and learning self-defense and fighting tactics (Mautle, 2001; Schapera & Comaroff, 1991). According to Mautle (2001), “Obedience was taught largely through informing the boys about the consequences of disobedience” (p.30). The indigenous education of the girl child, however, placed much emphasis on reproductive and traditional roles of girl child than any other socio-political and economic achievement in the community (Agbodeka, 1997; Mautle, 2001; Nukunya, 2003).

In pre-colonial times, Anlo Ewe people taught their youth sex education through strict taboos (Nukunya, 1969). These taboos sought to minimize incidents of rape, teenage pregnancy, stealing, murder, and other vices from the community. Many of the taboos were meant to deter the youth from indulging in sexual activities at a tender age and were, therefore, used to complement the teachings through proverbs, folktales, and riddles (Egblewogbe, 1995; Mautle, 2001; Schapera & Comaroff, 1991). Sex education seemed to be emphasized in the indigenous classroom and the youth were made to learn about the physiology of sexual relations, the duty of procreation and other rules of conduct in married life, and the dangers of promiscuous intercourse with “ritually
unclean women” (Mautle, 2001, p. 31). In essence, the Anlo Ewe society believed that for one to preserve their chastity constituted one of the most major and an honorable criterion that is representative of a good and moral character (Nukunya, 1969).

Traditional Anlo Ewe forms of education, like those of all other African communities, were undocumented and many Western scholars frequently question the authenticity of their indigenous education system. Antwi (1992), Abdi et al. (2006), and Dei (2004) challenge the assertion of Western scholars that before the arrival of Islamic and Western education in Africa, Africans had no form of education. Dei (2004) and Antwi (1992) argue that although pre-colonial education in Ghana was not structured similar to those of Western societies, there existed a form of education among African communities. Pre-colonial indigenous ethnic groups of Ghana, such as the Anlo Ewe, used education to “transmit cultural and linguistic identity; develop skills for men and women; prepare youth to respond to pressing problems found in the communities, and to initiate development programs for the society” (Nukunya, 2003, p. 34). Ellis (1965) emphasizes that traditional education came at particular stages in human life.

At each stage of life, beginning at birth, education for boys and girls continued until it was time for the child to move from childhood to adulthood. At each stage of life, girls were educated to perform certain skills essential to motherhood and caring for her husband. Mothers taught their daughters these skills, while fathers educated the boys on manhood from approximately the age of six (Ellis, 1965; Greene, 2002). Before the advent of colonization, education was largely based on oracy, which was and still is an integral part of the socialization of a child in Africa (Egbo, 2000; Kann & Sharma, 1993;
Mautle 2001). Importantly, the transmission of oral traditions to children was for the continuity of culture, intellectual training, acquisition of vocabulary, and proficiency in one’s expression directed toward oral artistry (Adelunke, 2000; Anyidoho, 1997; Gyekye, 2003; Sarpong, 1974). Practical experience was the major mode of teaching and specific emphasis was placed on physical training, character molding, respect for elders and peers, intellectual and vocational training, cultural heritage, and the acquisition of spiritual and moral values (Bray et al., 1986; Gyekye, 2003; Mautle, 2001; Sarpong, 1974). Diversion from the norm was punishable through corporal punishment.

In many ways, African indigenous education was intimately intertwined with social life and was an important part of every community (Nukunya, 2003). African indigenous education provided equal educational opportunities for all youth to learn survival and self-reliance skills. Education was a continuous phenomenon and it provided cultural capital in terms of a body of knowledge important for the child’s successful functioning in the society (Greene, 2002). It also assured the future social status of the child. In African societies, there is strong emphasis on the community, as educators; along with parents they play an important role in the education of children (Bray et al., 1998; Egbo, 2000).

In African communities before colonization there were no written or codified regulations about how indigenous education should be carried out or evaluated in the community. Although the indigenous education in pre-colonial Africa was mainly uncodified (unwritten), it had a strong effect on the socio-economic, political and cultural life of African communities (Adekunle, 2000). In line with the conclusions of
Agbemabiese (2003) and Nukunya (2003), indigenous African education enabled every member of the community to be gainfully employed in the sector in which he or she was trained. The two authors noted that the indigenous education had its foundation in the five principles of preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holisticism. Thus, the contents of the indigenous education in the community were based on the physical, social, and spiritual environments of the community. And the content of instruction and the duration of learning or apprenticeship were generally determined by the master.

I want to observe here that the process of educating the Ghanaian child in the indigenous community is not exclusive to the parents alone, but to the entire community (Nukunya, 2003). The education of both boys and girls was done through the utilization of customs and traditions, rites of passage, and other social institutions with the goal of providing a holistic-type of education that imbibed the individual with intrinsic and instrumental values that were either embraced or eschewed by the community (Ametewee, 1997). Nukunya (2003) and Ametewee (1997) maintain that the indigenous education included the study of local history, legends, the environment (local geography, fauna and flora), poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, storytelling, and story relays. In many ways, the education of the young culminated in initiation ceremonies when boys and girls reached puberty. According to Nukunya (2003), physical hardening, instruction in what the community revered and eschewed, adherence to customs and traditions, sex education and ritual circumcision were elements present in many of the initiation
ceremonies. These ceremonies were among the most important rituals in the rites of passage in the cultural life of the community.

Another important aspect of traditional education in Ghana prior to colonization, especially among the Anlo Ewe, was the training for vocations (Antwi, 1992; Dei, 2004). Often Anlo Ewe children follow vocations of their parents. For the Anlo Ewe males, this included smithing (gold, silver and black-smithing), fishing, logging, carving, leatherworks, animal husbandry, public speaking, kente-weaving, carpentry and masonry (Agbodeka, 1997; Kuada & Chachah, 1999). Anlo Ewe girls learned hair-braiding, soap-making, and trading skills from their mothers (Nukunya, 2003). Training in the aforementioned fields was done through apprenticeship with an identifiable and respected expert inside or outside the community (Nukunya, 2003). Thus, vocational training was the key element in traditional education and enabled the Anlo Ewe child to acquire skills that helped develop appropriate work attitudes.

Other aspects of education were provided through initiation rites for boys and puberty rites for girls. For example, Anlo Ewe males were subject to difficult conditions during initiation rites to test their manliness. These rites include hunting and physical exercises that make the males combat ready since the men were expected to defend their families as well as the community in times of attack (Agbodeka, 1997; Dei, 2004). General instruction for boys also included the strict compliance with the norms of society, particularly obedience to elders, sex education, respecting taboos, engaging in agricultural activities and learning self-defense and fighting tactics.
Upon reaching puberty, aunts, grandmothers and mothers played an active role in ensuring that the Anlo Ewe girl child understood her sexuality and the implications it brings upon her life (Agbodeka, 1997; Ametewee, 1997, Nukunya, 2003). During this process, it was through interactions with elderly women that the young virgin Anlo Ewe girl child was taught personal hygiene, home economics, culture, cooking, and home management as a preparation for future marital life. After the training, there was always an elaborate “graduation” ceremony, which was an occasion of great joy, drumming, and dancing. This sort of education for the young Anlo Ewe girl child was the socialization process indicated by Ametewee (1997) where the girl child was trained to adapt to the socio-cultural and physical environments to enable her survival in her role in the community.

Moral education was an additional aspect of education provided to the Anlo Ewe child. This aspect of the training was to help them refrain from pugnacious acts such as stealing and dishonesty, as well as acts that leave a stigma on the family and their respective communities (Busia, 1950; Cutrufelli, 1983). Due to the placement of a high premium on moral uprightness in pre-colonial times, Okechukwu, Abosi, & Brookman-Amissah (1992) note that:

Character-training was central to traditional education…parents preferred their children to be upright, honest, sociable, courageous, humble, considerate, persevering, daring, truthful, and well-behaved at all times, and would spare no pain to inculcate these qualities in the child. (p. 45)
Largely, the indigenous modes of education were locally developed to bring up the young in the community to an acceptable conduct that was respected by the older and more experienced members of the society. The goals and objectives of the indigenous learning forms had to do with the: 1) actual living conditions of the people; 2) their view of the universe; 3) their relationship with God (the Supreme Being); and 4) mankind as well as their relationships with other groups of people in the community (Atakpa, 1997; Guerts, 2002; Nukunya, 1997, 2003).

Similar to the Anlo Ewe of Ghana, Davidson (1969) provided the following description of an indigenous African educational system:

Until you are ten or so you are counted as a ‘small boy’ with minimal social duties such as herding cattle. Then you will expect, with some trepidation, to undergo initiation to manhood by a process of schooling which lasts about six months and is punctuated by ritual ‘examinations’. Selected groups of boys are entered for this schooling once every four or five years. … All the initiates of a hut eat, sleep, sing, dance, bathe, do handicraft, etc….but only when commanded to do so by their counselor, who will be a man under about twenty-five. … Circumcision gives it a ritual embodiment within the first month or so, after which social training continues as before until the schooling period is complete. Then come ceremonies at which elders teach and exhort, the accent now being on obedience to rule which have been learned. The social charter is thus explained and then enshrined at the center of the man’s life. (p. 84-85)
The mode and content of indigenous teaching has something to do with the natural environment on which the people’s survival and the well being of the society depends. Furthermore, this indigenous education was functional in the sense that it was primarily aimed at helping children, in particular, and adults learn and master the necessary social and occupational skills, which would enable them to effectively cope with their socio-cultural and natural environment around them (Nukunya, 2003). In other words, the African child’s ethnic group and community, before the advent of colonialism, were held cohesively by indigenous rules and regulations, values and social sanctions, approvals, rewards, and punishments which he or she was inducted. He or she was taught social etiquettes and agricultural methods that ensured the smooth running of the social entity of which they were an integral part. The boys observed and emulated their father’s craft and learned practical skills that they performed according to their capacities, as they matured into manhood and became heads of their own households. The indigenous pre-colonial education of girls was differentiated from that of boys in accordance to the roles each sex was expected and socialized to play for the remainder of their adult lives (Adekunle, 2000; Nukunya, 2003). Due to the collective concern and pragmatic approach to education, there was no room for “dropouts” in the traditional education system.

In an effort to establish a responsive civil society, provide for a socially friendly environment, and offer policies that provide equity in social services of the community, many African societies, including the Anlo Ewe community, ensured that the education of children began from birth as a continual process throughout to adulthood (Ametewee, 1997; Egblewogbe, 1995; Nukunya, 2003). Largely, indigenous pre-colonial education
was not an education for change; it demanded conformity, but not individuality, creativity, or individual uniqueness. It taught strict obedience to the elders’ rules and authority, which were not always necessarily founded. Since a Ghanaian proverb states that ‘it takes the whole village to raise the child’, supervision of the child was first and foremost by the parents, then the extended family, and finally by the entire community; and, should an individual fail in life, it is blamed on the networking within the community (Dei, 2004, Kuada & Chachah, 1999). Before the coming of the colonial administration and formal education system, traditional education was informal and designed to prepare children for the responsibility in the home, the village, and the community. In the society, learning took place anywhere and every adult was a potential educator.

An evaluation of the pre-colonial African indigenous educational system reveals that it was holistic and an effective way of learning skills to meet the socioeconomic, cultural and political needs of the community. However, aspects of it were also counterproductive as it was gender biased (Dei, 2004). The process of indigenous education in pre-colonial Africa was intimately integrated with the social, cultural, artistic, religious, and recreational life of the ethnic group. That is, ‘schooling’ and ‘education’, or the learning of skills, social and cultural values, and norms were not separated from other spheres of life. That is why the education of the African child started at birth and continued into adulthood. The indigenous education that was given to the African youth fit the group and the expected social roles in society were learned by adulthood (Dei, 2004). Girls were socialized to effectively learn the roles of motherhood,
wife, and other sex-appropriate skills. Boys were socialized to be hunters, herders, agriculturalists, and blacksmiths, depending on how the particular ethnic group, clan or family derived its livelihood.

In the following sections, I discuss the role that colonial and post-colonial education systems, with an emphasis on indigenous belief systems, mitigated against women’s education during such eras.

**Formal Education during Colonial Period (From 1592-1957)**

The colonial educational system was started in the then Gold Coast, now modern day Ghana, by the Portuguese colonial government in 1592 with the primary purpose of educating young people for employment in the European commercial enterprises on the coast (Njeuma, 1993). George (1976) asserts that the Portuguese “established the first of these at Elmina (west of the present Cape Coast)” (p. 23). This was soon followed by the Dutch in 1644, then by the British in 1694 and the Danes in 1722 (Antwi, 1992; Greene, 2002). Later, the English (British) in 1751 established schools in Cape Coast. Schools that were opened by the Europeans were particularly for the children of European nationals and children of merchants and wealthy Ghanaian executives. George asserts that the established European schools also “served mulattoes and children of African traders” (1976, p. 23). It was between 1800 and 1850 that Western education began to include ‘ordinary’ individuals of the Ghanaian public. The first girls’ school was established by Mrs. Harriet Jarvis, widow of a British merchant company officer, in 1821 (Cutrufelli, 1983). This school was initially set up for daughters of the Europeans.
According to Njeuma (1993), colonial education offered girls arbitrary curriculum focusing on health, nutrition, needlework, and childcare. The educational system did not pay attention to women’s participation in subsistence economy and waged labor. In effect, colonial education rationalized women’s place as destined for life at home, and offered girls an education that could make them ‘literate wives’ of the more educated Christian men. Largely, it was a production of good mothers and caring wives for their children and male relatives. Njeuma (1993) notes that colonial education for girls comprised the “3 Bs”, an acronym for “baby, bath, and broom,” which can be translated to mean biological reproduction and nurturer in character. It is observed that this is a kind of “familism” that encouraged girls to be trained to accept family as the only place they could experience self-fulfillment. Meanwhile, boys were pressured towards the capitalist ethic of “individualization” through the pursuance of individual achievement, self-interest, and material success (Njeuma, 1993).

The introduction of colonial education served as an instrument of intellectual and cultural servitude as, “colonial education was an instrument of imperialist domination and economic exploitation” (Egbo, 2000, p.30). Through European education, the “natives”, the local people in Africa, were trained to serve the White European masters. According to Conklin (1998):

The hidden agenda of colonial education was… education for few Africans. …

The educational policy was not concerned about females and lower class people.

… Rather, schooling was an instrument for dissemination of colonial culture to selected individuals. (p. 56)
Thus, Western culture, and its needs and priorities were promoted at the expense of indigenous culture. The curricula and models of colonial education were largely inadequate and irrelevant to the development of Africa. This colonial past still informs many schooling patterns on the continent (Egbo, 2000; Mungazi & Walker, 1970). To a large extent, it could be said that formal colonial education in Africa perpetuated cultural and intellectual servitude and the devaluation of traditional African cultures. The formal colonial education system was used as a systematic and measurable tool for economic exploitation, reduction of local resistance to white rule, transformation of indigenous outlooks, and meeting the limited needs of the colonial civil service. Mungazi and Walker (1970) argue that “Various aspects of colonial education for Africans were tightly bound to the ideology of each colonial power, and were ultimately designed to serve their interests” (p. 58).

At independence, each new African state faced an enormous and daunting task of using limited resources to transform educational structures into national systems. This was very challenging for those countries with a poor economic background. This curtailed early post-independence educational gains in many countries (Egbo, 2000). I have noted earlier that formal education in Ghana, which was started by Portuguese missionaries, dates back to 1592. The initial focus of the educational development by the Portuguese missionaries was geared towards missionary activity where it was a means of converting Ghanaians to Christianity. The spread of Western education in Ghana was by Catholic missionaries from Italy and England, the Moravians from West Indies, the Basel missionaries from Switzerland, the Wesleyan Methodists from Great Britain, and the
Bremen or North German missionaries (Cutrufelli, 1983; George, 1976; Greene, 2002). Each of these missionary groups established schools in the inner territories with the sole objective of spreading the gospel. By the end of 1881, missionary schools in Ghana amounted to 139 consisting of the following: Basel had 47; the Wesleyan mission had 84; Bremen had four; the Roman Catholic mission had only one while the government operated only three schools (Cutrufelli, 1983; Greene, 2002; Pittin, 1990). By the 1950s, the Salvation Army and the Church of England also embarked on the establishment of missionary schools in Ghana. All these missionary groups were part of the colonizing team and their schools served the colonial goals and objectives.

In these European established missionary schools, the daily curriculum consisted of religious studies, arithmetic, reading, and writing. In one of the schools built by the Basel mission, agricultural science, technical education in building, woodwork, metalwork, shoemaking, pottery, and painting were added to the other subjects. In another school established by the Wesleyan-Methodist, English language was the dominant language of instruction, and no native language was allowed (Meyer, 2002). However, to assist the newly recruited African teachers to become fluent in some of the local languages, the Basel and Bremen missionaries allowed the learning of local languages of the indigenous people. The new African graduates studied the local languages to help them translate the Bible in the local languages correctly (Meyer, 2002).

Gardinier (1974) also suggest that the colonial missionary schools provided a special curriculum for girls’ education in order to shape the future lives of girls to be domestic servants. Gardinier indicates that the curriculum for girl education consisted of
domestic science, English, and religion. The objective was to turn girls into efficient
wives for the European merchants who took interest in marrying African women
(Graham, 1971). The sort of education that was provided the girls seemed to be a vehicle
that fostered domesticity and dependency (Meyer, 2002; Obeng, 2002). Hence, African
women were educated to be ‘good housewives’ and mothers for the emerging new
population of African male clerks and church officials (Odaga & Heneveld, 1995).
Obeng (2002) observed that there were other reasons why parents refused to send their
daughters to school. Obeng notes that parents were reluctant to send their daughters to
school for fear that they might be impregnated by a stranger. Thus, they considered it
more profitable sheltering the girls at home and assisting them learn agriculture and
house chores.

Throughout the colonial era, most schools were run by Christian missions
(George, 1976). The mission schools continued to exist even into the 20th century.
George states that:

Until 1951, the Government continued its policy of leaving educational expansion
largely in the hands of missionary bodies, which were allowed freely to establish
schools wherever they wished. To a large extent, responding to local demand,
which was greatest in the urban and other areas of economic and social change,
the missions carried out their educational work mainly in the southern part of the
country. (p. 24)

The growth of mission schools continued throughout to the 20th century. Though the
missionaries established schools throughout Ghana, many of the schools were housed in
dilapidated houses, they had a lack of educational materials and equipment, and they were staffed with untrained teachers (Dei, 2004). In addition, the missionaries introduced a curriculum, teaching methods and assessment techniques that were alien to the Ghanaian communities (Dei, 2004). This form of education was bureaucratic and reflected the mode of manufacturing and commerce that fed industries in Britain (Dei, 2004). Education was mainly for subordination and domination with strict rigidity of the school program (Dei, 2004). Largely, the formal education model emphasized hard-work, punctuality, and humility. Teaching was evangelic and focused on boys only, so that they could read the Bible and train as catechists who would assist missionaries propagate the Gospel (Mautle, 1991; Dei, 2004). It is observable that the colonial system of education was genderized and comparable to indigenous education, which trained the girl child to purposefully conform and take on child rearing practices as her social responsibility. The missionaries in the colonial period introduced a form of education that did not cater to the girl child. Instead, the colonial education system perpetuated the social and cultural belief systems of the indigenous African education systems that did not benefit the girl child (Agyepong, 2001; Dei, 2005; Obeng, 2002, 2006).

It is clear from the foregoing that the colonial administration laid an unequal foundation for the development of formal education in Ghana. It is for this reason that most African scholars blame colonization and colonial education as partly responsible for the prevailing economic, political, and educational crises in Africa today (Njeuma, 1993). Largely, colonial education was a major source in creating economic inequalities and social stratification (Fafunwa, 1974; Rwomire, 1998). For instance, only a handful of
Africans had access to education, which they used to exploit and dominate other Africans. As a result, certain ethnic or regional groupings were denied education and increasingly became economically and socially disadvantaged (Rwomire, 1998).

This set the educational stage for entry into the Ghanaian independence period. By the 1950s there were about 3,000 primary and secondary schools in Ghana and about seven percent of the population of 4.2 million was in school (Njeuma, 1998). From every indication, colonial education left unequal educational opportunities for girls. To worsen the situation, urban areas rather than rural areas benefitted from national resources educationally and economically. Largely, boys rather than girls received more education opportunities, thereby, enhancing the boy’s chances of economic stability. Even Africans with more economic resources benefitted beyond the poor. (Bray et al., 1986). Such was the state of education when Ghana moved into its postcolonial period, already deculturalized, with unequal opportunities for both boys and girls (Obeng, 2002).

**Postcolonial Education Era (1957 to Present)**

At the time of Ghana’s independence in 1957, the government of Ghana considered educational development one of its highest priorities (George, 1976). Even though the Ghana government in postcolonial times saw formal education that was introduced by the colonial administration as essential to the acquisition of skills for economic productivity and national development, what they did not realize is that skill training in colonial education was gender specific (Gardinier, 1974; Obeng, 2002). For education to transform society, it was essential to expand access massively and rapidly for both genders and in all communities. Education was meant to eradicate illiteracy and
raise the level of schooling among the population to ensure national development. If the concept of development entails utilizing literacy skills, problem solving skills, technical skills, and manual dexterity in order to contribute to the country’s developmental process, then Ghana’s investment in education should have translated into equal access to schools equitable distribution of resources, equal participation of the community in the educational process, and attention to the needs of special groups. Unfortunately, after independence the starting point of educational efforts in Ghana was an imposed education system handed down by the colonial administration.

Postcolonial education was geared towards the acquisition of the English language or a language similar to the missionaries, and training teachers to become missionaries, catechists and interpreters for Europeans (Cutrufelli, 1983; Greene, 2002; Nukunya, 2003; Odaga & Heneveld, 1995). Notwithstanding these practices that did not serve the best intentions of Ghanaians themselves, Ghana still follows an adaptation of the colonial model of education. By continuing the model of colonial education, the government fails to keep up with modern pedagogy, or draw upon indigenous learning and teaching resources (Dei, 2004). Instead of designing a relevant curriculum and pedagogy to meet current and future needs of Ghana for the development of human and natural resources to their greatest potentials, education built upon the colonizer’s model has not addressed the equity disparities. According to Dei (2004), education should aim at addressing social circumstances as part of its traditional function in preparing young people to play their role in society. In Ghana’s situation, the humanistic aims of education should be the promotion of the all-around development of the individual, both male and
female, in order to foster intellectual growth and creativity and enable everyone to reach their potential.

Since independence from Britain in 1957, Ghana established a free, but compulsory universal primary education for all (FCUBE). In postcolonial Ghana, educational policies and reforms are adaptations of the Western educational system (Agbemabiese, 2009; Graham, 1971). For example, some of the educational reforms in Ghana were based on achievements by other nations with whom Ghana either competes or wants to emulate economically. A case in point is the effort to model Ghana’s education on that of the United States (Agbemabiese, 2009). This is often in conflict with other aims for schooling within the cultural context and expectations in Ghana, such as equity and citizenship. Gallegos (1998) notes that, “Schools and governments get set up for attack by raising public expectations for what is not fully within the education system’s control to deliver” (p. 4).

The effort to view education and its role in society through the single lens of global economic competitiveness, (as Ghana is presently doing) ignores policies that could help solve many social ills, including the issue of dropouts in the education system (Dei, 2004). Invariably, the new education system of Ghana aims at preparing the Ghanaian child to be able to take gainful employment or proceed to tertiary institutions after primary education, yet there still exist numerous impediments that lead to students dropping out of school (Dei, 2004). A report by UNICEF (2009) has observed that customs and traditions in Africa prefer boys to girls and that the girl child is often forced to stay at home to help in domestic chores (Nukunya, 2003, 1997). Such a phenomenon is
likely to account for reasons why girls make up the largest dropout population of the school system in Ghana. Other reasons for the unequal dropout rates between boys and girls reviewed mentioned by the UNICEF report, includes early marriage or pregnancies that prevents young girls from the benefits of education and all the advantages that go with it. The UNICEF (2009) report further notes that the situation largely constitutes an unjustified deprivation of liberty to girls. The implication is that negative customary practices and obsolete traditions thwart girls’ access to education, female emancipation, and their ultimate empowerment.

Although Ghana was the first nation worldwide to implement the “Right to Education Policy” by the United Nations General Assembly (1989), available statistics indicates that enrollment ratio of girls is consistently 10 percentage point lower than that of boys (See Table 1).

Table 1

National Enrollment of Primary Public Schools in Ghana (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>44.99%</td>
<td>45.46%</td>
<td>45.69%</td>
<td>45.85%</td>
<td>46.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>55.01%</td>
<td>54.54%</td>
<td>54.31%</td>
<td>54.15%</td>
<td>53.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statistics indicate that despite notable efforts by Ghana to ensure the right to education for all as declared since independence in 1957, a large population of its citizenry is out of school and the majority of them are girls.

Significantly, Table 1 indicates that girls’ enrollment falls below their male counterparts in public primary school in Ghana. The enrollment ratio of girls is consistently about 9% points lower than that of boys. The average enrollment rate between 1991 and 1995 has been 54.4% for boys while that of girls has been 45.9% (Sutherland-Addy, 2002). According to UNICEF (2009), many of these girls, who are out of school are saddled with domestic obligations and household chores, and many are limited by traditions in which parents consider the school cost of education too high to pay when it comes to their daughters. Not only is this phenomenon a violation of a girl’s right to education, but also a great loss of talent, capacity, and human resource to the nation and community at large. In addition, because societal and parental ideas of female roles are more domestic, especially in terms of marriage and raising children, they expect less from their girls in formal education, feeding into the high rate of the female dropout in school (Dei, 2005; Obeng, 2006; Tanye, 2008; UNICEF, 2009). The few that attend school tend to lean more towards female dominated areas of work and specialization in areas such as nursing, catering, home economics, hairdressing, and teaching.

Though it is difficult to explain why inequality still persists in Ghana’s education system, Apter's (1987) two-dimensional analysis of African sociopolitical structures is a tool to analyze the disparities in the unequal education system. According to Apter (1987), two basic types of value systems are found in traditional African communities. In
those systems having “consummatory” values, means and ends are so closely linked that modifying the means will substantially alter the acceptance of ends themselves. In systems having “instrumental” values, the incorporation of new means does not transform the ends (Apter, 1987). In the former type of system, the introduction of a simple technological change may challenge, among other things, the existence of traditional forms of authority or religious belief. Conversely, societies possessing instrumental values may assimilate certain innovations without threat to the total socio-cultural organization. Applying this model, if the girl child acquires a high level of education it will destabilize the centralized authority in the male gender, and more, it will reduce the value imposed on the girl child by the belief systems of the community (Apter, 1995, 1987).

One of the features of contemporary African states is the commitment to formal education as the pre-eminent instrument of modernization (Dei, 2004; Gachukia, 2004). In spite of efforts to encourage education for all, African education systems are marked by inequalities in the school system. In the process of changing belief systems about the girl child and offer her educational opportunities in Ghana, some may suggest the disorganization of the various traditional social and cultural patterns and organizations that impact her education. However, the relationship among status, power, and education of the girl child challenges the old indigenous frameworks that are loaded with patriarchal ideological belief systems (Obeng, 2006).

In the Girls’ Education Unit Briefing Report the dropout rate of girls in Ghana showed high levels of disparities in dropout rates of boys and girls (Ghana Education
Service, 1998). The picture painted in Table 2 indicates that the high percentage of girl dropouts in the regions is due to a number of factors that impact or that work against girl education in Ghana. In an explanation, Canagarajah and Coulombe (1997) states that, “A lot of girls dropped out of school not only because of the poverty of parents, but because traditional cultural attitudes are still very strong, especially in rural areas. The little money parents have to scrounge for sending children to school is seen as too big an investment to risk on the girl child” (p. 23).

Table 2

* Dropout Rates of Primary School Pupils in the Regions, Distribution (in descending order) *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Order</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Upper East</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Upper West</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brong Ahafo</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>295</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close study of Table 2 reveals that at the primary school level, the three Northern Regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern) and the Western region have relatively higher dropout rates. In the Northern and Upper East regions, for example, approximately 46% of pupils who enroll in primary school drop out before reaching basic primary six. That is almost half of the girls who begin primary school drop out before completion. At the JHS level, the Western, Eastern, and Brong Ahafo regions have the highest level of dropouts of girls. At the district level, East Gonja (Northern Region), Bawku West (Upper East Region), and Wassa Amenfi (Western Region) have as many as seven (7) out of every ten (10) girls not reaching the basic primary class six, in primary school (Sutherland-Addy, 2004). The dropout disparity between boys and girls signaled the need for a reform in Ghana’s education system as the dropout rate became the third major factor militating against female education (Sutherland-Addy, 2008, 2004).

Although the implementation of Ghana’s 1987 Education Reform by the Provincial National Defence Council (PNDC) highlighted many issues and concerns in the objectives, content, administration, and management of education in Ghana (Ministry of Information, 1996) there was still socio-cultural, economic, and policy factors affecting girl child education in Ghana. In the same report, the Ministry of Information (1996) stated that male-female enrollment ratios for the Upper East Region show that 58% of boys and 42% of girls are enrolled in primary school, and that 63% of males and 37% of females enrolled in junior secondary school. From the report, it is evident that certain factors, such as socio-cultural, educational, or governmental policy and school-
related factors are causing the gender gap in the enrollment of boys and girls in the education system.

From the economic point of view, education contributes directly to the growth of national income by improving the productive capacities of the labor force in a nation or community. Thus, education is a key strategy for reducing economic hardships, as well as, raising the self-esteem of the girl child. In Ghana as well as most African countries, postcolonial governments saw formal education that was introduced by the colonial administration as essential to the acquisition of skills for economic productivity and national development, hence, they made every effort to expand access to education after gaining independence from their colonial masters (Dei, 2004; McWilliam, 1967). The feeling was also that an investment in education could bring broader economic benefits to the socioeconomic advancement of the newly independent African countries (Abdi et al., 2006; McWilliam, 1967). Folson (2006) claims that since independence in 1957, Ghana’s education is perceived as providing “skills, preparing the population for economic functions in an increasingly complex society by socializing students to fit into new models of economic organizations, promoting both private as well as social returns of education” (p. 136).

Another factor that was identified soon after independence as impacting female education and female participation in government in Ghana was socio-cultural issues (Folson, 2006). The socio-cultural factors were responsible for females being at the lower echelon of educational obtainment in the country. The Ministry of Information (1996) education report indicates that by Ghana’s independence in 1957, the majority of African
women, about 90 percent, were illiterate. In lieu of this, soon after independence in 1957, the Nkrumah administration embarked on a free education policy for all regardless of race, religion, and gender. The Education Act of 1961 was meant to ensure that every Ghanaian child received free primary and middle school education (Ministry of Information, 1996; UNESCO, 1998). Although most African leaders were optimistic about the central role education plays in the socioeconomic development of the individual as well as the nation, by 2001 it became obvious that little progress was made in terms of expanding and improving on education (Gachukia, 2004; Sutherland-Addy, 2008). These inadequacies in the Ghana’s education system ushered in a new review committee in 2002, which led to the current educational system in Ghana (Dei, 2005).

Ghana’s 1987 educational restructuring made provisions for universal education for all children of school going age, yet, the educational system still had systematic flaws as inherited through the indiscriminate importation of European models and concepts which ill-suited the social, cultural, and economic systems (Dei, 2005). For example, the curriculum schedule of Ghana’s education system has it that, at the Junior and Senior Secondary school levels, home economic classes are held at the same period that science subjects such as physics, biology, chemistry and agricultural science, are also held (Dei, 2005). The conflict in timetable scheduling creates a situation where girls could hardly take those hard core science subjects and this eliminates girls from pursuing careers in high-paid jobs such as medicine, dentistry, and other jobs with science background (Abdi et al., 2006; Obeng, 2002).
As a result of a continual spiral in educational outcomes, especially for girls in Ghana, in 2007 the then Ghana President Kufuor implemented new educational reforms that would require fewer subjects to be taught and a shorter length of time to complete school (Chapman, Emert, & Osei, 2006). The new educational strategic plan for Ghana was to provide equal access to education for everyone, a higher level of quality education, and educational management and technological advancement in terms of training and equipment (Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, & Hunt, 2007; UNICEF, 2009). Even with the new education reform policies that the Ghanaian government has established, critics state that Ghana’s reforms have largely not been able to deliver upon their promises, leading to recurrent calls for reforming the education system (Dei, 2005; Osei, 2007). Apparently, colonial education in Ghana only served as a tool to transform the power structure of Ghanaian traditional society and re-enforced the unequal access to education an empowerment of the girl child.

In sum, it is evident from the history of education in Ghana that the importance of educating the girl child had been emphasized in all the three historical epochs—pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, but with varied goals and objectives. In the first two periods, the intent was purely domestic. In the latter period, although efforts were aimed at removing the gender disparity in education of both boys and girls, cultural attitudes toward girls became the primary reasons for the prioritization of boys’ education over that of girls. Factors that underpinned reasons for discriminating against girl child education in each period formed barriers to the total emancipation and empowerment of the girl child. What is pronounced in the colonial and postcolonial education systems is
the near exclusion of girls and women from formal education; this is reflected in the low level of female participation in education in Ghana. Even though educational regulations affecting women were not codified or written for anyone to see, they still existed as uncodified or invisible veils present in cultural institutions in the community. According to Owusu-Banahene (2000):

Some reasons assigned to this included the threats of female chastity, the apprehension that educated girls will not make ‘controllable, obedient, and subservient wives and the widely held belief that it was as waste of money to educate a girl who will leave home on marriage and not contribute to the maintenance of her home. (p. 43)

The literature concludes that there still exist gender gaps in the education system. As in the pre-colonial period, the informal education sector trained the male child to be the head of the household and girl child as wives, daughters, and mothers. In like manner, the contemporary education system does not encourage the girl child to be educated to be part of the decision making process in the home, community, and the nation.

The historical outlines of education in Ghana from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial are essential, and most especially amongst the Anlo Ewe of Ghana. To understand the ontological and epistemological aspects of the socio-cultural of Anlo Ewe, it is fitting that I examine the Anlo Ewe since Abor, my research area, is comprised mostly of Anlo Ewe and Abor is known to be a predominantly occupied Anlo Ewe area.
Socio-culture of the Anlo Ewe

Introduction

Historically, the Anlo Ewe are referred to as a group of people whose dialect is also the Anlo Ewe language spoken in southeastern Ghana. Etymologically, the term Anlo derives its name from the Ewe term ‘nlo’ which means rolling up or folding into oneself—a statement credited to the founder of the Anlo Ewe ethnic group, Togbui Wenya (Greene, 1992, p. 1). As an ethnic group, the Anlo Ewe occupy the West African coast between sections of Ghana and Togo. They are known to be located along the littoral between the Keta Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean (Greene, 1992) (Appendix F). The main economic livelihood is fishing along the coastal areas, salt-making, livestock, and farming in the hinterlands. The site for this study, Abor, is a coastal savanna located in the south-eastern corner of Ghana, particularly, on the international road connecting the capital of Ghana, Accra, and the capital of Togo, Lome (Agbemabiese, 2003; Akyeampong, 2001).

Traditionally, the political organization of the Anlo Ewe community is ruled by the power of the chiefs and the councils of elders (Amenumey, 1997). In an effort to establish a responsive civil society, provide for a socially friendly environment, and offer policies that provide equity in social services for the community, the Anlo Ewe ensure that the education of children begins from birth as a continual process throughout to adulthood (Nukunya, 1997, 1999). According to Nukunya, (2003):

Behavioural patterns are meticulously taught and transmitted from generation to generation. … Children learn primarily from their forebears; the past of the adult
is the future of each new generation; and the blueprint of culture is essentially complete and, therefore, unchallenged. (p. 7)

In the polity of the Anlo Ewe, roles in the community are gender sensitive and the male-female responsibilities are designated as complementary (Greene, 1996), but are patriarchal in nature.

**The Philosophy of Anlo Ewe**

The development of the child from birth through to adulthood so as to be a custodian of Anlo Ewe heritage is enshrined in the traditional belief systems of the Anlo Ewe. Therefore, people’s reactions to the child’s performances and activities, both in and out of the home, channels the thinking forms of the child to what the society articulates or eschews. The Anlo Ewe child is integrated into the community to grow to be an inheritor of a rich identity consolidated in the customs and traditions, and the mother tongue of his or her source language (Agbemabiese, 2003). To this effect, Agbemabiese (2003), states that among the Anlo Ewe:

> The education of the child…emerges from the child’s involvement in the socio-cultural and political consciousness of the society. From birth, through rites of passage, to adulthood, the child grows through a process, interacting with elders and peers at various stages. Through frantic experiences and challenges, the child is shaped emotionally, spiritually and temporally in the ideas that make up the heritage of the community. (p.145-146)

As such, the Anlo Ewe are no exception to what Ametewee (1997) exudes in the statement that education is a “socialization process” where the individual is trained to
adapt to the socio-cultural and physical natural environments of his/her community for his or her good.

The belief systems provide a developmental learning of the understanding of indignity, their origin, place, history and ancestry. Ametewee (1997) notes that the emphasis on the traditional education of the Anlo Ewe is to raise up children who are respectful, respectable, and well-behaved as defined within the social norms, values, and beliefs. To demonstrate the importance and worthiness of the development of the children to be the custodian of virtues that Anlo Ewe extol, the late Awomefia, Togbui Sri I of the Anlo Ewe stated:

Children forget not the saying,
Evildoers are the ruin of nations.
Set your children on the right path
For they are the nation of tomorrow
We live today but tomorrow we are not.
In the virtue of our children will lie
The growth of our country in wisdom, love and bravery.
The obedient children are the ornaments of their parents
And of the whole nation
Sapphires and coral are they and pearls and gold
And the adornment of their Fatherland.
In their virtue is wisdom itself
Through which the people thrive
It increases the joy of life beyond the grave,

Truly he who lives according to God’s law

Is a pillar of the state.

Therefore, my children, let every crime be punished.

And the wayward corrected.

The liar must acknowledge the sovereignty of truth.

(Debt must be discouraged)

Theft, adultery and the evil practices of sorcery

Must never be tolerated in our land of Anlo. (in Fiawoo, 1983, p. 22)

Fiawoo’s writing on the maxims of Togbui Sri I presents the philosophy of the development of children within the Anlo Ewe society. In traditional Anlo Ewe society it is the expectation that children are guided in the “observance of customs and traditions and taboos” (Egblewogbe, 1975, p. 23), due to the retributions that result from the curse of the gods on the individuals, their family, and others (Nukunya, 1969). Essentially, traditional beliefs of the Anlo Ewe of Ghana are highly developed alongside the indigenous spirituality and their religious system, and these shape their worldview as well as help them fulfill their cultural expectations and obligations in the society (Egblewogbe, 1975; Nukunya, 1969). Many of these patterns that guide children to become the custodian of their virtues are in the process of disappearing, due to many factors such as colonialism and the influx of Western ideology (Ametewee, 1997, Nukunya, 2003)
Nature and Process of the Transfers of Knowledge

Among the Anlo Ewe each child is born into an atmosphere charged with beliefs in myths, legends, customs, and traditions (Geurts, 2002). Verbal art forms, dance drumming, games, and song performances are part of the enculturation process through which the child is introduced to the use of music and linguistic behavior to their future roles as men and women (Ametwee, 1997; Anyidoho, 1997). As a means to transmit knowledge and a way of life for girls, songs are mostly performed by elderly women to educate the girl child on personal and social occurrences. Traditionally, most of the songs are acquired by the girl child as a learning tool aurally from older relatives (Ametewee, 1997; Anyidoho, 1997; Egblewogbe, 1975). Often, songs that are taught to the girl child during her formative years reveal the joy and pain of motherhood, childbearing, childcare, admiration for babies, female concerns, and social commentary.

Cradle song performances, for example, are part of the enculturation process through which the girl child is introduced to the use of music and linguistic behavior as a mother to her child. A selected song text in Anlo Ewe dialect, such as this reveals more than meets the eye:

Tutu Gborvi, tutu gborvi, nana mele afea me o,
me ka ne f a vi la na.

Dzudzor dedevinye bornu, bornu kpoo
(Quiet my little child, quiet my little child,
your mother is not in the house.

For whom are you crying
Stop crying my little baby and keep cool.) (Agbemabiese, 2003, 75)

This song, though a lullaby, reveals the joy and pain of motherhood, childbearing, childcare, admiration for babies, female concerns and social commentary; thereby, making this cradle song transcend trivialities as it also promotes musical values in the customs and traditions of the Anlo Ewe (Egblewogbe, 1975). More often than not, verbal art becomes a vehicle for transmitting the socialization process and ideas which cannot be stated or expressed in normal language situations (Ametewee, 1997; Anyidoho, 1997; Egblewogbe, 1975). Clearly, each stage of life is representative of shaping a person emotionally, spiritually, and temporally, making up the heritage of the community.

**Organization of Economic Production**

From pre-colonial times to date, the Anlo Ewe culture adheres to accepted and structured forms of role categorization of women and men in the Anlo Ewe society (Greene, 1992; Nukunya, 2003). For example, both women and men play a particular role in the organization of economic production. One aspect of gender-based production roles is demonstrated in the specific activities pertaining to fishing and farming production (Akyeampong, 2001; Greene, 1996; Nukunya, 2003). Along the coast and rivers of the Volta, the occupation of fishermen is quite prevalent as a means for economic production. Women, in essence, purchase the catch and resell it or process it before taking it to the market. Nukunya (2003) notes that men catch the fish and women perform specific activities such as smoking, drying, salting the fish, and selling it at the market.

Additionally, as in the area of Abor where farming is widespread, a division of farm labor clearly defines men’s and women’s roles are clearly defined. The most
strenuous work of cutting of trees, clearing of bushes, and the plowing of the fields is performed by men; whereas, the sowing and harvesting activities are performed by women. In the Anlo Ewe societies, children usually accompany their parents to learn by doing the gender specific roles (Nukunya, 2003). The importance here is to illustrate that this act of traditional learning begins as an early process in life, and places boys and girls in the specific labor roles of their gender as they grow to the status of adulthood.

**Traditional Gender Conceptions**

In traditional African thought, “the value of a woman begins when she is born, not when she gets married” (Mbiti, 1991, p. 63). A close look at Anlo Ewe society reveals that their collective views and practices are influenced by the social and the political, and is riddled with contestations, and the community also exists as a part of a shared symbolic universe (Greene, 2002). It is from here that one can begin to understand the lineage of Anlo Ewe womens' developmental encumbrance. Anlo Ewe females are type-casted from birth and instructed in manners of learning subservience, as strict and hindering gender roles determine the path of their life (Greene, 1992). According to Agbemabiese (2003), the history of Anlo Ewe women’s experiences have “been written in our riddles, songs, dances, proverbs and folktales by men because, a proverb says, regardless how rich a woman may be, even above her male counterparts, she is forbidden from owning a talking drum” (p. 101). It is also important to note that among the Anlo Ewe, girls and women symbolize many different things, including fertility. They are responsible for bringing life into the world and having a connection with the earth and are just as engaged as the boys and men (Nukunya, 2003).
In sum, the metaphors and symbols assigned on females in the culture of the Anlo Ewe’s society shapes her disposition, orientations toward the world, and selfhood. They are the means by which females subjective reality is closely governed by the cultural construction of womanhood; it is not merely expressed, but realized and maintained by the belief systems of the people for ages. So to locate the representation of males and females within the Anlo Ewe social spaces they occupy, recognition that gender, whatever it encompass, functions as an inherent component of a culture’s overall ideological complex, and must be treated within that context (Schlegel, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

Since this study explores factors that affect girl child education in Ghana, a qualitative research methodology was appropriate to use. In Chapter 1, I indicated that theories are employed in research as a framework for asking questions and aspects of a researcher’s findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This qualitative study employs a multi-theoretical approach to address the research questions. The research questions were appropriate for qualitative methods of investigation since in qualitative methods, the emphasis is mainly on understanding the particular instead of the general (Glesne, 1999).

Taking into account the individual contexts in which girls dropout of school in Ghana, it is also important to provide a holistic perspective of the study. Patton (2002) posits that a holistic perspective in qualitative inquiry means contextualizing data. Patton (2002) urges qualitative researchers to be concerned with contextualizing the physical, temporal, historical, cultural and aesthetic context in which experiences happened. To assist me, the researcher, in contextualizing the experiences and the voice of individual
girls who dropped out of school, while at the same time acknowledging interpretation of the cultural context in which they lived their experiences, I utilized a postcolonial feminist theory of social justice, pro-sex and womanhood (Mohanty, 1991). I also utilized Gramsci’s notion of hegemony (Morton, 2007), as a theoretical framework for the study to underscore the patriarchal system under which the girls lived and how it impacts girls’ school attendance and opportunity. Each of these theories is discussed below.

**Ethnographic Case Study**

Whereas some authors define case study as a method that involves an in-depth examination of events, I believe that it also can be defined as an intensive study of events taking place at a particular site. From this perspective, an ethnographic case study represents a systematic empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The site I chose for the ethnographic case study for this research was Abor Pioneer Academy, located in the Volta Region of Ghana. Focusing on this site, the ethnographic case study method helped me address my research questions that ask about what factors influence the education of the girl child in Ghana. The ethnographic case study method helped to provide background information relating to the experiences of the girl child in the context of the schools and other practices in Ghana that are concerned with education. By using the ethnographic case study method, I was able to develop a general understanding of how schools encourage both young girls and the boy students to stay in school, as well as factors that make them drop out in the Abor area. Defining the focus of this study led it to an ethnographic case study since girls who drop out of school in Abor Pioneer Academy were the central informants among the
subjects I studied. The method of ethnography allowed for me to examine the group under study, and to learn about their patterns of behavior, customs, and traditions. In other words, I was able to study the “meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2007).

An ethnographic case study approach in research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the qualitative researcher attempts to “study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). Yin (2009) states that a case study is an empirical method of inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real context and uses multiple sources of evidence. In similar manner, Stake (1994) in discussing the importance of case studies, found out that they help define theory through reflections made on human experiences. Thus, an ethnographic case study approach was employed to describe and explore the contents of identifiable factors that contribute to the formal educational outcomes of the girl child in Abor, Ghana.

According to Nuthall and Alton-Lee (1990), the choice of a method for a research study should be based on the understanding of the nature of the problem being explored. Patton (1990) states that case studies are “rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question” (p. 54). Similarly, case studies allow the researcher to vicariously experience unique situations in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As noted by Creswell (2007), the case study design is an “exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth, data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). In this
research study about the Anlo Ewe girl child, I spent time observing participants in order to acquaint myself with their everyday lives as it relates to social, cultural, economic, and political systems of the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal educational outcomes.

As I addressed the research questions, I constantly reminded myself of Howard’s (2000) notion of the “sociology of possibilities” which poses the questions: “Why do things have to be this way; and can we change the way things are?” (p. 9). These questions enriched, as well as guided my research approach, as it asked me, the researcher, to value the knowledge of the local people’s lives, and it assisted me in determining strategies to address factors that impact the educational outcomes of girls.

By employing an ethnographic case study method I was able to understand the conditions that existed and the practices that prevailed in the schools, including some emerging trends (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The educators who participated—teachers and administrators—provided me with copies of relevant Ministry of Education documents dealing with how to handle students. They also provided information detailing the opportunities that were available to students and the support provided to them by teachers and school administrators. The students who participated at the site told me about their actual experiences. Information gathered from the participants underlines the importance and type of socio-cultural problems impacting girl child education in the Abor area. I also placed great importance on the quality and efficiency in the data gathering and its analysis, because it leads to a richer and valid results (Patton; 2002).
Postcolonial Feminist Theory

Through works of poetry, autobiographies, drama, novels, and short stories, African postcolonial feminist women have addressed issues of gender, patriarchy, economic, political, and cultural domination of women by men in African communities (Adichie, 2004; Aidoo, 2003). All these forms of creative works of women in African communities bring awareness to forms of oppression, subordination, and subjugation of women as it exists in African societies (Oyewumi, 2003; Wölte, 2002). As noted by Oyewumi, a postcolonial feminist approach when critically “applied to Africa, addresses the dynamics of cultural values, histories and the varying forms of households, family relations, and social organization” (2007, p. 114).

Although this research does not utilize the poetry, drama, and novels of postcolonial African female writers, it is what grounds me to seeking the narrative voices and stories of the girls in this study.

A postcolonial feminist theory approach to studying girl child education in a patriarchal society in Ghana brought to the fore some of the traditional practices that result in discrimination towards girl education in Ghana. What is observable is that Abor is an oral or aural community with uncodified nuances that can easily escape an outsider. As a researcher who is not educated in an oral community, some scholars may see my interpretation of the oral narratives of the girls during our meetings and interactions as problematic as the nuances could easily escape my attention (Borland, 1988). However, the goal of this study is to revalue girls’ perspectives, their lives, and the world that systematically ignored or trivialized women’s culture (Borland, 1988). Oral and written language developments are intertwined and the narrative ability of each girl child I
studied is an important predictor of their school success. In fact, I view the oral narratives from the girls as "subjective documents" because they refer to a broad class of evidence that reveals:

The participant's view of experiences in which the participant had been involved.

They include autobiographies, life histories, letters, oral narratives, interviews… giving particular emphasis to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and textual analysis.

I will focus here on one example, the oral interview or narrative; this strategy will expose both the unique peculiarities of these data and scholarly ambivalence about subjective sources. (Westby, 2004)

Instead of seeing the analysis of the narrative data as being problematic, it rather demonstrated how such analysis of narrative data or personal documents could transform or bring meaning to scholars in ethnographic studies and other fields. My study searches these oral narratives by the girls—these reconstructions of the self—at the symbolic level, not for what is remembered only in them, but for the ways in which memories themselves are structured (Westby, 2004). The methodologies suggested by ethnography and textual analysis prove powerful tools for analyzing these narratives. In so doing, I allow data from the informants to speak for themselves.

Mohanty (2003) also draws attention to the fact that postcolonial feminism is about struggles for women’s economic and social justice in society. As such, Mohanty calls for a society that is pro-sex and pro-woman (2003). Related to this, hooks (1990) argues that to many African women, gender inequity between African men and women does not always take precedence over other forms of oppression such as racial, ethnic, or
class related oppression in society. When considering the question of why in a patriarchal society, men seem to control women, the concept of hegemonic masculinity surfaces. It is my belief that embedded in patriarchy are a convergence of ideas that provide socio-cultural factors aimed at mapping ways by which men can expand their masculinity and authority over the female gender.

**Hegemony**

This research considers the concept of hegemony as central to why socio-cultural factors are designed in patriarchal systems to institutionalize gender differences. According to Gramsci (1971),

Hegemony springs not only from the explicit ideological, moral, and philosophical underpinnings of power but also from less fully conscious, transparent realms of thought—the experientially insistent world of common sense. (p. 421)

Central to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is the concept of culture and its power relations in a given community. In many ways, gender dynamics are, therefore, hegemonic in that the descriptions of women and men in a patriarchal society like Abor are:

Institutionalized in the socio-cultural beliefs of the community, in the normative images of the family and in the social structure, and fiber of the community…and such cultural beliefs have long been studied as widely held gender stereo-types.

(Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000, p. 67)

Although the majority of research, especially in Ghana, on gender and education has rightly focused on retention and the ratio of boys to girls in school, no recent research has
focused on the impact of socio-cultural factors of patriarchy on girl child education in the Abor area.

According to Ridgeway and Correll (2004), “In a patriarchal system gender is a system for constituting difference and organizing inequality on the basis of that difference,” and this difference is embedded in “the widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave clearly are a central component of that system” (p. 511). What is observable is that in a patriarchal society such as in Abor:

Gender is not primarily an identity or role that is told to a child or enacted in family relations, instead, gender is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference. (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 510)

These hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender and their effects in what we call “social relational contexts” are among the core components that maintain and affect the gender system (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In a close study of culture and its impact on the education of women, Weaver-Hightower (2003) found that:

A study of culture and its impact on the education of the girl child have led to great strides in understanding the function of gender in educational contexts, from the processes that affect female entry into school till her success in math, science, and technology—areas dominated by boys. (p. 472)
In patriarchal African societies, hegemony relates to the whole social process of the distribution of power and influence among men, through the employment of active social and cultural forces within the society to entrench male authority (Williams, 1997).

In the Anlo Ewe culture, from a tender age, the socialization process differentiates the girl child from the boy child. Anlo Ewe males are socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households and at the same time, females are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers (Ametewee, 1997). The cause of such differentiation is because in a patriarchal society women are socialized into gender roles with men at the top of the social order of hierarchy (Charvet, 1982). This is because men define and shape their lives in a way as to wield political, social, and economic control in society (Williams, 1977). Morton (2007) explains that in such a society, cultural hegemony is a lived experience, a superstructure, not only because of the depth and thoroughness that the cultural hegemony is lived, but because cultural tradition and practice are super-structural expressions of a formed social and economic structure.

Since this research is to investigate the extent to which socio-cultural, economic, and political factors impact the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child of Abor, I consider the concept of patriarchal hegemony very important in understanding the inequity observed in girl child education in Ghana based on the reasons heretofore mentioned.

Summary

Through analysis of research literature in this study, it is observed that the legacies both of the colonial education system and pre-colonial cultural institutions and practices still permeate every fiber of the socio-cultural and economic experience of the
community. They exist as unexplored discrepancies that militate against the formal education of the girl child. From the pre-colonial period through the colonial to postcolonial times, one could see the extent to which the curriculum, school practices and cultural practices affect and hinder the education of the girl child. Although Ghana and other African countries share similar problems with developed countries like the United States (U.S.), in terms of girl children who drop out of school, factors that impact the dropout rates of boys and girls in the education system are not similar. Furthermore, factors that impact girl child education in Ghana are unique to Ghana, in that Africa is diverse with varied ethnic groups that have multiple cultures, customs, traditions, values, and though their gender dynamics are profound, they vary in each of them.

Discussing issues that affect the girl child in the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods bring out a number of factors. From the literature review, it is observable that the girl child faces discrimination from the earliest stages of her life, from childhood through to adulthood (Egbo, 2000). Her low status manifests in several ways. From birth she is seen in the community as a daughter, a wife, and a mother. Cultural and traditional practices, therefore, dictate the place of the girl child in the society form birth. On the other hand, the goal of traditional education is to make boys become “men” or to define their masculinity and expect from them a bundle of responsibilities—male roles and masculinities in the perspective of the culture. In lieu of that, society also confers on them a bundle of genderized rights and privileges. The concept of this hegemonic masculinity recognizes that in each community, particular forms of masculinity will be considered desirable and particularly valued. This hegemonic masculinity determines
which men are considered ‘successful’ by their own society, and this strongly influences how boys and men judge themselves in turn and are accorded respect in the community.

Another factor that features prominently is that among various ethnic communities of Africa, the socialization process in the home educates children to accept gender stereotypes. Among the Anlo Ewe, right from birth children are taught to accept differences in gender roles. A newly born baby boy signifies inheritance and perpetuation of the family lineage (Egbo, 2000; Njeuma, 1998) and as the male the power and identity of the young boy is associated with a father, breadwinner, leader and a warrior figure. On the other hand, the birth of a girl child signifies the birth of a daughter, a wife, a mother, in fact, a caretaker and this is perpetuated by rituals and actions, both verbal and non-verbal in the whole society.

Since the end of colonialism, through to the inception of this postcolonial period, the issue of gender dynamics has not changed within African communities (Osei, 2007). This confirms the fact that African societies, which are mainly patriarchal, tend to have a strong cultural preference for sons. The preference accounts largely for the greatest level of gender inequalities in the formal education system. In a study conducted by the University of Sussex in collaboration with the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, it was revealed that institutional practices and traditions does lead to a highly gendered school environment rarely challenged by students or teachers (Kutor et al., 2005).

Even with co-educational institutions in Ghana, children still segregate, and there are no policies or interventions from teachers and administrators to curtail the issue (Kutor et al, 2005). Largely, schools have become an extension of the traditional African
culture, which segregates men and women in all social spheres. To an extent, schools are breeding grounds for potentially gendered practices that affect the dropout rate of the girl child. From the literature review, it is evident that the historical experiences of African communities have teamed up with their sociological and cultural experiences to marginalize women (Lemrini, 2000). Gender inequalities in education in such societies are simply one aspect of a generalized and systematic discrimination against women and girls.

Despite the fact that the Ghanaian government has put policies in place, such as the “free but compulsory universal primary education for all” and the “Right to Education Policy”, to usher in gender equality in schools, the system has failed. Enrollment and retention reports and statistics from the Ministry of Information (MOI) (2000) indicate girls still struggle against huge setbacks in the society to obtain education. Many hardships that the girl child had to face in the past still endures today.

If society recognizes the fact that improving access to quality education for girls dramatically improves other indicators of human well-being then the personal and societal consequences of girl dropping out of school are costly for Ghana and the Ghanaian girl child. Across the world, dropouts are believed to experience higher levels of unemployment and receive lower earnings than high school graduates (Asamoa et al. 2005; Rumberger, 1987). Dropouts are also more likely than graduates to become dependent on welfare, engage in illegal activities, and experience health and affective problems (Kutor et al., 2005; Rumberger, 1987). Since dropping out of school creates a negative momentum for youth in a society, Ghana’s education system must aim at
initiating policies that address socio-cultural impediments that affect girl child education in Ghana.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the qualitative constructs, methods, and techniques employed to conduct an in-depth study of girl child education in Abor, an Anlo Ewe ethnic community in the southeastern corner of the Volta Region of Ghana. The study explored the causes of female dropouts in junior and senior high schools in the Abor area. This chapter provides information about the setting of this study, the research participants and details how data were collected and analyzed. The research process utilized an ethnographic case study design focusing on girls from Abor and its environs who served as informants. In addition to interviews with the informants, I gathered data through observations and document analysis.

Qualitative research employs a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Whereas quantitative research uses experiments to test hypothetical generalizations, qualitative research encounters the world first hand. Each represents a fundamentally different approach to inquiry. The choice of each approach reflects the researcher’s determination about the methods needed to appropriately address a particular research question.

In qualitative research, Patton (2002) notes that the choice of a paradigm depends on the issue under study. Patton states, “This will allow for a ‘situational responsiveness’ that strict adherence to one paradigm or another will not” (2001, p. 39). Furthermore, some researchers believe that qualitative and quantitative research can be effectively combined in the same research project (Patton, 1990, 2002). There are many methods
available to researchers depending on the type of issues being explored. Creswell (2007) discussed five traditions, namely biography, case study, ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenology. My study utilized the case study and an ethnographic method.

In the process of selecting the appropriate methodology and research design to address the concerns of the research questions for the study, several issues were addressed. The research issues include, though are not limited to, theoretical paradigms, conceptual framework, location of documents, document analysis, time allocation, selection, and the rationale of study methods. These concepts illuminated and problematized issues of girl child education in Ghana and provided the focus for this study. In sum, this chapter presents and discusses the methods used to address the research questions, the theories that ground the research, the research site, the strategies employed for data collection and analysis, and issues that emerged while the research was conducted.

Methodological Approaches

Currently, there exist several research studies on girl child education in other rural African communities (Balde, 2004; Davison, 1996; Kiluva-Ndunda, 2001; Obeng, 2006; Stambach, 2000; Yeboah, 1997), but there is no literature on socio-cultural issues influencing girl education in the Abor area prior to this study. The lack of studies dealing with primary and secondary education of girls in the Abor area presents a gap not only in ethnographic studies focusing on the educational experiences of rural Anlo Ewe girls, but also the discrepancies between codified formal educational policies and uncodified norms existing in the indigenous cultural institutions affecting girl education in the Abor area. It
is the aim of this study to add to literatures on girl child education in Africa by looking at socio-cultural factors that influence girl child education in Abor area. My research study, therefore, provides detailed information on why in contemporary times girls “want to go to school but they can’t”——medi be mayi sukuu gake nye mate yui o——(a statement from almost all the participants).

By using qualitative methods, I was able to gain information about participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions in considerable detail, and what I learned came directly from the participants themselves. They used their own words and gave voice to their own experiences. This approach also allowed me to vary the emphasis and tone of the questions with different participants and to modify the questions when I deemed it important. I was not confined by structured questionnaires, but had the flexibility to ask probing questions when I required clarification.

With qualitative methods, I was able to interpret informants’ replies on the basis of an emerging understanding of the circumstances confronting them. It was not difficult for me to come to the realization that my participants had different world views and personal experiences from my own and to see how their reactions to events in their lives were guided by those views and experiences. The choice to use qualitative methods also allowed me to acknowledge my personal views and their inevitable influence on my interpretations of the informants’ perceptions and experiences.

**Research Questions**

The primary research questions guiding this study were:
1. What factors impact the formal education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana?

2. How do such factors affect the education of Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

3. How can the effects of such factors be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

These questions illuminated the contextual and socio-cultural factors that contributed to the reasons girls drop out of school in the Abor area.

**Methodological Constructs**

This study benefited from a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists hold that knowledge and truth are socially constructed, therefore, are subject to the influence of personal and cultural perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This applies both to study participants and researchers alike. The constructivist paradigm required me, the researcher, to learn more about my participants by making an effort to learn about their experiences first hand (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In particular, I found myself in a world where I could learn about dropping out of school from the perspective of girls who had actually dropped out not on their own volition, but due to circumstances beyond their control.

The constructivist paradigm not only enabled me to listen to stories about the experiences of others, but it also enabled me to become a part of the context and to connect my own experiences to the lives of the girls and the society I was studying. At the same time, a constructivist frame of reference enabled me to identify, interpret, and
refine prior opinions drawn from my own experiences and what I learned from my informants. Moreover, from a constructivist perspective, I adopted a circumspect view of my own data analysis and interpretation, acknowledging that the findings of the study would (and should) be open to evaluation and critique by others not only faculty on my doctoral committee, but also by the staff of Abor Pioneer Academy.

Researchers and informants may be reflexive regarding their own points of view (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). I believe I am quite reflexive as a researcher, because I recognize that knowledge and interpretation are a result of a collective, not an individual, process of meaning-making; and this recognition enables me to present information about participants’ lives and incorporate my own interpretations without worrying that the interpretations will have a distorting influence on the truth of participants’ stories. I believe, moreover, that my use of multiple and systematic data gathering and analysis methods increased the trustworthiness of my interpretations. These methods are discussed next.

**Overview of Research Site**

This study took place in Abor, a rural community located in the Volta Region of Ghana for a seven-week period, from November 25, 2009 to January 15, 2010. Prior to this date, I had spent summer months, between 2005 and 2009, studying the culture and getting acquainted with the ethnographic site. Later, I received the necessary permissions from the parents of the participants and the Abor Senior High School authorities to conduct my research. I chose Abor Pioneer Academy, a school built in 1965 through community initiatives, not because of the ease of access to the site, but because my
husband had attended that school in the 1970s. Additionally, I was able to spend time at the school on several visits during my summer vacations in 2008 and 2009. I had been drawn to it due to my years of working with girls, and my passion and perseverance in education. What also led me to this area to conduct my research are the many stories that my husband would tell me in how boys were able to complete their formal education and move to higher levels of employment or obtain higher degrees of education. These stories puzzled me, and I wanted to learn and know more about the factors that were impeding girls from achieving higher levels of formal education.

Although access to the school resulted from my acquaintance with the educators working there, I attempted to detach myself from the teachers at the school during the research and presented myself solely in the role of researcher. While conducting research at the school, I worked to keep my passionate views about the issue under study from the public eye. I sat and observed quietly the daily activities of the students and avoided participating in matters concerning girl child education or activities in the school. I also made an effort to limit most of my informal conversations with the teachers to discussions of superficial matters so as not to form opinions about the education of the girl child.

Abor is an Anlo Ewe ethnic community. The dominant language of the people is Anlo Ewe though English is partially spoken by many of the people. The community is comprised of approximately 5,000 inhabitants (Kpemlie, 2005). The main economic livelihood is farming. Abor is a coastal savanna located in the southeastern corner of
Ghana, particularly, on the international road connecting the capital of Ghana, Accra, and the capital of Togo, Lome (Agbemabiese, 2003; Akyeampong, 2001).

According to Manuh and Moletsane (1999), there is a “general urban-rural disparity in educational involvement. Generally, there is a higher enrollment in urban than in rural areas” (p. 87). From Kpemlie’s observations (2005), the phenomenon of low enrollment of girls is pertinent in Abor area. Manuh and Moletsane note that in Ghana about “70 percent of the population live in rural areas and are dependent on farming, hunting and fishing for their survival...and with girls and mothers providing most of the family labor on farms, the level of involvement in education for girls is negatively affected” (1999, p. 87). As in the case of Abor, the majority of the people engage in agricultural occupations. Crops grown in Abor area include corn, cassava, groundnuts, sweet potato, and beans. These crops are basically food crops and the excess are sold in local markets of Akatsi, Denu, and Keta. Men are said to be the farmers, and the women engage in petty trading selling their goods in markets like Akatsi, Denu, Agbozume, and Keta (Agbodeka, 1997; Bukh, 1979). Most of the girls assist their mothers at the market, while also contributing to labor on farms. Because of these responsibilities, the “level of involvement in education for a girl is negatively affected” (Manuh & Moletsane, 1999, p. 87).

Abor has two junior high schools and only one senior high school. Students from adjacent towns such as Avenorpedo, Sasieme, Dzogadze, Afife, Aborkutsime, Heluvi, Havene, Lotsyofedo, and Hlorve also come to attend Abor Senior High School (Kpemlie, 2005). Because Abor Senior High School serves all of these adjacent towns, there is
competition for vacancies at Abor Senior High School, and with a competitive situation like this, only a few fortunate students gain admission to the only senior high school in the Abor area. Like all other schools in districts in Ghana, there are disparities between the boy and girl child population in Abor Senior High School (Kpemlie, 2005; UNICEF, 2009).

**Data Collection**

Because an ethnographic case study design gives researchers the opportunity to use various methods of data collection, I was able to gather information from several sources: interviews, observations, and government policy documents on girl child education in Ghana. The conceptual analysis problematized the socio-cultural factors impacting girl child education in Ghana. By combining the use of historical evidence and philosophical analytical tools, relevant background was established to examine the factors that impact the education of girls in Ghana. The information generated enabled me to conduct a detailed examination of the site, the informants, and the wider context influencing both. Abor town in itself is a site that has its own culture and economic and socio-political environment, which exerted influence on the lives of the girl child and its educational institutions.

To select informants for this study stratified purposeful sampling was used. Patton observed that stratified purposeful sampling enables the researcher to “capture major variations rather than to identify a common core” (Patton, 1990, p. 74). This sampling is more “illustrative” of the range of factors than being “definitive” (Janinski, 1996, p. 87). The decision to employ stratified purposeful sampling was that it served specific goals
needed for my ethnographic case study. A stratified purposeful sampling approach for the study of girl child education provided credible and valid results reflecting on the characteristics of the population to be studied (Patton, 1990; Janinski, 1996)

Table 3 lists the sources of information/data for the study. Included in the list are other girls and boys that I observed and with whom I had informal conversations during class hours, break-time, and playtime. I visited various classrooms, including math and home economic classes with the teachers, and observed them teaching in order to understand how they relate to girls in the classroom. At the time of my visit to collect data in Abor, the teachers were mostly preparing students for the end of the semester exams. I also met with the teachers at meetings, and during recess. Most of my time was also spent observing and holding informal conversations with members of the school community.
Table 3

*Modes of Data Collection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Mode of Data Collection</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headmaster/mistress</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community elders</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Leaders</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy (Catholic/Presbyterian)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2 Math, 2 English, and 2 Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Interview/observation</td>
<td>6 girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Spouses</td>
<td>Interview/observation</td>
<td>6 different groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>2 Math and 3 Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visitation</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>6 homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Child Education Director</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1 (females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government documents</td>
<td>Library work</td>
<td>12 documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (various ages)</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of my study, I also visited the student participants and observed them in their homes. Spending time with the participants in their home enabled me to gain a fuller understanding of the various interactions that shaped their experiences. My visits to the homes of the student participants also enabled me to observe the cultural and
social values that underpin choices of parents when it comes to educating both boys and girls in the family. The informants shared stories about their struggles, achievements, and challenges, allowing me to add to my understanding of what went on in their home lives. Despite the challenges, I could detect in their voices their desire to go back to school, but they cannot. I saw their hopes and aspirations and the self-assurance with which they dealt with the problems that faced them.

Prior to visiting the girls at their homes, my own experiences with dropouts in the U. S. led me to assume that what I would see were dejected individuals who were prone to blame society or the government for their plight. On the contrary, I saw young girls and women, who did not blame society or the government for their educational dilemma, but were looking for an access that provides them with the availability of a means, convenience, and ability to be educated. From the data, these young girls see education as the process through which they could develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, politically, and economically to become functional members of their society. It is true that many governments, including the Ghanaian government, make provisions for the education of their citizens, but the provisions most of the time do not take cognizance of the peculiarities of the girl child. If children are seen as future leaders of tomorrow and mothers as guardians of the future, the first aim of every family and society should be to raise healthy and productive individuals who are physically, psychologically, socially, and mentally well developed. The degree and quality of the girl child’s participation in the life of the family and the society depends to a large extent on the degree and quality of her education.
During the home visits, I had the privilege of speaking with some of the participants’ parents. These adults seemed resigned to the fate of their children’s circumstances; nevertheless, they hoped for a better future for their children despite the difficult conditions confronting them. Following home visits and other informal encounters, I wrote field notes. From all indications, the relative economic and political position of the girls, as well as their social status and independence, seemed to have declined due to their dropping out of school. The situation made me wonder whether discrimination inherent in Western formal education had joined hands with African customs limiting female participation in selected social functions, thus, severely limiting female education and career opportunities.

Later, I engaged my informants in conversational interviews and allowed them to talk with me informally. I contributed to the conversation by sharing my experiences in the U. S. as well. My approach to the interviews introduced more lively interactions. Sharing experiences from the U. S. with my informants helped me to gain trust from the participants in a way that made them comfortable with sharing details about their lives with me. Stories about my struggles in life as an African American woman who was born during the Civil Rights era, in a family of 10 children, with its attendant needs and expectations seemed to affect the participants; most seemed to appreciate the similarities between their experiences and mine. I also took care to assure the participants that in the dissertations and other reports of the research, I would use pseudonyms as a way to protect their anonymity.
I used interview protocols to structure the formal interactions with participants that took place in both scheduled and unstructured interviews. I asked each of the girl informants the same set of questions. Prior to conducting the interviews, I developed a set of interview guides for all of the informants, teachers, husbands of the girls (if they had one), parents of girls who have dropped out of school, opinion leaders, religious leader, and chieftaincy leader. During the interviewing process with the informants, I would follow up with questions in order to gain clarity and to explore topics and issues that the informants shared in their response to my questions. I audiotaped most of the interviews. I employed one research assistant to translate some of the conversations I had with the participants from Ewe to English. When technology was available, I spent some evenings transcribing and typing out the transcriptions myself.

To ensure that my data was ready for analysis, I expanded on my field notes promptly after each interview (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Once the transcripts and field notes were complete, I cross-checked the transcribed notes and focused on identifying the mode of the conversations, such as identifying the emotions of the informants, their voice pitches, and when they stressed points to assist in the analysis and so on. I added this information to the transcripts. The information I gained from the various sources, in particular the home visits, enabled me to verify information I heard from participants in my interviews with them.

The use of multiple sources of data (i.e., triangulation) enabled me to be more certain about the findings that I derived through the process of data analysis. Throughout my fieldwork, I continually reviewed the data from interview transcripts, the
accumulating collection of documents, observations and field notes (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). This approach provided me with an impressionistic “feel” for the data. Once I began to see consistent themes emerging from this informal analysis of the interview transcripts, I reviewed the documents and conducted additional interviews as a way of exploring preliminary insights about the site and participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data generated in a research study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for such a transformation. According to one qualitative methodologist, the point at which data analysis is complete and yields findings is “known [to a researcher] only when—and if—arrived at” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Patton also adds that, “the human factor is the great strength and fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis—a scientific two-edged sword” (2002, p. 433). If the researcher fails to analyze data in a way that produces meaningful findings, the study becomes less valid than it might otherwise have been. To increase the likelihood that data analysis will yield meaningful findings, researchers make use of thorough and systematic procedures. For this study, the analysis followed a six-step procedure supported by leaders in the field of qualitative research: 1) organizing the data, 2) generating categories based on major concepts in the theoretical framework of the study, 3) coding the data, 4) checking preliminary findings, 5) exploring other explanations, and 6) writing the report (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 2009).
Coding the Data

Data collection and analysis of data often occur simultaneously in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, at some point, I reached saturation; whereby, the data collected no longer provided new and unique information, and I decided there was no benefit in collecting more data. Although many qualitative data analysis processes are open, enabling researchers to uncover, name, and develop concepts, I chose to use a more structured process (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). This process combined a first level of coding that was open and inductive. This type of coding exposed the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained in the interview transcripts, field notes, and documents (Creswell, 2007). Once I had developed thematic codes, I connected them to categories that I identified through the review of the literature rather than inductively through the first level of data analysis. This method most closely resembled the approach recommended by Yin (2009). The approach of Yin involves coding and categorizing data based on the major concepts in the literature that supports the theoretical framework of a study. Using this method, I ended up with a variety of categories.

Throughout the process of analysis, I took notes that explained the codes and categories, as well as the ways codes could be organized into broader categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used these notes to reach a final decision about the categories that represented the best fit, both with the prior literature and the codes derived from my data. Then I examined each line of the transcripts, field notes, and documents to determine if there was sufficient data to justify the inclusion of each of the
categories. In addition, I looked for ways to combine categories into explanatory themes. Following this, I examined the fit between these data and the themes, searching for other possible themes that might explain the data even more clearly. To assist me in the organization and management of the data, I utilized NF Classic software program for qualitative data analysis. The process resulted in a final set of broad categories.

**Writing the Report**

I used a chronological composition structure to report the case study, what Yin (2009) might call a linear-analytic structure. The writing of the case study report occurred at the same time as I was coding and analyzing data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Throughout the report, I used [ ] for conversations translated from the native language (Ewe) to the actual conversation in English that had not been recorded. In developing the individual portraits, I tried to recreate participants’ experiences in narrative form, in fact, in what Geertz (1973) calls “thick description”. Although some of the interviews were in Ewe, the native language of the people in the Abor area, I worked in collaboration with my research assistant, a graduate student at the University of Ghana, to translate the conversations without sacrificing important meanings.

**Triangulation**

My research provided access to multiple sources of data, so I was able to compare codes and categories across data sources and thereby to triangulate my data. As I previously indicated, I used interviews, participant observations, and documents as my primary sources. Drawing from different sources of information, I believe that I acquired
a rich and accurate representation of my informants’ experiences and how those experiences influenced and shaped their lives.

Throughout this process, I was an active participant-observer, and I kept a personal journal to record my reflections, thoughts, ideas, and to record my interactions with my informants. In the end, I found that the journal revealed the extent to which my prior beliefs and values influenced the study. The journal also showed the influence that the study had on my goals as a scholar. Because of what I was learning in the field, I even began looking at life differently. Moreover, learning about the lives of others reinforced my appreciation for the opportunities I have had in the U. S. to become who I am today. Most importantly, I learned about an unmet need in the young girl dropouts in Ghana and developed a determination to help in whatever ways I can.

I also learned that to be an exceptional researcher, I must not only seek to provide data, but also to develop an identity as a researcher. Throughout the process of analysis, I utilized phone calls to discuss or get clarification on issues or things that was said and that was not clear to me. To enhance further my analysis, I returned to the research site in the summer of 2010, from June through August, and consulted with some of my informants. This also helped me to continuously refine my interpretations to account for all the cases (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Wherever I uncovered inconsistencies, I utilized phone calls to those informants involved to verify and confirm that my data accurately reflected their perspectives and stories. More often than not, I listened to the recordings repeatedly in an effort to get a sense of the emotional responses
of the participants from their choice of words and expressions and the tones of their voices.

I also used this process to increase my understanding of the information revealed in the data as a whole. One of the dominant phrases that stands out and has stuck with me is, *Medibe mayi sukuu gake, nyemate ŋui o* [I want to go to school, but I can’t]. The more I listened to the recordings, the more it emphasized the effectiveness of social pressure applied by schools, society, husbands, and parents in channeling the girl child into the narrow roles of a daughter, wife, and mother.

**Ethical Issues**

Before I embarked on my research study, I sent my approved proposal for the research from Ohio University, Patton College of Education and Human Services, with all the documents from the office of Institutional Review Board (IRB) to the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy. I also provided a copy of my questionnaire for all the participants in the research to the Headmaster. This step in my research process was completed in a timely manner to avoid problems associated with conducting an unethical study. I was concerned about the informants’ confidentiality and made sure to get consent from the participating girls, their parents and the school authorities. I used pseudonyms to protect the identities of my informants and did not share the information I gathered with anyone. My research assistant signed confidentiality papers to ensure that she would not divulge the information from my informants with anyone. The transcripts, notes and tapes were secured in a safe place (under lock and key). I also honored the wishes of those informants who asked that they not be recorded.
**Trustworthiness**

Largely, the issue of trustworthiness in this study is similar to the issue of validity and reliability of data generated in the study. In the study, I used the four main criteria for establishing trustworthiness, which are, “credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability,” as directed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The effort was to address the manner in which the position of the research/researcher could blur “good research” (validity) and “goodness in research” (ethics).

Since the study focused on ways to rethink girl child education, it was important to question the assumptions of validity and the way the issue could be re-imagined as not to both blur and challenge issues of research ethics and accountability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed the concept of trustworthiness as an alternative to reliability and validity in case study. As shown in Table 4, the truth value of my research and its purported trustworthiness as a sound research activity rests in part upon the parameters that I have established for the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Table 4

*Trustworthiness/reliability and validity* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for Establishing Trustworthiness</th>
<th>Suggested Strategies</th>
<th>Strategies Employed in this Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Prolonged engagement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative case analysis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referential adequacy</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistent observation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member checks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Thick description</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposeful sampling</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Audit trail</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformability</td>
<td>Audit trail</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative researchers often face the issue of trustworthiness in their data. Within the realm of qualitative research, establishing that the data can be trusted is unequivocally difficult. In that case, the relationship between the researcher and participants raises a concern. In my situation, the relationship I developed with the participants in the study and the consistent consultation with my committee members elicited the understanding for which I was seeking. I employed multiple methods in the collection of data, and the
level of immersion helped ensure the trustworthiness of the data. According to Flick (2009), “The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood…as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (p. 231).

**Timeline**

The research took place over a period of eight months in several distinct stages. The first stage was a visit to the ethnographic site to acquaint myself with the culture and language of the people. The second stage included the interviews and informal conversations that took place in the school and community. In the third stage, I focused on observing teachers and students at work in the school setting. I then proceeded to the homes of participants for interviews and participant observations. I gathered information from those informants who had dropped out by conducting interviews with them in their homes. Sometimes, I interviewed my informants alone or independently; at other times, their parents were around. I also took time during this stage to make frequent visits to the other research sites, especially, the school to meet with teachers and have access to government documents regarding girl child education. The fourth or final stage of the research involved the coding, categorization, analysis, and the production of a draft manuscript. As mentioned above, this stage started before data collection had been completed as a way to allow the analysis process to contribute to decisions about the types of data that needed to be collected toward the end of my time in the field.

Although a preliminary visit to the site took place earlier, data collection and analysis, on the other hand, commenced in November 2009 through October 2010. The
timeframe offered the opportunity for a thorough use of time as an invaluable research resource. The length of time, as illustrated in Table 5, enabled me, the researcher, to exhaust library materials, meet with the participants, and confer with others on the nature of my interpretation.

Table 5

*Research Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Research Site &amp; Preliminary Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading of Literatures on the Subject and Data Collection</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion into Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Writing/ Corrections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The timeframe as outlined in Table 5, along with the method of data collection offered me avenues for evaluating multiple factors that impact girls’ access to education in the rural community of Abor. Additionally, the timeframe and methodology functioned as a method of triangulation at the same time (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In the process of gathering information about factors that impact girl child education and making analytical decisions with respect to the value of data and the ethics about case study, my committee provided me with invaluable resources and guidance. As many researchers do, I frequently consulted with members of my committee in an ongoing dialogue. The open dialogue and active participation in the research process helped direct the focus of the study to specific areas of interest from the point of view of education and educational outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Limitations

The limitations affecting this study included its relatively short duration, restricted amounts of time to study participants in their homes and communities, and limited number of available participants. Carrying out interviews and working on the analysis for a period of six months allowed me to collect data that was available at that time, but not beyond. I also believe that the time I spent observing the informants was not adequate to support conclusions about their daily activities. Because the informants knew they were being observed, I also believe that my presence may have somewhat influenced their behavior somewhat. Most importantly, realizing that I was from the United States, a well-known donor nation that has a large influence on the economy of Ghana, the false
assumption could be that I arrived to study their situation in order to help them out financially.

As mentioned earlier, my informants were chosen by people other than myself. The teachers and administrators who identified the informants may have selected those students they trusted, those who possibly could give the school a good name, or those who were more vocal than others were. The cultural belief among Anlo Ewe, and maybe throughout Ghana, is that children should “be seen and not heard” initially put me at a disadvantage as a researcher. Because of this belief and other cultural norms, the young girls tended to be shy and reserved. Some girls were embarrassed about their condition, and at times participants seemed unwilling to disclose the kinds of information that would have given me greater insight into their circumstances. Some mothers initially were protective of the culture, and the traditions and customs of the Anlo Ewe that influence decisions to allow their sons to go to school while the girls drop out to help the mothers raise money to educate their sons in schools.

On few occasions, with limited electricity at the research site, I experienced low batteries for my recorder, and had to repeat or reschedule the interviews. This taught me to be wary of relying on batteries as a power source for the recorder. Though Abor is on the national electricity grid, electric power is rationed and this resulted in my taking notes at some points in time. There were times when some parents of the informants were insistent on what their daughter should say. At one point, one of the girls sat quietly and closed up herself allowing her mother to talk. At other times, the mother or relative that the girl child lived with would whisper to the girl child in Ewe possibly to conceal
information. At times, in the presence of my research assistant, instead of speaking aloud responses to my interview questions, the informants rather gave me short to the point answers. They did not provide detailed explanations or extended responses even if I probed further.

Contrary to practices in many European countries and in the United States, Ghanaian girls do not have a tradition of diary keeping or journaling as a way to record and reflect on their experiences. Because of these circumstances, there were no documents I could use to verify their perceptions, beliefs, and the interpretations of their experiences as shared in the interviews. Since the duration of my research was limited, I did not give my informants notebooks or ask them to keep diaries of their daily experiences. In hindsight, I suspect the society does not have the tradition of keeping diaries or journals because they feel someone reading their diaries would be too invasive or infringe on their private lives. They might also have felt that the practice of sharing personal writings about one’s innermost feelings was discordant with their cultural norms and values.

Ewe language is tonal and very poetic and most of the time when some of my informants, especially, the opinion leaders and elders of the community responded to my interview questions with either idioms or proverbs, my research assistant found it difficult to interpret to me. In translating such idioms and proverbs from Ewe to English, some of the meaning would get lost in translation. This difficulty may have affected my results as some nuances in the culture might elude my attention. In addition to this challenge, I found that it was sometimes hard to interpret the narrative of my informants
because the same word often has different meanings when used by members of different Ewe speech communities.

**Delimitations**

The issues surrounding girl dropouts in Ghana’s education system are very complex and my study explored only the experiences of a small sampling of girls and other informants from Abor, an economically deprived rural community. The experiences of dropout girls from an urban setting are sure to be somewhat different from those of girls who drop out in rural areas. The study included six girls who dropped out from Abor Senior High School, their parents, opinion leaders, priests, school administrators, and teachers of Abor Senior High School. The experiences of this limited sample of participants cannot be viewed as a representative of the experiences of all dropout girls of Ghana.

**Recruitment of Informants**

As indicated earlier, the focus of the study was on factors that impact girl child education with specific reference to girls’ access to education in the rural community of Abor in the Volta Region of Ghana. In qualitative inquiry, the dominant sampling strategy is purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). The criterion used for the selection of participants who were young girls and have dropped out of school is stratified purposeful sampling (Janinski, 1996; Patton, 1990). Patton and Janinski have observed that stratified purposeful sampling enables the researcher to capture major variations, in addition to the identification of a common core (Janinski, 1996; Patton, 1990). This sampling is more illustrative of the range of general education documents in Ghana than being definitive on
the girl child (Janinski, 1996). The selection of this type of sampling was also based on the research topic and research questions.

Although I had hoped to have some influence on the selection of the girls to be interviewed, I later found out after a visit to the school to introduce myself that the headmaster and one other teacher had taken the initiative to select participants for me. All the girls selected dropped out of Abor Senior High School at various grade levels, at different times. The headmaster and the teachers selected these students probably because of their familiarity with the school’s programs and organizational environment. I also suspected that the headmaster and teachers selected those girls because they thought they would serve as ‘information rich cases’ (Patton, 2002). The teachers I interviewed taught some of the same students I interviewed. The teachers were from different disciplines, of different genders, and had different qualifications. Some of the teachers held undergraduate degrees and diplomas from various tertiary institutions. The Headmaster, in particular, had a Masters’ degree at the time of the study. All the teachers interviewed were Ghanaians and were employed by the Ghana Education Service.

In order to gather information needed on factors that contribute to girls who drop out of school and their lived experiences, it was necessary that young girls between the ages of 14 and 19 were selected from the Abor area. The research was, therefore, conducted with individuals who fit the research objectives. Girls who are between the ages of 14 to 19 are, according to UNICEF (2009), increasingly dropping out of school, not only in Abor, but throughout communities in Ghana. For that reason, to answer the research questions, it was necessary to interview significant others or husbands of girls
who drop out of school in order to understand their perception about girl child education. In addition, it was necessary to interview parents of girls who drop out of school, teachers, education administrators, opinion leaders, clergy, and elders as a means to gain insight into the uncodified occurrences and experiences of the girls (Obeng, 2002). It was equally important to cast the net on informants wide to gain information on the varied perceptions about female’s access to education in the presence of various factors such as economic, socio-cultural, and political structures within the Anlo Ewe community of Abor.

In Ghana, the impact of cultural, socio-educational, and political factors on rural girls’ education is prominent. Obeng (2002) asserts that “amongst Ghanaians, aspect of their belief systems and socio-educational and political crises in Ghana can have a significant impact on conditions of the formal educational outcome of girls” (p. 8). In order for me to understand the impact of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors on the formal education of girls in Abor area, it was necessary for me to gain access to the various community members in order to examine forces they believe are contributing to low educational outcomes for girls (Obeng, 2002). One important aspect of this research is my point of entry or “point de entrée” in research.

**Point of Entry/ Researcher Positionality**

When and where I entered my research site was important. I have already mentioned that the Anlo Ewe society is patriarchal. From the onset, I recognize I am an African American woman from America entering into a male dominated territory to conduct research on women or the girl child. I did not attend school in Ghana nor was I
born in the community. As a qualitative researcher it is important to acknowledge my position as a Westerner entering the non-Western region and culture in order to complete my research study. Creswell explains, “Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain world view that guides their inquiries” (2007, p. 74). Not acknowledging that researchers bring their worldview to their research can be damaging to the process, because attributions may be made that are not representative of the cultural context. Moreover, researchers may unwittingly superimpose their own interpretations on their research, both the process and interpretation of the data. I am primarily an outsider; however, in a discussion about the relationship between the researcher and the researched Farmer (1999) pointed out that the researcher should maintain links with the culture even if he or she never lived there. Furthermore, the research should ensure not to be “caught up in the routine experience of participants in a way that would hinder…discrimination of finer nuances of cultural practices” (p. 42). Holliday (2002) found appropriately approaching the research setting involves interactions between the culture of the setting and the culture of the research.

My intention during the data collection process was to be partially visible without being intrusive or imposing myself on the informants for this study. By presenting myself as an “in between” and attending and partaking in the communal activities, I had the opportunity to relate to my informants. Often, I tried to give back to the researched community something useful. Occasionally, I traveled with children from the village to the well (vudoto) to fetch water for individuals. I did not go in “just for my data”; instead, I was visible and helpful during the entire period of my data collection (Chamber, 1983).
Besides spending time with my informants in their homes, I went with them to their farms and markets and participated in their chores. Accordingly, these activities were helpful in building trust, which is necessary to informants’ openness to me. Farmer (1999) found such strategies valuable in leading to the acceptance of the researcher into cultures that are traditionally suspicious of outsiders.

As a researcher, I cannot shed my identities as an African American female and a citizen of the United States. Each aspect of my identity can have an impact on the collection of my data. Conversely, my identity as an “outsider” had a positive impact on the research process since sometimes as an outsider I saw things that were invisible to members of the cultural environment. In actuality, cultural practices and beliefs become so naturalized to those living with them so much that they hardly see the incongruence in them. In order to mitigate these impacts, I first acknowledged that I brought a unique worldview to the research, and then responded to that.

One way I mitigated my own positionality as an “outsider” in this cultural context was to keep that dynamic at the forefront of my awareness as I entered the community during data collection. In particular, I added to my daily field notes questions of how my positionality may have impacted or might impact my data collection on a given day. A secondary method of mitigating my positionality was through the research design itself. Given that I am interviewing numerous people, all of whom have their own points of view, these multiple interviews served as checks on one another by providing multiple perspectives from the people of the culture within which I was researching. A third method of responding to my own positionality was for me to informally check-in with a
member of that culture who would be considered an “insider”. Without compromising anonymity, I talked in very general terms about some of the questions that arose about the cultural context and practices.

As I immersed myself in the data collection process, I remained cognizant of the fact that there may be some blind spots in my research. This was done since it would be difficult for me to be aware of all the intricacies of the society that was outside the realm of my Western world. In the process, I acknowledged the fact that I have a partial understanding of the culture and the practices of the community. The reason for my partial understanding of the culture is that over the years, I have spent some time in Ghanaian communities; I have studied the Akan and Ewe language, and I am married to a Ghanaian man. All these experiences provided more than a slight glimpse and understanding of the culture in the area of my research. Given that we cannot remove ourselves from our worldviews, bringing an awareness of my own positionality in research is a critical step.

I have earlier mentioned that in this research, I used the descriptive style of report writing that draws a picture of something tangible through the use of words (Bassey, 1999, p. 87). The objective of this disciplined inquiry is to derive solid and well-textured findings essential to girl child education and educational goals in the 21st century.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I outlined and described the procedures used to collect data for this study. I discussed the data analysis techniques and provided information on the processes used to gain entry into the research site. In addition, I described my role as a
researcher and provided information on the issues confronted in collecting the data for this study.

I chose the case study and an ethnographic approach to this study because of its ability to provide information about the specific character of participants’ experiences and to answer the research questions. These methods helped me understand the lives and experiences of the girls who had dropped out of school. I employed case study method in order to describe the social space of the girls that were dropping out of school in the Abor area. I used ethnography because it allowed me to be on the ground and experience firsthand incidents in the lives of the participants that led to their dropping out of school. Experiencing their day-to-day lifestyles and listening to their own stories formed the primary basis for my understanding of the situation and helped explain participants’ experiences.

Based on data generated from the study, it is understandable that basic education in Ghana consists of six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, and four years in senior high school for a total of 13 years. The senior high school prepares students for university education. For the purpose of this research, a school age child is defined as between the ages of 6 to 15 years of age. However, statistical data on enrollment in schools in Ghana are not readily available; hence, a clear picture on girl child education does not emerge from any existing data.

I based my research on a constructivist (or interpretive) paradigm because I understood that the nature of the research questions and the qualitative approach to data gathering and data analysis would result in a narrative that tells the stories of participants.
In addition, it inevitably would reflect perspectives drawn from my own experiences as an African American woman from the United States. ‘My situation fits well with Lincoln and Guba’s (1994) characterization of researchers’ inability to enter research sites with a completely open mind:

No one enters a site in a mindless fashion: there is always prior formulations, as attested to by the fact that it is always possible to write out ahead of time what one expects to find there. (p. 305).

The study used several data gathering methods, namely, interviews, participant observations, and review of documents. Each method provided unique challenges, but the decision to combine methods contributed to the study’s validity because this approach permitted me to triangulate data from multiple sources. Qualitative data analysis involved the use of coding based on concepts present in the data combined with categorization based on major themes present in the extant literature. The resulting analysis supported a description of sites, portraits of several participants, and the identification of emergent themes.

The findings and analysis of data as reported in subsequent chapters is descriptive. I adopted Bassey, (1999), as well as Strauss and Corbin’s (1994) narrative style. In particular, I noted the informants’ answers by quoting strings of utterances from them to support my analytical claims to prevent idiosyncratic judgments and unsubstantiated claims. In so doing, my analytical claims are protected from rigorous public inspection or scrutiny. Furthermore, the interpretation of data comes not only from me, but more importantly, from the informants themselves. Such interpretations reflect
the participants’ own point of view and are shown to be relevant to the participants themselves.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, findings are provided to support the research questions established and presented in Chapter 1. The findings for this study are, therefore, derived from interviews, participant observations, educational documents, and field notes that examine causes of girls dropping out of school in Abor area. The causes for why girls drop out of school in Abor were examined through the perspective of the girls themselves who have dropped out of school, teachers, administrators, parents, opinion and traditional leaders, and clergy in the town of Abor. In addition, the regional director of education provided insight into the reasons why girls drop out of school in Ghana, and most specifically, in the Volta Region.

For the context of this study, the term “drop out” speaks to factors that cause girls to leave school before completing at the junior high (JHS) or senior high school (SHS) levels. For an even more nuanced understanding of this study, one could consider the factors that impact girls as push/pull factors. For example, in the findings it demonstrates that the girl child could be pulled from school by her parents because of their notion that she may become pregnant, or the economic conditions may cause her to be pushed from school due to lack of financial support. To this effect, the term “drop out” is synonymous with girls who leave school and who have not completed the required years at the JHS or SHS levels, but withdraw due to various factors.

In order to have a clear understanding of the problems of girl child education in Abor area, I posed three questions. The three research questions explored specifically: 1)
the existing factors that influence the informal education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana; 2) the impact of factors on the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana; and 3) addressing the effects of factors that impact girls in order to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana. The focus was to gather information regarding what factors impacted girls and caused the girl child to drop out of school.

In Chapter 3, I provided detailed information on the research site of Abor area. I employed an ethnographic case study approach to examine factors that impact formal educational outcomes of girls who drop out of school in this area. Findings in this study were derived from the transcribed interviews and field notes I generated from my research. The findings contribute to the unique perspectives on how the school, community, home, and educational policies impact issues of girl child education in Ghana. The multiple perspectives employed in the study provided greater insights into the dynamics of the community at-large as an institution implementing both codified and uncodified messages about the education of girls in Abor, Ghana.

As I immersed myself in the data during and after the period of transcribing the interviews and reviewing field notes, four distinct categories emerged, drawing attention to specific themes. The themes included the context of: 1) government policies and girl child education initiatives; 2) school environment and administrative structures; 3) socio-cultural; and 4) economics factors. In the following sections, the themes and how they impact the girl child’s formal educational opportunities are presented using multiple informants’ pseudonyms, voices, and perspectives. As noted earlier, data analysis utilized
“thick description”. However, it must be added that in presenting the informants’ interpretations, I enhanced them with my etic perspective (using an outside observer’s categorization), emic (analyzing with structural and functional elements), and observations during the research. The overall context or natural setting in which the culture of Abor manifested is also taken into consideration.

In this study, it is important to note the impossibility to separate each emerging theme completely from other themes. The themes emerge from a common social context and, hence, constantly interact with one another. For clarity and explanatory purposes, I present the four major themes. To illustrate this point, one of the major themes derived from the interviews and observations in this study is the economic factor. The economic factor is directly related to the socio-cultural factors that impact girl child education amongst the Anlo Ewe of Ghana. Hence, the culture of the Anlo Ewe, their belief systems, economics, education of parents, and family expectations are all woven into a web that influence the girl’s education in the community. Another example is school environment factors that hold sway, because education remains an important determinant of the economic and social opportunities for individuals. Therefore, the contexts of the themes presented in the findings are not only specific or isolated, but they are interrelated and interactive. Before the findings in this study are presented, I provide brief profiles of selective informants, along with their pseudonyms, who were interviewed for this study, and whose voices emanate within the findings.
Brief Profile of Selective Informants

Through interviews and focus group discussions with girls who have dropped out of school, their parents, teachers, school administrators, opinion leaders, clergy, traditional leader, and girl child education director, I was provided with data that assisted me in answering the research questions for this study. To provide findings to the research, it is important that I present background information on participants for this study that I interviewed; thereby, I have selected some of the participants to provide their brief profiles. One note that I would like to make here is that all of the informants in this study are Anlo Ewe, with the exception of the girl child education director.

Brief Profile of Girls

- Adzovi is 17 years of age, and one year ago she dropped out of school before entering into the Abor Pioneer Academy. Her drop out was due to the financial hardship of the family, because her family had to support two of her brothers who were attending the senior high school. She lives with her grandmother, mother, and four siblings in a compound located in Abor town. During the study period, Adzovi decided to go to Accra, the capital city of Ghana, to seek employment opportunities in housework or petty trade.

- Awoto is 19 years old, and dropped out of school upon becoming pregnant. She lives with her mother, and is not married. The family of her mother has a farm that they work on to produce cassava and corn, but their crops were failing; consequently, impacting their economic woes. After the study was underway, Awoto left Abor town to go to Accra to seek employment opportunities in petty
trading and housekeeping. When she left for Accra, she did not take her two year old daughter with her, but rather left the daughter in the care of her mother.

- Afi is 18 years of age, and is considered to have dropped out of school due to her low scores on the Basic Elementary Certificate Exam (BECE). According to Afi’s mother they faced financial hardship, which made it difficult for Afi to focus on obtaining an education. A few months after dropping out of school, Afi became pregnant and had a son out of wedlock. At the time of this study, her son was three months. She lives with her mother in Abor, and each day they travel to different markets to sell “used handbags”.

- Akuwa is 19 years of age, and dropped out of school after completing the last year of Junior High School. She is not married and has a son who is one year and eight months old. She was considered to be very intelligent and competitive in sports. Akuwa did well on her BECE exam, but was unable to attend senior high. She lives with her father, two brothers, two uncles, and an aunt. She seldom sees her mother, who now lives in the capital city of Accra. Her father made the decision to send her two brothers to school, instead of allowing her to attend senior high school. Her father has education to the tertiary level while her mother did not complete the primary school level. Akuwa does not work, but helps her father on the farm and performs the household chores and upkeep of the home for her family.

- Adwoa is 19 years of age. She dropped out of school after her first semester in the high school at Abor Pioneer Academy. Adowa lives with both her mother and
father who are farmers. As they were faced with economic hardships, Adwoa’s parents were unable to keep her school fees paid, in addition to paying school costs for her brother’s education in the junior high school. Once she dropped out of school, she became pregnant and delivered a daughter. Each day Adwoa either accompanies her parents to the farm or she goes to the market to sell the produce from her family’s farm. During the evenings, she sells kenkey and fried fish at the local market in Abor.

- Mamavi is 18 years of age, and dropped out of school during her first year of senior high school at Abor Pioneer Academy. Mamavi is not married and has a son who is one year and three months old. At the time of this study, Mamavi lived with an aunt in Abor town, and is a petty trader of bananas and oranges. She sells her produce at a major car station in the town. Her father lives a long distant away from Abor with his wife and children, and her mother, who is a petty trader, lives in the capital city, Accra.

**Brief Profile of Opinion Leaders**

- Mr. Dorbu, a retired educationist, entered the Abor community in the early 1970s, and has been there ever since. Unlike many of the informants for this research study, he is not originally from the Abor area. He is Anlo Ewe whose family is from a village a few miles from the research area. Mr. Dorbu is a middle-aged man who was a District Specialist and trained in psychology and history at two of the major universities in Ghana. As a retiree from teaching at the senior high school level, he now serves as adjudicate for the District Magistrate.
Mr. Nutor, an elderly man over 60 years of age, is a retired educationist, and according to him he is an “opinion leader in community circle, and a traditional leader in customs.” Mr. Nutor plays an important role in the chieftaincy matters, and proclaims to “have a lot of roles.” He was a professor of Political Science at a major university in Ghana and has since retired from the university in Ghana. He was born in Abor; and to be more specific, he was born in the house in which he now lives and where I met and interviewed him.

**Brief Profile of Religious Leader**

- Reverend Father Agbadzeanyi is a Catholic clergy. Father Agbadzeanyi is a citizen of Abor, a middle-aged man in his 60s, who is said to have from a very early age devoted his life to the propagation of the Catholic Church doctrines in Ghana.

**Brief Profile of School Administrators and Teachers**

- Mr. Afanya has a dual role in the community: He is a mathematics teacher at the senior high school, and holds the position as an opinion leader in the community of Abor. Mr. Afanya holds an undergraduate degree from a major university in Ghana, and stated that he was “born and bred” in Abor. He has taught at Abor Pioneer Academy for 15 years.

- Mr. Afetsi is a young man who appeared to be approximately 30 years of age. During my time spent with him, he made it known to me that he, too, is a native of Abor. He has studied at a major university in Ghana, and holds a Master
Degree in Science. Mr. Afetsi has been teaching at Abor Pioneer Academy for the past five years.

- Mr. Agbavor, the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy is a native of Abor and an old student of the school. He has been the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy since 1997, and at the time of this study, he was at the last stage of his tenure at the school and was due to retire in December. He holds Master of Science degree in Mathematics from one of the premier universities of Ghana.

- Mr. Agbanyo is a teacher of both mathematics and science. He has taught at Academy for 10 years. Mr. Agbanyo holds Masters Degrees in both mathematics and science from major universities in Ghana. He is a native of Abor and also graduated from Academy. He is married and a father of three sons and one daughter. All of his sons are now attending the major universities in Ghana at the undergraduate level.

- Mrs. Agbelie currently serves as the administrative secretary at Abor Pioneer Academy. She has held this position as administrative secretary for the past 10 years. She has lived in Abor her entire life and completed senior high school at Abor Pioneer Academy. Mrs. Agbelie is married and a mother of two sons and one daughter. Her youngest son is a student at the junior high school in Abor. Her elder son is a student at one of the major universities in Ghana, and her daughter attends a teacher training college.

- Ms. Dovlo (Madam Dovlo as the students call her) is a Home Economics teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy. The girl informants of this study acknowledge that Ms.
Dovlo is one of the best and most encouraging teachers at Abor Pioneer Academy. Ms. Dovlo is in her early 30s, has never married, and has no children. She is a native of Abor, but did not attend high school at Abor Pioneer Academy, but rather attended high school in the city of Accra.

- Mrs. Gbodzo is a teacher of English at Abor Pioneer Academy. She has taught at Abor for three years, and is a native of the area of Abor. She is married and has two sons and one daughter, each of them too young to attend school. Before coming to teach at Abor Pioneer Academy, she was teaching in a rural community in North Volta Region.

- Mr. Nuwosu serves as a science teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy, and has taught there for the past 10 years. He holds a Master degree from one of the major universities in Ghana. He is a native of Abor, and completed his senior high school at Abor Pioneer Academy.

- Mrs. Tetsi is a native of Abor; hence, she was born, raised, and has lived most of her life in Abor town. She currently serves as an English teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy. She taught at the Kindergarten level for approximately ten years, lower and upper primary and then in the junior high school. Interestingly, she did not immediately go to training college after junior secondary school (junior high school), but rather at the age of 15 she married just after completing junior secondary school, wherein she had four children.
Brief Profile of Girl Child Education Director:

- Mrs. Agboda is the Volta Regional Director of Girl Child Education Unit (GCEU). She supervises the Abor area (Keta District), and resides in Ho, the capital city of the Volta Region. She has served in the role of Regional Director of GCEU for the past four years.

Brief Profile of Women’s Focus Group:

- The focus group consisted of six women of various ages with the youngest being 20 years of age and the eldest being the age of 70.

Presentation of Findings

Government Policies and Girl Child Education Initiative Factors

Since Ghana’s independence in 1957, the government has made various attempts to increase the enrollment of children at the primary school-age level. With the implementation of intervention programs such as the Education Strategy Plan for 2003 to 2015, the Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (FCUBE), there is a demonstration of the commitment towards the achievement of ensuring that all children of elementary school-age are enrolled.

According to the Ministry of Education (1996), the FCUBE policy states that:

The Government is committed to making schooling from Basic Stage 1 through 9 free and compulsory for all school-age children by the year 2005.

Although the FCUBE implemented the coverage of tuition costs for all students at the basic education level (primary and junior high school), what is not addressed in the reform policy are other costs involved in educating children that limits a child’s ability to
continue schooling. This is presented in a report by the World Bank (2004) that found that:

While in principle there has always been free universal primary education in Ghana, fees charged at the local level have been one factor in restraining enrollments. Free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE), introduced in 1996, aimed at eliminating these fees.

The efforts of FCUBE Programme was to bring about equity in education for boys and girls through access, participation, retention and achievement (GES, 2005). The findings from educational documents provides evidence that the implementation of FCUBE has increased enrollment at the basic levels (primary and junior high school) (Akyeampong et al., 2007; Thompson & Casley-Hayworth, 2008); yet, there continues to be a low enrollment of students at the senior high school level. While this argument provides a picture of girls who are not accounted for quantitatively, what is missing is the qualitative picture of why girls drop out in the face of FCUBE policies.

During my meeting with the Volta Regional Director of Girl Child Education Unit (GCEU), Mrs. Agboda indicated that the Girl Child Initiative is of a major concern in leveraging gender equality and equity in education for girls in the Ghanaian school system. Mrs. Agboda, who supervises the Abor area, asserted that regardless of the policy of FCUBE to cover tuition costs, poverty continues to be the number one issue of why girls drop out of school. She reported that:

Poverty, I will say it is number one even for the region. Even when we have the more endowed districts [inaudible] we still have certain communities that we
realize the poverty level is very low. You go there you are telling them to send their child to school. And even you look at the community the surroundings where they cannot even afford one good meal a day. And then let alone even some for the education of the children and especially the girls; it becomes a problem. And then believe me or not, still we have low value for girl education.

Although Mrs. Agboda was unable to provide statistics on the number of girls that drop out in Abor area, she provided me with a monitoring report conducted by UNICEF in 2007 through 2008. This report only focused on Nkwanta and Krachi East Districts of the Volta Region. The two districts are similarly situated in the Volta Region like Abor Pioneer Academy. Nevertheless, the report notes that within the primary school in these two locations, Nkwanta and Krachi East Districts, there is a low enrollment of especially girls, low retention rate of girls, poor infrastructure of schools, and a high teenage pregnancy rate (UNICEF, 2009). The example of Nkwanta and Krachi East Districts are significant in that they provide an overview of factors that impact girls’ educational outcomes throughout Ghana, especially in rural areas.

Mrs. Agboda emphasized that due to the alarming increase in the dropout rate of girls throughout Ghanaian schools, the government of Ghana embarked upon the establishment of offices throughout Ghana to initiate programs to assist in the education of girls. A report by Ghana Education Services (2005) reflects this notion:

In June 1995, a National Seminar on Girls’ Education was held in Accra because it was realised that a special emphasis and a coherent plan of action were needed
if girls were to gain access to school, participate fully, and come out as achievers.

Because of the girl child initiative and FCUBE, at the national level, Ghana has made significant strides regarding girl child education initiatives. However, the UNICEF (2009) monitoring report exposes flaws that hinder funding for programs that increase involvement of girls in schools in order to aid the girls to reach higher heights in their educational attainment. These funding drawbacks are what seem to be essential in providing the necessary tools and resources to fund girls’ education in Ghana. The UNICEF (2009) monitoring report states that:

The GEU needs a budget for its activities. Regions and districts must receive sufficient resources to play an active role in promoting girls’ education….

Additional funds should be leveraged to support girls’ education programmes that contribute to the achievement of girls. A well-focused and well-budgeted action plan should be developed to ensure that resources leveraged are applied systematically. (p. 10)

A lack of funding for GEU, thereby, has an effect on smaller rural areas, such as the Volta Region. Mrs. Agboda concurred with the report of UNICEF (2009) stating that funding allocated from Ghana’s government to carry out girl child education programs in her area is difficult to obtain. According to Mrs. Agboda:

The low funding sources that is budgeted for girl child education makes it difficult to stay motivated to keep the programs going.
The remarks made by Mrs. Agboda must be taken into consideration because they point to the issue of whether or not programs and initiatives such as girl child education are being taken seriously. It also adds to the disparity between theory, policy, and practice. In this case, without adequate funding the girl child education program in the Volta Region and regions throughout Ghana may be considered as nonessential and meaningless to girls achieving in the education system.

Another issue affecting girls’ formal educational outcome is the lack of national and local policies regarding the pregnancy of girls in the school system. In all of the documents that I reviewed on girl child initiatives and government education reform initiatives in Ghana (MOE, 2006; GES, 2002; and UNICEF, 2009), there was no mention of any policies stipulating that when a school girl becomes pregnant she has to be expelled from school. Additionally, there are no policies forbidding girls from returning to school after they deliver the child. This is demonstrated in the remarks made by Mr. Afanya, a math teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy and an opinion leader in Abor town. Mr. Afanya states that:

And somebody who had children before 18 will be offended, so we normally ask those people to go to nearby schools. You can be pregnant if you are in final year, and write your exam. But as soon as you deliver, if you are in your first year you go to another school. You will not deliver and come back to the same school.

Imbedded in the statement of Mr. Afanya is the expression of an unwritten or uncodified policy to which girls must adhere should they become pregnant during their schooling.

Mr. Afanya’s statement is important because it points to what appears to be the disparity
between policy formulation at the national level and implementation of the policy at the local level. Nowhere in any of the government education policy documents did I find a statement forbidding a pregnant girl child from returning to school after delivery of her baby.

The lack or absence of a policy on girls who drop out of school and become pregnant is shown through Mamavi’s testament. At the time I met Mamavi, one of the girl informants who dropped out of school, she was selling oranges at the local “car station”, and often talked about going back to school. At the time of my research Mamavi was 18 years old. A year prior to this study, Mamavi had dropped out of school when she became pregnant. When I asked her the reasons why she dropped out of school, and what her future plans were towards obtaining formal education, she said:

I dropped out of school. I was just enjoying the company of my boyfriend and got pregnant in the process. As it is now, I am looking for all possible means to go back to school.

Mamavi’s hope to return to Abor Pioneer Academy is not an option. What I have learned in my interview with Mr. Afanya, is that should Mamavi aspire to continue her formal education, she would be required to attend another school outside of Abor area. It is clear from Mamavi’s statement that girls were dropping out of the school for reasons other than financial problems, and once they become pregnant they do not return to Abor Pioneer Academy.

One of the main issues affecting girls’ determination in school is the local politics that affect educational policies in Abor. In my interview with Mr. Nutor, a retired
educationist and opinion leader in the community, he explained that he sees no effort by
the national government to enhance the education of the girl child in rural communities in
Ghana. In an answer to the question of how national educational policies and educational
initiatives influence girl’s education in Abor, he stated:

National politics is under a roof in the people. National politics is something in
the air. (Laughter). It doesn’t affect the people so much [in Abor], and local
politics haven’t got much to do with this kind of school system at all. National
politics is strong only in the capital and not in the rural area. It affects the
populous only at the time of politicking, during the electioneering campaign.
During the periods and so on, allow us – it’s a thing for Accra. Accra and Kumasi.
That is where national politics belong. As of now when you begin to ask
questions of national politics here in the local areas, so they have very little to tell
you about that – not the schooling. Local politics has to do with first, the power
hierarchy, the local chief, and his elders, and so on. And they sort of try to
influence the people in one way or the other. In fact I’m at the center of local
politics.

In addition to the importance of what is embedded in Mr. Nutor’s statement is the issue
of national verses local politics that affects educational policies in rural Ghanaian
communities. I discussed the issue with the Father Agbadzeanyi, a Catholic Priest who is
well versed in Anlo Ewe culture, tradition and customs. Father Agbadzeanyi shared his
view not as a Catholic priest, but as a Ghanaian on the national politics on girl child
education:
The only thing is that – now the way uhh the government or people are sort of pulling – the politicians, you can see that they want votes. So if they shout like anybody, the girl must go to school, she must go to school, then they will get the vote from ladies. So if you are watching very well, it’s like everybody is talking about the girl child.

The remarks by Mr. Nutor and Father Agbadzeanyi seem to be in sync with one another because they point to the discrepancies between national government initiatives or policies on girl child education and the implementation of such policies at the local level.

On another level, findings from my data also confirm the fact that there is a discrepancy between utterances of male and female teachers in the school system. Perhaps an important factor to mention is that male teachers see things from their male dominant positions, whereas the female teachers see it from their subjugated positions. An example is what the four girl informants say as against the above comments by Mr. Nutor, Mr. Afanyo, and Father Agbadzeanyi regarding the implementation of educational policies. In an interview with the girl informants, they all seemed to express interest in education and the impact of education on their lives. I asked each informant if they were aware of girl child initiatives by the Ghana government through its educational policies. Individually, they made the following points:

- Adwoa: Yes. The education now is giving more attention to the girl child.
- Afi: Yes. Ghana’s media carried lots of programs about girl child.
- Mamavi: Yes, I always see on televisions programs about girl child education and on print media.
• Adzovi: Yes. Everyday there were programs on mass media promoting
girl child education. There are increased in girl enrollment into education
institutions.

The statements from the girls indicate they are aware of girl child initiative efforts present
in Ghana’s education system from media sources, and not from school or local sources in
Abor. The findings in this study indicate that regardless of whatever initiatives the
government puts in place for girl child education, its implementation at local levels
appears to be more aligned with what suits the customs and traditions of the community.
Thus, government policies are not fully adhered to at the local levels.

**School Environment and Administrative Structure Factors**

Abor Pioneer Academy is situated in the southeastern corner of Abor Township.
The school has a welcoming atmosphere. In fact, during the period of my data collection,
each time I arrived at the school everyone was always friendly and helpful to me. I was
always welcomed by teachers, faculty, and students, which indicates the positive social
relationships and attitudes that are important to a sound educational environment.
Externally, the Abor Pioneer Academy is a well-maintained school. And from my
observations it appears to encourage a climate that fosters school connectedness, which in
turn may boost students’ educational achievement goals.

The organizational or administrative structure, which is an integral feature of the
education system of the school was examined. The physical and social environment of a
school is the thread that connects a multitude of activities on the school’s campus. In
many respects, this thread is almost invisible, yet everyone experiences its influence. Mr.
Agbavor, the outgoing headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, stated that among other things that the school has a structure laid down by the Ghana Education Services (GES).

Mr. Agbavor maintained that:

As it is the GES standards – each school is to have an administrative body with the headmaster as the chief administrator. The headmaster is supported by two assistants in the day-to-day administration of the school. Additionally, there’s the school board and the PTA, the parent teacher association. Headmasters work with the school board and the PTA of the school for effective running of the school.

The school board’s role is that of administrative agency. The PTA help raise funds to support teaching and learning in the school.

From my interview with Mr. Agbavor, although school boards and the parent teacher associations are discouraged from becoming involved in the day-to-day operation and administration of schools, the demands for public accountability dictate some level of involvement in the administration of the school system. Public accountability requires that the school board must, at a minimum, provide oversight, adopt standards, and assess progress of the school towards the accomplishment of key objectives of the government’s education policies. On the other hand, the functions of the school’s administration require knowledge of the educational procedures instituted by the Ghana Education Service to accomplish the government’s educational policies. The goals of education cannot be achieved without some degree of administrative oversight, which is the essence of the headmaster’s position in Abor Pioneer Academy. The school environment context is a major factor that impacts the formal educational achievements of girls. At the research
site, I engaged myself in a careful observation of the physical structure, the students, the staff and dynamics of the research site. The power relation of the administration of Abor Pioneer Academy is well structured. The administrative structure is best understood in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Administrative Chart of Abor Pioneer Academy
A close study of the school's administrative structure, as exemplified in Figure 1 reveals a definite pattern of gender-based roles in Abor Pioneer Academy. I learned that the headmaster, Mr. Abanyo, and his assistants, who are the leaders of the entire school, are all males. All the department heads are males with the exception of the Home Economics Department, which is a female. I learned from my interviews that men held most positions of power, responsibility and authority in the teaching staff, as well as school administration. In the case of nonteaching and other administrative posts, men held not only the majority, but also the most important positions. The assistant headmaster responsible for administration is a male, and the head of the accounting department is a male. The few women on the teaching staff were in the Home Economics Department, while the rest were in other nonteaching staff positions such as administrative secretary and receptionists. Another area of interest is the academic or teaching roster of the school.

The teaching roster shown in Table 6 is a resource directory of high quality teaching personnel at Abor Pioneer Academy who are especially well suited for working with the students in each subject area. Each is an experienced educator and supposed to support students, irrespective of ethnicity, gender or religion, to make connections between their subject interest and the standards expected of them. The teachers are supposed to be skilled in integrating concepts in all subject areas with skills that the students need for their professional development.
Subject Roster for Abor Academy Pioneer Academy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elective Science</th>
<th>Core Science</th>
<th>Language Arts</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Home Economics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHS 1 to SHS 2</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Female Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS 3 to SHS 4</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>Female Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close look at the Table 7 reveals levels of power and authority sharing between the men and women. This basic staffing pattern reflects and reinforces the gender biases in the school through assignments allotted to committees and other staff members. Male staff members dominate positions such as departmental chairs and core subject teachers. The academic staffing pattern of the school meant that the ratio of male teachers to female teachers in the school is imbalanced. The presence of gender dynamics in staff leadership, teachers’ perceptions of girls, advising of girls during course selection, and how academic performance is addressed constitute school environmental forces that militate against girls’ formal educational outcomes/achievements.

A close look at the traditional hierarchical administrative structure of Abor Pioneer Academy shows it is based on a collaborative system that aims at personalizing services to students by separating or dividing the school into small units. The headmaster is the head of the school. As the head of the school, the headmaster has the responsibility to improve teaching and learning. According to the findings, the headmaster is seen as
educational visionary, instructional and curriculum leader, assessment expert, disciplinarian, community builder, public relations expert, budget analyst, facility manager, special programs administrator, and expert overseer of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives.

The headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, Mr. Agbavor, is an old student of the school. He holds a Master of Science degree in Mathematics from one of the premier universities of Ghana. As the one in charge of the administration of the school, he is the guiding force, providing not only support for the teachers, but also direction for the students as well. Mr. Agbavor monitors all activities within the school and acts as a liaison between what goes on in the school and those in the general community. From my observations, Mr. Agbavor makes every effort to meet requests from parents, school board members, and ensure government policies are maintained in the school. In an interview with Mr. Agbavor he stated that:

During my tenure at the school, I initiated changes to increase academic performance of girls. I brought the community and the school together to understand the opportunities in enhancing the education of both girls and boys.

From this interview, I realized that the vital role of the headmaster is in providing leadership for school initiatives, serving as a forum for citizen input relevant to public education, and inculcating the beliefs, behaviors, and symbolic representations that define the organizational culture of the school system. At another time, Mr. Azameti who has been at Abor Pioneer Academy since 1995, commented on Mr. Agbavor’s initiatives at the school:
Under the first headmaster under which I worked, really, you didn’t see much development in terms of infrastructure, because at that time everything was being done from Accra. And under Mr. Agbavor he was very innovative, yeah, in dealing with infrastructure. So most of the buildings, the new ones that we have were done through his own initiative. He internally generated funds from other ends. He did a lot [emphasis added] for the school. Upon assuming the leadership of Abor Pioneer Academy, Mr. Agbavor initiated changes to favor girls in the school and brought the community and the school to understand the opportunities in enhancing the education of both girls and boys.

To this effect, Mr. Agbavor stated that when he took over the administration of the school in 1996, there were 250 students with only one-fourth being girls. Through his instrumentation, by 2010 there were over 1,070 students with girls making almost one-third. This is demonstrated in an excerpt of an interview where Mr. Agbavor recaptures his initiatives at Abor Pioneer Academy:

Researcher: When you came to Abor Pioneer Academy in 1996 how many students were there?

Mr. Agbavor: 250 students.

Researcher: Were there records there at the time on gender?

Mr. Agbavor: Boys were more than the girls.

Researcher: When you left were the numbers still more boys than girls.

Mr. Agbavor: Yeah, more boys than girls. Only I don’t have the figures.

Researcher: Well, when you left how many students were there?
A. One thousand seventy.

With the increase in the number of students at Abor, to ensure that the school environment was welcoming and protective for the girl child, Mr. Agbavor made the school build a boarding house/hostel to accommodate the girls. The hostel accommodated 300 girls and 100 boys.

Okay, when I came there were no accommodations for students that come from outside Abor. So, I gave out my bungalow to the girls. The bungalow took almost 40 students free of charge so that the girls can come – because I have my own accommodation in town. I was first staying with my father, so I gave out the bungalow to the girls as their hostel. So more girls started coming, because what threw a lot of students away was accommodation. They didn’t have any good accommodation. So after three years we built our own hostel for boys and girls. That took 300 girls and then 100 boys. We started building classrooms from PTA funds. So we had a lot of classrooms, furniture. We also appealed to some people in town, churches, and individuals. They gave us money. And some families provided the land for these structures – school land, yeah. Families provided a big portion of the land for the hostels and then the classrooms. Then we arranged with other people in town to give out their houses for students to rent at considerable prices so that this was done. And a lot of students were well accommodated, with teachers put in charge of them in town.

Apart from building hostels, Mr. Agbavor devised a tuition plan that would meet the harsh economic realities of the students and their parents. The effort was to draw more
students to Abor Pioneer Academy. According to Mr. Agbavor, the school environment and classroom interventions that were put in place increased girls’ interest:

Yeah, and with the increasing – then apart from accommodation program we spread out school fee in such a way that even the poorest student could pay. Because school fee a year was around four-hundred thousand. Yes, so we didn’t collect all of this in a year – at a go. So you could pay one-hundred thousand every month you could pay something. After you finish paying the four-hundred thousand for the whole year. So payment of fees was flexible. Yes, we spread it in such a way you could pay at your own pace, prevented you are able to finish paying before the year end. So this has attracted a lot of students to the school. Unlike other schools you must pay at the beginning of the school first time for the year.

Mr. Agbavor indicated that despite the tuition plan his administration devised, it was still difficult for some families to pay the 15 Ghana cedis, and parents withdrew their daughters from the school.

They all want to be on the compound [school campus], because of evening study, lights, water, everything was there. So they have no problem. And the fee they pay for hostel is very cheap – 150,000 cedis [15 new Ghana cedis equal to approximately 10 U.S. dollars] for the year, as compared to other schools, where they pay 300 cedis [30 new Ghana cedis] or 400 cedis [40 new Ghana cedis].

Despite Mr. Agbavor’s initiatives to alleviate economic pressures by instituting a tuition payment plan and building hostels for girls there continues to be a pull factor that makes
it that girls drop out of school. The continuing low rate of girls to complete school at the senior high school level, widens the gap between males and females in education achievement; thereby, continuing a cycle of gender disparity in the school and community.

**Gender Dynamics in Leading Roles**

I learned from my review of teachers’ assignment roster at Abor Pioneer Academy that there were definite patterns of gender roles in the academy. Mr. Agbavor, the outgoing headmaster, stated that there are:

- 46 teachers and 20 administrators. There are two assistant headmasters. One in charge of administration and the other in charge of academics. In all there are fewer female teachers to that of their male counterparts who teach all subjects except the home economics.

The headmaster and the assistant headmasters, who are the leaders of the entire school, are all males. I also came to know that men held all positions of power, responsibility, and authority in the teaching staff and school administration. From the entire workers’ list, male staff members dominated positions such as departmental chairs, core subject teachers such as in math, science and English. On several of my visits to the school, I learned that men on the staff, such as assistant headmasters and departmental chairs, all had their individual offices with their names on the doors. On the other hand, women such as the administrative secretaries, clerks, and the receptionist were clustered into one larger office.
Findings from my interviews with teachers reveal that many of the current teachers and administrative staff, both males and females, were former students of the school and, in particular, natives of Abor area. For instance, according to Mr. Agbavor, the outgoing headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, he mentioned that he has lived in Abor most of his life and is a former student. Mr. Afanya, the math teacher (who is also an opinion leader in the community) said he too had lived in Abor throughout his childhood and adulthood. Mr. Afanya stated with pride that:

Like I said I have been born, bred in this town. I left and I came back. And I’m teaching here.

What Mr. Afanya states above was the sentiment of most of the teachers I interviewed. From the data, most of the teachers and administrative staff at the Abor Pioneer Academy are originally from Abor town. The male/female ratio is not only limited to the teaching staff alone. I observed that because most, if not all, the teachers are male there is the possibility of entrenching the patriarchal character of Anlo Ewe community into the Abor Pioneer Academy. Such a tendency is possible because gender bias is perpetuated by systems of patriarchy especially where male-dominated structures and social arrangements exist in the society. Since males dominate Abor Pioneer Academy, it is possible that male norms operate throughout all social institutions in the school and in the end is the standard to which all persons adhere.

**Views on Girl Child Education**

In this study, I found out that the most likely people to drop out of school in Ghana are girls. In interviews with six teachers, four males and two females, I asked each
of them whether boys or girls were the most likely to drop out of school. In answering my question, not one informant on the teaching staff said anything about the vulnerability of the boys. Instead, they itemized their ideas about the girl child indicating she is more vulnerable and susceptible to dropping out of school more easily than boys. According to the teachers:

- Mr. Agbanyo: I think that the girls are most likely to drop out of school. This may be due to lack of parental care, teenage pregnancies or death of parents, thus, becoming an orphan. Again, girls are more vulnerable.

- Mr. Afetsi: Girls, some due to financial problems, peer pressure. Some inability of parents to cater for them.

- Ms. Dovlo: Girls. Because they are vulnerable and easily influenced by peer pressure.

- Mr. Azameti: Girls. One, truancy; two, numerous house chores; and three, vulnerability of girls.

- Mr. Nuwosu: Girls are more likely than boys to drop out. Girls lack of parental care or peer influence.

- Mrs. Gbodzo: Girls, because of numerous house chores.

Each of the teachers, including the female teachers, stated that education is elusive for the girl child. The discussions highlight issues of socio-cultural patterns in the home combined with the relatively poor quality of parental supervision, thereby, placing girls, their education, and development in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position. Even if in
the Abor community education connotes the acquisition of something good or something worthwhile, the girl child from the point of view of the teaching staff is disadvantaged.

From the discussion with the teachers, I learned that in the Abor area parental care, economic hardships, teenage pregnancies, death of parents, financial problems, and peer pressure are some of the factors challenging the education of girls. On the other hand, I observed that the teachers did not mention in their responses the role of the school environment in the education of the girl child. Instead, the teachers described the girl child in negative terms, such as “has a disruptive behavior” or ‘lacks interest in school”. What I also deduced from the data is that when each teacher describes the character, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of both boys and girls in their classes, each of them has something negative to say about the girl child, but at the same time, provides positive attributes to boys:

- Mr. Agbanyo: Girls are naturally timid and highly emotional. Boys are determined to be successful in education
- Mr. Afetsi: Girls, hardly are attentive in class. They have high interest in trading and handiwork. As for boys they are abreast with current national events.
- Ms. Dovlo: Girls. They see no profit in her attending school. As for boys they are above-average work. They aim at good profession after education.
- Mr. Azameti: Girls, because some have good family background they are always interested in being very neat in appearance. Boys are good in math. Shows signs of being studious.
- Mr. Nuwosu: Girls. Very calm and submissive. Boys all the time show manly and leadership qualities. Boys are hard working and strong.

- Mrs. Gbodzo: Girls, their school work is below-average. Shows disorderly conduct often. Boys are responsible and well-focused. Boys are good in class attendance.

In my effort to understand the images and conceptualize them, I categorized the various attributes provided in the teachers’ statements and assigned these attributes by gender as shown in Table 7:

Table 7
Attributes of female and male students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timid</td>
<td>Good attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly emotional</td>
<td>Determined for success in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly attentive in class</td>
<td>Shows signs of being studious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High interest in trading/handiwork</td>
<td>Aims at good profession after education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees no profit in her attending school</td>
<td>Shows manly and leadership qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good family background</td>
<td>Abreast with current national events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very neat in appearance</td>
<td>Good in math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very calm and submissive</td>
<td>Above-average work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School work is below-average</td>
<td>Hard working and strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows disorderly conduct often</td>
<td>Responsible and well focused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recognizing the critical importance of schools, both as socializing agents and as factors in the social mobility of the citizenry, the data in Table 7 sheds light on the gender gaps that exist in teachers’ view on character and educational success of both boys and girls in the school system. The few benefits of education to girls and the positive terms teachers used to describe or talk about the female students had little to do with actual school retention or academic success. From the above findings, the only positive things the teachers said about the girls had something to do with their "neat appearance" and not their academic capabilities. In contrast, the teachers described male students as "responsible," "hardworking," and "focused."

I asked girl informants if there were differences in treatment of boys to that of girls in the school. This interview with informants took place at the school in one of the available administrative rooms. At the time I asked the question, a male teacher walked by and on seeing the face of the teacher, the informants were hesitant in answering my questions. After the male teacher had passed by, they all gave me these answers:

- **Adzovi**: When it comes to the school chores and punishment, the treatment is the same.
- **Amavi**: There is no difference. The boys and girls do take the same school chores or punishment the same.
- **Awoto**: Girls do sweeping and cleaning jobs. While boys do cutting of trees, gardening and digging works.
- **Akuwa**: The treatment in terms of school chores and punishment, they were the same.
• Mamavi: Girls are given less work than boys.

• Afi: Things the same

In my understanding, the arrival of the teacher might have influenced the response of the girls. The concealment of their true or inner feelings might be intuitively out of fear from a superior, and this time, a male superior, who is also a teacher. Two days after meeting with girl informants at the school, I had another interview session with two of the girls, Mamavi and Akuwa, at my host family’s house, away from the school. During this interview session with Mamavi and Akuwa, I posed the same question as to differences in how boys are treated versus girls in the school, and their responses were different – seemingly free from fear of reprisals. They talked of the varied expectations required of girls and boys in the school system, and the way girls were punished for the least offence in the school and home:

• Akuwa: Sometimes, the punishments are not only insults, but also something that breaks your heart.

• Mamavi: At times, I cry because the classes are hard, the teacher cares less about we girls. They don’t help you in math and science but punish you when you make mistakes.

The story of Mamavi and Akuwa is similar to girls in other communities of Africa. In a study carried out by Woolman (2001) in four different countries in sub-Saharan Africa, students perceived school as boring, the course of study hard to conceptualize, and the teachers very uncaring and sometimes prejudiced against the girls. According to Woolman (2001), dropping out of school results from students’ interaction
among factors relating to individuals, educational condition, and the family and the communities in which the students are located. The situation described by Woolman, therefore, seems to be closely related to the educational experiences of the girl child in Abor Pioneer Academy.

**Course Selection**

Findings from data analyzed show that in most sectors of Ghana’s economy nationally, females are relatively less in numbers than males. In colleges, female students are less likely than males to obtain science and engineering degrees, because females who take courses at the senior high school level in science, technology, engineering, and math are very few. The result is the gender gap in math and science subjects in the school system. This is demonstrated in my interview with Mr. Nuwosu, a science teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy. Mr. Nuwosu described factors that particularly affect girls in achieving success in the areas of math and science. Mr. Nuwosu, in a very stern and serious manner, discussed the issue of girls’ interest in math. I must also state here that Mr. Nuwosu was “born and bred” in Abor, and after completing his Master degree at a major university in Ghana decided to return to Abor to teach at academy. He has taught at Abor for the past 10 years, and was able to provide insight into how he views science and math courses for students at the academy:

It must be linked to environmental factors. And here again social forces discourage even talented girls from studying science and math. For example, there’s the saying in the community that boys are likely to go into engineering because it is a man’s job, it needs strength, it is physical, but a girl is destined to
do home economics, because she is the woman of the house. And you know, math and science classes are tough and need self discipline.

The persistence of stereotypes in the school about the girl child seems to dissuade the girls from certain courses, like math and science, in the school system. Science teachers, such as Mr. Nuwosu, seem to believe that math and science classes are tough, and therefore, deter more girls from science, technology, engineering, and math fields.

In my interactions with the outgoing headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, I gained insight into the social structures of Abor Pioneer Academy. What I gleaned from our conversations was that there is a consistent school environmental influence affecting how girls select and perform in subjects such as math, science, and often English.

According Mr. Agbavor, upon assuming the leadership of Abor Pioneer Academy, he initiated changes to favor girls in the school by providing them with special courses in math and science. However, the initiative did not bring about great results in girls achievements in math and science courses. Mr. Agbavor stated that:

We don’t force anybody. Sometimes your performance in Junior – JSS that will qualify you for a particular program. ….We cannot force anybody to do math, geography, and business. Those areas they need mathematics. So by all means anybody doing those general art courses and business courses must also do elective math. The core math is compulsory for everybody. But a lot of these girls will not mind because they feel that with these courses they can go into catering, and so, where they don’t need mathematics – well, I also feel some of their teachers tell them there’s no need for mathematics for them. So, they should
concentrate on their elective subjects like food, clothing and so on. So some teachers are like that. They discourage them from learning math….Those we managed and convinced and we formed a mathematic association. And they joined the association and they were able to get some grades. But at the same time, some of them have no interest at all. You cannot convince them to do anything. We even introduced awards for girls who can perform better in math, so that they would not pay school fees, but still umm no – not great.

In addition to awards for academic achievement in the subject areas of math and science, the headmaster encouraged the community and the school to understand the opportunities in enhancing the education of both girls and boys. Mr. Agbavor stated that girls were not psychologically interested in school, and most especially in taking the courses that will take them to college to engage in subjects such as math, science, and English. Mr. Agbavor observed that:

Their [girls] main problem is mathematics and science. But all other subjects they did well. In the education system of Ghana, taking mathematics and science courses and scoring high on national exams, provides students with an opportunity to attend the university. But, girls generally score very low in these subjects, and therefore their aggregate scores will only allow them to attend tertiary institutions and training college. So at least every year we get quite a good number of girls going to tertiary institutions, training college and so on. But the university is aggregate limits them. Sometimes the university will want an aggregate 15, but some of them [girls] go beyond 19/20. So they go to training
colleges. Girls normally go to training colleges and a lot of boys go to the university.

Another issue that impacts girls’ achievement in education is derived from their low academic achievements at the primary and junior high school levels. From my interviews with the girls, their teachers and parents of girls who have dropped out of school, I learned that many girls come into the senior high school from junior high school with low grades in mathematics, while some of the girls do not have course work in mathematics at all. In my interviews with the girl informants of this study, each of them stated that they did poorly in mathematics and science courses at the basic school levels.

The low involvement in math and science courses at the basic school level lessens the desire of these girls to learn these subjects at the senior high school level. The result is that on the average, every year there is a high failure rate in math and science for girls at Abor Pioneer Academy. The findings also show that there are other factors responsible for the failure rate in math and science. Mr. Agbavor states that:

Well, some of them, actually, some boys, have seen some of their seniors who did math and are in good positions. So they feel if they can also pass math and science that they will also go there. And the girls also, some of their friends who also are making it without mathematics. So, because some of them are beauticians and some join the police service without math. So they also go and join the services. So, one factor is the role model, people they see where they are without math and those are places with math. So they all copy them.
The findings suggest that there is no escaping the fact that a social stigma affects the education of the girl child in the Abor community. Though this is not limited to Abor alone, there is no refuting the fact that school culture, which is immersed in traditional beliefs about girls, has become almost anti-math and anti-science when it comes to girls. Findings from my data also show it is evident that a gender gap in math and science achievement, as well as in education in general, persists in Abor Pioneer Academy.

**Academic Performance**

In discussing the academic performance of both boys and girls at Abor Pioneer Academy, I posed this question to the teachers, “How will you rate the academic performance of both girls and boys in your class?” In their responses, teachers believed that boys perform much better than the girls do and so have much more potential than girls for academic success. Teachers’ expectations of their female students projected careers that were apparently different from those they held for their male students. The teachers observed that:

- Mr. Agbanyo: The academic performance of boys in my class is higher than that of the girls due to the fact that girls perform more household chores at home and therefore do not have much time for their studies.
- Mr. Afetsi: Girls compete well with the boys and sometimes outweigh them.
- Ms. Dovlo: Boys are doing quite well than girls. About 90 percent of boys perform well to that of 55 percent of girls who perform well.
- Mr. Azameti: As for girl, only 40 percent as to boys 60 percent.
- Mr. Nuwosu: As I see it, girls perform 50 percent to boys 50 percent.
- Mrs. Gbodzo: The girls only perform 40 percent while boys at 60 percent.

Although in the data above the teachers generally rated the girls as falling behind boys in the class, data I gathered during a class observation provided a different and unique take on both boys and girls in Mr. Afetsi’s biology class. Mr. Afetsi, is a young male teacher who appeared to be approximately 30 years of age. During the time spent with him, he made it known to me that he, too, is a native of Abor, and has studied at a major university in Ghana. He holds a Master Degree in Science and has been teaching at Abor Pioneer Academy for the past five years. During my observation of his class, I realized that when the few girls in the biology class were called upon to answer questions, the girls did not shy away from the question or look withdrawn. As noted in my field notes:

Observation, Wed., 12/02/09: I visited Mr. Afetsi’s biology class today.

Yesterday, Mr. Afetsi told me to arrive at 9:00 a.m. I arrived at 9 today, but, he requested I observe his 11:10-12:30 math class. I decided to go to the bank and went back to the school at 10:45 a.m. Mr. Afetsi greeted me at the school compound. We walked to his class at 11:10. Students were all seated at their desks. Seated in the class – 15 boys; three girls. He introduced me to the students, told me to be seated near the front (more like demanded to me). He was preparing students for their biology examination. Quite advanced. Students seemed to be engaged (both boys and girls). Boys were attentive and participating freely – raising their hands and interacting with Mr. Afetsi (call and response nature). When Mr. Afetsi asked the students to answer a question, I noted one girl quickly
raised her hand to answer the question. Mr. Afetsi ignored her (it seemed a bit harsh to me); she persisted and answered the question (correctly!) even though Mr. Afetsi did not call her. Mr. Afetsi continued without acknowledging her correct answer (as if she never said anything). This occurred each time girls answered questions today. In fact, the three girls appeared quite attentive and interested in biology just as the boys. When boys answered Mr. Afetsi’s questions, he congratulated them him with “well done” or “good”. I felt unease with this situation. Before the end of the class, the female students looked sullen and never answered anymore questions till the class was over.

Though the girls were not always correct in their answers to the questions posed by Mr. Afetsi, they seemed to perform well alongside their male counterparts. Data from my field notes presented showed girls participated effectively and were able to give correct answers to questions more so than many of the male students in the class. On the other hand, it was evident that male students were more or less patted on the back per se, by the male teacher and so the boys were more relaxed than the girls.

From my observation of the classroom activities in the above scenario, it appears that teachers may hold negative beliefs and attitudes about the academic abilities and potentials of their female students. As a result, the female students themselves also seem to internalize their teachers’ attitudes about them. Based on findings from the data gathered from my classroom observations, expectations regarding a girl’s success in education appeared quite negative and this influenced the girl’s perception of herself. Clearly, many teachers hold preconceived notions about the capabilities of the girl child
in the community. The preconceived notions are culturally engrained on the mind of the people in the community, including the teachers and the girls themselves.

In an interview Mr. Agbavor, the outgoing headmaster observed, “The expectations of girls in the community concern their role as a housewife.” Mr. Agbavor noted that since the possible life occupation of the girl child is that of a housewife, traditions and customs of the Anlo Ewe offer tools for the way the girl child relates to her career as a housewife. On the other hand, when I asked one of the girl informants, Adzovi, why she desired to attend school, her remarks were decidedly career oriented:

Researcher: Why do you wish you could go back to school?

Adzovi: Because I want to be a doctor. So I’m trying to go to school for my future.

The picture painted by Adzovi’s response above is critical, as well as complex. Although girls are found to have the desire for critical knowledge and skills at school, schools seem to be conservative institutions that reinforce gender inequality. This gives credence to the earlier remark of one of the female informants that, Medibe mayi sukuu gake, nyemate nui o [I want to go to school, but I can’t].

According to some of the female informants, an educated woman with a husband earns more respect in the community; however, none of the informants stated they were in school so that they will find a husband and be respected in the community. During an interview, I posed the questions to Adzovi:

Researcher: In your society what woman is most respected?

Adzovi: A highly educated woman with children, and a husband too.
Researcher: That’s good. Tell me more. So you think a highly educated woman – a man will look up to her and speak to her. In what ways?

Adzovi: They can train and discipline the children. [Adzovi and her friends, who accompanied her during this interview, nod their heads as if in agreement].

From the above data, the level of respect accorded a woman does not rest solely on her higher education. Regardless of Adzovi’s current situation, if she were to have some level of education, and then a husband and children, she would be accorded more respect and dignity in the community. In contrast, data suggests that education is a disadvantaged sphere of social life for women, and that gender inequality is pronounced in numerous aspects of the educational process, from infancy through to adulthood. As for girls in Abor area, they are not only faced with the belief that with a husband, the society legitimates them within their socio-cultural environment, but also their ability to pass exams add to their legitimacy to remain in school. Not being able to pass exams in school puts them in a disadvantaged position as they will not be able to continue education beyond junior high school level and/or gain any social mobility in the society.

In conceptualizing how students qualify to be enrolled in Abor Pioneer Academy (a senior high school), the ability to pass well the Basic Elementary Certificate Exam (BECE) becomes an index. The BECE examination serves both as a point of termination in the education ladder, and as a preparation stage for admission into the senior high school. Only those students who complete the basic education program (junior high school) and pass successfully the BECE examination with high scores could enter the senior high school and prepare for entry into the university. Mrs. Tetsi, a home
economics teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy, explained how the girls are impacted by the BECE examination. In my interview she described aspects of the BECE examination and how it impacts girls in Abor:

The examination in Ghana here, the examination is set nationally. What a child will be writing in Tamale a child will be writing in Abor. Formally it was a school — formally it was GCE, General Certificate Examination, and then it came to the new reform that’s the JHS program. So it was turned to SS. That’s the Senior Secondary education that’s set within Ghana — Ghana schools. Now its WASE — West African Countries, so now the questions are set in Nigeria. The exam questions are set in Nigeria. But the junior high school one is set within and according to the syllabus we are using — the scheme that we are using. So the one that we are calling basic — the basic examination certificate — that’s from the kindergarten to the JHS is what we call basic, BECE. BECE. Basic — that’s the basic — for the basic schools. Basic education certificate examination. So that one is set generally in Ghana for all junior high schools. This one is not set outside Ghana.

I recognized three issues in the above statement by Mrs. Tetsi. There is: 1) an expectancy component, which includes teachers and the community’s beliefs about the girls’ ability to perform at BECE; 2) the value component, which includes values added to a girl’s formal education, her role in the society; and 3) the affective component, which includes the beliefs about the girl’s importance in the community. However, the basic construct in
the entire situation is the belief about the girl child in the community. Later I posed to Mrs. Tetsi the following questions regarding the impact of the BECE on girls:

Researcher: Do you believe that the examination impact girls in terms of their academic achievement?

Mrs. Tetsi: Yes, if I may say so.

Researcher: How?

Mrs. Tetsi: Because mostly when the exam is set and the result is out may be like 1,500 boys then the girls 1,200. When we come in terms of passing mostly you will see that most of the boys pass more than the girls. So I feel that the girls may be their knowledge of understanding, is the girls who mostly fail in their exams.

Researcher: Well, if that’s true do you believe that may be there can be something – a change or improvement – how can girls be helped in terms – or how can the education system be improved, if it impacts girls to the point where they drop out.

Mrs. Tetsi: Okay, the only thing is that we have to encourage them to learn hard, because you can’t do anything otherwise, especially in this community. You can’t even group them. They don’t even like to attend extra classes. So you only be talking to them, advising them, giving them encouragement just to learn how to climb the academic ladder.

Mrs. Tetsi’s reflection shows the role of genderization in the school system and how examinations influence the achievement of boys and girls in the school system. From the interview, it appears that the manner in which subjects are selected in the school is
genderized and this influences who is admitted to the senior high school or to the university.

The data displays the complex role of the school in creating and defining gender differences in performance in the BECE examinations. Mrs. Tetsi indicated that:

Before you go to the training college, you have to do some entrance examination. And if you pass you go for an interview. Yeah, and then if you, after the interview, if you pass the interview, then they will admit you to the college. We call it assessment exam. And if you know you can’t even read and write and especially you normally test them in English and mathematics before you promote them to the next class. But firstly we do whole promotion, and by the end of the year let’s say by the end of the school academic year when the children go to write their exam, you can see that they only – the standard is falling. Some of the children from the kindergarten to the Basic 1 to Basic 3, 4, 5, 6 and then to the junior high school, after writing their exam they get zero. They don’t write anything at all. They don’t understand anything at all. So this thing has been the standard of education is falling in the school, and in the district, and the nation as a whole. So what we did is that we have to repeat them. So by the time you reach class 6 and if you don’t know how to read a sentence or a paragraph, and if you can’t calculate then we have to repeat you, so that you repeat at the class, but this made them – they become disappointed. Some girls say they feel shy. Some say they want to continue like that. We should allow them to continue like that. Even some parents come saying that their girls – that we should allow them to pass the
system. We should allow them to pass the system. But if you allow them to pass the system, they are spoiling the results. So what we’ve decided, especially the Abor community schools, what we’ve decided is that we have to repeat, whereby they will repeat a certain class, whereby they will gather more courage before going to the next class. Yeah, that’s what we have started doing, but not all the schools. So when they go they can’t perform well.

What I learned from the interviews with teachers, such as Mrs. Tetsi and the administrators of Abor Pioneer Academy, is that they painted the complex role of the school in creating and defining gender differences in examinations and academic performances. It seems plausible from the data that the style of examination and how the government or examining body defines achievement or the passing grade contributes to gender differences in performance at BECE, and the tiered conditions to entry into the university. All these create unequal opportunities for girls to be successful throughout school, and hence, in their lives thereafter.

**Socio-cultural Factors**

One of the research questions of this study is the extent to which socio-cultural factors present in Abor community impact girl child education in the area. Socio-cultural factors encompass the traditionally established concepts and belief systems of Anlo Ewe. They include certain traditional customary practices, beliefs, perceptions, kinship relations, household units, and behavioral expectations that determine social networks and institutions within the community. Findings from data generated in this study suggest that through the process of socialization, the child’s interactions with individuals in the
community makes him or her a partaker in the wealth of the intellectual and moral resources that make up the society’s culture. The findings in this study further indicate that Anlo Ewe social institutions powerfully shape the extent to which women and the girl child could be heard in any decision-making process of the family or community. In my interview with Mr. Agbonugla, a traditional leader in the chief’s court, he said:

Within the family structure within the Anlo Ewe community, the man is the head. The continued belief is the economic utility of sons as family labor, wage earners as well as support for parents during old age makes it that there is discrimination against the girl child. Among the Anlo Ewe, the girl child is considered a transitory member of family and a burden as she is to be married off to another man or family even if she is highly educated by her parents. She is a daughter and so is made to take the back seat in comparison to the male child who would be a bread winner one day and heir of the family.

The statement by Mr. Agbonugla brings back memories of the proverb I repeatedly heard from both men and women, during my data collection, “A woman’s bedroom is in the kitchen.” It denotes that a woman, regardless her age, is the daughter of her father, a wife to her husband, and a mother to her children. This status obliges her to keep close to her mother to learn all household chores, know how to look after her children, how to care for her husband, to fetch water, cook, and gather firewood for the kitchen in order to prepare meals for the family.

A day after my arrival in Abor to conduct my research, I was immediately summoned to the chief’s palace to greet him. When I arrived in his home, my
observations of his home were not what I had envisioned of a chief’s “palace”. In fact, the house was a modest white painted house with a small compound, consisting of an outdoor area to hold his court sessions. During our meeting, one of the traditional leaders (six of the council of elders were present) said they were eager to answer any questions that I want to ask in regards to my research topic. Later, in my interview with this particular traditional leader who appeared to have very good command of English, I learned that Anlo Ewe gender roles are clearly defined. The traditional leader explained that:

Within the Anlo Ewe society, a girl or woman is not seen as an individual, but as a daughter, sister, wife, or mother. She has little to say even in matters concerning her own life. She is confined to the house and kitchen, not expected to speak in a loud voice or even – independently – not to speak or asserting herself. The statement above indicates that one major deterrent to the Anlo Ewe girl’s educational opportunity is the socio-cultural biases that favor males within the society. The traditional leader notes that the patriarchal system of social organization ascribes duties to both genders in the community. The paradoxical socio-cultural gender biases create not only a structural economic inequality, but also limits the social interaction of girls through the belief systems, value systems, and practices of the community.

**Traditional Customary Practice**

The community of Abor, as noted in the literature and observed in my data, is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs, traditions, and customs that actually create barriers to student access and success in educational achievements. The belief systems that emanate
from their culture shape the way they think, live, act, and interact with each other and with those outside their culture. Their cultural belief systems reflect their values and perspectives and, at the same time, can close their minds to accepting other ways of thinking and doing things (McQuillan, 2005).

During my fieldwork, I learned that there exists amongst the Anlo Ewe exists a traditional practice known at Trokosi (it is often referred to as Fiasidi in my research area). Trokosi is based on religious traditions and patriarchal superstitions of the Anlo Ewe. According to Mamavi, one of the girl informants, Trokosi is a traditional custom in that when a relative commits a crime, ranging in severity from petty theft to murder, the family must offer a virgin daughter, typically from eight to fifteen years of age, to the local shrine, where she will become a trokosi, or “slave of the gods.” Trokosi or Fiasidi is a system of servitude that makes a virgin girl to atone for a family member’s wrong doings, such as stealing, adultery, and murder (Greene, 2009). Nukunya (2003) also notes that the Trokosi system is one of the most ancient practices still found among the Ewe, and its origin is shrouded in mystery, tradition, and obscurity. The Trokosi system can be seen to be directed against women, emphasizing the low esteem in which they are held, especially in the rural areas (Nukunya, 2003). One opinion leader, Mr. Dorbu, asserted that the existence of Trokosi and other traditional practices is not very strong in Abor area:

Yes. Yes, we have something called the Trokosi system, which is a very old institution, which is dying away gradually. She [girls] has to be very young. So
cultural practices, per se, yes. As I said, we – that is not a problem with us. What
is a problem with us is poverty. Poverty is the bottom line.

As stated by Mr. Dorbu in the above statement, the issue of Trokosi is actually not a
problem when it comes to the education of the girl child. Mr. Dorbu’s statement points to
the issue of poverty as being the major factor hindering the education of the girl child. On
the contrary, government reports studied for this research identify the traditional practice
of Trokosi as a concern to Ghana’s government. Some other informants also see Trokosi
as a practice that takes a very small proportion of girls out of the classroom. Mr.
Agbavor, the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, indicates that traditional practices
such as Trokosi affect formal educational outcomes of girls:

Oh, yeah, it’s from – like those who belong to some religious cults, yeah. They
don’t allow their children – their girls to go to school. They want them to remain
with the cult, either Vodu or Trokosi, and I have to write that one for you [the
assumption being that I do not have knowledge of Trokosi]. So these Trokosi may
be six years before they enter the cult and they will be around 15 years at the age
of getting married, before they will leave that place. So they can’t go to school at
that time. They are 15 years. Yeah, they can go, but they themselves will not be
prepared to join Class 1, Class 2 children, so they drop out of school.

Later, I posed the same question to Mrs. Gbodzo, a teacher of English at the Abor
Pioneer Academy. Mrs. Gbodzo elaborated on what I had earlier observed within the
community. During my rounds in the community, I observed that certain females,
including infants and young girls, had what appeared to be “fresh” marks (cuts) on their
faces. The young girls and older women had distinguished marks on their faces along with special cuts in their hairs. Mrs. Gbodzo, explained that:

Nowadays, they are not common, but at first it was common, but now you know Christianity is all over now. So those traditions that went on in those days, they are no longer there. But still there are some in the environs, like this juju – juju people. These people too are taking our children out of school because some people – some of the children are living with such parents, so when the parents are going to those places, the children follow them, especially the girls. By the time they come to school you will see a mark here, here, here, here and here [gesturing locations on face]. So, there’s nothing they can do. As this is Christmas time they are doing their festivities. Yesterday I saw some of my schoolchildren, girls, they like their head of saccora [sic] and they make a new mark again with some concoction in it. They like the dancing; they prefer the dancing instead of coming to school. So still there are some traditional beliefs that affect the girl’s education. They are around.

From the above statements, it seems that in the community few children are forced to participate in traditional practices such as Trokosi and accept the values in the belief systems without question, regardless of the impact it has on their formal education. The findings suggest that the system of Trokosi is not highly prevalent in the Abor area, and as it is now, only a few young girls are placed at the center of such practices that hinder them from obtaining formal education.

**Perception of Girls/Women**
One of the essential elements of Anlo Ewe culture is the ability to relate to others in proverbs, or what is termed verbal art (Anyidoho, 1997). Throughout my data collection, I was spoken to in proverbs by children as well as adults, both males and females. The proverbs best expressed the feelings from the experiences of the parents when their daughters dropped out of school or became pregnant. One parent expressed her dismay and shame, thus:

_Elo fe nukpea, eve fe nukpe_ [The public disgrace of the crocodile is equally the shame of the alligator too].

Deconstructed, the crocodile and alligator belong to same species and share similar characteristics; therefore, any insult to one group equally affects the other. As stated previously, any disgrace or shame that a daughter incurs implies that she was not well bred by the mother.

In an interview with Mr. Dorbu, an elder in the Abor community, he indicated that within the Anlo Ewe culture there exist some unwritten or hidden perceptions about the girl child. According to Mr. Dorbu, Anlo Ewe use coded proverbs often in their conversations, and their perceptions of girls are embedded in the coded Ewe language. Throughout my data collection, I indicated in my field notes that my host used some expressions to describe the behavior of girls or his own daughter, which I hardly could understand. My interview with Mr. Dorbu threw light on the coded proverbial expressions used to speak about girls. Mr. Dorbu made me aware that people’s perceptions of girls are often revealed in their choice of words during conversations. Mr. Dorbu gave these examples:
• You don’t send a basket to the riverside.

• The hunter’s bag is meant to hang on his shoulder and not on his head.

• The hunter’s bag is meant to carry the catch of the night and not to be an ornament of decoration.

• The needle cannot be of any use if it does not accept the thread in-between its legs.

• If the chicken will not lay eggs then it will only be good for the market.

• God knows why he created the womb of the pawpaw to have many seeds.

• The place of the mortar is in the kitchen and not the bedroom.

He also added:

You see, you don’t understand these expressions. Do you know what is a mortar?

We use it to prepare food in the kitchen for the husband and children. This last expression means, a woman’s place is the kitchen. That’s all. To be a wife, be in the kitchen to cook and raise for me children. (laughter)

The above statements suggest that despite national efforts to provide equality in education for all, traditional beliefs continue to affect some students, causing them to drop out of school. When I later asked a group of parents the question “Why don’t you want or encourage your daughters to go to school?” one of the parents responded saying:

Then the girls largely who enroll in school do not reach high levels. The reason is—umm-- that is not our belief. But, no matter what the faith is, she will end in the kitchen. We have a proverb that says “no matter what the faith is, she will end in the kitchen.”
The response reveals that parents themselves do not have faith in the education of their daughters or the final product of education in their lives because according to the proverb, “no matter what the faith is, she will end in the kitchen.” Such a belief prevents some parents from investing in the girl child. In the same manner, Mamavi’s father had this to say about his belief about girls getting an education:

Peasant farmers and petty traders, that’s the thing that the women do. And uh, the tradition is that when you have a female in the house the highest office of the female is in the kitchen. That is our belief. Uh, the highest office is in the kitchen, so when you have for example, two people the male and female what they do is that they allow the male child to go to school and let the female child stay at home because they say that they just marry and go and stay with somebody else.

Out of the six parents interviewed, four reached senior high school or tertiary education level. According to Mamavi’s father, he was educated to the tertiary level. However, regardless of their levels of education each parent had a belief about the “place” of the girl child in the society and the extent to which education can benefit the girl in the end. According to Afi’s mother:

They born – they are born here they are bred here and they stay here. So that is all that they have. Females, they are all in the kitchen. That’s all.

From the above statement, it is indicative that traditional beliefs and practices are often at the root of the gender gap and the educational achievements of girls. Girls are kept at home to supplement family welfare by working and caring for siblings and performing household chores. Although there are governmental efforts to change the status of girls in
Ghanaian communities and change parents’ perception of the value of their daughters, the traditional role of female children and women still persist in several spheres. Findings in this study reveal that the perceptions are not altering the attitudinal disposition of parents towards girl child and her education in the rural communities of Ghana.

On the other hand, not all parents view girls’ education negatively. Some of the parents also believe that their daughters’ education benefits the family, their society, and nation. Parents who think this way have firm desires for their daughter to go back to school and achieve a higher level of education. From my discussion with Afi’s mother and other women, it seems that expectations and cultural beliefs reflect their values and perspectives and, at the same time, can close their minds to accepting other ways of thinking and doing things. This made me ask the parents about the benefits of education for girls. Each of the parents responded by saying that if girls get their education it will enable them to help parents in their old age. This is demonstrated in the statement of Afi’s mother:

I think it is the best cause when she becomes a useful person, she may support me during old age. I wanted her to become somebody for me and to society as a whole in the future.

From the above statement, it is the assumption of the parents that with education their daughters will bring not only economic wealth to the family, but also prestige, which is an assurance against the future probabilities of the parents. However, it also suggests that the parent’s investment in the girl child is not to empower the girl child, but to yield dividends against the future poverty of the parents. Hence, the continued son preference
value, based on traditional views and perceived financial returns to families, leads to a lower educational attainment among girls.

All the girl informants in this study agree that the education of girls is one of the most important investments that any family or nation can make for its future advancement. The girls in the study noted that in the long term, almost every aspect of progress, from nutrition to family planning, from child health to women’s rights is affected by whether or not a nation educates its girls that dramatically changes the traditional value of the girl child.

When I asked the parents about how society views the woman and a child born out of wedlock, there was a sharp reaction from both the men and women. They all agreed to what Afi’s mother said:

Have children out of wedlock—it is abhorred within the society. Her chance of marrying a man other than the father of her children is less likely to occur. This means that a girl who has a baby out of wedlock and drops out of school becomes ostracized from the community and classified as immorally trained by the parents. The situation of having a daughter who has a child out of wedlock questions the ability of the parents to raise a girl to grow and eschew the immoralities that the community shuns. The social norms, which support gender relations, are culturally transmitted from one generation to another through the process of socialization. From childhood, girls internalize the social norms of the community, including those that define women’s status as subordinate to those of men.
When I asked parents about how they felt when their daughters became pregnant and did not accomplish the goal of education, the mothers gave excuses that their daughters were influenced by peer pressure, thereby, causing her pregnancy. Through my interactions with Awoto’s mother, she seemed to be shamed and embarrassed that Awoto had become pregnant and delivered a baby. Afi’s mother stated that within the society and community:

My daughter is now frowned upon due to her pregnancy out of wedlock and dropping out of school. She is teased by the peers at the schools. The men, on the other hand, felt that their daughters, despite the opportunity they had provided them—that of going to school—confirms their fears about girl child education since through pregnancy and the dropping out she is, according to one father:

Labeled a failure in education and pregnancy demoralizes them. They miss a good opportunity for life. Afi’s mother reiterated that should a girl become pregnant before marriage, it brings shame and blemishes the reputation of the mother’s capabilities of “mothering.” The shame that a daughter brings additionally illuminates her (the mother’s) upbringing; hence, it could be said that, “like daughter, like mother.” The attitudinal disposition of parents and society towards the girl child in general, and girl’s education in particular, has not changed despite the fact that most parents have come to believe that education remains the most powerful tool for the social, economic, and political integration of women.
The above remarks by Afí’s mother represent the views expressed by all the mother informants in this study. As seen through the findings, Anlo Ewe do not favor pregnancy out of wedlock. Similarly, the Anlo Ewe do not endorse single parenthood; that’s why when girls reach adolescence they are under social pressure (voice of customs and tradition) to prepare for marriage/motherhood (Nukunya, 2003). This belief is embedded in the customs and traditions of the community and is carried out in a way that the girl by social pressure, tends to also focus on the fulfillment of her community expectations rather than schooling.

**Behavioral Expectations**

In this study, it became apparent that gender defines one’s role and behavior in the Anlo Ewe community. All the informants in the study indicated that gender is an important mediator in the community’s human experiences and the ways in which individuals behave and interact with each other and with the physical environment. In addition, gender accounts for the individuals' choices of friends, vocation, and how they behave in society. What was most surprising is that on several occasions’ informants, including Mrs. Agbelie, the administrative secretary at the Abor Pioneer Academy, mentioned that girls are expected to have certain behavioral traits such as being shy and timid in nature that results in their inability to challenge those in authoritative positions. In response to my query about the behavioral expectations of girls in the school, Mrs. Agbelie notes that:

Oh, mostly the girls. Mostly all the girls; they feel shy. That’s why because of that shyness, that’s why they easily go into marriage, they become pregnant, because
when the boys talk to them they don’t know – the children they feel shy. So they just give out themselves. They give out themselves for the boys to misuse.

Sometimes, it is the group they go with.

Mrs. Agbelie’s statement that, “Mostly all the girls are shy…. Sometimes, it is the group they go with,” brings to the fore the issue of socialization. Nukunya (1999) has maintained that through socialization the Anlo Ewe child is made to acquire behaviors considered appropriate by the family, the community, and the larger Anlo Ewe society. Girls, as well as boys, are expected to develop attitudes and behaviors that fit societal norms for their gender designation; that parents and other societal agents foster the gender-typed behavior and the children themselves adopt these gender stereotypic characteristics at an early age. In a separate interview, Mr. Agbavor, the headmaster, emphasized that gender-stereotypic attitudes and behaviors are rigorously enforced at all levels of the Anlo Ewe community.

I have mentioned elsewhere in this study that traditionally, Anlo Ewe educate and socialize their children through patriarchal authoritarian methods. From my observations and interviews, the home, which provides children with their earliest educational experiences, was and still is dominated by parents and other adults in the community who adhere to strict traditional modes of instruction. Traditional instructions are dictatorial, and each child is expected to conform to the rules and demands of tradition without questioning it. The traditional dictatorial instructions to children, most especially the girl child, causes them to be shy. Mrs. Tetsi illustrates this behavior in girls:
Yes. It’s in the culture. It’s in the culture. Like mostly too there are children who are timid, because of the training they’ve had in their house. Yes, there are some— you know, some parents they are harsh on their children, so when their children go out, they don’t want to mingle they are introvert children. They don’t want to mingle with others. So they feel shy.

Mrs. Tetsi notes that within Anlo Ewe culture, there is very little or no room for a child to question or challenge the authority of adults. The school environment also poses the same threat to girl child education through its authoritarian methods of interacting with girls as it is genderized with its attendant biases. Mr. Afanya, who is the math teacher at the Abor Pioneer Academy, did not mince word on this issue. He observed that the school bureaucracies that are well defined in the administrative policies governing the school do not favor the girl child:

So they tell you that even—now one other thing that we are seeing these days is that we have a tradition such that you do not have the uh right to talk. When you are in trouble you don’t talk. So when you have a problem—the female child has a problem, you don’t talk. You only have to sit in the problem. So the only alternative is to just stay at home and sit. To some extent the male child, he can talk, yes. Why they do that is that the role is for him to become a family; he is going to pursue a family, so they allow the male child some role of freedom. As for the female child, you don’t talk. So like I said poverty is one, and our tradition too, also counts. This is how the British too make it in the school system.
Mr. Afanya’s statement describes a behavior that reinforces the notion that a girl’s misconduct could be looked upon as a character defect, while boys' misbehavior is viewed as a desire to display or assert their manliness. An aggressive or assertive behavior on the part of a boy is applauded as a sign of prowess, strength, and agility. On the other hand, girls exude mostly a behavior that is mild-mannered and shy; thereby, affecting how girls interact in the classroom and community at large. This in some ways leaves girls vulnerable, as they are expected to have a behavior that is not assertive or aggressive as boys.

In Abor Pioneer Academy, teachers use the descriptive word of “neat”, “submissive”, and “attractive” for girls. Such descriptions are in sync with what society expects from girls and this leads the girls to believe that it is more important to develop their social personality and find a potential husband than focus on education that does not guarantee their social value. In my conversations with some of the opinion leaders and elderly women in the community, they stated that one of the issues with girls is that they are vulnerable. The belief, according to these informants, is that the character of a girl is determined by her willingness to be submissive. After all, in an earlier interview, when the researcher asked the girl informant, Adzovi:

Researcher: In your society, what woman is most respected?

Adzovi: A highly educated woman with children and a husband too. [The emphasis was on “children and husband”].

In addition, when the researcher further asked:
So how do you feel about girls being educated? What are your thoughts on girls being educated?

The response of Adzovi sheds more light on her inner feelings and what are her dreams and aspirations in life.

Adzovi: School is good for your future, because if you are not educated you can’t do anything possible.

Researcher: So what can you do if you are educated? What possibilities are there if you are educated?

Adzovi: If you are educated you can get employment, and you can do what you want to do.

Adzovi’s responses point to the fact that education is instrumental in promoting women’s’ self-empowerment, economic independence, democratic values, political awareness, and respect for her human person. However, findings in this study locate the existing educational gender inequalities in the socio-economic, cultural norms, and attitudes particularly those that assign women a subordinate position in the Anlo Ewe society. That is the relationship between women and men, and particularly the power dynamics between the two genders, as it affects participation of both genders in the educational process.

From the findings, it seems plausible that traditional beliefs about the girl child and formal school environment do not support or encourage the girl child when it comes to her formal education. In the school system, there are uncodified factors that influence the education of girls. Meanwhile, the expectations of the home, parents’ beliefs, and
perceptions about the value of the girl child in life influences whether the boy or the girl’s education is financed. This is why Akuwa, a girl informant, stated that, *Medibe mayi sukuu gake, nyemate ñui o* [I want to go to school, but I can’t].

**Family Unit**

In speaking with some of the teachers, opinion leaders, females in the community, and other leaders, I learned that there is the concern that the family structure of Anlo Ewe is slowly eroding as girls are left to fend for themselves. One informant told me that it is easy to find children no longer sleeping in the same room with their parents. Informants notified me that families are known to sleep in the same close-knit quarters, and because this is no longer occurring, girls are left on their own without supervision. This creates circumstances where girls are no longer under parental control as they can leave the house in the night at will and take boyfriends at will. During a group discussion, one of the elderly females expressed her concerns regarding the issue of girls and parental control:

“But in some houses in town, the children don’t’ sleep with their parents. They sleep with their sisters, grandmothers, so the father and mother have time to themselves. So this can also influence them from going to school. Because normally the girls in this town the moment they are attached to some money, somebody is encouraging them, the money is here. So they forget about school. Going to school will be irregular. Yeah, irregular. And next is teenage pregnancy.

The discussion above reveals the many structural factors influencing access and retention of girls in educational processes. The discussion also identifies the social, economic and
cultural fields that do not ensure the full educational development and advancement of
the girl child. The structural factors include issues of broken homes that make girls to
stay with grandmothers who are too old to put pressure on the girl child. Others include
teenage pregnancy, parents’ attitudes, lack of role models, and insensitivity to the specific
gender needs of the girl child. These factors underscore the need to concretize the
educational policies which strategize implementable activities.

The situation is worse in rural poor sectors of the society, such as Abor, where the
very survival of the girl child is often at stake. Because some girls lack parental control,
their economic instability and lack of employment opportunities in the community leave
them to fend for themselves. A lack of parental control, therefore, makes it that girls are
become vulnerable to males in the community who offer to them some financial support.
Discussing this situation during an all-female group meeting revealed much by an elderly
woman:

Yeah, that drives them [girls] to the boys, because they don’t have money
themselves. So, only boys can provide those things, like these drivers, fitters,
drivers, local sellers. You see them when you go into their backgrounds, you see
these people wooing their love, because they can provide money instantly for
anything you ask. Some of them put on watches or even you see a lot of them
using expensive mobile phones, something teachers are not using. Some of them
change their footwears. So, you see that, but influential people in the
communities, drivers and so on that help them get those things. And some of them
end up becoming pregnant.
The pressure that seems to influence the girls, who lack parental and financial support, as shown from the above excerpt, comes from males who have the appearance of “wealth” and use this to lure the girl child away from her focus on education.

In my discussion with Mr. Dorbu, a retired schoolteacher and an opinion leader, about parental control in the community, he believes that with many of the girls dropping out of school and becoming pregnant the issue of broken marriages and broken homes arises. According to Mr. Dorbu, broken marriages are things of modern times. Anlo Ewe detests divorce because of the effects of broken homes and marriages (less parental control of children). In our conversation, Mr. Dorbu provided the following insight into the issue of broken marriages in Anlo Ewe society:

Broken marriages account a certain percentage of the girl dropping out where the mother and father are no longer together as a married couple. The girl either stays with the mother or stays with the father. Usually it is with the mother, because girls are prone to stay with their mothers. But then there is very relaxed control. You see the mother keep hovering around, trying to put this and this and this together so that she could maintain the home. She becomes a single parent, it’s difficult. So, first she hasn’t got time for the girl. The girl is left most of the time alone on herself. So she does what comes her way. What she thinks is good, that is what she does. The single parent may not be very up-to-do with the task. She may not have the money. So, naturally, the girl child is forced to fend for herself. If the girl stays with the father that is even worst. The father gets up and goes to work and then that’s the end. The child stays for the greater part of the day on
herself. She may not even go to school, or she goes to the school and goes somewhere else. This is from about 14 upwards. The father may put two thousand cedis down for her, and say oh, that is your chop money [the word “chop” means food]. I’m going to the farm. I’m going to work. The father comes home late in the evening. The five thousand he leaves in the house may not suffice, may not be enough. Even if it’s enough, then there’s no control again. “Oh, don’t do that. Go to the school. When do you close? Why are you coming home at this time?” These things are not there, because the father is at work. He comes home late in the evening. So, actually the child is on herself – the girl child is on herself. The boy child is on himself, but the boy has only a small problem. He will only go out looking for money anyway he gets it looking out for himself. But the girl the way to look for money is to get attached to somebody who can provide the money. That is the easiest way of getting money as far as a girl is concerned. The easiest way to get money is to get attached to a worker, somebody who can provide to her. So that is the certain factor in our community here.

In another conversation with Mr. Nutor, an opinion leader, I asked him if the problem of broken marriages and broken homes is a widespread problem, and how does it affect the girl’s formal education. Mr. Nutor mentioned that the problem is very common among young couples of today. He stated that the older people have little problems with broken marriages because traditions and customs that were practiced amongst the older generation rejected divorce. Mr. Nutor had this to say:
The older people don’t suffer as much because of some traditional practices. It’s not prevalent among older people [broken homes and broken marriages]. No matter how your husband is treating you; no matter how many women he goes after, tradition says you must stay. A man can marry so many wives, but you the woman have no mouth in that. That is what tradition says. But among young couples, the moment the man does this, ‘I can’t stomach it. I can’t stomach it.’ Yes, so when the man after going into marriage starts flirting with other women, other girls, this –we need not call them women, these are very young couples. You will see that the marriage will flounder as soon as it began.

I asked Mr. Nutor the question again because I felt he did not provide me with the answer when I first asked him whether the traditions and customs are changing. He then said:

No, they haven’t changed, but people are no longer tied down to those things. They do not have respect. The younger couples do not have the respect for customs as it used to be. There were some things that tied people down in the old days in my generation. Some customs tied them down. Like when you are with your husband, when you got married, the man can go after several women. You need not go. Your parents will reject you if you go wayward. That is one. Because you’ll bring shame onto your family. Then there are some restrictions, some taboos and everything. If you go out and engage, you the women, if you go out and engage in extramarital affairs, there are taboos that you will go mad and you will do this and this and this. These things were societal and restrictions, mechanisms that kept the marriage intact in those days. But among the younger
couples that is, that does not do anything. Yes, we have lost a respect and fear of those things.

When I later posed the same question to Mr. Dorbu, he shook his head for a while. I could see he was disturbed inside himself. I allowed him to think about the question for some time. Later, in a somber tone he iterated:

The younger people have lost respect and fear for those traditions and customs. One of the main reasons that younger people do not adhere to the traditions and customs of the older generation is because of Western religion that is taking hold in the community.

I could feel the regret in Mr. Dorbu’s voice. Then, he paused for a while as if to take in breath. When he came back to himself, he said:

That is where Western religion has come to make some inroads in to our traditions. Western religion would condemn all those things as evil practices. So, now that the young couples are mostly Westernized by religion – Westernized only by religion, religion as a mystic, not through their bodies. Not through the systems, it only gives them a clock. “As for me I’m a Christian, I’m this, I’m that. I don’t believe in those mysticisms.” So these things are affecting marriages and family relationships.

The views expressed by both Mr. Nutor and Mr. Dorbu regarding Western religion as having broken down the traditions and customs of the family system is also a concern that Father Agbadzeanyi expressed that the “family system is completed eroded.” He stated that if a woman comes home from work and her husband comes back home from
work, then his concern would be as to who would do the cooking. According to Father Agbadzeanyi, if both the husband and wife do not cook (in Anlo Ewe society women cook), and most especially the woman does not know how to cook, then there would have to be a servant to perform the cooking for the husband and wife.

If you come back to the house, who is going to cook? Who is going to cook? It is the man that does not know how to cook. The woman does not know how to cook. Then you only have to go out and get a servant. And soon who becomes the husband – the wife? It is the servant. See this is where there is breakdown between the marriage system between two educated people. I am educated. I am a doctor and you are a doctor. Who serves who?

Much as he is knowledgeable about how Anlo Ewe society views parenting, I asked whether he is conversant with any changes that were occurring within Anlo Ewe families of the research area. He then observed that though it is obvious that change is occurring in Anlo Ewe society, it is a slow process. On the other hand, he sees change occurring in patterns and manners that affect girls’ formal educational outcomes. Regarding the role of parenting, he stated that what he sees happening is a “carefree society and that it would be no surprise to find condoms with girls as they go to school”. He stated that if a child is at school and corrected by a teacher, the child can go and report the teacher to the police. To this effect, teachers are becoming relaxed in how they reprimand children. The relaxed atmosphere of the classroom has led students to engage in truant behaviors. Homework is no longer taken seriously and academic standards are falling seriously in Ghanaian schools. It is obvious that in the past there was a healthy relationship between
parents and teachers when it comes to disciplining students. It is no more according to Father Agbadzeanyi:

If the child does not want to do – and truancy, they don’t punish the child [referring to teachers]. They just sort of sit in the classroom just to pass on the knowledge whether the child picks it or not it is not their concern. So if they want to force – appear to be forcing the girl to do what a child has to do at this hour. It’s like opening him or herself to the parents. The child can go and report that you are harassing him or her and the parents can come to the school.

In a somber voice, and although he mentioned that change is a slow process, he lamented over the changes that were occurring within Anlo Ewe society. He was particular about the changing roles of parents and the school system’s effects on children in the society. Even at school, it’s like the teachers of today do not want to really force – ehh, I shouldn’t use the word force, but insist on the children to take orders. So, if they want to force – appear to be forcing the child to do what a child has to do at this hour, it’s like (pause) opening him or herself to the parents. The child can go and report that you are harassing him or her and the parents can come to the school and talk to the teachers, and so on. See we are now entering a society, which is free.

It is obvious that Father Agbadzeanyi’s parents were strict on him when he was growing up. This is contrary to what parents of today do, as stated by Father Agbadzeanyi:

You see, I would say that we have not reached that age of letting children do what they like. No. Let me tell you something, I always say that if I was not born – God
did not give me to my father, I would have been a truant. My father, my mother who gave birth to me, and my father who gave birth to me, those two people, I would have been a truant.

As observed in Father Agbadzeanyi’s statements, it is interesting that he speaks of parenting in terms of authoritarian parenting. Father Agbadzeanyi has the belief that the changing society is contrary to the traditional beliefs and customs of Anlo Ewe; thereby creating a vacuum for many social problems that are arising in society such as teen pregnancy. Gender roles are defined elaborately in the Anlo Ewe society. To this effect, the socialization process further contributes to or leads to defining the differences in behaviors between boys and girls. Parents teach boys how to be a man, while at the same time girls are taught the subservient role as a wife, mother, and daughter. Through observations and interviews, how parents teach their children, therefore, builds on each child’s social skills, which guide them in the way they behave and relate to one another in the society, as well as, their gender roles.

To the two opinion leaders, Mr. Dorbu and Mr. Nutor, and Father Agbadzeanyi, Christianity seems synonymous with modernity, and freedom from anything traditional and customary. They conclude that because the younger people feel that they are baptized into Christianity, they do not have to follow the customs and traditions of their parents or ancestors. As found in the data, the young ones believe they are in modern times, which call on them to take on Christian beliefs systems which refer to traditions and customs of their ancestors as voodoo and pagan worship.
Findings from my interviews with parents, teachers, opinion and traditional leaders, and Father Agbadzeanyi emphasize the belief of Anlo Ewe that it is the destiny of every girl or woman to marry and be a helpmate for the husband. Any education, formal or informal, must gear her towards this goal of making her knowledgeable, competent, dynamic, and versatile in homemaking. The belief systems of Anlo Ewe do not exist in a vacuum; it is engrained in the fiber of both males and females. Each female informant I interviewed, from the young girl child informants who have dropped out of school to the teachers, worry that many years of schooling takes away from the girl her youthful vitality (fertility) and ability to get a husband and raise children. The data provides evidence that the young girls in the school system are, therefore, conscious of this fact and it contributes to factors that affect girls’ formal education outcomes.

**Economic Factors**

Data generated during the study indicate that the rate at which economic factors influence girls’ education in the rural areas of Abor cannot be underestimated. I observed that in many instances the economic factors of family life directly and indirectly affect the education of, not all its members, but particularly girls. Hence, economic factors are directly and strongly interrelated with girl child education. In speaking about girls’ economic hardships, Mr. Agbavor, the headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, provided the following:

Some naturally have financial problems that prevent them from coming to school. Some parents do not have work to do. They are peasant farmers that cannot pay for school uniforms, feed them, because these girls will help them in the market
when their parents go away. So they need somebody to help them carry things to
the market, help them sell in the market. So you see them moving from market
days to the whole week is busy for them. They train their children in trading.
Train them in trading.

Through observations, I noted that girls who are socialized into lower level course work
end up in lower paying employment opportunities. I also learned through observations
that there is a tendency for girls who do not complete their education to take up roles
such as beauticians and seamstresses, but most often they become petty traders in the
market place, which earn them less money.

Contrary to the economic experience of girls, boys do not face the same economic
or financial hardships. It is more likely for boys to get manual jobs reserved for them.
Through observations it was apparent throughout the Abor community that young boys
from the age of approximately seven onward were doing some activity of work.
Conversely, the difficult economic situation of girls is perennial and the geographical
location of Abor adds to the burdens. Abor lacks employment opportunities for girls in
the community. Recalling what he has observed in the community, Mr. Afetsi, a science
teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy, said:

See, normally boys don’t face financial problems seriously. They can go to farm,
get minor jobs and so on. But the job for girls here can be these moving about,
like those girls selling second-hand clothing. Because of peer influences, some
girls will not like to do that. People may laugh at you and so on. So, boys they
have got their jobs; it’s common. Yeah, weeding somebody’s farm, yeah, they can
do that, get money. Helping people, mason, carpenters, yeah, they can get money from that. So you see a lot of boys in school, but the girls they don’t have such facilities.

On the other hand, girls face difficulties because of societal and cultural expectations imposed on them.

In the school system itself, the Ghana government through FCUBE absorbs fees for students at the basic school level. However, when students leave the junior high school level and move into senior high school, their needs change and tuition fees are the responsibility of the parents. I was informed that notebooks for students cost five Ghana cedis each, and each child needs a minimum of 10 notebooks per year. According to the headmaster, Mr. Agborvu, the government supplies some textbooks, but they are minimal and students need to purchase additional textbooks if they intend to “pass and pass well for university”. In addition, Mrs. Tetsi, a teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy, further identified some of the needs of the girls as:

If they don’t have money, it’s for pocket money– for feeding themselves, something for them to buy school uniform, to buy their underwear and so on. These minor, minor fees, especially money to feed themselves. Break time, your friends are gone out to eat and you have nothing to eat. Some of them face such hardship. You go to a classroom, ordinary pencil, some students don’t have. Even eraser some don’t have. Sometimes when I go to class, I have to carry pencils alone. I can’t provide pen, so give pencil to them to do their homework.
The inability of girls to have the economic support to provide for their school supplies make it difficult for girls to continue with their education. Findings from interviews with teachers, opinion leaders, and girls show that girls generally will drop out of school when they lack the economic support, because they are very sensitive to how they look, dress, maintain their school uniform, meet their school supply needs, feeding, and other needs.

When some teachers know that girls are financially handicapped, they subject the girls to performing household chores for them in return for financial favors. When interviewing Mamavi, she stated that when she was struggling in school to provide for her daily needs and the needs for her schooling she had turned to a teacher for assistance.

The following excerpt from a conversation I had with Mamavi further explains the situation more clearly:

Researcher: Did any teachers ever try to give you support?
Mamavi: Yes, one of my teachers.
Researcher: Was it a male or female?
Mamavi: Male.
Researcher: What did he do to support you?
Mamavi: No, he said if I want to go to school, he would do everything. He would give me money for everything.
Researcher: Did you ever go to him and say you need money and he gave it to you?
Mamavi: Yes.
Researcher: What did you have to do for him to give you money?
Mamavi: I cooked for him.

Researcher: Anything else?

Mamavi: I washed. I washed his things. That’s it.

According to Mamavi, when she later became involved with the father of her child, the teacher stopped supporting her financially. In my conversations with some of the opinion leaders and elderly women in the community, they stated that one of the issues with girls such as Mamavi, is that they are vulnerable. When teachers know that girls are financially handicapped they subject the girls to performing household chores for them in return for financial favors such as what Mamavi experienced.

In addition to looking to teachers for support, when girls lack financial stability they look up to the boys in the community and, in many instances, this results in their pregnancy. According to the headmaster, Mr. Agbavor, when girls drop out of school they become idle and look to boys for support, and then get pregnant. Mr. Agbavor explains:

So they [girls] are dropping out of school. Can be financial because – and these when they are idle in the house, you see them later pregnant because they look for money from boys. So when they give them money, then of course, you have to pay back. Then they have unprotected sex, and become pregnant.

Considering the fact that education remains an important determinant of economic and social opportunities for individuals, it means girls in Abor area lack opportunities of providing financially for themselves. As a result, families too are disadvantaged when it comes to taking care of the educational needs of girls. Parents find it difficult as well to
put their financial resources in girls because of the “kitchen” concept. To this effect, Akuwa’s father made the following statement to justify Akuwa being withdrawn from Abor Pioneer Academy:

This was contrary to my wish. I simply could not afford my daughter going on studying when I do not see any prosperity at the end of the educational road for her. After all, she is a girl. The earlier she completes school the better because if she completes early the man who will marry her will see her high qualification before coming forward. If she fails to complete her education, some village fool will knock at my door with two bottles of local akpeteshie [a local alcoholic beverage brewed from the juice of either sugar cane or palm trees] and say, he is marrying my daughter.

Adwoa’s mother added:

The greatest concern was the need to buy new school uniforms, shoes and books, every now and then, for four children, even when the farm fails in the season.

Where and how would I get money?

As demonstrated in the statements of the parents above, there is a concern over cost of education in the presence of the low economic opportunities that exist within Abor area. It is evident here that girls in rural areas of Ghana, and for that matter Abor area, are excluded from education not only because cultural attitudes of Anlo Ewe, but also because of poverty—one of the main barrier to girls' education.

Data analyzed in this study points to the fact that the cost of educating the girl child far outweighs the cost of not educating her. Fact is a woman who did not attend
school and lacks basic skills have greater difficulty finding well-paying jobs and escaping poverty. In lieu of this fact, educating girls have particularly striking social benefits: incomes are higher, and maternal and infant mortality rates are lower for educated women, who also have more personal freedom in making choices.

I have already observed that Abor is an economically deprived community. In the Abor area, with the exception of teachers and few nurses at the hospital, the rest of the population, especially the men engage in food crop farming. Majority of the women are petty traders, buying and selling food crops and other products at markets outside Abor. As a farming community, Abor depends heavily on the rainfall. However, during the period of my research, a severe drought had set in and the rains had ceased to fall for months leaving the crop withered. In a discussion with Mr. Dorbu about the drought situation he mentioned that:

This should have been the farming season. The farms – the maize should be getting ready for harvest. But not even in the soil – we have not planted even one, because the second rainy season did not materialize at all. So, and when you come to consider that 90 percent of the people depend on this subsistence economy you see that poverty is really ripe in this area. There are many – perhaps if you – in your questionnaire you had built that in to it, the means of the people, you will see the family size and the family earning you will come to think – you will come to see that poverty is really, really – this is a marginalized area – marginalized area where people live off the land, and the land is now very (inaudible)… It is getting worse. No rains are coming. And if that is what is going to provide the livelihood
of the people, where is it going to come from. The trade system depends on what is produced on the land, and the land is not producing anything. So the trade system will go off. We don’t have live stock as the north. The north when the rain fails they fall on the livestock. We don’t have that. So it’s a very big problem. The boys will go and become apprentices to drivers, and make a few cedis and feed themselves, or they engaged in this illicit activity, gambling and so on and so forth. But the girls cannot do that. The girls cannot do that. So they look for some – like this (pointing to my research assistant) – some look to their parents or those who don’t have their parents that can produce, that can provide, will look up to somebody else. And looking up to somebody else has its consequences.

During the period I was collecting my data in Abor (November through early January), the people in the community of Abor were supposed to be harvesting their crops. Instead of a great harvest, the people lost their crops due to a severe drought, which had been with them for the past four to five years. But, according to many people in the community, this particular year’s lack of rain and ability to grow their crops was the worse they have ever experienced. The situation spelled economic hardships for not only Mamavi and Akuwa’s father and their families, but also for all in the Abor area. Akuwa’s father, who grows cassava and corn as food and cash crop, could hardly raise money to support both Akuwa and her brothers in school. Akuwa provided the following explanation:

When it rains it grows a lot, but at the time it is not coming and they are not growing. When we harvested the crops, then we sell some too to provide some
monies. But there are no crops; they didn’t grow [quietly speaking with head hung low].

From observations, I noticed that all the crops including cassava, corn, groundnuts, and fruits such as mangoes and oranges were dried up on their trees. According to the girl informants in this study, the corn, cassava, and groundnuts are generally the food, as well as cash crops, that families use for meals as well as selling some in the market to pay for their children’s education. For several days during my stay in Abor, I saw the rain clouds pass by without a drop of rain to fall in Abor. I observed that sometimes the rains would fall at areas close to Abor as if it purposefully avoided the Abor area. Out of curiosity I asked Mr. Dorbu if he had any notion as to why the rain has ceased to fall in Abor consequently affecting productivity and family incomes. Mr. Dorbu sadly said:

You know, the rainfall pattern here is very low. The weather here does not make farming attractive. You know yesterday I was going to Denu [which is approximately 12 miles from Abor] and the rains fell heavy. So, they will harvest some corn this season. But here, the land is very, very hopelessly dry. Due to the lack of rain in Abor area, the economic activities of the farmers are negatively affected.

For the fact that I am not from the area, I was curious to know how the rain seasons were prior to this year’s severe drought. Mr. Dubor stated:

Other seasons have been very bad, but this particular one is quite strange – it’s extraordinary. We do normally have rains in October and then in November. Then we are able to get corn maturing around this time during Christmas. Some even
though harvest during the season is not very much, we are able to get something. But this year (pause) the entire crop failure at Abor, nobody is going to pick a cob of corn, no, at all [emphasis given somberly]. We are down. So two weeks back we expected on rain to improve – I mean to improve the growth of our maize, but it failed. The rain never came. Never came. Even there were patches of rain around Abor proper, the rain – it ended somewhere before here – you see, and so we are down. And uhh with the pardon – with the failure of the rain, next year life will not be very good.

From Mr. Dorbu’s reflections, it appears that the current drought was not an uncommon occurrence, and it appears that the drought situation is becoming worse each year. He acknowledges that the failure of crops makes it financially difficult for families to cope with the education of their children, thereby, affecting how families make decisions as to whether to educate their sons or their daughters.

The effects of low yield of crops also affect how girls make decisions to stay within the community or leave for the larger cities. Mr. Dorbu also added the resulting effect of low economic returns on crop. He stated that:

All these girls will be running away from school to go to Accra and other big cities to trade.

Interestingly, during my study in Abor, some of the girls who were informants for this research study, at least three of the girls informed me that they were for an indefinite period of time going to Accra to join some relatives to trade in the market. Other girls came to me on several occasions and out of respect would ask permission on days that
fell on Akatsi, Agbozume, Keta, and Abor market days to go and assist their parents or others in the market. Some of the girls who drop out of school and live with their parents or relatives were needed to assist with petty trading in exchange for their basic needs. Some were attempting to find menial jobs in the major towns and cities to work as petty traders “standing by the roadside” as a means of survival.

In fact, when I returned to Abor, six months after conducting my research, I met at the car park two of the girls I interviewed for this study who asked that I purchase water from one and purchase an orange from the other. This confirmed to me the plight of girls who do not complete at least a high school education. It invoked some emotions in me, and in fact, I felt guilty that there was little I could do to assist them in their woes.

**Summary**

From the data presented in this section it is indicative that there are many factors, which interfere with girls' schooling that causes them to drop out. They range from the economy of the family, cost of schools or educational materials, girl's status in society, competition with other household chores, flexibility of schools in allowing dropping in and out of school, lack of the appropriate kind of resources, and values emphasizing "respectability" rather than autonomy of the girl child. In Abor and all other communities of Ghana, women are considered custodians of culture, and yet, they are responsible for the transmission of cultural values, attitudes and norms, which assign them an inferior social status relative to that of males. The findings brings to the fore the fact that the social construction of both male and female genders in the society is further enhanced by the existing dominant religions and belief systems.
Findings also point to the fact that the social construction of gender defines the gender roles assigned to boys and girls and determine the social position of both boys and girls, women and men. It assigns female gender a subordinate position while the male gender is assigned a superior position. As such the total process of socialization is, therefore, the major factor which affects the schooling system in its totality. It determines the attitudes and perceptions, which contribute to the designing of the school curriculum, and it affects the content of the educational process, as well as shapes the decision to either send a boy or girl to school. Traditional discriminatory practices can consequently be traced in the life cycle of the girl child in Abor area. These traditional discriminatory practices are reflected in the manner the society expresses preference for male children through differential treatment of the girl child from birth. Various rites and rituals, and rites of passage illustrate the different values attached to male children and female children. The impact of these practices on the development of children and particularly how this impacts their participation in formal schooling remains grey areas yet to be explored.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Introduction

In Chapter 4 of this study, I presented factors that have an impact on the educational outcomes of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana. In this current chapter I interpret and discuss the themes that emerged from the findings outlined in Chapter 4. The current study builds upon other studies undertaken by Sutherland-Addy (2002), Manuh and Moletsane (1999), and Mensch, and Lloyd (1998), that found that gender differences exist in the schooling experiences of girls in Ghana. This study examined issues such as, to what extent do rural socio-economic, cultural, and political factors impact the education of the girl child in Abor and what strategies are in place within the traditional, social, and political milieu to improve girl child education. The relevance of this question can be seen in the assertion that the world “have historically sought to eradicate all forms of oppression, even if assigning priority to particular forms of discrimination” (Gilmore, 2008, p. 7).

In Chapter 4 a number of themes and sub-themes emerged as major factors impacting educational outcomes of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor. It is the intent of this study not to generalize the findings, but to present findings that contribute to the depth and breadth of shedding light on factors that impact the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal educational outcomes in Abor area. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that data for this study is derived from interviews of girls who dropped out of school at Abor Pioneer Academy, with parents, teachers, school administrators, opinion and traditional leaders, elders, and clergy who are all Anlo Ewe and natives of Abor. In all, I observed
and interviewed 24 participants, who articulated their ideas about socio-cultural, economic, and political factors affecting girl child education in Abor area. Informants’ articulation of the factors impacting girl child education stems from their belief in the advancement of the girl child and their faith in Western education as a means to social mobility and self-empowerment for girls in contemporary Ghana. The girl informants in this study indicated that actions of teachers, administrators, and the community of Abor do not empower, provide avenues for social mobility, nor support the education of the girl child. The girl informants further noted that even though Ghana government pledges fee free education for all genders, government proclamations are not supported by actions nor are they translated into reality. One could therefore conclude that efforts at girl child education in Ghana exists in theory and not in practice because government proclamation are not supported by actions especially when it comes to girl child education.

As shown in Figure 2, four major themes emerged in this study. The themes were: 1) government policies and girl child education initiatives; 2) school environment and administrative structures; 3) socio-cultural factors; and 4) economic challenges. Each of these themes and their sub-themes reflect the factors that influence the education of the girl child. Although the themes and their sub-themes suggest distinct categories, it is also evident that all have influences on the girl child. It should also be noted that each of the four themes are constantly interacting and influencing the other. Potentially, this interaction creates an even greater impact upon the girl child. The four major themes and their sub-themes are presented in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Factors Impacting Girls’ Formal Education in Abor.
Discussion of Findings

The following sections of this chapter provide the discussion of the findings with the aim of answering the research questions. The first two research questions will be answered jointly:

1. What factors impact the formal education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana?
2. How do such factors affect the education of Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

Discussing the first two research questions jointly allows for a unique approach to decipher the factors and the effects the factors have on Anlo Ewe girls who drop out of school. The two research questions are addressed together in the discussion because when extracting the data to answer the research questions it became clear that each one is connected to the other – inseparable in nature; and thus, is presented together in the discussion.

The last section of this chapter will discuss findings that address the third research question:

3. How can the effects of such factors be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

The third research question will, therefore, speak to the factors that need to be addressed for the advancement of education of the Anlo Ewe girl child. Additionally, the discussion of each research question will be organized and addressed by the four determined themes.
Research Questions 1 and 2: What factors impact the formal education of the Anlo Ewe girl in Abor, Ghana; and how do such factors affect the education of Anlo Ewe girl child?

**Government Policies and Girl Child Education Initiative Factors**

Findings from government documents on education in Ghana indicate that the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was instituted in principle to provide education for all children and improve the quality of education services. Since independence in 1957, Ghana’s government embarked upon free education policy for all regardless of ethnicity, religion, and gender. In the same manner, the formulation of the Education Act of 1961 was to ensure that every Ghanaian child irrespective of gender, religion, and ethnicity received free primary and middle school education (Ministry of Education, 1996; UNESCO, 1998). Although Ghana’s 1987 educational restructuring made provisions for universal education for all children of school going age, the educational system still had systematic flaws. Ghana’s education system inherited significant gender biases through the indiscriminate importation of European education models and concepts, which ill-suited Ghana’s social, cultural, and economic systems. In the first place, colonial schools in Ghana were set up not as coeducational institutions, but as separate-but-equal institutions, where girls had separate schools from the boys (Agyepong, 2001; Quist, 2003). However, findings in this study indicate that although the educational institutions were set up to be separate-but-equal, school experiences were separate, but hardly equal. The educational system discriminated not only in terms of the physical set up of the institutions, but also in terms of subject choice because the girls
were made to study vocational and commercial subjects while the boys studied professional subjects like math, law, medicine and administration (Agyepong, 2001; Quist, 2003).

One other flaw in the concept of FCUBE is that the financial support for children ends once children complete their education at the junior high school level. If students desire to continue their education, they must pay their individual school fees and other school related costs out of pocket once they leave junior high for the senior high school. Studies by Dei, 2004; Akyeampong et al. (2007), and Thompson and Casley-Hayford, (2008) report that although the government took substantial strides in providing FCUBE at the basic school level, it fails to provide tuition cost for students in senior high school. The lack of financial support for Adwoa and Akuwa while they were attending Abor Pioneer Academy is a major reason that contributed to their dropping out of school. I recall that Adzovi dropped out of school at the end of her junior high school term, and did not have the financial support to continue to senior high school, because her parents decided to support her brothers instead of Adozvi.

Each of these education reform initiatives are only with structural transformation of the education system in Ghana (Dei, 2004). The reforms, however, seemed neither to recognize or address crucial factors that impact girl child education. This means gender sensitive policies that the government put in place to improve girl child education either were ignored or were not implemented in the school system. From the data, the implication is that girls who dropped out of school encountered gender sensitive factors that affected their educational outcomes. Furthermore, in the educational documents
examined for this study, no implementation strategies to improve girl child education were noted in any of the documents as a means to follow-up on the study’s recommendations (MOE, 2007; UNICEF, 2009).

Findings from government reports suggest that the direct costs of schooling had actually become more pronounced with the advent of structural adjustment programs, which among other things have advocated cost-sharing policies that are tantamount to shifting of educational costs to parents (Stromquist, 1999). For example, the introduction of school fees for senior high school students in Ghana in the 1980’s resulted in the decline in enrollment of girls at the high school level (Stromquist, 1999). Data analyzed suggests that cost of education was one of the main barriers to girl’s education access especially among rural societies (USAID, 2007). Findings in the data indicate that the introduction of the Capitation Grant program by the government of Ghana in 2005 yielded positive enrollment results in the education system. With the Capitation Grant, 30,000 Ghana cedis (about US$3.50) per child was paid by the Ministry of Education to the appropriate school based on student enrollment. The objective for introducing the grant was to compensate for the financial barrier created by extra expenditures incurred in each school (Akyeampong et al., 2007; Thompson & Casley-Hayford, 2008). Table 8 shows that both girls’ and boys’ enrollment increased after the introduction of the Capitation Grant.
Table 8

*Senior High School Enrollment Figures in Ghana after Capitation Grant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2004/5</th>
<th>2005/6</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1,754,539</td>
<td>2,075,864</td>
<td>321,325</td>
<td>18.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1,943,909</td>
<td>2,239,023</td>
<td>295,114</td>
<td>15.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,698,448</td>
<td>4,314,887</td>
<td>616,439</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 8 indicates there was a 16.67% increase in total enrollment in the SHS level in the whole Ghana, with girls increasing by 18.31% between 2004/5 and 2005/6. Boys’ enrollment on the other hand also increased by 15.18%. While increase in enrollment figures tends to point to progress in girls’ education, findings from the data suggest that enrollment figures are devoid of other dimensions of the girl child’s lived experiences that affect the actual educational outcomes. Additionally, while the number of girl enrollment increased, the dropout rates for girls transitioning to senior high school are far greater than boys. Consequently, boys still have larger enrollment to completion educational outcomes. Although there is a numerical increase in enrollment for girls, dropout rates for girls transitioning to senior high school were far greater than for boys. The consequence is that boys still have better educational outcomes than the girls.

Data from interviews with the Girl Child Education Director of the Volta Region, Mrs. Agboda, revealed that programs for girl child education in the district were halted due to budget constraints and lack of funds from the government. Data confirms the fact
that Ghana’s government was to earmark funds to improve and enhance the Girl Child Education Initiative projects throughout Ghana in order to increase educational access for girls at all levels (Sutherland-Addy, 2002). For example, Table 9 shows the grant money that Volta Region, as well as other regions, expected to receive from the government.

Table 9

*Capitation Grant Amount Due per Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2005 (GHC)</th>
<th>2006 (GHC)</th>
<th>2007 (GHC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASHANTI</td>
<td>109,195.00</td>
<td>122,637.67</td>
<td>128,856.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRONG AHAFO</td>
<td>75,468.46</td>
<td>85,388.08</td>
<td>89,802.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL</td>
<td>82,582.75</td>
<td>94,801.00</td>
<td>99,936.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EASTERN</td>
<td>100,191.20</td>
<td>110,941.40</td>
<td>118,093.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREATER ACCRA</td>
<td>87,579.60</td>
<td>94,164.60</td>
<td>101,665.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHERN</td>
<td>139,704.23</td>
<td>146,376.46</td>
<td>155,021.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER EAST</td>
<td>59,538.50</td>
<td>66,664.00</td>
<td>75,051.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER WEST</td>
<td>89,497.80</td>
<td>73,080.00</td>
<td>7,434.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>VOLTA</em></td>
<td>91,871.75</td>
<td>103,855.00</td>
<td>113,528.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTERN</td>
<td>66,018.55</td>
<td>81,469.36</td>
<td>82,716.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93889.99</strong></td>
<td><strong>103381.09</strong></td>
<td><strong>109,916.21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, Table 10 shows the actual amount that was released to the regions, including the Volta Region, where the amount fell short of the amount promised to the region. Findings in this study indicate the Capitation Grant was to ease the demand-side constraints on education as a way to improve the quantity and quality of education in the
country. However, the decrease in the grant financing educational programs and the goal of providing fee-free universal basic education for all Ghanaian children of school-going age remains elusive.

Table 10

*Capitation Grant Released Amount per Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASHANTI</td>
<td>79,588.09</td>
<td>89,385.94</td>
<td>93,918.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRONG AHAFO</td>
<td>55,469.56</td>
<td>62,762.34</td>
<td>66,006.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL</td>
<td>61,022.27</td>
<td>70,049.90</td>
<td>73,843.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EASTERN</td>
<td>74,356.25</td>
<td>82,329.55</td>
<td>87,639.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREATER ACCRA</td>
<td>65,114.09</td>
<td>70,009.95</td>
<td>75,586.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHERN</td>
<td>103,400.60</td>
<td>108,328.40</td>
<td>114,723.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER EAST</td>
<td>41,204.17</td>
<td>46,135.44</td>
<td>51,940.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER WEST</td>
<td>61,937.78</td>
<td>46,581.13</td>
<td>53,589.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VOLTA</td>
<td>64,964.45</td>
<td>73,442.98</td>
<td>80,278.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTERN</td>
<td>48,483.91</td>
<td>59,859.68</td>
<td>60,762.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>68,553.54</td>
<td>75,529.16</td>
<td>80,272.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In piecing together findings from the data, it became evident that through the Capitation Grant scheme, Ghana embarked on a national initiative for the provision of universal primary education in 2004 including girl child initiatives (Girls’ Education Unit, 2006). This initiative sought to bolster Ghana’s constitutional promise in which free, compulsory, and universal primary education was mandated for both boys and girls,
and to support its educational policy (FCUBE) was established as an outgrowth of this constitutional mandate. The data indicates that though the goal of the Capitation Grant was to remove the financial barrier to enrolling both boys and girls in schools, while at the same time compensating schools for any loss of revenue incurred by eliminating student levies, it did not remove the gender disparity (Girls’ Education Unit, 2006). A critical analysis of Tables 9 and 10 reveals that the Capitation Grant amounts that the government actually released in all the regions fell short of the amounts due to each of the regions over all the years. What this means is that efforts at financing programs that provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls would be hampered in the schools because of inadequate funding. Since the Capitation Grant was to ease financial burdens on parents so that they will send both boys and girls to school, a shortfall from the Capitation Grant would also have a significant impact on girl child education.

In interviews with Mr. Nutor, an opinion leader in the Abor community, and Father Agbadzeanyi, a Catholic priest, it became evident that girl child initiatives were in “name” only. As a result, there was no implementation of girl child initiatives in Abor area. During the interview with Mr. Nutor, I found that he was aware of Ghana’s nationwide girl child initiatives, but as he opined, the national initiatives hardly operate at the local level in Abor area. Rather at the local level policies are influenced by the chief and council of elders.

The lack of national policies for girls who become pregnant during their schooling experience is a deciding factor in educational outcomes for girls, also. Each of the girls interviewed in this study became pregnant either before or after they dropped out of
senior high school or before entering the senior high school. One of the informants indicates that there was very little respect for girls who dropped out of school, most especially those who were unwed mothers. In discussing the future of children of their community, parents, teachers, and opinion leaders had very little hope for girls’ futures other than becoming petty traders or taking up a trade, if they could afford it. This is supported by interviews I had with the parents (fathers and mothers) of the girl informants in addition to opinion leaders and teachers. One teacher indicated that girls who drop out of school normally end up as petty traders by the roadside. From my interviews with Awoto and Akuwa it became obvious that although there is no written policy that a girl cannot continue her education should she become pregnant, there is something unsaid and unwritten that makes girls know that they cannot go back to school. Annin (2009) in a research study he conducted in Ghana, focused on the dilemma girls face when they drop out of school. Annin found that girls who become pregnant end their academic career, and normally without any support for recourse.

From the narratives of informants it is clear that pregnancy out of wedlock conflicts with core cultural values of an Anlo Ewe family; it carries a significant stigma to the girl, her family and community. The strong cultural values of Anlo Ewe teach that a child who goes awry or demonstrates immoral behavior, brings shame on the entire family and extended kinship. In a study conducted by Baldé (2005) with Fulani Muslim girls in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea, it became clear that in Africa, cultural values of a community are more honored than the individual values. Therefore, to break or disrespect the cultural values of family and kinship is highly eschewed amongst Africans.
and in this case, the Anlo Ewe. This may be why there are no government policies to encourage the girl child to return to school post-pregnancy, because those government policies in the end may be in conflict with cultural values present in the community.

In analyzing interviews I had with Mr. Agbavor, Mr. Nutor, and Fr. Agbadzeanyi, and information obtained from government documents on education, I realized the presence of elusive access to education for the girl child. Data reveals that policies in Ghana’s education system have been preoccupied in seeking ways of making the content of education more meaningful, and the methods of delivery more cost-effective within the context of nation building and economic development. Yet, there has been inadequate attention to implementation of these policies in the rural communities. Without means for implementation of these policies in rural areas, the girl child continually faces constrained access to education. This is because she is circumscribed by the economic conditions of her parents, the patriarchal system, beliefs of the community, and the traditional culture, which require a submissive role for women and the girl child in the community. These systems of beliefs appear to be more intact in rural communities, and are sustained without the serious implementation of the government educational policies. If the policies were implemented for girls in this region, potentially it could have a gradual impact on the community as it relates to girls’ educational success

### School Environment and Administrative Structure Factors

Findings from data in this study reveal that schools’ physical environment, social, climate and administrative structures of the school, most especially teachers’ attitudes, behavior and teaching practices have implications for female students’ retention and
academic achievement. Although analysis of textbooks was not a part of my methodology, I noticed that majority of the science and math textbooks used in the school system are written by men, while examples and pictorial illustrations in textbooks are more representative of boys than girls. The genderized nature of the textbooks is an example of the hidden curriculum that operates to hide those things that might encourage a girl to see herself as an educated person in her own right. These representation or lack thereof reflects Hall’s (1985) concerns for the encoding of representations. When one does not see oneself represented as successful in various endeavors, it is much easier to internalize the hegemonic belief that one cannot, nor should, aspire to success in that given endeavor.

Participants in the study view the fundamental purpose of education as the development, facilitation, and acquisition of lifelong skills for useful living. Mr. Agbavor, Headmaster of Abor Pioneer Academy, noted that:

As for students, they acquire lifelong skills that are regularly developed and validated to retain their marginal usefulness and vigor when they can be annexed and directly applied as solution-driven mechanism. What I know is that education can be used to bring hope to everyday challenges, socially, economically, and politically. This is why I tell my students that in terms of the skills they gain – lifelong education are reliable and positive-oriented weapon in life. And for my students to acquire this, I need to be there for them, the math teacher, the school system needs to be there for them.
Mr. Agbavor’s assertion is important because school environments affect not only access and retention of the girl child in the school system, but also the educational outcomes of the girl child. If girls are not supported in their educational endeavors, then they lose out on the promises of education as noted by Mr. Agbavor.

Findings in this study reveal that mentoring, typified as part of any institutional responsibility, is the informal educational and/or organizational process that can promote personal and intellectual growth of the girl child. The growth that mentoring brings to the girl child includes professional development through empowerment and confidence building for the achievement of academic, social mobility, professional, and other organizational competence. Mr. Agbanyo, a male math and science teacher at Abor Pioneer Academy also confirms the fact that:

When teachers supervise the young girls in the school system, it is the basis for the development of a virile, nurtured and well groomed future citizen and intellectual of all time, for all day for her family, the community and the nation. However, school environment and administrative structures are not in place to ensure these ideals.

During an interview with some of the girl informants, they talked about only one male teacher and the Home Economics teacher as engaging them in mentorship. The informants mentioned that the female teacher was like a coach, training them with hands-on-the-job, discussing their home experiences with them, and counseling them against becoming sexually involved with boys at their age. The girls indicated that male teachers, on the other hand, have cultural restrictions that do not the male teachers to be close to
girls outside the classroom. This is because cultural taboos have restrictions on male-female interaction in public spheres. The problem is in the “imagined power” of the structures and the school environment that is saturated with socio-cultural beliefs about the girl child; teachers bring these beliefs, consciously or not, into the classroom environment. From the data, it became clear that the school environment in Abor Pioneer Academy is not conducive to effective learning for the girl child.

Another aspect of the school environment that influences decisions about enrollment, retention and persistence of girls in schools relates to teaching and teachers’ perception of the girl child. In this study, I found that both male and female teachers have lower expectations of girls’ academic ability. Boys are perceived to be intelligent, hardworking, motivated, and co-operative while girls are perceived to be easy to control, passive, calm, and submissive. Data reveals that teaching practices often have negative consequences for girls’ education once they are in an unfavorable school environment, and this compounds the impact on the girls. In each of the classrooms I observed, boys were called on more often than girls to answer questions presented as problems by the course instructor. Teachers’ low expectations of girls reflect the views held by the wider society. Since the girl child often lack access to girl-friendly, safe and supportive spaces from the community, as well as from the teachers and the school environment itself, she becomes socially invisible and academically marginalized in the school system. This is exemplified in the Report of the Expert Group Meeting (2006)
Pervasive patriarchal gender biases and rigid, patriarchal gender roles, stereotypes and values keep girls on the lowest rung of the social and family hierarchies, rendering them socially invisible and marginalized (p. 4).

The persistent nature of patriarchal socio-culture amongst Anlo Ewe in Abor imposes constraints on education as a vehicle for girls’ liberation. The ideology of the patriarchal society produces differential expectations among parents and teachers regarding boys and girls educational obtainment; thereby, leaving the girl child on the periphery of education (Ageypong, 2001).

Men in Anlo Ewe society exercise power and are the overarching decision makers in Anlo Ewe culture. In the words of Mr. Nutor, an opinion leader, he states that local politics is ruled by the chief and council of elders, who are all men. Similarly, in the Abor Pioneer Academy’s administrative structures, men are in every position of decision-making (i.e. headmaster, assistant headmaster, heads of departments). The hierarchy of power within the political and school structures found in Abor compounds and reinforces the belief system in the society where, “children should be seen and not head”. The position of girls in Anlo Ewe society puts girls in a peculiar situation For instance, I observed in the biology class at Abor Pioneer Academy that girls who were eager to participate in the class discussion had their voices silenced by the male teacher who failed to acknowledge their class participation. In this example, I witnessed girls withdraw psychologically after being shunned in class by hanging their heads low displaying a sense of shyness and shame. Additionally, in this example, the pedagogical nature of the
biology teacher was predominantly teacher-centered, leading to a controlling of girls’ participation.

Gender stereotypes and sexist behavior presented in the class are unchallenged by girls and are reinforced by the assignment of all or predominantly male teachers in core academic subjects. This concurs with observations of Dunne (2007) regarding male teachers in Ghana and Botswana schools that were overrepresented in core courses. In Dunne’s account of teachers in Ghana and Botswana, teachers were seen to motivate boys by dismissing girls in the classroom regardless of the girl’s performance, as a result causing the girls to become shy and bashful. Through the analysis of my observations with the six girl informants, they appeared to be acutely shy. During the interviews I had with Mamavi, she held her hand over her face, hung her head low, and spoke very softly and quietly. In my interviews with Akuwa, she was the most shy of all the girls, and although she spoke in English, it was always difficult to hear her. All of the girls interviewed for this study appeared to be shy, but in fact, their voices are silenced by men in their home, community, and school through the socialization process. Studies by Agyepong (2001), Davis & Kanyka (1992), Dei (2004, 2005) and Dunne (2007) critically view the shyness or silencing of girls on the surface level to mean that they are well-behaved girls, but in fact, the shyness is representative of a dominant version of a subordinate group that is built from the foundation of a male dominated power structure within the society (Humphreys, 2005, Seke, 2001).

Gender dynamics in the Anlo Ewe community is what determines issues of inheritance, decision-making in the family, educational attainment, and the hierarchy of
the family or household (Nukunya, 1969, 1997). The gender dynamics in the society also calls on the female gender to accept her position as a silent participant in every decision-making process in her own home and within the community. Moreover, if a female is of school going age or works in a school or office, she has to limit herself to that space assigned to female gender. For instance, at Abor Pioneer Academy women hold the positions of Home Economics teacher, administrative assistants, and hostel administrator, whereas men hold the superior positions of authority or teach the “hard core” subject such as math and science. Gender inequality is, therefore, well-pronounced and institutionalized in the educational system; it is also highly prevalent in homes causing a distinct division of labor, which places an overwhelming burden on the girl child in homes.

**Socio-cultural Factors**

Despite Ghana’s success in championing girl child’s access to education, the disparity between boys’ and girls’ formal education derives from the socio-cultural nature of the Anlo Ewe. The socialization process by which Anlo Ewe operate determines that gender roles are defined at birth, with males being at the top of the hierarchy. The traditional education of boys found amongst the Anlo Ewe emphasizes the beliefs, values, male self-assertion, and manly authoritative behavior (Ametewee, 1997). Oyewumi (2006) argues that in order to examine gender dynamics and experiences of women in African societies, consideration must be given to the social and cultural context. This is because in traditional African societies, such as amongst the Anlo Ewe, a proverb states that, “A woman is a beautiful flower in the garden and the man is the fence around her”
(In my field notes—learned this proverb at a session with one opinion leader). This proverb places women in a particular role, a recipient of male support and protection which emphasizes the subordinate role women play within the Anlo Ewe society. Petty, Roberts, and Smith (1987) argues that, “women’s subordination could be seen as social in origin, as neither given by nature nor by an accidental feature of relations between men and women” (p. 35) and only education can resolve the problematization of the subjectivity.

At a very early age, Anlo Ewe males and females go through the socialization process by the use of forms such as verbal art, rituals, and dance and song performances to convey social and moral behavior of society. Through an analysis of women’s stories in rural Kenya, Davison (1996) found the forms of songs and proverbs learned by young girls were for the preparation of adulthood, and included a focus on many traditional female roles. Songs and proverbs that Davison (1996) present from the voices of Gikuyu women in Kenya were similar in nature to what Anlo Ewe experience as the socialization process. While the man in Anlo Ewe society is socialized to be the breadwinner and head of the house of the patriarchal society, the socialization process that the Anlo Ewe’s girl child goes through positions her as a wife, mother, and daughter within the society. This makes the position of the girl child vulnerable since she can hardly go against the grain of tradition and customs. The classification of the girl child as a wife, mother, and daughter within the Anlo Ewe society is a “triple heritage” the girl child carries for life. To become anything outside of the “triple heritage” is counter-cultural in the Anlo Ewe society.
When Akuwa, one of the girls I interviewed, says, “I want to go to school, but I can’t,” one wonders what it is about that “I can’t” that makes her not gather courage and go to school. Inside the “I can’t” is that uncodified behavior or attitude of those with the power to allow her to attend school. Present in that statement is the fact that there are practices or policies in the school or in the community that impact her educational outcome. Whether or not it makes a difference, although I suspect it does, usually males are the ones in power to make decisions about girls’ education. Evidently, those in the community have some uncodified beliefs about a girl who gives birth out of wedlock that also influence the girl child to say, “I want to go to school, but I can’t.” The importance of educating the girls, such as Akuwa, lies in the fact that the average woman leads an essential life that is truncated based on her being “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc. (Mohanty, 1991, p. 56).

Socially, there are uncodified legislations in the Anlo Ewe cultural milieu that position a woman “in the kitchen”, define the hierarchy of her gender and social class, as well as define her “triple heritage”. In an interview, Akuwa stated that while her brothers continued their education, her father did not support her education and relegated her to the caretaking of the household chores, including cooking the meals each day. This socio-cultural perspective is also demonstrated in the voices of several informants of this study that stated, “A woman’s bedroom is in the kitchen.” In a study of Hofriyat women in Northern Sudan, Boddy (1989) reports a similar metaphor of the “kitchen” as the place of girls and women. In her study, Boddy notes that Hofriyat women have clearly designated separate entrances and dwelling places in their homes. Men enter the front of the house,
while women come through the back door near the kitchen. This makes the relationship between patriarchy and gender crucial to the understanding of women’s subordinate position in the Anlo Ewe society.

Gendered divisions of labor can be seen at home, where there are different parental expectations of female and male children in the performance of household chores. Findings in my study reveal that female children carry the larger bulk of the duties in the home compared to their male counterparts. Akuwa, an informant who dropped out of school, shared that all the chores around the house are her responsibility, and states that her brothers are not required to perform any chores to assist in the household. Akuwa prepares the food, washes the clothes, and takes care of her son, brothers, father, two uncles, and aunt’s needs. This sort of division of labor is reiterated in a study conducted by Bukh (1973) in Southeast Ghana, where women were found to work hard on a daily basis by doing many chores requiring them to cook, farm, clean, wash, carry fire-wood, carry water and food crop, and take care of the children.

Cultural values and the attitudes of men who are the principal decision-makers at the household level play a major role in the gender-based division of labor. Agyepong (2001) and Mohanty (1991) posit that when analyzing the sexual division of labor the cultural and historical context such as colonialism must be taken into consideration. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) and Stromquist (1998) support the argument that colonialism not only introduced new patterns of the division of labor, but colonialism strengthened the patriarchal ideology that has affected many African communities. The system of colonialism restructured the roles of males and females further exacerbating hegemonic
tendencies. There is a prevailing gender division of labor that assigns women reproductive and domestic tasks (Nukunya, 1997). An analysis of the gender division of labor underpins a major barrier to the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal educational outcomes. The division of labor in Anlo Ewe society situates girls in a particular gendered role of domesticity and motherhood.

The impact of the family unit of the Anlo Ewe in continuously echoing the dictates of the customs and traditions into the ears of the child is undisputed. According to Charvet (1982), the boy child in the family is preferred to the girl child. In fact, boys rule girls by right of birth and even if the boy child is not the first born in a family, he is automatically considered the head of the household who should protect and look after his sisters. The girl child is further discriminated upon due to the fact that she eventually marries and joins another family while the boy child ensures the survival of the family name through bringing additional members into the family (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). This attitude leads to the parents preferring to educate boys to girls, because boys carry on the family name with their children while girls are attached or married and bear children for another family.

Although some parents expressed hopes for their daughters to have higher education, their hopes are articulated against the background that should the girls receive higher education they will get “better” husbands in the future and leave the family. Findings in this study also reveal that when parents wish that their daughters receive a higher level of educational success, it is made against the backdrop that the educational success of their daughters insures the parents against future insecurities. Because if the
daughter marries a successful man, it means the “brideprice” or dowry the husband will bring the father-in-law would be of great value.

In Anlo Ewe society to have a child out of wedlock is eschewed by the community, and is known to generate derogatory remarks about one’s family. Kinship, marriage, and family, as in most African societies, are highly regarded social structures amongst the Anlo Ewe. When speaking of marriage and kinship, Nukunya (2003) notes that when a couple is joined in marriage, their respective lineages and families automatically become affinal realities, while the children of the union are kin. Marriage in this sense means that all the customary rights have been performed according to the customs and traditions of the Anlo Ewe (Nukunya, 2003). Among the Anlo Ewe society girls are looked upon in terms of their reproductive roles, therefore, the importance of formal education is diminished. As presented in the narrative of the opinion leader, Dr. Dorbu, parents are highly concerned when their daughters reach puberty and are attending school:

But when girls start growing and their – you know, their physical, you know, appearance begins to change most parents’ daughters would not be able to make any high level.

The concerns are that their daughter will lose her virginity and become pregnant. This concept of girls being removed from schools by their parents is supported by studies by Baldé (2005) and Obeng (2006). They report that in the Muslim communities they studied, parents make the decision to give their daughter into marriage out of the fear she will become pregnant before marriage. The interviews I had with informants in this study
in Abor area did not reveal that girls are given to early marriage, but because of parents’ fears that their adolescent daughters may easily become pregnant while in school, many parents pull their daughters out of school. Parents pull adolescent daughters out of school to prevent their family from having a negative stigma on the family should their daughter become pregnant out of wedlock. Findings in this study reveal that once girls drop out of school, their hopes of becoming anything other than a mother and wife is null and void. Girls who drop out of school, for any reason, know that their fate is relegated to the backdrop of a petty trader and the only option that remains is to seek menial job opportunities in the larger cities.

Gender dynamics do not operate in the school or home alone, but also in access to education in general, in workplace experiences, and in post-collegiate outcomes. The girl child drops out of school because she fares relatively less well in terms of educational experience and achievement. In this study, data has distinctly suggested that dropping out of school creates a disadvantaged sphere in the social life of the girl child, thus, gender inequality is pronounced in the educational system of Ghana. It appears that education is associated with formal employment and social mobility. This is, among other things, due to the fact that most families do not sufficiently weigh the social gains that are accrued as a result of education.

During my research, I learned from my informants that among the Anlo Ewe oftentimes conflict arises between what is taught at home (during initiation ceremonies) and at school (formal classroom) which leads parents to oppose girls’ continued attendance at school. For example, among the Anlo Ewe, talking openly about sex is
considered profane, but the school curriculum includes sex education. In many instances the curriculum offends the moral and religious beliefs of parents, and girls are pulled out of school as a result. Indeed, girls' behavior is often directly related to the many traditional taboos that dictate what and what not to do at the various stages of their development which may conflict with the demands of schooling and curriculum.

Parental attitudes determine a child's chance of education. Parents control the initial decision of a child to attend school and often influence the nature of a child's participation in education. In Abor, I found that boys received more parent-supplied exercise books than did the girls. Even such material support for children's schooling may influence persistence with school and achievement. I also found that many individuals, including women in Ghana, thought it was more important to educate boys than girls. The reason most cited was that girls marry or conceive during the school cycle resulting in wastage and loss of the educational investment. Cultural belief factors are, therefore, seen to contribute considerably to the larger school dropout rate for females.

**Traditional Customary Practices**

Another socio-cultural aspect that impacts girls’ educational outcome is traditional customary practices. Informants in this study stated that Abor area has various religious shrines for Yewe, Afa, Brekete, and other minor deities. Prominent among these shrines are the Trokosi and the Fiasidi deities. Many of the socio-cultural factors discussed in the preceding section are intertwined with traditional rituals and belief systems about the girl child. In the study, Mr. Agbavor indicated that in their every day social activities the Anlo Ewe consult their deities incessantly. Mr. Agbavor maintains
that when it comes to making decisions on critical matters like education, parents often resort to their belief systems and religious ideas. The recourse to traditional customary practices in explaining social behavior in Anlo Ewe society is prevalent enough that an examination of the relationship between religious affiliation and the education of girls would enhance the comprehension of the girl child’s educational attainment and socioeconomic situation among the Anlo Ewe.

Findings in this study indicate there is an interrelationship between formal traditional belief systems, religious affiliation, and women's educational attainment among the Anlo Ewe of Ghana. The intersection between religion and girls’ educational processes comes about because religious norms, values, and practices are used to rationalize the choices parents make when it comes to girls’ education. Greene (2009) states that Trokosi is a belief system that is associated with unusual events outside the realm of human control and young girls are recruited through a variety of means:

Some came into their service through a judicial process that emphasized collective punishment for particular crimes objectionable to the god. In such instances, one person from the community in which the crime was committed would be selected to bear the brunt of the punishment so as to spare the entire community spiritual retribution. Individuals were also consecrated to serve a particular god at its shrine because that person's birth or recovery from illness was attributed to the intervention of that deity. (p. 56)
This study found that occasionally, girls between the ages of 6 and 15 are recruited into these religious shrines. The scope of admission and reception rituals associated with the shrines situates the girls in the cultural contexts of the Anlo Ewe.

Ansah (2003) suggests that cultural practices based on traditional belief systems, discriminate against girls, because it disempowers them in many areas and circumstances, including education. Mr. Dorbu, an opinion leader who has lived in Abor area for many years stated that:

The Trokosi and Fiasidi system are in the society. Often, some girls are withdrawn from school, and taken into servitude in the shrine. Once girls are dedicated to a shrine the formal education for her and that of her children is thwarted.

Ocansey & Hayhoe, (2004), and Tanye (2008) confirm the situation in their study, stating that the complex system of Trokosi causes harm to the girl child and its persistence in the Volta Region does not favor girl child education amongst the Anlo Ewe. On the other hand, Nukunya (2003) states that a young girl who is a Fiasidi or Trokosi is in fact highly respected by her family, because of the esteem she is given as “preserved for the deity”. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that Fiasidi or Trokosi still exist, but is not highly prevalent in the Abor traditional.

Among the Anlo Ewe, it is evident that traditional beliefs, values, and ideals shape the social identity and culture of the community. For example, various shrines are instrumental in the rites of passage of both boys and girls and the provision of indigenous education in traditional communities. In an interview, Mr. Afanya shared the fact that
traditional values among the Anlo Ewe help sustain the existing gender relations as they provide the normative framework for the behavior of their members. Mr. Afanya observed that in many instances traditional ideologies and norms of Anlo Ewe help legitimize traditional gender roles by providing a non-secular ethos and worldview about the position of girls in relation to boys.

Informants in this study report that a religion with the traditional patriarchal theological orientation tend to support the socioeconomic dependence of girls on boys. Data in this study shows that in Anlo Ewe worldview, male dominance and female subordination are part of the natural order of things. The general belief is that a woman's career should help support her husband and family, and this belief is protected by religious sanctions. This makes gender dynamics present in the religious experiences amongst the Anlo Ewe.

According to Richter (1998), in male dominated communities every cultural activity has both traditional hidden script and uncodified practices. Richter mentions that in patriarchal systems girls continue to be subjected to certain traditional and customary practices that prevent them from completing their formal education. Throughout my study, the girl informants indicated that certain traditional customary practices empower boys more than girls in the community. The headmaster, Mr. Agbavor, notes that:

So these Trokosi [girls] may be six years [of age] before they enter the cult and they will be around 15 years at the age of getting married, before they will leave that place. So they can’t go to school at that time. They are 15 years. Yeah, they
can go, but they themselves will not be prepared to join Class 1, Class 2 children, so they drop out of school.

My findings indicate that the nature and operations of Trokosi and Fiasidi shrines suggest that belief systems and religious factors present among the Anlo Ewe highlights men’s prerogatives and spell out the allegiance and subservience of women. It also legitimizes men in their exercise of power over women to sustain the latter’s subordination and marginality. This study suggests that a society’s gender ideology is grounded largely in social, traditional beliefs, and political principles of the community, which are then used as grounds to justify different rights, responsibilities, and rewards to each gender.

Analysis of the data suggests it is evident that because of religious activities, privileges of access to education have often been restricted to certain groups of individuals, especially to boys and not to girls. In Anlo Ewe society, the girl child could be sent to a shrine to become an adherent (worshipper/believer) of Trokosi, or Fiasidi, thus affecting her education. This pattern of the exercise of power in determining who becomes an adherent in the shrine has been influential in determining access and exclusion to formal public education. Within the Abor community, there exists a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which the society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. These systematic sets of cultural beliefs, identifiable in the religious, legal, political, educational, and material institutions create and reinforce expectations about how men and women should behave and interact with each other in the society.
Findings in this study indicate that in patriarchal societies like that of Abor, hegemony relates to the whole social process of power distribution and the influence of men, something carried out through the employment of active social and cultural forces within the society to entrench male authority. Hegemony, according to Hall (1985), is “dominance and subordination in the field of relations of power” (p. 41). The reliance on socio-cultural structures in Anlo Ewe community, therefore, empowers the men to define and shape social relations in the community in a way that allows the men “to wield political control, social control, and economic control” (Hall, 1985, p. 42). In many ways, this is the world of the girl child in Abor area. It is a world to which she must succumb to the social, political and economic structures of the patriarchally controlled system of her community.

**Economic Factors**

Findings from my research indicate that Abor is one of the highly populated towns in the Volta Region of Ghana. The traditional economy of Abor is primarily agriculturally based and most people live and work as small-scale farmers. A few of the women, on the other hand, are petty-traders in the market. However, the small-scale agriculture of the men and the petty trading by the women, which formerly sustained the population, stagnated throughout the 1980s until today. As an agrarian economic community, whenever there is a lack of rain to support the crops’ growth, many families fall into low economic status. Currently, because of the continuous dry seasons the land of Abor is still fallow and annually the people have had low yields of crops. The high population density and the level of overused land and now unproductive land results in
massive unemployment. The Abor community has rural poverty at approximately 80 percent (Kpemlie, 2005). This affects not only the standard and style of living, but also the education sector in general. This invariably affects the ability of parents to finance the education of their children and meet other human needs.

Most of the families in Abor area depend on their children, including daughters, to assist on the farm, and at times in the market, for income generating purposes. Girls from the age of 10 are expected to assist in the household chores, more so than boys (Nukunya, 1969). Research by Mensah (1998) and Fentiman, Hall and Bundy (1999) support findings of this study that in rural communities in Ghana, such as Abor, families experience high poverty rates, and must depend on their children to assist in the daily work activities. My interviews with each of the six girls confirmed that they were each responsible for economic generating activities to assist their parents in their respective homes. Additionally, girls who had younger siblings were made to be responsible for their younger siblings so that their parents could work to make ends meet.

The dependency on children to assist with the household income in order to support their family is a major obstacle to girls’ formal educational outcomes (Fentiman et al. 1999). Each of the girl informants revealed that they were made by their parents to contribute to the income generating activities of the family, more so than their brothers or male counterparts. Girls’ Education Unit (2002), Maletsane and Manuh (1999), and Tanye (2008) report that in many African countries, specifically in Ghana, girls disproportionately assist their mothers in the productivity of tasks inside and outside of the home; activities such as petty trading confirm this phenomenon. Boys, in fact, enjoy
more leisure time, thereby are allowed more time to study (Maletsane & Manuh, 1999). This further complicates the situation of the female’s educational outcomes in comparison to that of males. While girls are being pulled out of school to assist the family economy, boys are not hindered in their educational opportunities. With a lower and incomplete level of education, girls are then less apt to find employment or financial stability.

This study shows that schooling costs are quite high, and consequently, at times, households have to make harsh decisions on who should benefit from the little that they have. The literature and data in this study indicate that in instances such as economic crisis in the family, households tend to fall back on established cultural and social beliefs that relegate the girl to the backdrop of education. Cultural factors in Ghana and gender-specific attitudes about the division of labor also shape the decisions about whether a child should or should not be in school. Dunne (2005) in a case study on girls’ education in Ghana and Botswana confirms how gendered identities impact the life of girls in Botswana and Ghana. In the study, Dunne found that in rural Botswana and Ghana occupations are gendered—boys learn the trade of their fathers while girls follow that of their mothers.

One other finding was that even when parents manage to send their children to school (boys and girls), should the family/parents encounter some financial hardship it is the girl child who is first to be dropped out of school. Nukunya (1997) also asserts that girls are disadvantaged in their education as it is mediated through gender-based divisions of labor and social roles. Thus, in most Ghanaian societies gender-based divisions of
labor exist in both the production of goods and services and in household-based production, all of which affect access to schooling. In most instances, this gender-based division of labor tends to favor boys. It was one of the aims of this study to establish the extent of this problem in Ghana and, in particular, in the Abor area. Culturally determined ways of defining women and men and their roles in a given society have come to shape gender-specific opportunities and constraints in education. Thus, the existence of discriminatory attitudes towards the schooling of girls is informed not only by customs and culture, but also by economic constraints on the family. Very important is the fact that mobility restrictions arise in many African societies when girls reach puberty, especially when the school is many miles away from home. Because of the expectations for labor in the home and the distance from schools, girls cannot afford the travel time to attend school and labor in the home. This constraint impact girls’ retention rates in school as well.

As noted, economic factors impact educational outcomes and favor males over females. Anytime the family is in financial crisis and the family income shows a downward trend, the head of the family who is always the man, calls upon the girl child to give up her education in place of the boys. Two of the girl informants, Mamavi and Akuwa, had fathers who withdrew them from school due to the lack of financial resources to support them, while their brothers were allowed to continue their education. In a similar situation, Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) found that girls in Kilome, Kenya, had to drop out of school, not only because of the scarcity of resources, but also because fathers did not believe in the education of females. As evident in the narratives of the girls in this
study and from Kiluva-Ndunda’s (2001) report, many girls in Africa are faced with similar dilemmas by being asked to give up schooling so that their brothers can continue their education. Such situations reiterate the important impact of the family, as well as the community, on educating boys instead of girls.

The preference to have the boy remain in school instead of the girl is not written or explained in the culture. Rather, it is uncodified and carried out at the discretion of the male elder of the family, who in many cases is the father figure and head of the family. Data analyzed in this study reveals that during economic crisis, the returns on girl child education are weighed and the family decides to maintain the boy in school rather than the girl child. All decisions taken during economic crisis are underscored by uncodified perceptions of the value of the girl child in the community. Due to the uncodified perceptions or values attached to the girl child, the high dropout rate of the girls from schools in rural areas cannot be separated from the cultural belief systems of a people about the girl child.

**Research Question 3: How can the effects of such factors be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?**

The third research question in this study is, how can the effects of factors that impact girl child education be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor area. In order to advance and improve the state of the Anlo Ewe girl child’s educational outcomes, I addressed the various factors presented in the findings in relationship to the four major themes. As a reminder, the four themes are, government policies and girl education child initiatives; school environment and administrative
structures; socio-cultural; and economic challenges. I found many of the factors interacting with each other in complex ways. Addressing these factors will take thoughtful analysis. To answer this third research question, I will provide initial analysis of how the factors might be addressed. Data analyzed showed that although more girls enter school than boys, a higher proportion of girls drop out and do not make the transition from primary to junior high school, from junior to senior high school, and from senior high school to university. Essentially, this harms the girl child’s educational retention and success that in turn, impacts choices and opportunities of the girl child in adulthood.

**Government Policies and Girl Child Education Initiative Factors**

Support for education is a central component to the overall strategies of any government to ensure the socio-economic and health needs of the citizenry. Data from the study showed that issues of governmental financial support for schooling, lack of resources for girl child initiatives, and lack of policies to sustain girls who become pregnant in school are among the issues hindering girl child education in Abor area. These factors could be addressed to improve the educational outcomes of girls by the following:

- Identify education as a crucial precursor to development and invest enough financial resources in education; the government budget allocation for education must reflect the government’s commitment to education.
- Invest more in fee-free and compulsory basic education for girls up to the university level.
• Enact policies directly targeting gender disparities in all levels of education in Ghana and find means to ensure that the policies are adhered to even in the rural areas. Specifically, policies should address the issues of the dropouts and encourage retention of girls through secondary education.

• Adapt policies at the local and national levels that address the retention of girls who become pregnant while in school, and provide a second chance for pregnant girls to return or remain in the school system. This would allow girls to go back to school once they deliver their child.

• Implement an initiative providing sex education for both boys and girls, to address the high episodes of girls getting pregnant out of wedlock. However, it may be necessary for female teachers, who girls trust, to be able to discuss sex-related matters with girls without the retribution of girls being pulled out of school by their parents. Additionally, mentoring groups can be established to include elders and parents to collaborate in a community effort to provide sex-related education to both boys and girls.

The above-mentioned remedies are important since gender equality in education is a quintessential precedent to all other areas of development.

School Environment and Administrative Structures

In this study, the school environment and administrative structures were factors that were significant in the enrollment and retention of girls in schools. The issues found in this study included gender dynamics in leadership roles, teaching of core subjects, course selection such as math and science, teachers’ perceptions of girls, and academic
performance, including testing. In order to make the school environment and administrative structures conducive for learning for the girl child, governmental policies could be enacted to assist in remedying the issues that causes gender disparity in educational outcomes of girls. The policies could include, though not limited to:

- Establish a means to increase the number of female teachers in the schools and, in particular subject areas, such as math and sciences. In addition, having female teachers in these subjects would serve as role models to the girl child in the school and community.

- Invest in teacher education to ensure that male and female teachers are equipped with skills and a curriculum that addresses gender related issues in the school environment, as well as in the process of teaching and learning. In so doing the school environment could further support the girl child in finding out her specific individual abilities, competences, and interests.

- Find ways to encourage, monitor, and assess schools and teachers for the kind of environment they create to either encourage or deter the girl child from having access to formal education. This could be done by putting in place an external assessment body for the teachers. The external assessment could develop a teaching assessment scoring rubric for teachers, which would set a goal or target for all teachers to ensure they motivate and retain equal numbers of boys and girls in the class in all subject areas, including math and science. If teachers know that they are
being monitored and assessed in the school, they will become conscious to create the appropriate environment for both girls and boys with equal expectations in school performance.

- In light of the underrepresentation of girls in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering, attention could be devoted to providing opportunities to the girl child to equalize with the boys in mathematics and science subjects. In addition, the use of a variety of teaching methods could be explored to unearth the girl child’s abilities and assist her in the learning process.

Addressing the factors with such approaches would go a long way to not only provide a congenial learning environment that promulgates the girl child to gain confidence in her educational endeavors, but also to remain in school.

**Socio-cultural Factors**

Traditional cultural attitudes about the girl child are very strong in rural communities in Ghana. The findings in this study demonstrate that the socialization process of the Anlo Ewe plays a crucial role in how the girl child is situated in her home, community, and in relation to the school. Issues such as traditional customary practices, valuing of the role of the girl child, and the changing dynamics of the family within the environment of Anlo Ewe in Abor are all contributing socio-cultural factors that hinder the girl child’s education. Such factors might be addressed by considering the following:

- There is the need for a concerted effort to educate parents, teachers, administrators, and the community on the role and importance of girl child
education, as well as the benefits in educating both boys and girls equally. The education could help influence socio-cultural genderized attitudes about the girl child such as her “triple heritage” in the home and community.

- At the community level, chiefs and elders could come together to address patriarchal attitudes and expectations of the community for both boys and girls in light of the changing contemporary dynamics of the society. This calls for the leaders in the community to reflect on and consider a reevaluation of traditional customary practices and belief systems and how they influence the girl child’s educational outcomes. Such an endeavor emanating from the local and community level would redefine the place of the girl child in the community.

- Governmental policy could be enacted to encourage girls who become pregnant to return to school after the delivery of her child. The establishment of a nursery and/or day care could perhaps provide a remedy to the girls when they reenter school. This provision would also enhance the economic conditions of women who may be hired at the nursery and daycare centers.

- Traditional women’s groups need to be involved in decisions about girl child education, because they have interesting experiences to share in this area from their traditional background in the indigenous education of the girl child.

These mentioned efforts would go a long way to resolve gender disparities in the schools and in the Abor community. The approach must be multi-dimensional, involving traditional leaders, opinion leaders in the community, and others who have various
experiences from which the government and the education service could learn and explore.

**Economic Factors**

Data from the findings show that economic challenges such as the lack of employment opportunities, diminishing growth of cash crops, and financial support for girls’ schooling and personal needs are issues that cause girls to drop out of school in the Abor area. Additionally, the findings indicated that enrollment of girls in the rural schools such as Abor lags seriously behind urban schools such as Accra. Similarly, the dropout rate of girls in rural schools is higher than those of boys in the cities as well. Such economic factors might be addressed by considering the following:

- There is need for financial support from the government to fund local income generating activities in the rural communities. This would be to assist parents retain girls in the schools in order to help them complete their education. This entails identifying and financing small-scale local industries, reducing the tax rates for rural economies, and expansion of micro-loans and grants to rural community industries.
- Special school enrollment drives should be initiated to target the girl child in the disadvantaged rural communities where lack of employment does not encourage the girl child to enroll in school.
- Being that Abor is an agrarian society, and families make their living off of their cash crops, it seems necessary that the community could come together to consider more modern ways of bringing water to the farms, such as
irrigation through the use of wells, and organic means of fertilization for the farm land. This initiative would mitigate the impact of the drought on local and family economies, thus, allowing girls to remain in school.

By making such provisions, the government will alleviate parents from problems that either prevent or affect the educational opportunities of the girl child. In addition, addressing these factors could help boost the fee-free education for all, as well as curtail the cultural attitudes that place little value on girls’ education, and mitigate attitudes that push girls towards dropping out of school for the varied reasons presented in this study.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I provided the discussion of the findings that revealed that there are factors that largely influence the education of the girl child. From the findings these factors limit the girl child to a small number of socially acceptable occupations and professions, such as a mother (mother to children), wife (servicing the husband), and daughter (a submissive/obedient daughter to her parents and willing to carry out the dictates of the age-old tradition). The discussion on findings reveals that the school environment has a complex role in creating and defining gender differences in performance in the school system. By attempting to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationship of causes and consequences of girl child education, the study went beyond the mere listing of causes for why the girl child drops out of school. This study discussed how factors could be addressed to reduce the high level of gender inequalities and lack of educational opportunities for the girl child that is widespread in Abor area.
Chapter 6: Summary and Recommendations for Further Research

Summary

The primary goal of this study was to explore socio-cultural factors that influence the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana. Second, the study was to contribute to the growing literature on girl child education in Africa. Through interviews, observations and my ethnographic approach, I was able to gain insight into the dynamics of Anlo Ewe culture. Through participant observations, I experienced the varying forms of Anlo Ewe culture, traditions and customs, studied household units, family relations, and social organizations and how these relate to the lived experiences of the girl child. Findings in this study indicate that the Anlo-Ewes are a patriarchal society and gender differences are socially constructed in the community. The literature review contextualized my study by examining factors that impact girls’ educational outcomes in Abor, Ghana.

There were three research questions for this study:

1. What factors impact the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in the Abor area of Ghana?
2. How do such factors affect the education of Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?
3. How can the effects of such factors be addressed to advance the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in Abor, Ghana?

My ethnographic case study of girl child education among the Anlo Ewe of Ghana offers additional perspectives on female education in Ghana’s educational system.
and its effects on the socioeconomic and political development of the Abor community. The literature reviewed observed that one of the major problems confronting Ghana’s government and stakeholders in the education and development of Ghana since independence is female education (Gachukia, 1992; Njeuma, 1993; Obeng, 2006). Although the importance of educating girls had also been identified in numerous education reforms, the state of girls’ educational achievement in Ghana, especially in rural areas such as the location of this study, remains low and lags behind that of boys (Akyeampong et al., 2007; Thompson & Casley-Hayford, 2008).

Data derived from the findings revealed four dominant themes: 1) government policies and girl child education initiatives; 2) school environment and administrative structures; 3) socio-cultural; 4) and economic factors. In positing education as a tool for self-empowerment and social mobility, the research agenda was structured to elicit data from girl respondents, parents of the girls, teachers, opinion leaders, clergy, director of the GCEU of the Volta Region, and administrators of schools as to the process of decision-making on the girl child’s accessibility and retention in the school system. Evidence from this study indicates that despite efforts of the Ghana government to address gender disparity in Ghana’s education system, girls continue to face many challenges in pursuit of their education. Based on the continuous presence of gender disparity in Ghana and its implications in the years ahead, I make these recommendations for future research so that the challenges regarding girls’ education could further be examined from different perspectives.
Based on the findings in this study, I suggest further research for ways to leverage the gender inequality in the Abor community and in the school system as an approach to girl child education in Ghana. The recommendations for further research are not only aimed at impacting the access and success of girls’ education within the socio-cultural environment of Anlo Ewe, but also to provide suggestions for continued research into other aspects of the life of the Anlo Ewe girl child where she experiences gender discrepancies. These discrepancies make the female respondents in this study cry out, *Medibe mayi sukau gake, nyemate yui o* [I want to go to school, but I can’t—emphasis mine].

**Recommendations for Further Research**

In the course of carrying out this research, issues arose that were related, but are ancillary to my research. Many of these issues lead to my recommendations for further research.

In terms of further research, studies on girls from other Anlo Ewe communities and ethnic groups apart from the Anlo Ewe would be interesting to undertake. This is because not all African communities are patrilineal, as is the nature of Anlo Ewe; some African communities are matrilineal. In Ghana, for example, the Anlo Ewe people are patrilineal, but the Ashanti are matrilineal. Although the Ashanti are matrilineal, they practice patrilineal belief systems when it comes to perceptions about females. Such studies could unearth information on other factors impacting access and retention of girls from matrilineal systems in education in Ghana. It will also enrich literature on girl child education in Ghana.
One other recommendation for further research would be to focus on the experiences of Anlo Ewe females who have never entered schools; this would allow for an examination of approaches that females, who lack formal education, develop to navigate the social as well as the economic and political structures within the society. A study of this nature will also allow for a comparison between girls who entered school gaining some literacy versus girls who never entered school and lack the basic level of literacy. In Abor, where this study was situated, women dominate the distributive system of trading; they collect and convey most of the food crops and other necessities for the household. A study of this nature would provide insight into the relevancy of literacy in the lives of women and girls who perform the agricultural labor and retail trade, especially since trading is dominantly women’s activity in Abor area.

Finally, earlier researchers that explored the link between colonization in Ghana and female subordination need to continue the discourse on gender in postcolonial Ghana, including the articulation of a Ghanaian womanist perspective. Such a study will highlight contemporary relationships between ethnic identities and female education. Further studies on the girl child and post-colonialism can be a direct "payoff" to the education of girls in economic and social terms.

**Concluding Reflection**

Conducting this research was an enormous learning experience for me. Amazing features of this research included the cultural aspects and language used to convey messages within the cultural milieu of Anlo Ewe. During the interviewing sessions with informants, I was intrigued at the use of proverbs as a means for informants to provide an
answer to my questions. It was a great introduction to what Anyidoho (1997) terms “verbal art”. Another striking feature of this research was my experience of feeling at “home” with people whom I would have never met had it not been for this ethnographic journey. Carrying out research in a foreign land allowed me to expand my worldview and open up to the world of those whom I studied, the complex world of Anlo Ewe. The findings reported in this study demonstrate that there is more for me to learn about being a researcher and the complex nature and culture of the Anlo Ewe of Ghana.

What I learned is that conducting research amongst the Anlo Ewe is complex in nature, and I believe it takes time to break through layers of the complexities. It is, therefore, with great hope that I utilize this knowledge to add to the larger picture of girl child education and development across the world, including the United States. Throughout my experiences in the United States I have worked extensively with girls who have dropped out of school due to various factors. My interest for the future would be to conduct a comparative study of African American and Anlo Ewe girls’ educational experiences, especially for girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy. I can only imagine how the dynamics of culture, history, education, traditions, and customs would interplay on an array of differences and similarities that encompass the uniqueness of both groups. In closing, it is my expectation that I will continue to delve deeper into issues of girl child education in order to enrich my own perspective on the subject for the larger good of the world.
References


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Alice.


Appendix A: IRB Approval

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

Project Title: Gender Spaces between Traditional Belief Systems and Education: Rethinking the Education of the Anlo-Ewe Girl Child in Abor, Ghana

Primary Investigator: Karen Yawa Agbemabiese-Grooms
Co-Investigator(s): 

Faculty Advisor: Jaylynne Hutchinson
(If applicable)

Department: Educational Studies

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

Approval Date: 11/17/09
Expiration Date: 11/16/10

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research (Minor Participants)

**Title of research:** I want to go to school, but I can’t: Examining the factors that impact the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal education in Abor, Ghana.

**Name of researcher:** Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Explanation of Study**

My name is Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, Cultural Studies Program at Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio, USA. I am conducting a research study to assist me in writing my dissertation on the impact of traditional belief systems on the education of the girl child amongst the Anlo Ewe in Abor. The goal of this research study is to learn and understand traditional beliefs and their relationship to the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in this area. During the interview process, I will be asking you to share your personal and educational story with me. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, and I will spend approximately five to eight hours with each girl for observational purposes.

**Risks and Discomforts**

At any time if you are not comfortable with any question(s), you may choose to withdraw or terminate the interview at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may be entitled.

**Benefits**

Apart from being subjects of a study that ushers in changing views on the girl child and her education in the community, the individual participants will benefit indirectly from the study. As such, the educational system of Ghana will be privileged to have information regarding the extent to which traditional belief systems impact girl child education within the Abor District. It will also provide a basis for further investigation in order to update knowledge of educational planners on critical issues essential to reforms in Ghana’s educational system.

**Confidentiality and Records**

I would like to state that all data collected for the research study will be held to the highest level of confidentiality. I assure you that all data collected for this study will only be used for the stated research purposes, and the information you share with the
researcher will be used in the writing of the dissertation and for submission to academic publications and journals.

**Compensation**

Each participant of this research study will receive up to $50 for their participation. At any time if you are not comfortable with any question(s), you may choose to withdraw or terminate the interview at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may be entitled.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact at 01 614 946 1856 or kg225006@ohio.edu, or upon request I can provide to you the advisor’s name for this research study. You will also be given a copy of your consent form for your records. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, 01 740 593 0664.

I, ______________________________, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms’ of Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA.

I would like to state that Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms has explained to me the objectives of her research as well as what my rights are as a participant in the study. I agree that all known risk to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research. I understand and accept her assurance of confidentiality. Furthermore, she has assured me that the data collected for this study will only be used for the stated research purposes. I understand that the information I share with her will be used in the writing of her dissertation, and for submission to academic publications and journals. I understand that participation in the research study is voluntary and may be terminated at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I may be entitled. My parent/guardian also knows about my participation in this project and agrees that I take part in the study; however, my personal participation in this research study is given voluntarily.

__________________________________________
Student Signature

__________________________________________
Date
Parental Permission/Informed Consent to Participate in Research
(parents of minor participants)

Title of research: I want to go to school, but I can’t: Examining the factors that impact the Anlo Ewe girl child’s formal education in Abor, Ghana

Name of researcher: Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study
My name is Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, Cultural Studies Program at Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio, USA. I am conducting a research study to assist me in writing my dissertation on the impact of traditional belief systems on the education of the girl child amongst the Anlo Ewe in Abor. The goal of this research study is to learn and understand traditional beliefs and their relationship to the education of the Anlo Ewe girl child in this area. During the interview process, I will be asking your child to share her personal and educational story with me. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, and I will spend approximately five to eight hours with each her for observational purposes.

Risks and Discomforts
At any time if your child is not comfortable with any question(s), she may choose to withdraw or terminate the interview at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which she may be entitled. Your child’s participation in this research study is voluntary, and as such she may terminate it at any time.

Benefits
Apart from being subjects of a study that ushers in changing views on the girl child and her education in the community, the individual participants will benefit indirectly from the study. As such, the educational system of Ghana will be privileged to have information regarding the extent to which traditional belief systems impact girl child education within the Abor District. It will also provide a basis for further investigation in order to update knowledge of educational planners on critical issues essential to reforms in Ghana’s educational system.
Confidentiality and Records

I would like to state that all data collected for the research study will be held to the highest level of confidentiality. As a means to protect your child, her identity will be confidentially coded with a different name so that no one can trace the data collected to her. I assure you that all data collected for this study will only be used for the stated research purposes, and the information your child share with the researcher may be used in the writing of the dissertation, presentations, and for submission to academic publications and journals.

Compensation

For the participation in the research study, your daughter will receive up to $50 for their participation. At any time if she is not comfortable with any question(s), your daughter may choose to withdraw or terminate the interview at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may be entitled.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact at 01 614 946 1856 or kg225006@ohio.edu, or upon request I can provide to you the advisor’s name for this research study. You will also be given a copy of your consent form for your records. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, 01 740 593 0664.

______________________________
I, _______________________________, agree that I have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and that all questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to have my child _________________________ participate in the study being conducted by Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms’ of Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA.

I would like to state that Karen Agbemabiese-Grooms has explained to me the objectives of her research as well as what my daughter’s rights are as a participant in the study. I understand and accept her assurance of confidentiality. I agree that all known risk to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research. Furthermore, she has assured me that the data collected for this study will only be used for the stated research purposes. I understand that the information I share with her will be used in the writing of her dissertation, academic presentations, and for submission to academic publications and journals. I understand that participation in the research study is voluntary and may be terminated at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I may be entitled.
Please check the box that applies:

☐ My child may be recorded
☐ My child may not be recorded

Signature of Parent/Guardian ________________________________ Date __________________
Appendix C: Map of Ghana

World Music Production (2011)
Appendix D: Map of Districts in Volta Region of Ghana

District location of Abor, Ghana

Appendix E: Map Display of Abor in Volta Region

Briggs (2010)
Appendix F: Interview Guides

Appendix F1: Interview Guide for Minors

Interview questions are semi-structured, and used as a guide to begin a conversation that is informal. Questions needing to be addressed by the participants are designed so that I can direct conversations with participants towards seeking responses related to the research questions of the study.

Demographic Information

1. Name (optional):
2. Age:____________________________________________________________
3. Occupation:_______________________________________________________
4. Your Marital Status: Single___ Married___ Divorced___ Widowed___
   Other___
5. Specify “Other” and explain___________________________________________
6. Educational Status: Elementary_______JHS_______SHS_______Tertiary_____
7. Religion: ___________________ Denomination: ______________________
8. Number of children: _______ Boys_______ Girls_______
9. What is the age of your children: ______________

Section Two

Personal life histories:

A: HOME

1. Do you have siblings or brothers and sisters?
2. How many of your siblings are boys?
3. How many of your siblings are girls?
4. Did you live with your parents when you were growing up?
5. If not, with whom did you live?
6. What house chores did you perform?
7. What house chores did your other sibling(s) perform in the house?

B. School

8. Have you attended school?
9. Which school did you attend?
10. If you did not attend school, tell me why?
11. If you attended school, which level did you complete:
   (a) Elementary School _____ (b) JHS _____ (c) SHS _____ (Other) _____
12. If you quit/dropout of school, which level did you quit/dropout?
   (a) Elementary School_____ (b) JHS_____ (c) SHS_____ (other) ________
13. What are the reasons why you quit/dropout of school?
14. Did you like school and wish to be in school?
15. What do you like most about school?
16. What are the things you did not like in school?
17. In your family did you have equal access to education like your other male
   siblings in the household?
18. What can you identify or mention as factors that hindered your access to
   education in the family as a girl?
19. Can you identify anyone or group of persons who encouraged you to work against
   all odds to continue schooling—father, mother, siblings, grandparents, or others in
   the community? Specify and say how you were encouraged.
20. Which teacher did you like most when you were in school?
21. What is the gender of that teacher?
22. Why did you like that teacher most?
23. Which teacher did you not like?
24. What is the gender of this teacher?
25. Why did you not like this teacher?
26. Which of your teachers was most influential on your life and why?
27. In school, how were you treated as a girl?
28. Was your treatment the same or different from that of boys?
29. How different was the treatment of boys to that of girls in the school? (e.g., school
   chores, punishment etc.)
30. When you look back, will you say you made the right decision to quit school?
31. If you had the opportunity is there something you could have done differently?
32. Has your quitting or dropping out of school affected your socio-economic status in your family and society?

33. Do you think formal education is serving the needs of the society/community/country and you as an individual? Yes_____ No_____ Please explain your answer.

34. Did the customs, belief systems and traditions in your community affect your education or schooling, and if it did how? Yes_____ No_____ 

35. Identify some of the belief systems, customs and traditions that affect girl child education in your community.

36. What do you think is the traditional belief or opinion of people in your community about educating girls?

37. Did the education system change this view for you? Yes_____ No_____ Please explain your answer.

38. Did the educational policies of your country challenge or eradicate some of the beliefs, traditions and customs that militate against girl child education in your community/country? Yes_____ No_____ (please explain your answer)

39. Should you be given the opportunity to change or make suggestions to improve the girl child’s access to equal education, what will you suggest?

40. What are your views about teachers?

41. Did your teachers assist you in achieving your academic goals? (a) Yes_______ (b) No_______ 

42. In which ways did they assist you?

43. Do teachers in your school and the government of your country take traditional views of your parents or the society about girl child education into consideration?

44. What are your views on betrothal, where parent give their children into marriage?

45. Have you regretted quitting or dropping out of school? Yes_____ No_____ (Please explain why or why not.

46. Do you intend to go back to school, and why or why not? Yes _____ No_____ 

47. Should you be given the opportunity to go back to school, what do you think will be the reaction of your husband, parents, friends, and the community?
48. From your personal experience, will you encourage or be willing to give your teenage daughters into marriage and why?
49. In future, how will you educate your children, both boys and girls?
50. What will inspire you to send your daughters to school?
51. Do you think girls and boys should be given equal educational opportunities?
52. What kind of advice will you give girl(s) who are thinking of quitting or dropping out of school?
Appendix F2: Interview Guide for Parents

Interview questions are semi-structured, and used as a guide to begin a conversation that is informal. Questions needing to be addressed by the participants are designed so that I can direct conversation with participants towards seeking responses related to the research questions of the study.

1. What is your gender? __________________ What is your age? ______________
2. What is your marital status? __________ What is your occupation? __________
3. What is your educational background? ________________________________
4. How many children do you have? _________________________________
5. What are the gender and age of your child(ren)? ______________________
6. Did you send them all, both boys and girls, to school? _______________
7. Why did you send your daughter to school?
8. Was your daughter very helpful, in terms of household chores while she was in school and how? Yes__________ No ____________ (please explain)
9. How will you compare how she worked with those of the boys?
10. Did your daughter drop out of school? If so yes, and why? Yes/No
11. Before she dropped out of school, did you yourself ponder over why she was attending school, and contemplated withdrawing her from school? Why or what were the reasons behind your thought of withdrawing her from school?
12. Has your daughter been serviceable to you ever since she dropped out of school and how? Yes_______ No ________
13. Do you think you made the right decision in sending her to school and why?
14. Do you think you also made the right decision dropping her out of school? Yes ______ No ______
15. Do you think her dropping out of school has affected her present social and economic status in the community and how? Yes ______ No ______ (please explain your answer)
16. Do you believe that traditional belief systems and customs influenced your decision of withdrawing your daughter from school? (please explain your answer)
17. Did government policies on education influence your decision in sending your daughter to school, and how? Yes ____________ No. ____________ (please explain your answer)

18. What do you like about the education of girls?

19. What are your views on girl child education in general?

20. Should you have the opportunity to change the educational system of the country what will be your suggestions?

21. Should you have the opportunity to improve upon girl child education what suggestions and modifications will you make?

22. Whom do you consider as the most respected in the list below and why?
   a. The highly educated woman without a husband and a child
   b. The highly educated woman with a husband and a child or children
   c. The highly educated woman with a husband and no child
   d. An educated woman without a husband and a child
   e. An educated woman with a husband and no child
   f. An educated woman with a husband and a child or children
   g. An uneducated woman without a husband and a child
   h. An uneducated woman with a husband and a child
   i. An uneducated woman without a husband and no child

Give reasons for your choice:
Appendix F3: Interview Guide for Teachers

1. What is your gender? ________________________________________________________
2. How long have you been teaching? __________________________________________
3. What are your views on girl child education?
4. In your estimation who are the most likely people (boys and girls) to drop out of school and why?
5. How will you rate the academic performance of girls to that of boys in your class?
6. During your years in this and other schools, what factors do you think are responsible for the rate of dropout of girls in public schools?
7. Should there be a cut or drop in educational resources in the school, who are more likely to be affected?
8. How do you think the dropout rate could be averted or prevented?
9. Are there educational subjects in which you consider girls to fair better than boys in the school? Name them and say why?
10. What efforts did you do to prevent the dropout rate of girls in the school and community?
11. In your school, who are more likely to repeat a class due to academic incompetence and what are those incompetence? Boy _______ Girl _______
12. What type of school chores do you have in the school?
13. How is the school chores allotted? Who sweeps the compound or weeds the grass? And how is this determined?
14. Should you have the opportunity to determine educational levels for both girls and boys, which levels do you expect girl child education to end and why?
   Primary________ JSS__________ SSS__________
   Tertiary________
15. Should you have the opportunity to determine educational levels for both girls and boys, which levels do you expect a boy’s education to end and why?
   Primary________ JSS__________ SSS__________ Tertiary________
16. Whom do you consider as the most respected in the list below and why?
   j. The highly educated woman without a husband and a child
   k. The highly educated woman with a husband and a child or children
   l. The highly educated woman with a husband and no child
   m. An educated woman without a husband and a child
   n. An educated woman with a husband and no child
   o. An educated woman with a husband and a child or children
   p. An uneducated woman without a husband and a child
   q. An uneducated woman with a husband and a child
   r. An uneducated woman without a husband and no child
   Give reasons for your choice:

   s. An educated woman with a husband and a child or children
   t. An uneducated woman without a husband and a child
   u. An uneducated woman with a husband and a child
   v. An uneducated woman without a husband and no child
   Give reasons for your choice:

1. Supposing you do not have enough money to educate all your children, will you consider educating your daughters instead of your sons? Yes ______ No ______ (explain)