Ghanaian immigrant children in the Bronx: a case study in acculturation

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GHANAIAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE BRONX: A CASE STUDY IN ACCULTURATION

by

James B. Asare

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Arts

College of Arts & Sciences
Department of Humanistic Studies
2009
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Ghanaian Immigrant Children in the Bronx: A Case Study in Acculturation.

Abstracts:

The aim of the current study was to examine the cultural adaptation process of the children of Ghanaian immigrants living in the Bronx, New York City. To this end, twenty-five Ghanaian immigrant children were interviewed. In an attempt to ascertain the extent to which these children have become acculturated to the host society and integrated into mainstream American culture, the focus of the interviews was on the impact of American culture on language, food, discipline, dress, religion, mate selection, and education. Interview participants were selected via snowball sampling. Employing a qualitative approach, I conducted face-to-face interviews consisting of open-ended questions aimed at establishing the level of acculturation of Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx. The findings indicate that participants are bilingual. The majority of interview participants prefer Ghanaian to American food. Corporal punishment is deemed an acceptable means of disciplining children. Since Ghanaian women traditionally wear dresses, the female participants in the study can be viewed as acculturated by virtue of their habit of wearing pants. Finally, participants conveyed their conviction that parents are not to restrict their children in the matter of mate selection.
Chapter One

Introduction

I migrated from Ghana to the United States in September of 1999 to further my education. Motivation for writing on acculturation of immigrant children came from my experience while studying at the University at Albany, State University of New York and while taking one course in particular—Race and Ethnicity. Soon after my arrival in the United States in September 1999, I began to observe a number of interesting cultural phenomena. I noticed, for instance, that most American students drank soda with their meals. Surprised, I wondered whether Americans disliked water. I later discovered that this habit typical of the American culture.

During the summer months, I took note of the way American women dressed. While some wore shorts, others wore clothes that were somewhat revealing. Their male counterparts, on the other hand, wore more modest shorts with shirts that came down to or below their waists.

Still later, I discovered that children in America were encouraged to report their parents to the police in cases of abuse. I was perplexed by such things, as they represent a stark contrast to life in Ghana.

It was not long before the demands of my academic pursuits prevented me from pondering such phenomena. During the Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 semesters, I enrolled in two Sociology classes—Race and Ethnicity and Transnational Migration respectively.
From these courses I gained an understanding of the ways in which migration can profoundly influence one’s values and lifestyle. I became motivated, especially by the first course, to research how Ghanaian immigrant children will abandon their culture and adopt American culture.

Migration is a universal phenomenon in the sense that it occurs in every society. People move from one place to another for various social, economic or political reasons. Migration thus can be rural-rural, rural-urban, or even trans-national. Many people from different continents, such as Africa, Asia, and Europe, traveled from their home countries to others including the United States, hoping for a better future.

The United States is a nation of trans-national immigrants. For more than two hundred years, millions of immigrants from all parts of the world have migrated to this country in search of better lives for themselves and their children. According to (1949: vii), the opening of the Erie Canal marked a new era in the annals of American history. Governor Clinton of New York celebrated the “marriage of the waters” in 1825 by pouring Lake Erie’s water into the Atlantic Ocean. To Ernst’s way of thinking, it was during this period that the labor of immigrants became fruitful; the new waterway became an agent to New York City’s material growth by serving as an excellent route that ultimately transformed New York City into the greatest immigrant port in the world. Indeed, as Bromley (1997:1) aptly depicted the situation, “New York City has been the nation’s principal gateway for immigration from almost every country”.

Numerous people representing a wide array of nations have been attracted to the country’s stable economy (Smith & Edmonston, 1997; Foner, 2001). Among recent immigrants to the United States are Ghanaians, who migrate for various reasons.
Scattered throughout the country, these Ghanaian immigrants include professionals, as well as skilled and unskilled workers (Ciment, 2001). Some have come to the United States because of the poor state of Ghana’s economy. Others have come seeking political asylum (Konadu-Agyeman, Takyi, & Arthur, 2006). Still others, who came to further their education, decided not to return home upon graduation (McGoldrick, Giordano & Garcia-Preto 2005:103). According to Matory (2004), students spearheaded emigration not only from Ghana, but from other parts of Africa as well. Statistics show that the number of African students who entered the United States increased dramatically in the late 1950s. Matory (2004) found that there were 24,000 African students enrolled in American colleges by the year 1991. The likelihood of still others who came to join their relatives is undeniable. All of the aforementioned types of immigrants can be found in New York City. This is not at all surprising in light of the fact that, as pointed out by Foner (2001), more than two and a half million immigrants coming from almost all parts of the world have settled in New York City over the past four hundred years.

126,941 for the period 1990-1993. Their research highlights that these figures were indicative of African immigrants holding permanent resident status.

Booth, Crouter & Landale (1997) examined the recent influx of immigrants on two levels. At the macrostructural level, they argued that because the United States involved itself so deeply in World War II not only militarily, but economically, and politically, this indirectly created pathways for legal and illegal immigrants after the war. At the microstructural level, they found both documented and undocumented cases of immigrants who came to the United States as a result of social networks.

Konadu-Agyeman, Takyi, & Arthur (2006) pointed to an unfavorable trading system as a significant factor pushing Africans to the United States. Because African countries received little in exchange for their primary exports to Europe, this had an adverse effect on their economies. This situation was exacerbated by high prices on manufactured goods imported to Africa. Another push factor cited by these authors is the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980’s which, although in theory designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to strengthen the economies of African countries, actually resulted in hardship for those countries. These financial institutions serve as international lenders for countries facing severe challenges with respect to balance of payments and economic growth (Chazan, Lewis, Mortimer, Rothchild, & Stedman, 1999). According to Chazan et al (1999), the IMF was created to foster trade and financial stability on a global level. These financial institutions thus lent money to African countries on condition that the receiving countries devalue their currencies, reduce inflation, reduce public services, cut back on government expenditures on health and education, and embark on financial reforms and privatization.
of public enterprises aimed at enhancing economic growth (Konadu-Agyeman, Takyi, & Arthur, 2006). The intended economic enhancement of the participating African countries did not materialize, however, and the program resulted instead in increased impoverishment and worsening living conditions. These unwelcome changes came about, per the authors’ claim, due to large-scale retrenchment, currency devaluation, and government cutbacks on such social services as education and health services. Together, these measures contributed to unbearable living conditions. Consequently, those who had the means to do so left their respective countries for the United States and other affluent western countries.

An additional crucial push factor is rooted in problems of a socio-political nature. Several African countries, including Ghana, experienced military coups d’états during the 1960s and 1970s (Tordoff 1997; Chazan, Lewis, Mortimer, Rothchild, & Stedman, 1999). These military coups brought about repression, economic and political instability, and arbitrary arrests (Konadu-Agyeman, Takyi, & Arthur 2006). Again, those who could afford to do so left African soil for the United States and other developed countries in order to escape the conditions brought about by the military coups.

A significant pull factor that must be considered here is that of education. Since the post-World War II emergence of the United States as one of the world’s leading countries of higher learning, many Africans have come to the United States in pursuit of a quality education (Konadu-Agyeman, Takyi & Arthur (2006). Rather than return to Africa, some of these students opted to settle in the United States permanently. Konadu-Agyeman et al (2006) observed that this student group served as contacts for another set of immigrants. In other words, those students who chose not to return to Ghana
encouraged family members and friends to join them in America. The United States became a kind of human magnet to the rest of the world.

By opening her arms to welcome people from all walks of life, the United States has become a country of diverse cultures. According to the findings of Booth, Crouter and Landale (1997), immigrants legally admitted to the United States in 1993 numbered 904,292. This influx was encouraged by the Immigration Act of 1990. Booth, Crouter and Landale maintain that immigration to the United States has been largely a family affair and anticipate that it will remain so in the future (ibid: 6). In support of their argument, they pointed out that under the Immigration Act of 1990, approximately 55,000 spouses and minor children migrated annually from 1992-1994. During the 1990s, the nation’s immigrant population increased by 11.3 million—faster than at any other time in the history of the United States (Camarota & McArdle 2003). In the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study [CILS], Portes & Rumbaut (2005) reported that immigrants are the fastest growing component of the American population. As of 2005, there were more than 30 million foreign-born persons in the United States.

Furnishing additional information regarding the immigrant population in the U.S., Camarota & McArdle (2003) reported that 223,005 people migrated from Africa South of the Sahara to this country in 1990. By 2000, this figure grew to 610,084, representing a growth rate of 174 percent for the decade. The largest numbers have come from Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Ghana (McGoldrick, Giordano & Garcia-Preto 2005). Brandon’s findings (2002) point to a large number of immigrant children in the United States. According to Brandon, one in every five children under the age of eighteen in the United States is either an immigrant or the child of immigrant parents. All
of this is consistent with the findings of Portes & Zhou (1993), who found that approximately 18.5 percent of the U.S. population in 1990 was made up of foreign stock. Additional statistics reflect stable growth among second generation immigrants in the United States.

It has already been mentioned that as the gateway for immigrants, New York City is host to a large immigrant population (Foner, 2001). According to Salvo, (1992), New York City welcomed approximately 8,000 immigrants from 48 African countries south of the Sahara between 1982 and 1989. The largest numbers of these immigrants came from Ghana and Nigeria with Ghana accounting for 22 percent of the total (Salvo & Ortiz 1992:49). Salvo reported that from 1983 to 1989 ninety-one Ghanaians lived in the Bronx. This figure has increased substantially since that time; one presently sees many Ghanaians on the streets of the Bronx. Moreover, several stores located in the Bronx are currently owned by Ghanaians. According to statistics provided by Goffe (2002), Ghanaians who migrated to New York City between 1990 and 1996 numbered more than 5,000. The US Census of 2000 indicates that the number of Ghanaians by birth living in the US at the time was 14,915, out of which 9,275 lived in the Bronx alone (Goffe, 2002). According to Goffe, the area of the Bronx with the largest concentration of these immigrants has been dubbed “Little Ghana.”

Some of these Ghanaian immigrants came with their children. In some cases, parents were subsequently invited to join their children. Still others were born here. Some Ghanaians, who married Americans, opted to settle here with their families.

It cannot be ruled out that some of these Ghanaian children either have not been acculturated or are not in the process of acculturating into American culture. On the other
hand, in the words of Rumbaut & Portes (2001), the vast majority of immigrants and their children are being “transformed into the newest Americans”. It is only to be expected that any immigrant living in America is in some way acculturated into American society. Significant acculturation must occur in order for the newcomer to integrate effectively into the new culture. Furthermore, as pointed out by Rumbaut & Portes (2001), because of globalization and the influence of the American media in their home countries, many of today’s new immigrants actually begin the acculturation process before their arrival in the United States.

This study examines the extent to which participants have adopted the behaviors of the dominant culture and the degree to which they have eschewed their own cultural traditions. The focus of the study is on Ghanaian children living in the Bronx, New York City.

**Background**

In multicultural societies, individuals from minority cultures often face a constant challenge of balancing their own cultural practices and behaviors with those of the majority culture. According to Schwab & Hoary (2005), some of the challenges faced by people from minority cultures are directly related to acculturation. Baker (2002:221) emphasized that the ability to become part of a culture requires learning and acquiring the language, values and norms of that culture through imitation, practice, and experimentation. Baker further pointed out that the key sites and agents of acculturation include one’s family, peer groups, schools, work organizations and the media. He argued that since the society influences or controls a person’s behavior, the process of acculturation represents the nurture side of the so called “nature versus nurture debate.”
Choe, Capella & Arnold (1993) contended that the acculturation process is best understood in terms of the following phases. Known as the contact phase, the initial phase launches the acculturation process. Without this phase, the interaction necessary for acculturation cannot occur. The contact phase is followed by the conflict phase, during which acculturating individuals generally resist various aspects of the host culture largely due to a reluctance to let go of certain features of their home culture. The third phase, adjustment, is marked by decreased conflict as acculturating immigrants begin to accept cultural and behavioral norms similar to or compatible with those of the original culture. During the final phase, identified as assimilation, original cultural patterns begin to blend with those of the host culture as acculturating immigrants shed their cultural identity and embrace the new culture.

Immigrants become acculturated by the host society at different levels. Studies have revealed, for example, that second generation immigrants more closely resemble members of the dominant society than do their parents (Ward 2005:244). Based on Ward’s discovery, second generation immigrants generally fall into either phase 3 or 4 as outlined above.

This study was based on face-to-face in-depth interviews and participant observation of two Ghanaian churches in the Bronx. The latter was incorporated into the study in an attempt to ascertain the level of acculturation of individual participants and identify ways they have been influenced to retain certain aspects of their ethnic culture. Study participants belong to the categories of second- and 1.5 generation immigrants, that is to say those born here and those arriving at a young age. That is, those who were brought to the United States prior to reaching adolescence.
Statement of the Problem

America is made up of diverse ethnic groups such as Asians, Africans, and Europeans. To the African group belong Ghanaian immigrants who come to this country every year via the Diversity Lottery program and other legal means, such as educational opportunities and invitations from children, spouses, or parents. In some cases, Ghanaians arrive by illegal means. Table 1 provides a summary of the migration trend for Ghanaians arriving in the United States between 1971 and 1996.

Table 1: Annual Number and Percentage of Immigrants from Ghana in Total U.S. Immigration, 1971-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Immigrants From Ghana</th>
<th>Total U.S. Immigration</th>
<th>Percentage of immigrants from Ghana in Total U.S. Immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>370,473</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>384,685</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>400,063</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>394,861</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>396,194</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>502,289</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>462,315</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>601,442</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>460,348</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>530,639</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>596,600</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Total Admitted</td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>Proportion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>594,131</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>559,763</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>543,903</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1041</td>
<td>570,009</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>601,708</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>605,516</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1239</td>
<td>643,025</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>2045</td>
<td>1,090,924</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4466</td>
<td>1,536,483</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3330</td>
<td>1,827,167</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>973,977</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>904,292</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1458</td>
<td>804,416</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3152</td>
<td>720,461</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6608</td>
<td>915,900</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38,088</td>
<td>17,987,584</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As for the period immediately following, in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, Ghanaians immigrants admitted to the United States numbered 5,105; 4,458; 3,714; 4,344; 4,031; and 4,256 respectively (2002 Year Book of Immigration). Kang & Kim (1998) observed that it is difficult to avoid contact and interaction with people from other
cultures while living in the same society. Like other new arrivals to the United States, Ghanaians would not be able to live in isolation as social beings.

Because the U.S. population comprises people representing many countries and diverse cultures, its individuals are bound to have contact with people from cultures other than their own. That the dominant population in the United States of America influences minority immigrants with its values and norms is undeniable. Some scholars believed that immigrants adopted the host culture in hopes of meeting the prerequisite for success in the United States. Others argue, however, that the current trend suggests that ethnic minority immigrants are no longer assimilating in this traditional fashion. Claiming that new immigrants are committed to maintaining their cultural identities, Kang & Kim (1998) pointed out that the notion of America as a melting pot in which all ethnic groups eventually blend characteristics and traits into one pattern has given way to a “salad bowl” in which each group maintains significant aspects of its cultural identity.

Clark (2003) contended that the argument that assimilation is the key concept of immigrant incorporation is no longer viable. In this regard, he pointed out that some social science scholars have gone so far as to say that assimilation is dead. The general consensus of social scientists is that the paths to incorporation are not linear. Clark explained that rather than thinking in terms of assimilation, it is more accurate to think in terms of blending the minority and dominant cultures. It is erroneous, he argued, to understand assimilation according to the old normative terminology that favored eradication of minority cultures. For Clark (2003), the concept of assimilation is better viewed as a process that occurs spontaneously and often unintentionally as majority and minority groups interact. The argument set forth earlier by Kang and Kim (1998) and
more recently by Clark (2003) is predicated on the notion that those who come to the
United States as immigrants are likely to retain some aspects of their ethnic culture rather
than abandoning it entirely. Applying this argument to the Ghanaian immigrant
population, it should be noted that Ghanaians generally tend to retain their culture
wherever they go. The question addressed in this study was whether or not Ghanaian
immigrant children living in the Bronx would go the route of the melting pot concept or
retain their cultural values instead.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent Ghanaian youth living in the
Bronx are adapting to American culture. The present study contributes to the existing
body of literature on acculturation of ethnic groups in the United States, although it is
limited to a focus on the following categories of acculturation: language, food, discipline
dress, religion, mate selection and education.

**Theoretical Framework**

Individuals tend to maintain their identity, particularly when they move to new
communities. Faure & Rubin (1993) defined culture as an aggregate product of a process
occurring in human society that incorporates such social phenomena as beliefs, ideas,
language, customs, rules, and family patterns, noting that these belief systems are
transmitted from one generation to the next. They contend that essential to culture is that
it helps people build and preserve their own cultural identity while making them aware of that identity and, hence, able to see themselves as different from others.

Concerned that their children will lose this cultural identity, some immigrants opt to socialize their children in a way that allows for reinforcement of cultural norms. Others attempt to stress cultural identity by using hyphenation, as in “I am an Italian-American” or “I am a Ghanaian-American.” Social activities play a vital role in retaining cultural identity as well. Some immigrant churches, such as the Ghana Seventh-Day Adventist churches in the U.S. and Canada, for example, participate in annual camp meetings. Such meetings heighten the attendees’ awareness of cultural dress, language, and socialization patterns. Some ethnic groups, Ghanaians in the Capital District region of upstate New York among them, meet monthly to discuss matters of interest related to social and economic developments. They also hold cultural activities and annual picnics to create opportunities for socialization. Some immigrants emphasize cultural identity by displaying their national flag on their cars or in their homes.

Scholars continue to debate the issue of acculturation. Within the context of this debate, Alba & Nee (2003) pointed out the relevance of multilinear acculturation, a reference to the tendency of immigrant groups to approach the language and cultural practices of the dominant culture in a selective manner so as not to shed their ethnic identity or culture. Adding to the debate, Ward (2006) postulated that theoretical perspectives on acculturation vary from linear unidirectional models, two cultures in opposition, to views of “gaining” one culture in terms of “shedding” another.

Alba and Nee (2003) observed that although individuals striving for success in America often fail to recognize they are assimilating, the intended consequences of
practical strategies and actions undertaken in pursuit of such familiar goals as education, a good job, a nice place to live, interesting friends and acquaintances, and economic security many times result in specific forms of assimilation. This phenomenon, they argued, likely accounts for the fact that some first and second generation parents raise their children speaking only English, the idea being that the children’s chances for success in school will be enhanced by complete mastery of the host language. The authors cited numerous examples of second generation Asian children living in the United States who speak only English at home.

Alba and Nee (2003:25) also addressed the controversial assumption that acculturation implies change on the part of ethnic groups in the direction of middle-class Anglo-American culture while introducing little to no change within the Anglo-American culture, the exceptions being food and place names. They noted that acculturation can also result from the process of group convergence, that is, convergence of the majority with minority groups. According to Alba and Nee (2003), this process of convergence makes room for the impact of minority ethnic cultures on the mainstream and vice versa.

In their research on the impact of a second culture on acculturation, Tadmor & Tetlock (2006) stressed by its very nature, culture offers a set of accepted habits and scripts that influence attitude and behavior. They made specific reference to the Acculturation Complexity Model (ACM), according to which people entering a new cultural environment are faced with a new set of cultural stimulus cues. In order to cope with the resulting uncertainty regarding how to behave, Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) concluded that the newcomers are motivated to consciously look for cues to appropriate behavioral responses in the new environment.
In light of the fact that one culture values something different from the next, it is to be expected that some things will go unnoticed in one culture while quite the opposite is the case in others. Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) are of the view that people who find themselves in a new environment must actively engage in analysis of that environment, giving conscious thought to things they had filtered out in their home culture. According to their findings, people switch to this type of conscious attention in situations of high ambiguity or when they discover that previous behaviors are no longer adequate. In other words, individuals encountering a new culture often find that their former way of viewing the world is neither relevant nor appropriate. This realization is facilitated by universal indicators of disapproval—nonverbal cues such as frowns, scowls, and glares. According to Tadmor and Tetlock, as a result of these cues, newcomers recognize that they must adapt their former responses to new circumstances. With this realization comes increased attention to the new environment.

People do not operate in isolation from each other. Rather, they interact within a system of shared norms and practices (Tadmor and Tetlock, 2006). With this in mind, Tadmore and Tetlock argued that accountability plays an important role in the acculturation process. According to their understanding, accountability is the personal need to justify one’s thoughts and actions to significant others in a way that is consistent with shared norms or the relationships within which that individual feels a need to answer for his or her beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.
Tadmor & Tetlock (2006) contended that people will often internalize the voices of those with whom they have strong affinity. They further emphasized that people’s accountability pressures and, consequently, their choice of acculturation strategy will depend largely on the nature of the subjects’ friendship and acquaintance patterns, and on the psychological functions that these relations serve. They maintained that children with friends from both cultures became more bicultural than children with friends from only one cultural group. Tadmor and Teklock (2006) proposed that if individuals become accountable to a single audience composed only of members from their original culture, they will likely adopt a separated strategy and maintain only their native culture. The authors also claimed that if individuals become accountable to a single audience composed of only the new culture, then these individuals will likely adopt an assimilated strategy and internalize only the new culture. Finally, the authors observed that individuals who are accountable to a mixed audience composed of both their old and new cultural groups will adopt a bicultural strategy.

Arguing from the point of view of the theory of social integration, Hirscham, Kasinitz & Dewind (1999) maintained that the greater the integration of individuals into a social group, the greater the control of the group over the individual. Based on this theory, they concluded that immigrant children who are more highly integrated into their ethnic group are likely to adapt to the forms of behavior prescribed by the group. The authors went on to state that the children of today’s immigrant groups are eager to adapt to American culture and to acquire an American identity by becoming indistinguishable from their American peers. They pointed out, however, that the process by which an immigrant child becomes an American is contingent upon the human and financial capital
that their immigrant parents bring with them. This capital includes the social conditions from which their families exit as well as the context that receives them. Cultural patterns, including values, family relations, and social ties are reconstructed in the process of adaptation.

**Objective**

This study will investigate why and how Ghanaian children in the Bronx have been acculturated into the value systems, norms, and styles typical of the mainstream society in the United States. The existing literature on Ghanaian immigrants in the United States focuses solely on how Ghanaian communities have been able to retain their cultural values. Ghanaian immigrants have accomplished this by forming organizations that meet periodically for social and cultural activities. They have also established their own churches, where they speak their ethnic languages during all activities.

Every society has its own culture. In order for newcomers to fit into the host society, they must adopt the society’s culture. Although several studies of acculturation experiences have been conducted for a number of ethnic groups in the United States—Mexicans, Vietnamese, Cubans, Chinese and others among them—only a few have undertaken research on African ethnic groups in the U.S. Unfortunately, the acculturation experiences of other ethnic groups cannot be used to generalize the study of Ghanaian immigrant children in New York City or elsewhere in the United States, for that matter. It is for this reason that this study is significant. Because there is currently a large number of Ghanaian immigrants in New York City, a study of the acculturation experience of
Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx is both pertinent and valuable at this time.

**Definition of Concepts**

**Discipline:** “The use of physical force with the intention of causing physical pain, but not injury for the purpose of correction and control. Examples of corporal punishment include slapping, spanking, pinching, and ear twisting” (Waters 1999:399).

*Twi:* An ethnic language spoken by the Akans in Ghana.

**Waakye:** Rice and beans cooked together.

**Kenkey:** Food made from corn flour eaten among all ethnic groups in Ghana.

**Diversity Lottery:** “The Congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Program makes available 50,000 diversity visas (DV) annually, drawn from random selection among all entries to persons who meet strict eligibility requirements from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States” [www.dvlottery.state.gov](http://www.dvlottery.state.gov)

**Second Generation:** i. Persons born in the United States with one or both parents born outside the country.

ii. A broad operational definition of second generation as native born children of foreign parents or foreign-born children who were brought to the United States before adolescence (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001)

**The 1.5 Generation:** Persons born abroad who came to this country as children. This includes individuals who spent their adolescence here and received much or all of their education in the United States.
Assimilation: The decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences (Alba & Nee, 2003).

Data Collection

The success of this study is dependent on research ethics. I established rapport with individual participants by interacting with them on general topics including food and education. I made it clear to all participants that their answers were strictly confidential and that the recorded tapes would be destroyed upon completion of the study. I used a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions to collect the data. Open-ended questions were formulated to facilitate an unlimited number of responses and allow participants to provide detail as well as qualify or clarify their responses. In addition to interviewing respondents face to face with the help of interview questions, I made use of the participant observation strategy, attending and participating in worship services and church activities. By way of participant observation, I attended two Ghanaian churches in the Bronx two times each. My aim was to discover to what extent the congregations use their ethnic language or languages while singing, preaching, and communicating at church.
Research Questions

1. Are participants retaining their identity?

2. How do participants value discipline in terms of physical punishment or spanking?

3. What are participants’ interests in education?

4. What level of education do participants want to reach in future?

5. How do participants view God, and how do they commit or refuse to commit to Him?

6. In what ways has the U.S. influenced the family’s religious culture?

7. What language is most frequently spoken at home and at social and religious gatherings?

8. Is there a set of rules governing when and where the ethnic language is spoken?

9. What are the participants’ food preferences? Do they prefer traditional food over the food of the host culture?

10. Who is likely to be their future partners and how will they make this choices?

11. Is the participants’ style of dressing changing?
Scope of the Study

This study was planned to include examination of the level of acculturation of 25 Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx. The participants were of mixed gender and ranged in age from 14 to 24. Only participants within this age range were deemed acceptable for the purposes of this study. Because there was no guarantee that there would be translators available for Ghanaian dialects, only English-speaking individuals were selected for participation. With or without translators, the participation of individuals speaking Ghanaian dialects may have resulted in skewed results. In the interest of time, expense, and accuracy, a situation potentially requiring translators was intentionally avoided.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter is arranged in four sections as follows: (1) Background of Migration to the United States, (2) Culture, Ethnic Identity, and Biculturalism, (3) Chronological Understanding of Acculturation, and (4) Language, Food, Religion, Dress, Education, and Discipline.

Background of Migration to the United States

In his description of the lure of America, Ernst (1965) stated that large scale migration to the United States began after the Napoleonic Wars. It was this period that witnessed mass immigration to the United States. Immigrants who arrived before the Civil War came primarily from western and central Europe (Ernst 1965). According to Ernst, over one million people fled Europe for economic and political reasons between 1815 and 1865. While some came as exiles, others, such as the Jews, immigrated because of religious persecution (ibid: 1). Ernst argued that the migrants of the 1820s were pioneers at risk in that they had no way to predict their success in America. He points out, however, that those who came and settled ahead of the others served as a buffer for those who came later; the newcomers of the fifties came with the assistance of an immigrant network. These newcomers had someone to turn to for answers to questions regarding the culture of the new country: What was it like here? What should they expect when they arrived? What were the people in America like? What should they bring with them?
With the arrival of immigrants, the nation’s founders urged the newcomers to abandon their culture of origin in favor of that of the host country. In Walch’s words (1994: ix), the Founding Fathers and their descendants assumed that immigrants would willingly cast off their European “skin” to become Americans. According to Walch, that was a serious mistake. Millions of immigrants came to the United States for various reasons, not the least of which was freedom from religious oppression and escape from the ravages of poverty and famine. Despite pressure to do away with their ethnic customs and languages, and even their names, Walch (1994) emphasized that these immigrants did not treat the shedding of their European skin as a priority. They were unresponsive to the desire of the United States government that all immigrants become acculturated or assimilated into the American culture. In the face of this resistance, the slogan of the day, “Americans All,” took on special significance as laws were passed by state legislatures banning the use of foreign languages in schools after World War I (Walch, 1994). The main objective of such laws was to remake the immigrants into Americans. All immigrants were to bear an American identity. This approach to the immigrant situation was similar to the French policy of assimilation according to which all the people in French colonies were required to speak and “act” French (Khapoya, 1994).

Immigration to the United States was not limited to Europeans alone. As the years went by, new immigration laws were enacted that removed the quota system and allowed people from other nations to immigrate to the U.S. Clark (2003) emphasized the Hart-Cella Act of 1965, as well as the Immigration and Reform Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990 as having transformed immigration policies, resulting in an increased flow of immigrants from regions other than Europe. The Hart-Cella Act of
1965 altered immigration policy, for example, by introducing skills and family unification-based preferences.

In addition to immigration legislation, Clark (2003) attributed the surge in migration to the U.S. over the past two decades to the pull of a flourishing North American economy combined with the push of struggling economies in developing countries. An additional factor noted by Clark was the search for religious and political refuge.

Culture, Ethnic Identity, Biculturalism, and Marginalization

A proper understanding of the concept of acculturation necessitates an examination of several terms, not the least of which is “culture.” McAdoo (1999) wrote that cultures vary in terms of worldview, perspective, and life patterns. She explained that the impact of culture can be observed on the individual level—in personality and behavior—and on the group level—in social interaction and institutions. Moreover, culture is dynamic. It is an ever changing phenomenon consisting of values inculcated soon after birth into human society. Culture is not static; it is a changing concept consisting of values learned soon after birth into human society. In this sense, culture is in the constant process of redefining itself (L’Abate, 1998).

Culture is learned through the lens of such social phenomena as beliefs, ideas, language, customs, rules, symbols, and family patterns within a social group living in the same geographical area. Because these societal beliefs and assumptions are transmitted from one generation to the next, it can be generalized that culture does not die. It is
rather its proponents who die in the end. In this sense, it can be argued that culture influences human behavior in several ways. That is, culture is social fact that socializes the members of the community and those who enter the community at a later point in time. The socialization process thus embodies the criteria for what is good or bad in a given society depending on who is interpreting it. Female circumcision, for example, though practiced in some ethnic groups, may be condemned by non-ethnic groups. Likewise, eating beef may be taboo in some parts of India at the same time that it is a major source of protein in another society.

Scholars within the fields of Sociology and Anthropology often make reference to additional terms, all pertaining to culture: biculturation, acculturative stress, and marginalization. These scholars understand “biculturation” to mean the development of adaptive skills used to cope with two cultures and “marginalization” as a reference to individuals who, having lost contact with their own culture, totally reject the new experience, seeing themselves as victims of exclusion or discrimination. “Acculturative stress” is understood to mean the conflicts, identity confusion, and emotional symptoms exhibited by individuals and families during the acculturation process. By way of example, L’Abate (1998) pointed to African Americans, whose members were born in the United States, but experience acculturative stress rooted in discrimination and lack of acceptance by the majority culture.

Because it helps people build and preserve their identity, culture is an important phenomenon. In a social world where every ethnic group wants to retain its own culture, Faure & Rubin (1993) claimed that one mechanism producing such an effect occurs when individuals become aware of their cultural identity as a result of regarding themselves as
different from others. Dasgupta (1998:953) pointed out that minorities in the U.S. adhere to the familiar customs and conventions of their countries as part of a process of ethnic identity development typical of all immigrant groups. Dasgupta assumed that minority groups actively establish a positive ethnic identity by means of distinct ingroup behaviors regardless of social and financial cost. He claimed that commitment to identity differs from person to person depending on the degree to which one is devoted to various aspects of the ethic culture and the degree to which one is identified with the dominant group.

Ethnic identity is an important aspect of acculturation concerned with how individuals feel about or relate to their own ethnic group as part of the larger dominant society (Montemayor, Raymond, Adams & Gullota, 2002). In the study of acculturation, ethnic identity is one of the more important questions to be addressed. According to Bernal & Knight (1993), an immigrant who asks the question, “Who am I?” is certain either to search for or maintain his or her ethnic identity. Moreover, wrote Bernal & Knight (1993:1), the answer to the question, “Who am I?” constitutes a basic part of the ethnic individual’s personality and, therefore, becomes an effective contributor to ethnic formation, maintenance, and social ties. Bernal’s and Knight’s contention is that ethnic identity is a multidimensional psychological construct, a set of self-ideas about one’s own ethnic group membership with several varying components. One such dimension is self-identification, commonly referred to as the ethnic labels or terms that people use to identify themselves. “I am an Akan,” for example, a member of a large ethnic group in Ghana might say. A second dimension within this construct is the individual’s awareness of his or her ethnic culture—its traditions, customs, values, and behaviors. The last of these dimensions is the, feelings, and values that individuals have about their group
membership and culture. Contributing to this discussion, Dasgupta (1998), made it clear that culture and identity cannot be separated from one another when studying acculturation. That is, if an immigrant abandons his or her culture and adopts the dominant culture, will not identify with the ancestral culture.

The concept of ”the melting pot,” according to which minority members in the United States eventually abandon their culture and adapt to the dominant culture is another important consideration in this discussion. The theory behind the melting pot concept is that all immigrants eventually become Americans and ultimately forget their individual identities. Bernal & Knight (1993:2); McAdoo (1999) argued, however, that this theory has not yet been borne out in the case of ethnic groups living in the United States. McAdoo (1999) concluded instead that when ethnic groups come into contact, they blend only to a certain extent to form an entity that is seen as improved over that of the individual components when standing alone. According to McAdoo, each group becomes richer and more resourceful while maintaining the integrity of the original ethnic group. Bernal & Knight (1993:3) argued for “the persistence of ethnic identity, a process of ethnic socialization provided by parents, families, peers and the rest of the ethnic community throughout childhood”. Needless to say, the extent to which any ethnic group blends with another is dependent upon how family members socialize their children, what peer group immigrant children choose to associate with, and what individual choices immigrant children make.

Although Bernal & Knight (1993:3) maintained that acculturation affects the persistence of ethnic identity, other scholars, such as Bakker, Zee, & Oudenhoven (2006), subscribed to a view based on minority status. They argued that because the bulk of
minorities suffer low status and are often negatively valued by the dominant group, this has serious implications. They referred to the Social Identity Theory (SIT), which states that the individual identity of minority group members is threatened. The basic tenet of SIT is that individuals are motivated to distinguish their own groups from others in a favorable way in order to achieve a positive social identity. According to SIT, immigrants facing a negative or threatened group identity will try to enhance their social identities by engaging in identity-management strategies. Such strategies include one of two basic possibilities: individual group members may try to leave their group or to improve their group status. With this theory in mind, Baker, Zee & Oudenhoven referred to Berry’s (1997) assimilation strategy as an individual strategy employed to enhance one’s social identity by leaving the low-status immigrant group to join the more positive valued host group. The final conclusion drawn by Baker et al was that “individual differences in personality seemed to favor a strategy leading some to choose to become full members of the host society (ibid pp. 2883)”.

Addressing the question of ethnic identity, Ward (2006) contributed the notion that minority groups tend to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity than members of the dominant socio-political group. According to Ward, if the minority does not hold on to their ethnic identity, the probability is great that they will be overshadowed by the dominant group.

Immigrants must exercise some of the values of the original culture within the dominant society in order to be seen as maintaining their ethnic identity. According to Alba (1990:15), “eating foods, observing holiday rituals, peppering English speech with words and phrases from the mother tongue, and participating in ethnic social clubs
contribute to ethnic identity”. Alba argued that if an immigrant fails to put all of this into practice, that individual may not be able to retain his or her ethnicity. He is of the view that in cases where an ethnic identity lacks content, where there is no commitment to ethnic practices, this type of ethnic identity represents a pure form of symbolic ethnicity or a self-conscious attempt to feel ethnic without being ethnic. According to Alba (1990), symbolic ethnicity can be observed in immigrants who have lived in the United States for many generations. Alba strongly asserted that if an individual identity is not reflected in action in ethnic values terms, then there is little contribution to sustaining ethnicity.

“The concept of biculturalism pertains to individuals or families who maintain the values of their native culture while adopting the values of the dominant culture” (Coleman & Ganong, 2004:337). Coleman and Ganong conceptualized biculturalism as the synthesis of two cultures which results in a third enriched reality that did not previously exist. When immigrants become bicultural, according to Coleman and Ganong, they are likely to overcome acculturation stress and enjoy emotional stability.

Based on their study of Mexican Americans, Coleman & Ganong (2004) found that biculturalism manifests in four distinct identities. The first identity they observed was that of an individual exhibiting the attitudes of both the Mexican American culture and the mainstream culture. The second identity was characterized by an individual who exhibited positive attitudes toward both the dominant and minority cultures, but accepted and felt more comfortable in the dominant country’s cultural settings. The third identity they described was that of an individual functioning within a bicultural minority with a stronger commitment to the ethnic culture. The fourth identity belonged to the individual
who was comfortable with his or her ethnic group and exhibited a strong commitment to that group only.

A Chronological Understanding of Acculturation

Acculturation theory is concerned with the extent to which ethnic identity is maintained when an ethnic group is in continuous contact with the dominant group (Montemayor, Raymond, Adams, & Gullota (2002). Gordon (1964) explained that sometimes assimilation and acculturation are used to mean the same thing. He stated that sociologists like to use “assimilation” while anthropologists have favored “acculturation.” In this sense, the two terminologies may be used interchangeably.

Defining acculturation, Gordon (1964:61) stated that “it refers to those phenomena which result when a person having different culture comes into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”.

According to Dillard, (1983) acculturation is a broad concept linked to the socio-cultural context of human interaction. Dillard defined acculturation as the loss of ethnic identity through adoption of the dominant country’s social and cultural norms. He pointed out that acculturation occurs in three overlapping types. The first type is a blind process that takes place when various cultures are in proximity to each other and, through exchange of goods and services, unconsciously adopt cultural patterns from each other. The second type of acculturation occurs when the cultural patterns, behaviors, and beliefs of the host country are forced or imposed upon ethnic minorities and immigrants because
the host country culture is deemed superior. The third type, referred to as democratic acculturation, offers the individual the freedom to choose to adapt to the cultural patterns of other groups. In Dillard’s view, all three types of acculturation likely occur in America.

Coleman & Ganong (2004) opined that acculturation does not imply a relinquishing of native culture or values. Rather, it is a process by which values representative of the host culture are adopted and/or elements from other ethnic groups are learned, borrowed or adopted. Acculturation as understood by Coleman and Ganong (2004) is operationalized by acceptance of American ideals and the ability to speak English. Along the same lines, Montemayor, Raymond, Adams, & Gullota (2000) determined that acculturation is the acquisition of the skills needed to function in a new environment.

**Acculturation Process**

Acculturation does not happen all at once. It takes time. The acculturation of immigrants in their new society is certainly not a one-time occurrence. Rather, it is a gradual process that occurs over time. According to Montemayor, Raymond, Adams, & Gullota (2000); Bents et al (2005), acculturation is a process incorporating two different types of adaptation to a new culture. The first of these adaptations is referred to as assimilation, which the authors view as the extreme form of acculturation. This type of adaptation involves abandoning one’s cultural identity and subsequently adopting the identity of the new society. The second adaptation process is known as biculturation,
which involves integrating components of the original culture with those of the host culture.

Gibson (1988) perceived acculturation as a process of cultural change and adaptation that takes place when groups representing different cultures interact. Stressing that the outcome of acculturation is not the replacement of old traits with new, Gibson described acculturation as an additive process, whereby old and new traits are blended.

Adding to the discussion, Choi (2006) asserted that although acculturation was formerly understood in terms of the immersion of immigrants into a new culture, current models emphasize that the acculturation process is both selective and multidimensional. Choi argued against the notion of a simple exchange of former or ethnic values in favor of the values of the host country. It was his observation that immigrants select, shift, and modify their values as they adapt to the new environment. Thus, despite the obvious differences among researchers, Choi’s findings highlighted the existing consensus regarding acculturation as a learning process resulting in adoption of at least some of the patterns of the host country.

Regarding acculturation and its variants, Rumbaut & Portes (2001:199) pointed out that the “classical assimilationist perspective views acculturation as linear and progressive and therefore not subject to reversal”. According to Rumbaut’s and Portes’ understanding, acculturation sometimes results in a reduction of cultural heterogeneity. Here they made reference to Gordon’s multidimensional typology of assimilation, which contends that immigrants from a poor background abandon their former culture over time and become completely “melted” into the host country’s culture. Rumbaut and Portes accepted this model on the assumption that diverse immigrant-ethnic groups in the
receiving society gradually abandon their native cultural and behavioral patterns in favor of new patterns because of their low position. This tends to happen, for instance, in the case of poor immigrants who will eat any food they can lay their hands on when unable to afford high-priced imported ethnic foods. In the same vein, because they may not be able to afford native dress at import prices, they might choose to buy clothes in the host country when they are sold at a reduced price. In a nutshell, the host country dictates the prices of goods for poor immigrants, which limits the selection of virtually anything they might want or need to buy.

Clayton (1996) maintained that the traditional view of acculturation actually calls for the assimilation of minority ethnic groups into the host country or, in America’s case, the Americanization of immigrants. Based on this understanding, Clayton viewed adjustment to a new culture as a linear process in which an immigrant experiences five phases of adjustment. During the initial phase, the immigrant’s emotions tend to fall within the normal range or are somewhat elevated as he or she prepares for entry into the new culture and leaves the home country. In the second phase, when the foreigner is more a spectator than a participant, his or her emotions are likely to vacillate between mostly high or very low. Characterized by increased participation, phase three is a period during which the immigrant begins to grasp the magnitude of the differences between the host and home cultures. This leads to the fourth phase, when shock sets in and the emotions become rather negative. Ultimately, in the final phase, emotions begin to level out as the immigrant learns to function in the host country. In Clayton’s (1996) view, the end of the process is marked by an exchange of the traditions, values, and language of the original culture for those of the host country.
Portes & Rumbaut (2001) outlined three types of acculturation, which they termed dissonant acculturation, consonant acculturation, and selective acculturation, respectively. Dissonant acculturation refers to the process, whereby children learn the English language and American ways while losing the immigrant culture at a faster rate than their parents. In the case of consonant acculturation, learning and gradual abandonment of the home language and culture take place at more or less the same rate across generations. Selective acculturation occurs when the learning process for both generations takes place within a co-ethnic community large and diverse enough to decelerate the cultural shift and encourage partial retention of the home culture.

According to Gibson’s (1988) findings, the majority of Punjabi Sikh immigrant living in California rejected the notion that Americanization meant giving up their separate identity. Although these Valleyside Punjabis encouraged their children to adopt the good ways of the American, these children tended to embrace more aspects of the dominant culture than most of the parents would have liked. According to Gibson, some Punjabis were less willing to subordinate their ways to the will of the majority, but a few encouraged their children to become fully assimilated. These parents argued that it was in their children’s best interests to be incorporated into the mainstream. Gibson (1988) thus concluded that acculturation was taking place for Punjabi immigrants and their children in their new Valleyside setting.

Webb (2001) emphasized that acculturation is significantly influenced by the strength of the family’s support systems and the depth of individual conviction regarding the importance of maintaining the traditions and values of the culture of origin.
Acculturation Conflict and Strategies for Acculturation

The acculturation process can have adverse effects on parent-child relationships within the immigrant population. It often brings about parent-child conflicts. According to Kamya (1977) and Matsumoto and Juang (2004), because acculturation is a process of adjustment to a new culture and environment, it cannot take place without tension or conflict. Similarly, Booth, Crouter & Landale (1997) reported that migration and adaptation as social processes are sufficiently complex that conflicts between parents and their children must be anticipated. Tension can arise between parents and their children for two possible reasons: (i) children tend to be easily influenced by their peer group members and (ii) children more readily adapt to their environment than their parents because they attend schools, where they read about and observe firsthand the culture and values of the host country, sometimes even participating in cultural programs. Additionally, students are broadly exposed to American foods in school, where the food sold in school cafeterias and vending machines is typical of foods commonly eaten in the host country. Conflict is likely to develop between immigrant children and their parents when children express a preference for or demand the host country’s food or when they emulate their American peers’ style of dress. Some Ghanaian parents object to their children wearing low-slung, baggy pants or to their male children wearing earrings, as this is all foreign to Ghanaian traditional culture.

The research of Rumbaut & Portes (2001) revealed that today’s second generation immigrants face a dilemma in that they live in a world that is far more materialistic and individualistic than that experienced by their counterparts some years ago. Again, according to Rumbaut and Portes, today’s second generation immigrants encounter
problems unique to those living in two worlds: at home they are told to work hard and do well to facilitate their climb up the socioeconomic ladder, while on the street they are encouraged to rebel against authority and reject the goals of achievement (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Particularly tense situations arise in cases when gangs entice immigrant children or when the desire to fit into the new society precludes consideration for whether a given lifestyle of the host country is good or bad. Pressure from parents and peers invariably produces conflict between immigrant children and their parents as well as between immigrant children and their peers. In this sense, it is not only second generation immigrant children who are caught between two worlds, but other generations as well.

That migration from one country to another brings changes and stress to the migrant’s everyday life cannot be disputed. These changes may be particularly unwelcome when they run contrary to the immigrant’s beliefs or values, but they are inevitable nonetheless. Vinokurov, Trickett, & Birman (2002:426); L’Abate (1998) posited that migration is not always smooth or joyful, but often brings with it acculturative stress. According to Kamya, (1977), immigrants will likely experience the challenges of social isolation, cultural shock, cultural change, and goal striving stress. Thurwald (1932) also emphasized that acculturation is a developmental process involving significant tasks and demands. Generally speaking, all immigrants going through the acculturation process will experience some degree of stress (Kamya, 1997 & Al-Issa and Tousignant, 1997). Schwebel & Hodari (2005) observed that in multicultural societies, individuals from minority cultures face a constant challenge of balancing their own cultural practices and behaviors with those of the majority. To their way of thinking, the challenges faced by minority immigrants are directly related to the process by which
cultural behaviors and values change via contact with a majority or host culture. It is because of this process that most immigrants experience stress or conflict.

Similarly, Sam (1992) observed that immigrant children in the United States face a dilemma unique to those living within two cultures, the culture of their parents and that of the host society. According to Sam, immigrant children suffer chiefly on account of their parents’ attitude. Many immigrant parents look down on the values and norms of the receiving country, whereas the receiving society rejects the value system of the immigrant parents (Sam, 1992). Immigrant children are caught in the middle of these conflicting value systems. Some immigrant parents pressure their children to retain the values of their culture because they do not want them to lose their identity. In such a situation, the burden is on the child to make a choice. According to Sam, children weigh the views of their parents heavily when choosing the level of relationship they will have with the host country and its culture. Sam’s (1992) observation does not hold true in all cases, however. Instances of immigrant children calling for the arrest of their parents for spanking them have been documented by (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Rumbaut and Portes have suggested that perhaps Sam’s perspective on the issue does not apply to all immigrant children because of the influence of popular culture on the immigrant population via television. Indeed the media introduce significant exposure to the lifestyles and consumption patterns of the host society. Perhaps immigrant children will not adapt to everything they are exposed to in the host society. They may retain some of their country’s ethnic values which they will get to know through their parents’ socialization policies.
By contrast, adults are able to establish relationships between two or more cultures because they are more adept at identifying the influences of different cultures (Sam, 1992). According to Sam, sometimes second and third generation children desire to become assimilated because they are bred in the dominant society and therefore easily adopt the values and norms of that society. This readiness on the part of immigrant children to embrace the host society can be attributed in part to long working hours that leave parents little time or energy to pass on the cultural traditions, values, and rituals that have traditionally sustained families in their homelands (McGoldrick, Giordano & Garcia-Preto, 2005). As previously noted, Rumbaut & Portes, (2001) observed conflict between immigrant parents and their American born children. In their view, conflict was to be attributed chiefly to the children’s desire to fit into American society. According to their findings, immigrant children tended to see their parents as conservatives adhering to “old world” values, norms, and behavioral patterns.

According to Zhou (1997), immigrant children approach their adjustment to American society based on the influences they receive. Immigrant children are undoubtedly influenced by their peer groups, television, and the mass media. Zhou reported that when these younger immigrants accept the influence of their peers and the mass media, they become embarrassed by their parents’ “old” ways and begin to ponder such questions as: How do I fit into American culture and my own ethnic culture at the same time? Which side should I remain loyal to, America or my own ethnic culture? Can I ever become American without leaving home?

By contrast, a major concern for parents is how to gain the most from their new environment while maintaining traditional family life. According to Zhou, parents also
concern themselves with how to prevent their children from losing their cultural roots and assimilating too much. While immigrant children see their parents as obsolete, parents aim to ensure the survival and future economic success of their children, who, in their eyes, have been lured by American culture and its negative effects (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Despite parental attempts to discourage the process of acculturation, Zhou (1997) concluded that immigrant children are generally eager to embrace American culture and to acquire an American identity by becoming indistinguishable from their American peers.

Because it brings about culture conflict, isolation from families and social networks, as well as initial problems related to language acquisition, employment, work status, social acceptability, and discrimination, acculturation is indeed viewed as a stressful experience (Flaskerud & Uman 1996:123; Vinokurov, Trickett & Birman, 2002). Although new immigrants may want to maintain their home culture, to do so throughout the generations is not feasible because of the influence of the new environment. In this regard, Gans (1999) reported that early European immigrants to the United States, who were uneducated peasants and landless laborers, spent most of their time at work, and as a result, were able to maintain their culture. By contrast, their culture disappeared in their second generation children because they went to school, enjoyed peer groups, and they had enough to mingle with the host society. Gans (1999) argued that when immigrants became upwardly mobile, they began to embrace American culture and become acculturated. His argument thus implies that second generation immigrants acculturated to American society more readily as a result of their improved status.
A number of scholars, including Schwebel & Hodari (2005); Choi (2006); Tadmor & Tetlock (2006); Kosic, Mannetti & Sam (2005); (Bakker, Zee, & Oudenhoven (2006) argued for the existence of acculturation stress strategies. These authors contended that the more stressful strategies include assimilation, whereby the individual entirely adopts the practices of the majority culture and relinquishes his or her cultural heritage. The next stress strategy, whereby the individual has contact with the majority group while maintaining the original culture, is termed separation. The third stress strategy is marginalization, a coping mechanism characterized by no contact with the majority group or non-adherence to both the old and new culture.

Based on the acculturation model established by Berry and others, Luque, Fernandez, and Tejada (2006); Kosic, Mannetti & Sam (2005); Bakker, Zee, & Oudenhoven (2006) demonstrated that minority groups in the dominant society preferred integration and rejected marginalization. According to Schwebel & Hodari (2005), empirical data support theoretical arguments that the integration of immigrants into the majority culture is the healthiest means of acculturation. Nevertheless, as Bakker, Zee, & Oudenhoven (2006) pointed out, certain conditions motivate immigrants to choose the strategy that most appeals to them. According to Bakker, Zee, & Oudenhoven, the choice of a particular strategy is influenced by such contextual factors as the attitudes of host members toward migrants or the attitudes of fellow nationals. If, for example, the host country receives the new immigrants warmly and treats them with kindness, fairness, and respect, these immigrants will be more inclined to adopt the dominant culture. If, on the other hand, the immigrants are not welcomed in this way, their acculturation is likely to be slow in pace. Vietnamese refugees arriving in the United States in the 1980s, for instance, were
discouraged from acculturating quickly to American culture by the attitudes that some American citizens showed toward them. According to Rambaut, & Portes (2001), a Vietnamese high school student in Davis, California, was stabbed to death by a group of white high school students in 1983. Similarly, in 1990 a young Vietnamese American was stomped to death by skinheads in Houston. Incidents such as these do little to motivate nationals to adapt quickly to American culture.

In their study of acculturation strategies and attitudes among African immigrants living in southern Spain, Luque, Fernandez, & Tejada (2006) discovered that there was no single acculturative strategy employed to address social relationships and friendships. A similar study conducted by the same authors showed that given the choice, African immigrants would opt for separation in situations affecting family relations, religious beliefs, customs, and ways of thinking.

African immigrants living in the south of Spain adopted the Spanish language in their work place, but continued to use their ethnic language at home with their families (Luque, Fernandez, & Tejada 2006). The researchers maintained that if the home language was used as the medium of communication with family, this implied that these immigrants would preserve their cultural heritage and transmit it to their children in the future. This study also revealed that the strategy adopted by most of these immigrants lay somewhere between separation and integration. The authors attributed this to the fact that most African immigrants had friends from their home country with whom they enjoyed frequent interaction, but enjoyed an equal number of friendships with Spaniards. They highlighted the tendency for individuals to embrace different acculturation options in different situations. It is for precisely this reason, in fact, that they suggested
acculturation of the members of a minority group is more accurately defined as a composite profile than as a single choice. The Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) views the acculturation process as a selective or relative adaptation in which each person makes his own cultural synthesis, accepting or rejecting elements of both cultures (Luque, Fernande, & Tejada (2006). Acculturation thus can be understood as based on a dynamic involving one’s environment and personal choice (Coleman and Ganong, 2004), a concept that complements the understanding of acculturation strategy set forth by Luque, Fernandez, & Tejada (2006).

In his study of ethnic groups in North America, Dhruvariajan (1993) also observed a range of variation with respect to how immigrants retain and perpetuate their ethnic and cultural heritage. Dhruvariajan found that first generation immigrants generally tend to retain their ethnic culture. He concluded that the degree to which participants retained their cultural heritage was dependent on their length of stay in North America. Schwebel and Hodari (2005); Choi (2006) commented that acculturation must be understood in terms of levels. Although some individuals acculturate without difficulty, most experience some degree of psychological stress. Studies conducted by Rumba and Portes, (2001); Portes & Rumbaut (2001) resulted in a similar conclusion regarding levels of acculturation. As outlined in the previous discussion of the acculturation process, Portes and Rumbaut referred to these levels as dissonant acculturation, consonant acculturation, and selective acculturation. Schwebel & Hodari (2005) pointed to a consensus among scholars that immigrants who endure acculturation with a minimal amount of psychological turmoil tend to discover ways to integrate their native minority culture with the adopted majority culture. The foregoing discussion has established that
immigrants employ different strategies for acculturation and that acculturation is influenced by a number of factors: parental socialization, the environment in which immigrants live, the reception of immigrants in the host culture, and the personal choices of the immigrants themselves.

Factors Influencing Acculturation

Acculturation is a complex process. It does not occur in a vacuum. Among the many factors influencing acculturation, research has established that the influence of family is quite significant. Among the Mexicans of Detroit, for example, Pozzetta (1991) found that those who migrated individually became acculturated more quickly than those who migrated with families. In the same study, Pozzetta observed that the Jewish immigrants of Yankee City showed no interest in synagogue attendance until their children become adolescents. According to Pozzetta, these parents developed an interest in synagogue attendance at that time in an attempt to discourage intermarriage. This action suggests an attempt on the part of these Jewish parents to prevent their children from acculturating.

Pozzetta (1991) maintained that family attempts to hinder acculturation are motivated largely by a desire to reduce the emotional disturbances that can result from culture contact. This attempt to discourage intermarriage was observed among Yankee City ethnic groups whose members migrated alone or as young adults. As Waters (1990) pointed out, intermarriage impacts acculturation in a significant way due to the fact that the family is the primary institution of socialization. She explained that when parents are
not from the same ethnic group, the children’s ethnic socialization tends not to be as strong as it would be if both parents were from the same group.

Discussing factors of acculturation, Adler & Gielen (2001) stressed that because young people adapt more readily to change than older people, young migrants tend to acculturate faster. As pointed out earlier, Rumbaut & Portes (2001) highlighted socioeconomic status and environment as significant determinants of acculturation. According to their findings, children whose parents were of poor socioeconomic status found it difficult to succeed without discovering their own ways, whether good or bad, to survive in the new society. They also noted that second generation children living in poor neighborhoods struggling either with social isolation or violence and drug activity were certain to become acculturated.

Rumbaut & Portes (2001) found that television viewing among immigrant children is a relevant acculturation factor in that it exposes them to the lifestyles and consumption standards of American society. According to Rumbaut and Portes, television viewing elevates the expectations of immigrant children above that of their parents. Pozzetta (1991) further observed that these children are not likely to agree to work for low paying jobs.

Another factor affecting acculturation is social mobility. Pozzetta’s (1991:269) study of acculturation revealed a positive correlation between acculturation and social mobility such that immigrants of high social status enjoy greater potential to become acculturated. Detailing his findings, Pozzetta highlighted that lower class Spanish-Americans were only slightly acculturated, whereas those who were upwardly mobile were among the most acculturated. Pozzetta noted in addition that the relationship
between acculturation and social mobility is particularly evident where religious
acculturation is concerned. In Jonesville, for example, he observed that lower and lower-
middle-class Norse were most loyal to the sectarian morality. By contrast, the upper
middle class accepted sectarian standards when interacting with other Norse, but
exhibited an acceptance of the standard of the outside community as well. Similarly,
among the Jews of Buna, the poor were affiliated with Orthodox Judaism while the
wealthy aligned themselves with Reform Judaism. Pozzetta, (1991:269) thus concluded
that “social mobility poses a threat to a group’s solidarity and cultural reviva”.

It is difficult for immigrants living in the United States to avoid becoming
acculturated in one way or another if they choose to remain in the host country. “New
Greece,” as it is called, is a prime example. Greeks who have established themselves in
America have modified their traditions, customs, manner of speech, and folkways to fit
into the host country (Athens, 1996:32). According to Athens, the establishment of “New
Greece” was based on three principles (ibid: 32). First, all Greeks were to abide by the
culture practiced by Greeks in Greece. This meant, among other things, that worship
services in Greek Orthodox churches were to be the exact replica of services conducted in
Greece. Second, only Greek was to be spoken at home and church. Finally, Greeks were
to date and marry only Greeks in order to maintain their bloodline and preserve their
cultural heritage.

Although these principles may sound good in theory, they proved a failure
(Athens, 1996). Athens attributed this failure to a number of factors. Because Greek
culture is neither monolithic nor static, there was no homogeneous culture for Greeks in
America to abide by. As for the issue of intermarriage, Athens argued that love has never
known ethnic boundaries and Greeks were thus apt to fall in love with Irish or English, for example, and to marry accordingly. Not all Greeks share the same interests or personalities, he argued further, and the pool of eligible Greeks was small.

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that despite the determination of Greeks in America to refrain from adopting mainstream culture, they have been acculturated into American society. Additional evidence of this trend was observed by Athens in the form of a mixture of English with Greek in Greek-American conversation (Athens 1996). Athens observed that more Greek than English was spoken in conversation between first generation Greek immigrants. In conversation between second or third generation Greek Americans, however, more English than Greek was spoken. According to Athens, attempts to preserve the Greek culture were evident not so much in the use of the Greek language as in the periodic cultural and social activities the immigrants scheduled at the Greek Orthodox churches in their communities.

Interestingly, although Greeks encourage dating Greeks only, Asian Indians discourage dating altogether. Just as the Greeks discourage intermarriage, however, Asian Indians encourage their sons and daughters to marry Indians only (Dasgupta, 1998). Studies have shown that some Asian Indian parents’ resist marital integration by refusing to allow their children to date or mix freely with their non-Indian peers (Dasgupta, 1998). Dasgupta reported that many Asian Indian parents fear that dating will expose their children to the evils of premarital sex or sexual assault. Thus, in addition to retaining a traditional Indian diet, Asian Indians aim to perpetuate their values concerning home, family, children, religion, and marriage. Because Asian Indian immigrants desire to preserve their South Asian culture and heritage in the United States, the roles of second
generation daughters are monitored more strictly than those of sons in order to avoid marital integration of non-Indians (Dasgupta, 1998).

Regardless of their country of origin, immigrants face significant adjustment challenges (Handlin, 1959). According to Handlin, challenges faced by immigrants include those stemming from exposure to a new language and new ways of thinking, modes of worship, and patterns of human behavior. European immigrants formed organizations to cope with these challenges. One such organization was the church. According to Handlin, when early immigrants from Europe came to the New World, they decided not to abandon their religion. Instead, they struggled to worship in much the same way as they had worshipped in the Old World. Because the newcomers found existing churches in the New World unacceptable, they insisted on building their own. They understood that this would have a profound impact on their life in the new country (Handlin, 1959). Handlin suggested that in this way, immigrant churches can delay acculturation. During my field study in the Bronx, I observed a similar phenomenon. In both of the Ghanaian churches I visited, services and other activities were conducted in Twi—one of the ethnic languages in Ghana—the aim being not only to teach Ghanaian immigrant children about God, but to help them learn or retain their native language and to reinforce the cultural dress and values of their native Ghana.
Religion as a Factor of Acculturation

Religion is an important agent of socialization that can result in the delay of acculturation. Because it is one of the means by which social relations take place, religion is seen as a prime source of identity and motivation for individuals (Bankston III & Zhou 1996:19). Bankston III and Zhou contended that first generation immigrants view religion or church involvement as one of the ways to link themselves with their American born children while gaining acceptance in the host society. According to Bankston III and Zhou, ethnic religious institutions help immigrants to preserve their ethnic self-images in the face of gradual assimilation and form a basis for collective action. They made specific reference to Hispanic-American churches as a recognized means of preserving Hispanic ethnicity. They also noted that Korean American churches cultivate the ethnic identities of American-born group members by sponsoring formal education in Korean history, language, and culture. According to their findings, religious activities serve to reinforce ethnic identification and establish a strong bond between immigrants and their ethnic groups. Vietnamese religious institutions play a similar role in passing on cultural heritage to young Vietnamese (Bankston III & Zhou, 1996).

Bankston III & Zhou (1996) observed that Vietnamese churches serve a dual function as centers for formal language instruction and for the reinforcement of Vietnamese traditions. On this basis, it cannot be denied that religious activities decelerate acculturation.

As Zhou & Bankson III (1998) discovered, Vietnamese religious institutions in the United States are much more than houses of worship. For the Vietnamese, the house of worship is also intended to be a place where the ancestral language and culture are
transmitted to the younger generation (Zhou & Bankson III, 1998). To this end, the
temple and churches are used for youth programs, summer camps, festival celebrations
and more (ibid p.99). The church also serves as a primary mechanism for integrating
young people into the community’s network of ethnic relations. Zhou and Bankson III
argued that this type of involvement with ethnic religious institutions both strengthens
ethnic identification and reaffirms ethnic affiliation. They noted in their research that
Vietnamese high schoolers who went to church once or more a week were more likely to
derscribe themselves as Vietnamese than infrequent churchgoers. None of those who
attended church more than once a week chose to identify themselves as “American,”
whereas most of the infrequent churchgoers preferred “American” as a self-description.

Not surprisingly, Zhou & Bankson III (1998) also found that a large percentage of
Vietnamese people who attended church once a week or more hoped to marry from
among their church members, whereas those who did not attend church regularly
expressed no concern as to whether or not they would marry a Vietnamese person.

According to Walch (1994), immigrant religion ensured cultural maintenance. He
argued that religion provided continuity for the immigrants by bridging the old world
with the new, which in turn made a gradual adjustment to the American culture possible
and bearable.

According to an article featured in The New York Times (2004), more than one
hundred African immigrant churches in New York City preach the Gospel in the Ibo,
Twi, Luo, Baganda, and Ga languages, and more. The article stated that these churches
provide cultural refuge to African immigrants and offer worshippers the opportunity to
attend services in traditional African dress. The article was accompanied by photos
showing Ghanaian worshippers in traditional dress while celebrating Palm Sunday in their churches (See Appendix F). The foregoing discussion serves to demonstrate how the practice of religion can encourage strong resistance to acculturation.

**Cultural and Social Activities as Factors of Acculturation**

Social activities organized for specific ethnic group can be an antidote to rapid acculturation of immigrants and their children. Periodic social activities for ethnic groups make immigrants in a host country aware of some of their values and norms and facilitate a sense of belonging. Immigrants who attend ethnic social activities are likely to identify themselves with their native country. Sonderegger & Barrett (2004) suggested that maintaining ethnic behaviors is easier when immigrants have access to family or social institutions like soccer clubs and churches. According to the authors, such activities promote specific cultural behaviors. Ghanaian immigrants in the United States, for example, belong to several associations that serve them well. There are approximately forty-three such Ghanaian associations in the United States (Ciment, 2001). Activities organized by these associations encourage young people to have an appreciation for their cultural norms and values.

Ackah (2003:571); Atta-Poku (1996) claimed that the greater the participation in Ghanaian cultural and social activities, the lower the level of acculturation into American society irrespective of duration of residence. Obeng (1998) pointed out that Ghanaian immigrants have established churches, welfare and ethnic associations, and businesses in this country, all of which serve to remind Ghanaians of their native home and ethnic identity. He stressed that ethnic festivals and other activities help tie children to their homeland and initiate host-country spouses into Ghanaian culture. Annual Christian
celebrations, for example, encourage slow acculturation among immigrant children by reminding them of their identity. Social events observed by Ghanaians in the United States include the Ghanaian annual picnic and celebration of Ghana Independence Day. These social events serve as tangible reminders of Ghanaian culture, providing regular exposure to Ghanaian dress, food, dance, and ethnic languages. Because these events are held annually, they discourage first generation Ghanaian immigrants and their children from abandoning their ethnic values.

The research of Attah-Opoku (1996) takes a look at the Asanteman Association, a Ghanaian ethnic group located in New York City. In his study, Attah-Opoku provided detailed descriptions of activities periodically organized by the association, which include, for example, celebration of the installation of Ghana’s kings. His description of funeral observances emphasizes that attendees wore the traditional red and black mourning garb of Ghana and provided emotional and material support to the bereaved in ways that incorporated traditional Ghanaian mourning customs, such as the pouring of libations to invoke the spirits of ancestors and wish the departing souls well as they joined the ancestral world. The study also includes detailed descriptions of member participation in dinner-dance parties, as well as in various sociocultural activities organized by individual members in honor of such events as naming, outdooring, and marriage ceremonies. In addition, Association officials are described as having represented the Association at various functions. Because all of these activities took place not in secret, but out in the open, Ghanaian children had opportunity to observe their home culture in action. This served to reinforce their ethnic identity and contribute to a deceleration of the acculturation process.
Obeng (1998) examined the social and cultural activities of Ghanaians living in New England, looking specifically at how these activities served as reminders of their native Ghana. According to Obeng, New England Ghanaian immigrant leaders are attempting to build a cultural center to educate Americans and their own children about the culture of Ghana. Obeng noted among the New England Ghanaians a group of second and later generation immigrants who exhibited little interest in Ghanaian traditional values. Considering festivals and other cultural activities organized in the United States a waste of their time, this group, not surprisingly, is likely to join the many immigrants in the United States who eventually become assimilated into American culture.

The research of Dhruvarajan (1993) built on Obeng’s findings. Dhruvarajan maintained that ethnic cultural retention is stronger among first generation immigrants due to their arrival in the country as adults. Arguing that the longer one stayed in a host country, the more exposure he or she has to the culture of the host society, he concluded that the commitment to one’s cultural heritage is dependent upon length of stay in the host country. Kang & Kim (1998) likewise found that immigrants who came to the United States as adults were more habituated to their previous culture and exhibited lower levels of cultural assimilation than those who came to the United States at an earlier age. Kang and Kim argued that it is immigrant children who are born in the host country and those who migrate at a young that are most vulnerable to acculturation. Dhruvaranjan, Kim, and Kang are thus suggesting that no amount of exposure to Ghanaian culture via specially organized social activities will prevent second and later generation immigrant children from becoming acculturated.
Education and Place of Residence as Factors Affecting Food Acculturation

Just as there are different cultures in the world, so there are different foods native to those cultures. As stated earlier, acculturation encompasses various forms of the adaptation of minorities to a dominant culture. Immigrants to the United States tend to make changes in their eating habits, often abandoning ethnic foods in favor of American food or perhaps adding other ethnic foods and American foods to their diet. Kang and Garey (2002) understood this phenomenon in terms of the theory of dominant-minority relations, according to which lifestyle, and food habits for that matter, are shaped by the culture of a disproportionately powerful group. They asserted that although they are sometimes resistant to change, food habits can be learned or unlearned in different cultures. According to Kang and Garey, inasmuch as human beings are like chameleons whose skin changes according to the color of their environment, there is a tendency for acculturation of food habits among minorities in association with cultures different from their own. Kang and Garey claimed that the dominant-minority relations of a given residence area, duration of stay in a geographic region or country, and individual lifestyle behaviors have a significant influence on the acculturation process.

Generally, traditional culture is an important determinant of food habits. Satia-About et al (2002:22) defined dietary acculturation “as part of the process by which immigrants or minority groups adopt the behavior and cultural traits of the host country”. A report based on their study involving 1,534 Chinese participants in the vicinities of Seattle and Vancouver revealed that ninety percent of the husbands/male partners preferred a traditional diet, while two thirds of the children showed a preference for a Western diet. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that like other aspects of
life, a society’s food habits are shaped by culture. In a separate study, the same authors found that first generation Koreans who resided in a white neighborhood in New York City were likely to serve Korean foods at ceremonies. When they compared the eating habits of this first generation group to Koreans living in ethnically mixed neighborhoods, they discovered that those living in the predominantly white neighborhood were more likely to eat their own popular ethnic dishes. They further observed that although the food habits of Koreans who had been in the United States for up to five years were acculturated, the food habits of Koreans who had lived in American between five and twenty years were more ethnically Korean. Well educated Koreans ate popular American food more often than Koreans with less education.

In a similar study of thirty-four Iranians representing thirty-two organizations, Biparva (1995) found that sixty-two percent of study participants ate Iranian food every day, while 38.24 percent ate Iranian food on an irregular basis every week. Neuhouser et al (2004:13) concluded that “when people migrate, their dietary habits become acculturated and that migration and acculturation are associated with changes in chronic disease risk”. Analyzing dietary changes among acculturated Hispanics in the United States, they observed that highly acculturated Hispanics ate fewer servings of fruits and vegetables than those who were less acculturated. They also noted that higher fat intake in combination with lower fruit and vegetable intake is associated with greater acculturation among Mexicans living in Washington State. Dasgupta’s (1998) study of Asian Indian immigrants in the United States revealed that even though this ethnic group has adapted to their environment, they have retained their taste for traditional food.
In his discussion of acculturation, Ng (1998) emphasized the importance of considering Asian immigrants. He stated that Asian migrants are not like chameleons who instantly adapt to a new environment; they bring with them a set of values, perspectives, and resources that affect their adaptation to the host country. Ng felt that there may be continuities and discontinuities in the adaptation process as reflected in the modification of traditional practices and invention of new cultural practices. These practices may persist into the second and later generations.

In a study on Indian immigrants living in New York, Khandelwal (2002) wrote that this particular group of immigrants said that they brought their food-related traditions along with them. Khandelwal’s observation was that regardless of class, the Indians preferred meals that were cooked at home in the Indian tradition. The same is not true, however, where age is concerned. Khandelwal (2002) pointed to the example of a young Indian American woman who did not like home-cooked food. She complained that her mother wanted her to eat breakfast at home before leaving for school every morning. According to Khandelwal, the woman would excuse herself, saying that she was getting late. She would then leave the house and stop on the way to school for some coffee.

**Language as an Agent of Acculturation**

Crucial to communication in all societies, language is the greatest immediate cultural barrier to assimilation (Cunningham and Lab, 1993). If an immigrant is able to speak his or her native language, this makes it easy to make friends with fellow ethnic group members, thereby impeding speedy growth in the host culture. If able to speak the
native language, an immigrant is likely to feel comfortable attending ethnic group meetings, festivals, and other activities, thereby facilitating the retention of certain aspects of the home culture. The United States government requires that immigrants learn the English language, in part, so that they can be assimilated into the American culture. Speaking to this issue, Portes & Rumbaut (2001:119); Caldas (2006:11) quoted Theodore Roosevelt as follows:

“We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, and not as dwellers of a polyglot boarding house; and we have room for but one sole loyalty, and that is loyalty to the American people.”

President Roosevelt was advocating that all immigrants living in the United States learn to speak English, the clear implication being that immigrants would fit into American society only once they were able to speak the country’s primary language. In support of the President, Portes & Rumbaut (2001) wrote that because a common language is the axis of national identity, language assimilation is an instrument that demonstrates a willingness on the part of immigrants to seek admission into their host country. The English language has been considered the primary tool of acculturating new immigrants into American society as well as the fire that brought the ‘melting pot’ to boil (Caldas, 2006). According to Portes & Rumbaut (2001), “the United States pushes for linguistic assimilation among immigrants because speaking English serves to unite the country”. In this sense, however, “the assimilative pressures exerted in the United States are making the country the cemetery grounds of other languages” (ibid: 114).
In a country where education is governed by the No Child Left Behind policy, immigrant children are bound to learn the English language. Elected in May of 2007, President-elect Sarkozy affirmed that all immigrants in France must speak French (BBC 5:00 am World news). Pressure of this kind may indeed cause some future immigrant children to abandon their native language in favor of French, particularly if their native language is not spoken at home. Many migrants who come to the United States face the challenge of learning English, but choose to abandon their native language when there is a clash with the new environment (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). According to Portes and Rumbaut, when immigrant children learn the language of the host country to communicate, they tend to abandon their cultural values or norms. As the authors pointed out, however, immigrants need to learn the language in order to be accepted in the host society. Portes and Rumbaut concluded that immigrants, and particularly immigrant children, have acculturated, in such a way as to include English, largely due to the forces of assimilation in the host country. Even immigrants who can speak English struggle with the problems related to having an accent; sometimes they are not understood. In their study of sixty African born immigrants living in the Greater Cleveland area, Konadu-Agyemang, Takyi, & Arthur (2006) indicated that more than 51 percent of interviewees reported that it was difficult for them to make themselves understood by teachers and fellow students. When confronted with such a situation, immigrant children may easily abandon their ethnic language to concentrate on mastering the host country’s language in order to fit in.

Alba & Nee (2003) pointed out that the children and grandchildren of immigrants had to be proficient in American culture, particularly in the English language,
if they were to enjoy any success outside the confines of their ethnic enclaves. Neto (2002), on the other hand, has contended that language competency is more likely to serve as a resource in the cross-cultural adjustment process. He believes that since immigrants who are competent in the host country’s culture and language tend to experience less social problems, language has a positive relationship to sociocultural adaptation. It is for this reason that immigrants who come to the United States without proficiency in English are very likely to learn it in order to fit into the host society.

According to Rumbaut and Portes (2001), two changes are indicative of acculturation, the first of which is the abandonment of the original language in favor of the host country language. The second indicator of acculturation comes either when immigrants identify themselves as having a link with both home and host countries or when they have abandoned the link with their home country. Based on assimilation prediction models, Rumbaut and Portes found that immigrants who live longer in the United States are more likely to abandon their native language in favor of English only. The authors stated further that these individuals will also likely adopt a nonhyphenated American identity.

Alba & Nee (2003:217) asserted that “whatever the regularity of use of the mother tongue by parents, some level of proficiency in English is usually apparent among immigrants who have resided in the United States for more than a few years.

They stressed that English proficiency reaches a high level among American born immigrant children. Alba and Nee argued further that the challenge for American born generations is not so much fluency in English as maintenance of the mother tongue. This
argument is well taken since immigrant children spend much of their time at school, where English is the dominant language.

Naturally, people who speak the same language see themselves as one entity. Zephir (1996) contended that language is a dimension of ethnicity that is considered sacred. Ethnic sentiments, she argued, are tightly bound with language by virtue of the close association between language and a given group identity, as well as the function of language as a symbolic representation of hope for the group’s future. In this sense, Zephir asserted, social identity and ethnicity can be established and preserved through language. She stressed further that language is a vital ingredient in identity theory, as ethnic groups regard their own language as one of the aspects of their identity that differentiates them from other ethnic groups. When immigrant sees themselves as a people united by a common identity, they are encouraged to retain their cultural values.

It has already been established that in addition to its function as a medium of communication, language acts as a unifying agent of culture and a means of its survival. According to Waters, language serves as a magnet to enhance solidarity and integration in the ethnic group (Waters, 1990). In his study on Iranians, Biparva (1995) indicated that study participants had not assimilated in terms of language. According to Biparva, Iranian parents played an important role in maintaining and transmitting the Persian language and Iranian culture to their children. His study of thirty-four participants from thirty-two organizations reported that 88.23 percent spoke only Persian at home and 90 percent used only Persian with Iranians outside the home.

Kang & Kim (1998) opined that immigrants who speak their ethnic language at home, at work, at school, and among friends are likely to retain and reinforce their
culture. Like other immigrants, Africans experienced a deep sense of loss of their culture, a loss generally associated with loss of a common language with children (McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto, 2005). McGoldrick et al reported that immigrant parents worried when they were unable to communicate with their sons and daughters as they could in their home countries and that it pained them when their Americanized children failed to learn their language. Dhruvarajan (1993:72) reported that empirical study has shown that the retention of ethnic language perpetuates ethnic and cultural identity. Using Mexicans as an example, Hurtado & Vega (2004) contended, however, that immigrants can be English monolinguals and maintain their ethnic identity nevertheless. While it may make theoretical sense to use language shift as a gauge for acculturation, they contended that even though all acculturation scales for Latinos are based on language shift, it does not make good empirical sense. Waters (1990) reported that the grandchildren of immigrants who came from Europe decades ago have not abandoned their identity. Instead, they identified themselves as Irish-American doctors, for example, or Italian-American Supreme Court Judges, and so forth. Waters’ study refutes the theory propounded by some sociologists that states that immigrants who live in the United States longer will become more Americanized. Waters pointed out that in this country of cultural pluralism, middle class immigrant Americans maintain some degree of identity with their ethnic backgrounds.

**Immigrant Attitudes Toward Education**

Education is one sure way of entry into the American mainstream. For this reason, some immigrants encourage their children to pursue higher education. Portes and Zhou (1993) reported that by 1980, dependent immigrant children in households were 10
percent in the United States, and they were all second generation. According to their findings, by that time there were also three million students in kindergarten through twelfth grade who spoke a language other than English at home.

According to Alba & Nee (2003), Punjabi immigrant parents from South Asia aimed to make their children aware that academic achievement is a means to improve their chances for success in the American mainstream. They argued that when immigrant children acculturate, they go beyond secondary school to attend four-year colleges and graduate schools.

According to McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto (2005), Haitians place a high value on education. For this reason, some Haitian families work long hours at multiple jobs in order to pay for their children’s education. According to the authors, Haitian parents are willing to make this sacrifice for the education of their children because they view academic advancement as a source of mobility.

Like the Haitians, Ghanaian immigrant parents make every effort to provide their children with an education. This effort is reflected in the number of Ghanaian children registered in schools at various levels as shown in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not in universe (under 3 years)</td>
<td>2494</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling completed</td>
<td>2453</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Table 2: *Education of Ghanaian Immigrants in the U.S.* (N=64,448)
In their study of school performance, Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey (1998) contended that immigrant minorities tend to compare their situation with that of their relatives back home. This tendency causes them to strive to do everything possible to improve their social and economic status. According to Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, school performance plays an important role in this regard as parents and community expect that children stand much to gain from their education. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey are of the view that the quality of the school will shape students performance. That is, the environment and the affluence of the school district determines the type of
skills and habits the immigrant will develop. For example, if there are gangs or drug users in the school or if the school lacks some viable facilities some immigrant children education may be affected negatively. Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey (1998) noted that behaviors mentioned above are strong predictors of educational performance. As some scholars have noted, an individual’s behavior is in large measure the product of his environment. Some immigrant children thus may not aspire to higher education because of the way they are socialized or raised. Alba & Nee (2003) asserted that the low level of formal education among immigrant laborers has an effect on their children such that a small percentage of them pursue education beyond a high school diploma. They pointed out that the educational attainments of children from immigrant families, whether they belong to the 1.5 or the second generation, show that their school performance is frequently superior to that of the general population. Alba and Nee explain this by the fact that highly educated immigrants, who see education as human capital investment, are able to translate this capital into relatively high educational attainment for their children. Alba & Nee (2003) emphasized that some immigrant parents, regardless of their own educational attainment, make their children aware of the importance of education as a route to success in the United States. Such parents are likely to encourage their children to study hard and provide all the motivation possible for their success.

Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind (1999) found that immigrant children from intact families or families with tight-knit social networks tend to be better emotionally adjusted than those from single-parent or socially isolated families. The authors argued that higher levels of academic achievement and stronger educational aspirations are also more characteristic of children from intact families than those from single-parent or socially
isolated families. Although this may be true, some consideration must be given to how each category of parents perceives education. Some single parents, for instance, will do all they can to help their children climb the higher education ladder. On the other hand, if intact families do not behave responsibly, this may hamper the future education of their children. For example, parents who are drug addicts or school dropouts without good jobs fail to provide their children the social or monetary capital necessary to boost their education. Children of such parents easily fall prey to a school dropout mentality.

**Dress as a Result of Acculturation**

According to Cunningham and Lab (1993:96), “dress is the next barrier to assimilation after language”. Dress is defined as encompassing both direct body modifications, such as hair dye, leather pants, and so on, and items displayed on the body, all of which are imbued with meaning for both the wearer and the viewer (Huisman & Hondagneu-Softelo 2005). “Dress holds different meanings, however, for different groups and ethnic groups” (ibid: 45). According to Huisman & Hondagneu-Softelo, when people from a particular national or regional context migrate as a group, because the audience changes, they often use different gendered forms of clothing for self and group presentation. The immigrants may cling to their original dress, embrace new gendered dress standards or create family and community discord about the pace of change.

Huisman & Hondagneu-Softelo (2005) explained that dress tells us who we are, what we have been, and what we are becoming. In this regard, they claimed, dress simultaneously communicates and provides gender and ethnic identities. They view body adornment and the daily dress of individuals as a nonverbal language. Some societies view certain styles of dress as immoral. The question of dress and morality is
controversial among Ghanaians. For example, the Ghana Methodist Church has banned the wearing of mini-skirts in church on moral grounds. The President of the Union of Methodist Singing Bands recently announced that the church would no longer permit women and girls to wear mini-skirts to church since this could lead to fornication and adultery, and it does not reflect the character of Christ. The President emphasized that the church would not allow misguided youth to infiltrate the church and destroy its integrity (www.ghanaweb.com).

Although immigrants are undeniably influenced by mainstream dress in the host society, immigrants can maintain their ethnic identity by wearing traditional dress. Cunningham & Lab (1993) found that Christian missionaries who came to the United States influenced Native Americans to emulate their way of dressing. Native Americans had to dress in European styles, according to Cunning and Lab, in order to survive the hegemony of dominant White culture. Today, however, Native Americans wear their native dress to reinforce their ethnic identity in an attempt to reclaim their heritage and the rights they have been denied for some time now. In their study, Cunningham & Lab (1993) cited Norwegian newcomers to America in the nineteenth century who abandoned traditional dress in favor of American cut clothes because they were not regarded with favor. These Norwegians later reverted to their own dress when they discovered that their clothes were of better quality. Cunningham & Lab (1993) cite the following letter sent by a Norwegian wife in 1863 to her family:

“No one emigrating from Norway ought to sell everything he has, the way the majority do because everything that is useful in Norway is also useful here. Women could bring their clothes with them, with exception of their headdress, bodices,
jackets and kerchiefs—those they might as well sell—but their other clothes can be made over and used here, for Norwegian things are better than anything you can buy here.”

The attitude that Cunningham and Lab referred may not be the same with other immigrants from other countries. Furthermore, it is not only dress that can be used as a determinant of acculturation of immigrants, but body decorations, styles of dress, and how they wear them can also be used as a means to measure acculturation. For example, immigrants may happen to have tattoos on their bodies, females may be influenced to wear pants, and males may tend to wear earrings, which in their home countries they will never do that.

Child Rearing and American Culture of Child Abuse/ Discipline

Discipline is an issue relevant to all human societies and institutions that cuts across all human societies and institutions. It is universally believed that discipline motivates individuals to do the right thing in the future. In all Ghanaian societies, children are disciplined in various ways as the situation requires. Because Ghana is a Christian country, the influence of Biblical principles on child discipline is significant. According to scripture, a disobedient child must be disciplined. In “The Rebuke of Love,” a Christian religious writer (Bunch, 1947) quoted the following on discipline from (Revelation 3: 19-22, Kings James Version).

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with
My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Bunch’s treatise on discipline incorporates some of the statements Jesus Christ made regarding discipline, namely, “I reprove and discipline those whom I love,” and ”My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.”

The Bible has much more to say regarding the importance of discipline, as suggested by the following quotes:

“He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”
Proverbs 13:24 (King James version)

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.”
(Proverbs 22:6, King James Version)

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15, King James Version)

The aforementioned biblical quotations indicate that discipline is indeed for correction and must be administered with love. As one of the quotations from Proverbs
aptly states the issue, if you spare the rod, then you hate your child. In other words, if you do not correct your child from wrongdoing, then you do not love him or her.

Acceptable forms of discipline vary from society to society. Webb (2001) enumerated several different forms of discipline in his study. These include withdrawal of love, power assertion, inductive discipline, ignoring the child, and requiring the child to make restitution for wrongdoing, as in making an apology.

Though considered child abuse in the United States and other western countries, corporal punishment is deemed an appropriate form of discipline in other cultures. Excessive spanking, which is considered abuse in the United States, is practiced in some countries as a last resort. L’Abate (1998) maintained that spanking and ridiculing the child in the presence of others are not proper forms of discipline. Although L’Abate’s argument may be valid to some, people from other cultures who use spanking or physical punishment as one of the means of disciplining their children would argue that spanking is indeed proper because it produces positive results in children. Reporting their interview findings, Monzo & Rueda (2006) indicated that none of the Latino families they interviewed said that they used physical punishment as a common disciplinary practice. The participant families made it clear that they generally used verbal discipline strategies and that physical punishment was reserved for stubborn children when all other strategies had failed.

There is no absolute approach to childrearing. Instead, there are different strategies, which are based on cultural beliefs (Hulei, Zevenbergen & Jacobs, 2006). McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto (2005) wrote that because children are valued in
Haitian culture, it is the duty of the entire family to raise children. Their research revealed that Haitian children received corporal punishment when they misbehaved or disobeyed family members. In Japanese families, silence is used as a punishment; the mother ignores the presence of the child (Webb, 2001). Webb commented that such verbal expressions of disapproval as “A bad child like you does not belong to us” connote threats of abandonment. In addition, Webb reported that in traditional Japanese families, children were locked out of the home and not let in until they expressed regret for their actions.

Childrearing practices are an important consideration in the acculturation experience of children. Booth, Crouter, & Landale (1997) found that although it is true that both parents and children become acculturated in the United States, immigrant parents sometimes have little appreciation for American parenting norms. Immigrants from the Caribbean, for instance, who believe that physical punishment is the best way to discipline a misbehaving child, take issue with those in the United States who regard this form of discipline as child abuse.

The Caribbean ideology of discipline is much the same as that of parents in Ghana and, consequently, Ghanaian communities in America. American parenting ideology must therefore be viewed as an acculturation factor influencing the participants of this study. In the traditional Ghanaian community, it is acceptable for any adult to discipline a misbehaving child on behalf of parents in their absence. This approach to the discipline of children was practiced some time ago in certain parts of the United States. Waters (1999) reported, for example, that in rural North Carolina physical punishment was the norm and that relatives and respected adults were permitted to inflict physical punishment
on children who transgressed societal norms. She pointed out that disciplinarians were not always the actual parents of the children in question.

A report by Booth, Crouter & Landale (1997) indicated that immigrant children living in the U.S. have learned that physical discipline in the Caribbean context constitutes child abuse and that some children report their parents to child welfare. Waters (1999) cited a case in which after receiving a spanking for disobedience, a five-year-old threatened to report her immigrant mother to the social worker for abuse. Because of current child abuse laws, immigrant parents in the U.S. are likely to adapt their approach to discipline in order to avoid arrest. In other words, existing child abuse laws are likely to deter Ghanaian immigrant parents from socializing their children in accordance with their own cultural perspectives. According to the Ghanaian perspective, lack of discipline “spoils” the child and encourages disrespect and disobedience to parents and other members of the community.

Like Ghanaian immigrants, West Indian immigrants to the United States view physical discipline as necessary and good. This was evident during an interview with West Indians, who commented on what they perceive to be a serious problem in the United States, namely the interference of the State in parental discipline. They are of the mind that forbidding parents to use physical punishment prevents parents from raising their children correctly (Waters, 1999). Very often first generation immigrant parents conform to America’s policy of non-physical punishment of children out of fear of being arrested or losing their children. The following response, provided by a Trinidadian male teacher who has lived in the United States for eighteen years makes it clear that some immigrant parents are afraid to punish their children physically:
“As they say, don’t spare the rod and spoil the child. But in this system, if you do that, the child can call the police and you will be in trouble. So that’s why some of the parents are finding it hard and the kids know it. They know they can get away with and they play it into trouble and then what are gonna do? You gonna beat them and they’ll call the police……….With my kids I am on them very hard.” (Waters, 1999: 221)

Such interview responses are a clear indication that in some cases, immigrant children have embraced the American practice of reporting their parents when they are disciplined physically and that some parents are not comfortable with the American notion of physical punishment.

On the other hand, just as some first generation immigrants accept corporal punishment, so do some of their children. Some immigrant children perceive corporal punishment as a way to make children become responsible. Foner (2009) cited a case of a twenty-eight year old second generation lawyer, a child of a West Indian immigrant, who attributed his success to his parents’ strict control and discipline during his childhood. According to Foner, this lawyer claimed that most of his friends, who were of American descent and, hence, afforded more freedom at a young age, did not become responsible adults. A number of them did not do well in school, some did not go to college, and many of those who did attend college failed to finish. Foner (2009) indicated that most interviewees from Jamaica and the West Indies said that even though they did not enjoy receiving corporal punishment as children, they came to appreciate it as they recognized
the benefits it yielded. Some went so far as to say that they will discipline their children the same way their parents disciplined them. Other West Indian second generation respondents conveyed their intention to combine the best of American and West Indian childrearing practices while toning down the beatings (Foner, 2009).

**Conclusion**

The literature review undertaken herein has resulted in an understanding of acculturation as the process by which immigrants shed some or all of their native values in favor of the culture of the host country. Acculturation is best described as linear and progressive, irreversible and multidimensional.

The review of the literature revealed specifically that second generation immigrant children are either completely or biculturally acculturated. Rumbaut & Portes (2001) found, however, that acculturation is best understood in terms of levels that are determined in part by the human capital of immigrant parents and the reception accorded to the newcomers by the host government and society. First generation parents consistently expect their children to retain aspects of their native culture. Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind (1999) stressed, however, that today’s immigrant children are eager to embrace American culture and acquire an American identity so that they are not seen as different by their American counterparts.

Certain factors influencing acculturation—education, language, food, religion, dress, discipline, cultural and social activities, and place of residence among them—were highlighted in the literature review. The role of family socialization policy as an acculturation factor was given special consideration. Families sometimes discourage their children from intermarriage in an attempt to ensure strong ethnic socialization.
Moreover, when immigrant families speak their native language at home, this increases the likelihood that the second generation will preserve their cultural heritage and transfer it to their children in turn. An important finding that runs contrary to this trend is the influence exerted by the United States government, which encourages immigrants to abandon their ethnic language in favor of English in order to facilitate their acculturation into American society. Rumbaut and Portes, Alba and Nee, and Dhruvaraj an emphasized the importance of length of stay in the host country as an acculturation factor.

The literature review showed that in the case of immigrant families living in poor neighborhoods, where gangs and drug activity are prevalent, immigrant children are likely to acculturate more quickly. Television viewing and exposure to media were also found to accelerate second generation acculturation.

A significant deceleration factor was identified, however, in the form of regular church attendance at ethnic group churches. The literature indicates a clear tendency among second generation children who attend church regularly to marry within their ethnic groups. Because regular attendance at ethnic and cultural events strengthens ethnic affiliation and identification, the rate of acculturation among immigrant children decelerates regardless of length of stay in the host country provided they attend and participate in such activities.

Discussion based on the literature revealed that immigrants’ level of food acculturation depends upon individual choices, individual countries, and education level. It was noted that Koreans who have earned higher degrees eat more American foods than those with a low level of education. The majority of immigrants from Iran were found to
eat Iranian food daily irrespective of education level, as did Indian immigrants, who retained their traditional diet.

Education was revealed as important to immigrant parents who encouraged their children to go to school, thinking it was the primary means of entry into the American mainstream. Some of the scholars under consideration in the literature review found that when immigrants acculturate, they go on from high school to graduate school. Dress, by contrast, was found to be a barrier to assimilation. When immigrants wear ethnic dress, they tend to maintain their ethnic identity.

Excessive spanking or physical punishment is against the law in the United States, although it is an acceptable form of discipline in the Caribbean and Ghana. Waters found that among some second-generation Caribbean immigrant children in New York City physical punishment was still deemed appropriate. However, a five-year-old immigrant child who threatened to report her mother for hitting her is evidence that not all immigrant children have embraced physical punishment as an acceptable form of discipline.

A critical look at the various views represented in this study indicates that immigrants are more likely than not to become acculturated to one extent or another. Zephir (1996) argued that level of assimilation depends on length of stay and the number of generations in the United States. Her explanation is that in the later generations, ties to the ethnic group are removed from the original settlers over time. Despite the argument of advocates of the melting pot model that declining residential segregation and occupational specialization, intermarriage and increased social mobility are indicative of reduced ethnic group solidarity, Zephir maintained that the degree of assimilation or
Americanization must be questioned because immigrants from southern and central
Europe have not totally given up their ethnic identity. She pointed out that some of these
Europeans maintain a connection with their immigrant ancestors’ identity by referring to
themselves as Irish-American doctors, for example, or Italian-Americans. For Zephir,
these hyphenated self-identifications suggest that an assimilation path has not been
followed.

In her study of “cultural pluralism,” Zephir (1996:16) asserted that immigrant
groups retain their distinctive religious practices, family structure, lifestyle, and cultural
values. She argued that although immigrant groups have been transformed somewhat by
the influence of the host society and have lost some of their values in the process, they
have not been remade. They continue to live as identifiable groups.

Finally, the literature review has demonstrated that the acculturation of
immigrants is dependent on the aforementioned factors. An understanding of these
acculturation factors is vital to the current study, which aims to identify the many
variables at work in the acculturation of Ghanaian immigrant children in the Bronx. It is
important to note that this study was not conducted in a small town, but in New York
City, where the population is huge and consists of people representing many different
countries. Interview respondents were residents of the Bronx, an ethnically diverse
borough with a predominantly minority population. Environmental influences from the
Borough of Bronx and the city as a whole are therefore potentially significant. Because
the focus of the current research is on the acculturation experience of Ghanaians, a group
that has not been studied extensively, the findings will make an invaluable contribution
and prove useful to future researchers in this important field of study.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter provides justification for the qualitative approach to this study with particular attention given to research design, data sources, participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis, and limitations.

Research design

Qualitative research is concerned with life as lived, things as they happen, and situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of events (Woods, 1999). Qualitative researchers thus seek to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behavior, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues (Woods, 1999 & Berg 1998). Berg argued that because research methods on human beings affect how these individuals will be viewed, there is a danger that conclusions may fail to reflect reality if humans are studied in a symbolically reduced, statistically aggregated fashion. Articulating his argument clearly, Berg stated that qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to.

The decision to employ a qualitative approach to this research was based on the nature of the study itself; its focus is the study of human subjects whose environments, experiences, and behaviors are best measured using qualitative techniques. Esterberg (2002:2) pointed out that qualitative research involves the scrutiny of social phenomena. According to Esterberg, qualitative researchers try to understand social processes in
context while paying special attention to the subjective nature of human life and the subjectivity of researchers themselves. In defense of the authenticity of qualitative research methodology, Babbie (2002) pointed out that qualitative research makes room for in-depth understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of study participants. Babbie argued that this methodology affords flexibility, leaving the researcher room to modify the field research design at any time. Rubin & Rubin (1995) likened the qualitative interview to a great adventure in that each phase of the research brings with it new information and opens a window into the experiences of the participants. They emphasized that qualitative interviewing is an effective way to find out what others feel and think about their worlds.

The aforementioned advantages of the qualitative research approach make it more suitable for the current study. Although the data produced from such an approach do not take the form of numbers, the qualitative or empirical technique allows the researcher to get closer to what is being studied. The greater flexibility afforded by qualitative methods makes it possible to employ them in various situations for a wider range of purposes. That they can be modified as a study progresses makes them especially well suited to the study of naturally occurring real-life situations. Moreover, qualitative methods are the most effective way to gain an understanding of the insider’s perspective and the meanings attached to things and events.

In this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the aid of written interview questions. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. A single set of interview questions was used to guide the interviews of all study participants.
Data sources

Study participants were males and females ranging from the age of 14 to 24. This age range was selected in order to include young participants, some of whom would be adolescents attending school. The 14 to 24 age range encompasses that all important phase of development during which adolescents looking for freedom are likely to be influenced by peer groups at school as well as the equally important phase during which children in the Unites States typically leave home and become independent.

All study participants were Ghanaians who had lived in the United States for a minimum of seven years at the time the interviews were conducted. Prospective participants who had lived in the United States for less than seven years were not selected for participation, as seven years was deemed the minimal period of time adequate for an immigrant, whether born in Ghana or the U.S., to abandon or retain some of his or her cultural values and norms.

Among those selected to participate in the study, some were born in this country. The rest were born in Ghana. The study was limited to Ghanaian children living in the Bronx, New York. The Bronx was selected as a setting for the research because of its high concentration of Ghanaians (see Table 3 for the distribution of Ghanaians living in New York City).
Table 3:

*Ghanaian Population in New York City Boroughs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>6225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000. SF3

**Method of subject selection**

The successful outcome of this study was dependent upon the ethical principles governing research involving human subjects. My aim was to establish rapport with the respondents in order to spark an interest in the project I was undertaking. Respondents were assured that all responses to interview questions would remain confidential. The research sample consisted of 25 Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx who were selected via a snowballing design. Because the Ghanaian population in the Bronx is dispersed over a relatively large area, sampling by referral was deemed an appropriate method for recruitment of study participants. Two entry points were used for selection of interview respondents. A personal friend living in the Bronx functioned as gatekeeper. He contacted a prospective participant at his church to inform her of the research. This individual responded in the affirmative, at which point I traveled to New York City to set up the interview. Upon completion of the interview, I invited her to
contact friends who might also be willing to participate in the study. Although only one referral materialized from this initial contact, the snowball method proved effective for the selection of additional suitable participants.

The second point of entry emerged during one of the days spent in the Bronx during which I happened to meet a student I knew from the University at Albany. I asked him if he would like to become a participant in the research. He was agreeable and we set a date for the interview. This participant, too, was asked for referrals from among his friends. The friend he referred to me agreed to an interview. I then requested additional referrals from him and so on until I reached the desired number of participants for the study. The snowball sampling technique was thus selected because of its propensity to encourage cooperation which in the end facilitates access (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996).

**Instrumentation**

Content validity was tested on the basis of point of view and judgment. Reliability was assessed on the basis of the consistency of participants’ responses and patterns. The face-to-face interview technique was employed, and all responses were recorded on audio tapes. Semi-structured interviews consisting of a set of open-ended questions were conducted to encourage participants to tell their stories without any limitations.

The Seidman (1991) interview technique was employed to incorporate the following principles: (a) interviewers must concentrate on the substance of responses to make sure they understand them and to assess whether what they are hearing is as detailed and complete as they would like it to be; (b) researchers must be conscious of time during the interview, alert to how much has been covered and how much is yet to be
covered; (c) interviewers are free to take notes during the interview; (d) interviewers may follow up on interview responses, asking participants for clarification or concrete details, and, if necessary, stories; (e) interviewers may ask to hear more about a subject if they are not satisfied with what they have heard; (f) interviewers are to explore rather than probe; and (g) interviewers are to avoid leading questions. The aforementioned principles guided the interview process in all cases and contributed to the success of the interviews.

**Research procedure**

Because this research involved human subjects, it was necessary to obtain prior approval from the Institutional Review Board before going out into the field to conduct interviews. The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects granted approval for the field research upon my successful completion of a course conducted under their auspices.

Study participants were required to sign an informed consent. The consent form stipulated that because participation in the interview was voluntary, a participant could withdraw from the interview at any point he or she might wish to do so, (See Appendix A). The consent form enhanced the findings of the study by facilitating trust and confidence in me and encouraging interviewees to be forthright in their responses. Participants under the age of 18 did not sign the consent forms. In such cases, the consent form was signed by a parent. In all cases, I ensured that participants understood the consent form before signing.

The method employed for data collection was semi-structured face-to-face interviews consisting of open-ended questions. (See Appendix D) The advantages to this
approach have been well established by Neuman (2000); Berg (1998); & Patton (1990) as follows:

Face-to-face interviews

- result in the highest response rates;
- permit the longest questionnaires;
- allow interviewers to observe the interviewees’ surroundings;
- allow participants to use nonverbal communication and visual aids; and
- permit the interviewer to ask diverse and complex questions, and conduct extensive probes.

Open-ended questions

- permit an unlimited number of possible answers from respondents;
- allow respondents to answer in detail and qualify or clarify responses;
- allow for the discovery of unanticipated findings;
- permit complex responses to complex questions;
- permit creativity, self-expression, and rich detail;
- reveal a respondent’s logic, thinking process, and frame of reference; and
- help researchers to understand the world as seen by the respondents.

The interviews were conducted and audiotaped over a two month period. During the interviews, I observed the emotions expressed by participants while answering interview questions. Prior to the interviews, participants had been informed of the
purpose of the study and assured that the audiotapes would be totally destroyed upon completion of the project.

Participants were interviewed in various settings: in their homes, in my office, and at a church. Conducted individually, every interview exceeded one hour in duration. While interviewing, I comported myself in such a way as to show the interviewees respect, as, for example, in body language, facial expression and tone of voice. Because all study participants understand English and speak it fluently, all the interviews were conducted in English. A paid transcriptionist transcribed the interviews over a period exceeding two months.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety by a professional transcriptionist. As I began to read and reread the transcribed audiotapes, the analytical work began. Each set of interview responses was reviewed carefully and thoroughly. Relevant or recurring words, phrases, and sentences were underlined and written in the margins. This preliminary review helped me to attach meaning to the data.

In the open coding phase, themes and categories were identified. Once each case had been subjected to initial coding, focused coding was undertaken to reduce the data and enhance their management by grouping them into categories. In order to make the focused coding more effective, I read through the data rigorously, focusing on the themes noted during open coding and further developing categories. Themes emerging from the data included:

- mother tongue survival;
- diminishing mother tongue;
• language usage at home;
• eating habits;
• adherence to the maxim, “Bite not the hand that feeds you;”
• mate selection;
• male-female relationships;
• the existence of God;
• cultural and social activities;
• a desire or need to fit in;
• educational mobility;
• united nations of friends; and
• self-identification.

Once these themes were identified, I constructed tables for ready organization of participants responses to theme.

I have recorded the findings of this research in detail complete with a summary, conclusions, and suggestions for future research. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I have devoted a section to the limitations of the research. An analysis of the ways in which my findings are consistent with those of other researchers and the ways in which they deviate is also included.
Chapter Four

Results

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings in two parts. The first part provides an overview of participant demographics and other characteristics. This information is presented in tables organized to include data gleaned from the interviews regarding the participants’ age, place of birth, length of stay in the United States, ethnicity/self-identity, education level, gender, belief in God, language spoken at home, eating habits, choice of marriage partner, dress, and use of physical punishment. The second part is devoted to analysis of the data.

Demographics of participants

The length of stay in the U.S. among study participants ranged from nine to 21 years. As indicated in the previous chapter, in order to qualify for the interview, participants must either have been born in the United States or migrated and lived here for no less than seven years. An additional qualification for participation was fluency in spoken English. All participants lived in the Bronx and attended school at the elementary school, high school, or college level at the time of the interviews. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Appendix B as outlined below.

Descriptive overview

Table 1.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. An analysis of birth distribution reveals that the majority of participants (56%) were born in the United States with a difference of only 12% between those born in the U.S. and those born in Ghana. It has already been established that participants ranged from 14 to 24 years of age. An analysis of age distribution reveals that 96% of study participants were between 15 and 22 years of age at the time the interviews were conducted, a range that spans adolescence and early adulthood. The table summarizing gender reflects a minimal
difference (12%) in the number of male and female participants with a slight female predominance (56%).

The participants’ responses to self-identity questions reveal that 72% of them consider themselves Ghanaians while 12% claimed to be Americans and 16% referred to themselves as Ghanaian-Americans. As indicated in the table, 96% of the participants stated they believe in God. Only one participant stated otherwise.

An analysis of distribution of length of residence as recorded in Table 1.1 reveals that the greatest percent (44%) of participants have lived in the U.S. between 19 and 21 years. The next highest percentage of participants (24%) falls within the 10-12 year length of stay category. Only one participant belongs to the shortest length of stay category of 13-15 years.

Table 4:
*Demographics & Other Characteristics of Participants*  N=25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Self-Identity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaian-American</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Length of Residence in the United States  N=25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Belief in God  N=25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social characteristics

Table 5 provides a summary of the frequency with which the participants speak their ethnic language at home. More than half of the sample (68%) indicated that they speak their ethnic language all of the time when at home. Five out of the total 25 participants reported that they sometimes speak their ethnic language at home, and the remaining 12% reported that they do not speak it at all. The majority stated that all members of the household speak their ethnic language to each other at home.

Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Language Spoken at Home</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants reported that they eat both American and Ghanaian foods with 56% indicating that they eat more Ghanaian than American food. Comments from those who indicated they eat more Ghanaian food suggested that if they spent more time at home, they would eat less American food. Their desire for Ghanaian foods would thus seem to be substantial. One possible reason for this is the influence of their parents, who typically eat ethnic food. On the other hand, the number of participants indicating they eat more American than Ghanaian food is significant. These individuals may be gradually abandoning their ethnic food as a result of environmental influence.
Table 6:

*Frequency of Eating Ghanaian & American Food*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Ghanaian food</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More American food</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 reflects participant attitudes toward eating with family members from the same bowl or plate according to the traditional Ghanaian custom. A significantly high percentage of the participants (84%) expressed a dislike for eating with others from the same bowl. Only 4 out of the total sample indicated that they enjoy eating together with other people from the same bowl. Typically, Ghanaians eat together from the same bowl using either their hands or a spoon, depending upon the type of food served.

Table 7:

*Eating Together From the Same Bowl*  
N=25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost all study participants expressed an interest in dating and a willingness to communicate their personal ideas as to how approach dating. As indicated in Table 8 a large proportion of the participants (80%) have already begun to date. Surprisingly, only one of the participants stated that he has no intention of dating and three expressed uncertainty, perhaps because of their age.

Table 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dating/Attitude toward Dating</th>
<th>N=25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently dating</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intends to date</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not intend to date</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to learn the participants’ perspectives on the Ghanaian concept of discipline, I asked them about this directly. As Table 9 shows, the participants unanimously agreed that the Ghanaian method of punishing children (spanking or hitting) is an appropriate form of discipline.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Punishment</th>
<th>N=25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejects</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of data

Theme 1: Mother tongue survival

Among the various ethnic dialects of Ghana, Twi is dominant. Although all Twi-speaking Ghanaians are known as Akans, the Twi dialect has several subdivisions—Asante Twi, Akwapim Twi, Brong Twi, and Fanti Twi among them. Despite the numerous ethnic languages spoken in Ghana and nine government-sponsored languages, it is the colonial language, English, that was made the official language of the country. While the study of English is compulsory in all schools in Ghana, it is generally not spoken in homes.

With the exception of one participant, who speaks Ewe, all study participants come from Twi-speaking families. Among the 25 participants interviewed, 17 have continued to speak their ethnic language. It should be noted here that 11 of these 17 participants were born in Ghana and migrated to the United States with their parents.

It is important to point out here that one of the Twi-speaking participants who was born in the United States was sent by his parents to Ghana to live with relatives for a time. This is not an uncommon practice among Ghanaian immigrants. Some parents send their children back to Ghana so they might see for themselves and experience firsthand their cultural background in the context of their native Ghana. The motivation behind these visits is threefold. First, there is a desire that when these children return, they will have an appreciation for their parents’ decision to migrate to the United States. Second, the idea is that upon their return to the United States, these children will refrain from
blindly imitating the bad behavior of their peers or the behaviors they read about and watch in the media. The hope is that with direct exposure to Ghanaian norms and values, these children will have a deeper appreciation for what their parents tell them is acceptable or unacceptable behavior according to the Ghanaian culture. Just as the Jews of Yankee City send their children to synagogue to retard acculturation (Pozzetta 1991), so some Ghanaian parents send their children to Ghana to encourage them to maintain their ethnic identity. Third, such visits are intended to encourage Ghanaian immigrant children to preserve the ethnic languages of Ghana in the United States.

Clearly, it is largely due to the influence of their immigrant parents that Ghanaian children born in this country maintain certain Ghanaian values and are able to speak their ethnic languages. These parents socialize their children according to the Ghanaian pattern, instructing them, for instance, that this is what Ghanaians do and this is what Ghanaians do not do, and reinforcing this instruction at Ghanaian social activities and festivities. Some parents are concerned that their children do their part to maintain their ethnic identity by learning to speak their mother tongue and, for this reason, they communicate to them only in their ethnic language. Others, who choose to speak only English to their children, create a situation where the children grow up without knowing how to speak their ethnic language. When asked to what extent, if at all, they were replacing their Ghanaian dialect with the English language, some of the participants responded as follows:

(a) There’s no English speaking in my house. I can speak Twi just as fluently as I can speak English.
(b) There is no English speaking in the house because it’s disrespectful to speak English to my parents.

(c) I get mixed up on a couple of words, but as far as the Twi language is concerned, I can speak it very well. She (mom) doesn’t want any of us to forget it, so it’s all we speak at home.

(d) But it is my primary language that I use at home. Since I grew up in Ghana—I was born here, but I grew up there—I didn’t know English. All I knew was Twi. When I came here, you know, you get assimilated with the culture, and now I speak a lot more English. My mom speaks Twi all the time. You can’t speak English with her.

Whereas some parents want their children to become conversant in their ethnic language, others indirectly discourage their children from speaking their ethnic language by not speaking the language to them at home. Participants (a) and (b) below claimed that when they were in Ghana, their parents did not allow them to speak their ethnic language. They were to speak English only. When asked to what extent they were replacing their ethnic language with English, two participants responded as follows:

(a) I don’t know about replacing because my first language is English. My mom said we should speak only English when we lived in Ghana.

(b) I talk to my parents in English. Even when my father calls from back home, Ghana, he still speaks English to us.

Because these two participants generally speak in English, they are able to speak only a little of their mother tongue and this only because they received their elementary education in Ghana and learned the language from their playmates. Some parents in
Ghana take special pride in their children when they are able to speak fluent English yet unable to read and write their mother tongue. In the home country, some Ghanaians measure a student’s intelligence by the fluency of his or her spoken English. Because participant (a)’s parents are well educated—the father is an officer in the Ghana Navy and the mother a nurse—this family likely lived in a diverse, middle class community where English was the primary means of communication. Moreover, both participants (a) and (b) attended one of the renowned international schools in the capital city of Ghana, where, as in all international schools in Ghana, students are compelled to speak only English at school. Since ethnic languages are not allowed to be spoken on the premises of such schools, it is not surprising that these participants were made to speak only English at home. In this way, their parents encouraged them to gain better command of the English language so they could be more competitive with their peers at school.

One significant observation I made was that of the 22 participants who speak their ethnic language, only a few have achieved fluency. The rest either mix English with their ethnic language or cannot speak it at all. The three participants who cannot speak and barely understand their ethnic language are not in any way concerned about this. They view themselves as Americans because they were born here and, therefore, see no need to know how to speak their ethnic language.

**Theme II: Diminishing mother tongue**

From the interviews I learned that all the parents of the participants were born in Ghana. Some came to the United States as young men and women while others arrived as full-fledged adults. With the exception of one woman, whose husband is from another
African country, all the participants’ parents are Ghanaians. Certainly these Ghanaian parents had the capacity to help their children learn their ethnic language while living in the United States because all of them speak their native languages.

Three of the participants are unable to speak their ethnic language at all. All three of these participants were born in this country. They claimed that they are somehow able to understand spoken Twi though they are unable to speak it. When asked how they have replaced their ethnic language with English, participant responses included the following:

(a) I cannot speak Twi at all.

(b) I don’t speak Twi fluently, so English is my primary language. I just barely understand basic conversation.

(c) We speak English because that’s what we’ve always done in my household. We’ve never actually carried out a whole conversation in Twi.

(d) But when I came up here [University at Albany], I found out that so many Ghanaian students know how to speak Twi and when I tell them I don’t know how to speak Twi, it comes as a surprise to them. So I took a course in Introduction to Twi at the University at Albany.

(e) I am certainly replacing Ghanaian language with English most of the time. English is only spoken in our house. The importance of knowing my ethnic language I feel is not when I'm in the U.S. It's when I go to Ghana.

(f) English is spoken in our house because it makes things easier. Everyone understands English well and speaks English well, so for the ease and flow of the conversation, we choose English. My parents speak Akan to each other all the time. It's only when they talk to us that they speak English. And sometimes
we may joke around in Twi or make some remarks in Akan, but besides that, my parents speak English to me and Akan to each other.

The response provided in (d) above would seem to validate Ward’s (1990) suggestion that because language has now become a voluntary part of ethnic identity, one can therefore consciously maintain it or try to recapture it by taking academic courses. Although Ward’s argument might be true to some extent, how many adult participants are prepared to take classes to learn or relearn their ancestral language? The participant who stated she was willing to study her ethnic language at the university was atypical in the sense that her school even offered such a program. Moreover, the extent to which a semester of language study can help someone learn to speak his or her native language is rather questionable. It is clear from the response recorded in (e) above that some immigrant children consider it nonsense to worry about whether or not they can speak their ethnic language. After all, the dominant language in the United States is English, and “the importance of knowing [one’s] ethnic language is not when…in the U.S.,” but when visiting Ghana. This participant is likely not alone in his lack of motivation to learn to speak his ethnic language.

The data clearly suggest that in order for immigrant Ghanaian children to know how to speak their ethnic language, their parents must demonstrate a positive attitude towards their ethnic language. If parents do not want to see their children lose their ethnic language, they must reinforce it at home by speaking it to them from infancy. Here we can see the practical outworking of the Biblical proverb that encourages
parents to train a child in the way he should go so that when the child grows, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6, King James version).

**Theme III: Language control at home (Parental restrictions)**

Rules encourage order and promote goal achievement. Certainly there must be freedom of choice, but freedom of choice must in all cases be guided by rules in order to accomplish desired or anticipated goals.

It was my aim in this study to discover whether the participants were able or unable to maintain their ethnic language as a result of a rule dictating what language was to be spoken in their homes. Participants gave the following responses when asked if there were rules in place which bound them to speak a particular language while at home:

(a) There is no rule. You can speak Twi or English. I speak Twi with my parents a lot because that’s what they speak all the time in the house unless they are outside with other people outside of their culture.

(b) Never. There are no rules as to what language to speak at home. I think basically that is just completely stupid to make it mandatory to speak English.

(c) No. No rules as to what language to speak at home. If I had those rules back in the day, I might speak more Twi, but my mom never set those rules upon us. (Note: Even though there were no rules as to what language was to be spoken at home, this participant cannot speak his ethnic language.)

(d) My mom speaks to us in English. So she never even tried to teach us our ethnic language.
(e) There are no rules at all. My father and my mother never taught me anything like that. They just said, ‘Be yourself. Do what you want to do,’ pretty much. If anything, I kind of adopted the Twi thing, but they never really set any rules or regulations for me for what language they wanted me to speak at home.

(f) There is no set of rules because we speak both languages and I don’t think it’s appropriate for you to ban English. It’s a free world and you are able to speak whatever language you want.

It has already been established that an immigrant child’s ability to speak or understand his or her mother tongue depends largely on parental attitude regarding the importance of the ethnic language in the life of their child. If parents do not deem knowledge of the ethnic language important to their child, chances are the child will grow up unable to speak it. However appropriate it is to give children freedom to make choices, it is likewise appropriate to provide the guidance necessary to put them in a better position to make wise choices. It was clear from the interviews that two of the interviewees wished they could speak their ethnic language. One blamed his parents for not speaking the ethnic language at home, and the other took a Twi class at the university in an attempt to compensate for what had not been learned at home. Unfortunately, however, the university offered only one semester of Twi.

**Theme IV: Eating habits**

Whenever one moves to a new environment, it is safe to say that this individual’s eating habits or choice of foods will be affected. First of all, food from the previous
environment may not be available in the new environment. In a situation such as this, one is forced to live on whatever food is available. In America, and particularly in New York City, however, the situation is different. Almost all the staple foods of Ghana are available in New York City. Ghanaians looking to buy Ghanaian foodstuffs can shop at numerous African markets in the Bronx, where they will find yam, garri, several varieties of dried fish, plantain and cocoyam flour, palm oil and canned palm soup, ken-key, canned garden eggs, and more.

When I wanted to find out to what extent the participants were familiar with the foods of Ghana, all participants were able to name some Ghanaian foods—fufu, banku, waakye, and jollof among them. Every participant mentioned jollof, which suggests that they all enjoy this particular food. Although jollof is not a traditional Ghanaian food in the actual sense, it has become a staple item in Ghana. Popular in all of West Africa, jollof was at one time limited to Ghana’s urban centers, but it is now commonly eaten in all of Ghana.

The interviews revealed that the participants have not abandoned their ethnic food. Nor have they shunned American foods. Living in two worlds of food, individual participants conveyed individual preferences, some preferring Ghanaian food while others prefer American food. Eleven of the total 25 participants do not particularly enjoy Ghanaian food. When asked to specify which food they eat most often and why, the participants provided various responses.

(a) I eat more Ghanaian food. For one thing, it is the only food that is cooked at home. And for another thing, I just seem to dislike the American food because it’s different and the sources seem not quite trustworthy.
(b) We don’t have American food in the house. When I am at home, I eat more Ghanaian food than anything. But when I’m on campus—because I don’t have a kitchen—I eat American food.

(c) I definitely eat more American food. I like American food best. I just like it.

(d) My parents love food from back home. That's what they grew up eating and craving—traditional foods. The way the foods are here, it's very fattening. It's not healthy for us to eat foods from outside all the time. I always love the food my mom prepares. My mom is a master chef. She cooks really good food.

One clear pattern emerging from the data is that although the majority of the participants eat more Ghanaian food, they eat American food when they are on their respective campuses. Perhaps the participants who indicated a preference for Ghanaian food were nurtured from infancy by their ethnic food. It is quite conceivable that the observation made by Kang & Garey (2002) regarding the largely Korean eating habits of first generation Koreans who had lived in the United States for five to twenty years applies to these participants. On the other hand, the findings of the current study are not consistent with Kang’s and Garey’s conclusion that Koreans with higher education tend to eat more American food. Some of the participants from the current study are children of highly educated parents, who, despite their education, have continued to enjoy Ghanaian foods. As the evidence suggests, their children have followed suit. Moreover, all of the participants are students whose food habits would more likely reflect a preference for American cuisine since only American foods are available at school. Less than half of them, however, conveyed that they like American foods more than their ethnic food.
It was of particular interest to me to find out whether or not Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx have adapted to the American habit of drinking soda with meals. In Ghana, meals are traditionally served with water. Because this world has become a global village, however, it is conceivable that some Ghanaians living in Ghana have replaced water with soda at meals. Perhaps some have been influenced by observing this habit in the media, or perhaps the practice has been exported to Ghana by visitors to Ghana from the United States and other western countries. It is otherwise alien to Ghana’s culture.

Soda is not an uncommon beverage in Ghana, but it is served primarily at funerals, Christmas and Easter celebrations, wedding receptions, and adoring ceremonies. One might also see people enjoying soda in urban restaurants or eating fried, roasted, or cooked meat in bars along with a beer or soda. When the weather is hot, travelers at bus stops will often drink either cold soda or cold water to quench their thirst. When I asked the participants whether or not they eat meals with soda, the responses I received included the following:

(a) I mean soda is just good. Me? I’ll say water is plain. It has no taste. If I am thirsty, I want something with flavor. That’s why I drink soda.

(b) If I’m being really honest, then it’s really sad because I could probably drink four or five 20 oz bottles in a day. Cans—I could go through 10 or so in a day at the most—at the least, four. I drink it when I am eating and just anytime. It started with every single birthday party we ever had. We laugh to this day. In all the pictures we had a lot of soda. Now I drink it for the caffeine.
(c) In the summer, I try not to drink it so much. I don’t see any good in it. I see a lot of bad in it…on the average like 4 or 5. Yes, I can’t eat with water. I have to drink soda with it.

(d) I don’t drink soda really at all. My mom doesn’t buy soda for the house…just juice.”

A summary of the data reveals that most of the participants drink soda not only at meals, but anytime and anywhere. This habit was unquestionably acquired in the host country.

Another area of interest under the food theme was “communal eating.” In the traditional Ghanaian home, members of the household and sometimes visitors sit together at the table and eat from the same bowl. They group themselves according to age, status, and gender. This spirit of communalism is prevalent in Ghana. A family member or visitor is never left to look on as a spectator while others are eating. Instead, an invitation is extended to join the others at the table should he or she have any interest in having a meal. Nowadays, one will see people eating meals on their own, but these are generally people who have migrated to the urban centers. As indicated by the results of this study, some Ghanaians have abandoned this cultural behavior since coming to live in a new environment and being exposed to a different culture. Some of the participants indicated that they sometimes eat from the same bowl with either a parent or siblings. Others were adamant about their disdain for eating with anyone from the same bowl. The interviewees responded to the question about eating together from the same bowl with these statements:
(a) It was usually me and my cousins eating from one bowl. I had no problem with it.

(b) I’ve never looked at it as a peculiar thing to do. If people share the same bowl, then they share the same bowl. I never questioned it or had anything to say about it.

(c) Occasionally we shall all eat from the same bowl. I remember it used to happen more often when I was a child. My sister used to come and take my food while I was eating...[W]e used to do that a lot when we were children.

(d) I don’t like eating from somebody else’s bowl. We were not really raised with that—eating from the same bowl. Because in America they eat from different bowls and they use a fork and a knife,...we just got used to that culture.

(e) No, not at all. When I was back home, I remember sharing food with my good cousins and we used to eat from the same plate. But over here it’s different. Everybody gets a separate plate. I guess when you come over here, you get assimilated with the American culture and they don’t really do that here. They don’t eat from the same bowl. Everybody gets a separate bowl so I guess that’s just what’s been passed down.

(f) No, I don’t eat from the same bowl with anybody. I don’t like eating with people. I think it’s gross.
Theme V: Discipline: Bite not the hands that feed you

The participants interviewed in the current study are of the view that physical punishment (spanking) is sometimes in order when disciplining a child who has violated family values or societal norms. Some of these participants, who experienced physical punishment themselves, are satisfied that they were disciplined in this way because they were guilty of wrongdoing.

This form of punishment is not unique to Ghanaians. In other countries, physical punishment is also viewed as an appropriate, albeit last measure in childrearing. McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto (2005), for instance, provide a typical example from Haitian culture, where children regularly receive physical punishment when they have misbehaved. In support of the Haitian philosophy of discipline, Booth, Courter, & Landale (1997) reported that immigrants from the Caribbean believe that corporal punishment is the right approach to use when addressing misbehavior.

The Ghanaian immigrant children who participated in this study indicated that they view corporal punishment as an acceptable form of discipline. Their view can be attributed to two separate schools of thought: the Biblical and the cultural. Because their parents and they themselves are Christians, some participants conveyed that they view corporal punishment as not only allowed, but encouraged by God. The underlying thought here is the Biblical injunction stipulating that children are to be disciplined (Proverbs 19:18, King James version) and the proverb stating specifically that "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs
13:24, King James version). It is highly probable that the participants have observed other Ghanaian parents using physical punishment and that they have been punished in this manner themselves. On this basis, it is not surprising that they would see nothing wrong with physical punishment as a means of discipline.

In Ghana, physical punishment is practiced not only at home, but outside the home. Educational institutions such as the Primary and the Junior Secondary Schools have embraced this form of punishment from time immemorial. In Senior Secondary schools and Teacher Training Colleges, students who break school rules are sometimes given a large portion of land to clear. In some cases, a student who has been found guilty of an infraction of school rules may be required to remove a stump, a task sometimes involving several days’ work. Other disciplinary actions include sweeping classrooms for a number of days or weeks, watering flowers for a prescribed period, and more. Such consequences for wrongdoing are believed to act as a deterrent to others. Today, however, physical punishment in the form of caning is considered out of order. The Ministry of Education has warned school authorities to put a stop to it. The following excerpt from a report posted at Ghanaweb.com in July of 2007 provides a glimpse of the current concern about discipline in Ghana:

Members of parliament have called on guardians and parents to live up to their role by instilling discipline into their wards to ensure a future for the young generation. They touched on the rising indiscipline among the youth and said they must not be left on their own but should be guided skillfully into the future.
Members were contributing to a statement by Mr. X (Parliamentarian) on the lifestyles of Ghanaian youth abroad. The member said these children were going wayward because of the environment and the little attention given to them. Mr. Y (Parliamentarian), in his contributions, stirred controversy, when he called for a return to the old order by applying the rod, in and outside the school, as contained in the Bible, to bring up children properly.

He was however challenged by Deputy Minister of Finance, Dr. Z, who said it was against the laws of the land and abuse of children to cane them (http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?

I am not aware of any law in Ghana that would prohibit parents from disciplining their children by spanking or hitting. If such a law exists, it is either dormant or poorly enforced. The absence or ineffective enforcement of such a law, however, is not to be misconstrued to mean that parents should discipline their children by spanking or hitting only.

In the United States, it is not unusual for a child or a neighbor to report a parent for child abuse when experiencing or observing even a light spanking. The participants of this study have different views on this situation. Despite the fact that all participants have lived a minimum of seven years in the United States, they are not as yet convinced that a child should be able to cause the arrest of his or her parents because of suffering physical punishment as a measure of discipline. Some of the participant views on discipline and calling 911 are as follows:
(a) I heard of instances in which children have done so, but it never came to [my] mind to report [my parents]. I wouldn’t have reported them. They are your parents and the love and caring that they give you can’t be matched by any one else. And also, you’re not to bite the hand that feeds you.

(b) I remember this one time—I have some hairy legs—I decided to shave my legs and I cut myself. And as soon as I cut myself, it was hurting and I ran to my father and I was crying to him like, ‘Daddy, look what happened,’ and he looked at me like he was about to spank me. And I think actually he did spanked me and he said, ‘Would your grandmother shave her legs? Are people walking around Ghana with shaved legs? Why would you do that?’ When I do things that are apart from our culture, he’ll point it out and make sure that I stop. I’m sure even to this day when I go home and I do something, I’ll get a beating and I’m 20 years old. So it hasn’t stopped. There is disciplining your child and then there is going too far. I do believe that people do abuse their children. As a Ghanaian, I think our parents do it tastefully. They’re not trying to hurt you. They’re not trying to kill you, so it’s alright. It’s commendable actually because not a lot of people do it. Not a lot of people have the strength to even discipline their own children. Like the children you brought to this world, you can’t even tell them not to do something.

(c) Yes, I have ever been hit. It wasn’t in an excessive amount like child abuse or anything. It was because I know that I did something wrong at that certain time. It’s just a form of discipline. You knew that you didn’t want to be
beaten so for that reason you didn’t repeat whatever you did to be beaten in the first place. I don’t think it’s very intelligent for people to do that. That’s how a lot of my friends ended up back home. It’s a bad decision to call 911.

(d) You can’t do that. Because I knew what I did was wrong first of all, and it’s against…we’re not American…it’s only Americans that call 911…you just can’t do that…you can’t call 911 on your parents. That’s just so stupid to me. It’s like nonsense to me. I knew what I did was wrong and I just took accountability for my own actions. I deserved it anyway so….I have been hit by my parents. If I do something wrong, then I know I did something wrong and I get disciplined. It was my fault for that to have happened in the first place. I’m not American. I wasn’t born here. Even if I was born here, I don’t see the point of calling anybody on your parents. First of all, they’re your parents and it’s not proper.

The perspectives expressed by these participants are in keeping with the dictates of Ghanaian culture, whereby children are to give due respect to their elders in general and their parents in particular. In the Ghanaian culture, the parents are “always right.” Even if the elders recognize that the parents are wrong, they will not confront them in the presence of their children. To do so would bring disgrace to the parents and likely cause the children to disrespect their parents. In other words, children—whether young or old—must always give due respect to their parents and the elderly. News of a child who has reported a parent to the police for disciplining him or her would thus be totally alien to Ghanaian communities in Ghana. In the minds of Ghanaians, reporting a parent in this way would be synonymous to bringing a curse on oneself.
Moreover, because all the study participants are Christians, this cultural mindset of respect for parents is reinforced by the moral standard established by one of the Ten Commandments of Old Testament Scripture, which states, “Honor your father and mother so that you will live longer in the land that thou God gavest you” (Exodus 20:12, King James version). In their discussion of the theme of discipline, two of the participants made direct reference to God’s Ten Commandments.

Of those participants who indicated they had been spanked, the majority reported that the spankings took place in Ghana. Those who experienced spanking in the United States stated that they did not consider spanking abusive. It had never occurred to them that this type of discipline could in any way be a form of child abuse. The data suggest that even if their parents had crossed the line into abuse, none of the participants would have reported them to the police. One participant mentioned her awareness that some children have been returned to Ghana for reporting their parents to the police when they used corporal punishment. It goes without saying that no child would want to be banished to the home country by his or her family.

**Theme VI: Mate selection**

Marriage is an institution common to every human society. In Ghana, every clan wants to maintain its lineage and hence encourages marriage and reproduction. Marriage in Africa is based on love rather than on romance (Khapoya, 1998). Traditionally, Ghanaian families influence the choice of their children’s spouses through betrothal, arranged marriages or suggestions of spouses they deem suitable. Hamon & Ingoldsby (2003) stated that the marriage system in Ghana is a formal relationship between families.
Extended family members become involved in the search for a marriage partner for a member of the family who is ready to marry. Family members involve themselves this way in order to ensure that the couples are compatible in terms of their values, expectations, and lifestyles (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). They explained that if couples are compatible in these areas and others, this will bring about stable relationships and, consequently, reduce the likelihood of separation or divorce. To this observation Parsons, Nalbone, Killmer, & Wetchler (2007) added that compatibility of faith is also an important consideration, as same-faith marriage encourages both marital satisfaction and marital stability. They explained that marital satisfaction is enjoyed in marriages characterized by role flexibility, open communication, and low emotional reactivity between partners. Their point is that when spouses share the same religious beliefs or the same cultural background, this is likely to reduce marital conflict.

Because society is dynamic, the system of arranged marriages, betrothal, and family and kin involvement in the marriage process has eroded to a minimum in Ghana (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Young people today prefer to choose marital partners on their own (Khapoya 1998). Even with these changes, however, parental approval continues to play a vital role in Ghanaian marriages. In the Akan ethnic group, for example, it is the father of the would-be groom who negotiates with the would-be bride’s parents for their daughter’s hand in marriage. Both families must agree to the marriage before the marriage ceremony can take place. Rarely will a man or woman in this ethnic group enter into a marriage without parental approval. Such exceptional cases are best attributed to the cultural interference resulting from imposed colonial rule and Western forms of religion (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003).
Urbanization has also had an impact on the selection of marriage partners ((Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003: 80). Because there is no family present in the cities to witness the potential influence of a diverse population or keep an eye on the activity of young family members, young Africans living in urban centers are more inclined to deviate from tradition. Even in cases where young people opt to choose their partners without the assistance of family, however, these families are not totally excluded from the process. In the end, the families of the bride and the groom must meet together to recognize the marriage and make it legal.

Appendix E shows pictures of a Ghanaian man and woman at a Ghanaian wedding held in a private home with onlookers present. These onlookers are likely the families of the bride and groom, and perhaps some friends. In Ghana, when the bride and the groom are not Christians, there is no religious leader to officiate the marriage. (Such is the case in the pictures presented in Appendices E.) Instead, in a traditional marriage, the head of the bride’s family — or the father of the bride if he happens to be the head of the family— will pour libation to the ancestors, beseeching a successful marriage and reproduction.

Regardless of what changes have occurred in Ghanaian culture in terms of patterns of mate selection, Ghanaian families living abroad continue to take a serious interest in how their children approach the issue of marriage and are thus likely to influence the choices their children make regarding a future partner. In light of these trends, it is important to consider the views expressed by the participants regarding the possibility that their parents may ask them to marry a Ghanaian or someone from the
Ghanaian churches they attend. When asked directly about this issue, some of the
participants responded as follows:

(a) I don’t think parents should force partners on their children in the first place.
    Someone goes to church—they could marry someone who doesn’t go to
    church at all and they can bring you to their church when they’re married or
    go to a whole new church. Fine. Forcing partners on your children—I
don’t think it’s proper. I don’t like control. I don’t think anybody likes
    control. So if you’re from the same church or the same ethnic group and the
    person might not make you happy, and it might be the other one that your
    parents might not want.

(b) If my father said that to me, I’d say, ‘Look here, Daddy. No.’ It’s an
    infringement upon my rights to choose the person I want to marry. I will
    tell him when you were getting married, no one told you [that] you had
to…so it’s my right now to marry who I want. But as far as other people’s
    parents are concerned, the question is—you’re not the one who’s going to
    be living with this person. You’re not the one who’s going to be dealing
    with this person. Your daughter or your son has to, so you have to give them
    the freedom to choose who they want because marriage is not an easy
    institution.

(c) I don’t mind. I don’t care. My mother has told me I should marry a
    Ghanaian. She didn’t even have to tell me that. I know I will marry a
    Ghanaian because I have something in common with that person as far as
    language or where we come from. So that’s not a problem.
(d) I would consider it. I wouldn’t completely block it. I wouldn’t completely block it out of my options, but I don’t think I should be forced to marry someone who I wouldn’t want to marry. Not to say that I wouldn’t want to marry a Ghanaian, but I don’t think it should be an option for them to decide who I should marry.

(e) It is a good idea to marry somebody who is a Ghanaian, but at the same time you could find somebody who is not a Ghanaian, who is white, American, Jamaican or whatever, and they would be able to understand you and be there for you.

(f) I like this advice, that is, if parents ask their children to marry from the same church that they attend, because I don’t think they’re trying to make life harder for you, but easier. Religion is something that is very important to some people. It’s very dear to them and if you have somebody constantly disagreeing with you on the most important aspect of your life, then it is only going to cause problems in your marriage.

(g) I think that is ridiculous, you know. When my sister had a boyfriend, my father really didn’t like him because he wasn’t a Ghanaian. And I don’t think I’m going to marry a Ghanaian, and I doubt even that my sister will marry a Ghanaian man.

(h) I believe that is wrong. There is nobody who should tell you who you should marry or not marry. I might choose to marry a Muslim. I might choose to marry a Buddhist. Religion, I think, plays a minor role in love. Love is love,
religion is religion, culture is culture, ethnicity is ethnicity. Totally different things and you shouldn't bring one into another.

(i) I would consider nationality because the way that person thinks may not be as I think. I would date a Ghanaian because their culture would be most similar to mine. Having the same culture would help in the marriage in the sense that it will create more togetherness and less conflict.

It is evident from these responses that some of the participants share a common ideology, namely that they do not care who they will marry in the future. What is significant here is that because the majority of the participants do not care whether their future spouse is white, black, or yellow, this suggests the likely possibility that their future children will become acculturated into the American system of culture should they follow through without considering their own background. Based upon their responses, it is clear that the majority of the participants will give little if any consideration to the cultural background of their would-be partner. Those who anticipate they will marry anybody who can make them happy will likely ignore their parents’ objections to a marriage they do not support and marry whomever they choose.

Based on the findings of this study, the participants would likely condemn a report recently published in the Ghanaian media. Speaking to the issue of arranged marriage, the report reads as follows:

Mr.….X, a 60 year old farmer, has threatened to commit suicide over his daughter’s refusal to enter into forced marriage to another man. Mr.….Y, who is Mr.…..X’s preferred choice of husband for his daughter, said his perspective father in-law
would have to pay back the two million cedis dowry he paid for Miss P’s hand in marriage and also compensate him for the three years he spent laboring on his farm in expectation of marrying his daughter.

(Miss….P’s attitude toward her father is similar to that expressed by some of the participants during the interviews. Miss….P opted to marry a man of her choice. The Ghanaian media reported that Miss….P, who is 20 years old, was six months pregnant with a man she loved, not the man of her father’s choosing. This media report makes it clear that among some ethnic groups, parental influence is still a significant factor in Ghanaian marriages. What is to be made clear is that this type of dowry is not typical of all Ghana’s groups. Each ethnic group has its own has its own way of paying customary approach to paying dowry.

**Theme VII: Male-female relationships**

Another specific area of interest in my research was the extent to which the American concept of dating has influenced Ghanaian immigrant children. A foreign concept in traditional Ghanaian culture, dating has no place in Ghana’s marriage system. If some people are dating in modern day Ghana, it is only because of the influence of the Western world. In America, one often hears that a man is dating this or that woman, or a woman is dating this or that man. In Ghana, however, if a boy has a girlfriend or a girl has a boyfriend, a practice that is not unheard of today, neither will be inclined to introduce this individual to their parents. Typically, Ghanaian parents learn of such relationships another way.
In order to assess the participants’ level of acculturation in this arena, they were asked to speak their minds on dating, which, as we have already established, is not accepted in Ghanaian culture. Some of their responses were:

(a) Dating is not common in Ghana, but people are doing it. The parents just don’t know. I intend to date because you have to get to know the person before you get married. And I think the parents have this idea that you don’t date and then one day you find someone and you get married. No, that’s not how it is. You have to get to know the person first and dating is the avenue to do that. Excessive dating is different. Like a different boyfriend every two years—that’s, you know….

(b) You have to date in order to find out who you want to spend the rest of your life with. That’s another thing I like about the American society.

(c) I date because I don’t want to be alone. It’s the American culture and like I said, I am mostly American. So that’s what I do. I am dating.

According to the data, approximately 95% of the participants are dating. Their responses clearly reveal that these young men and women have unquestionably been influenced by the American culture of dating.

**Theme VIII: the existence God**

Although America was once designated a Christian nation, religion is no longer promoted in public elementary, middle or high schools. Gone are the days when basic literacy was yoked with biblical literacy. Biblical literacy has given way in education to secular humanism and Darwin’s theory of evolution. By contrast, religion has its place in
every public school curriculum in Ghana. Evolution is not taught at either the primary or secondary level. One of the aims of this study was to learn whether or not Ghanaian immigrant children have been influenced by American education. Have they been dissuaded from believing in God and therefore from going to church? In the same way that America was once known as a Christian country, so Ghana is currently known as a Christian country. Even Ghanaians who adhere to traditional religion believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who created the heaven and earth and all that are in them. Some Ghanaians even choose names for their children that reflect the existence or attributes of God. For example, the boy’s name, Nyamekye, literally means “God’s gift.”

Since some of the participants attended elementary and high schools in America and others are still in attendance at American schools, it intrigued me to find out to what extent their thinking has been affected by the prevalent school of thought claiming there is no God. The participants’ responses clearly showed that they believe in God and that they choose to worship Him. They expressed themselves on this theme with the following:

(a) I believe there is God because first of all, my mother explained it to me and secondly I believe there is God because of occurrences that I have heard of.

(b) I believe God must be worshipped because He’s done so much in our lives and the least we can do is thank Him and worship Him every day.

(c) I believe there is God—even me being in this country. Some people here don’t believe there is God. My parents are Christian so the whole family is Christian.
The majority of the participants identified themselves as members of Ghanaian ethnic churches. A few stated that they attend African churches where the pastor preaches in English, but the sermons are interpreted into different ethnic languages. Zhou & Bankson III (1996) observed that ethnic churches such as that of Vietnamese immigrants serve as venues for informal classes in the sense that the ethnic language is spoken and traditions are displayed for the young to see. It was my observation that this is also true in the case of the two Ghanaian churches I attended in the Bronx. Both churches function as a place for informal lessons in both language and tradition. In both cases, all church services and programs were conducted in Twi.

On one occasion when I visited the church, the day had been declared one of “traditional dress.” Every parishioner was dressed in traditional attire. Every Sunday parents bring their children to the church for various activities not only to occupy them, but to provide opportunity for them to interact with one another as a people from the same country. In this way, as Zhou & Bankson (1998) pointed out, the churches function as places where the ethnic language and culture are transmitted to the younger generation and consequently their ethnic identification becomes strengthened. Those participants who had been active in church programs clearly became aware of their identity as suggested by their self-identification labels, Ghanaian and Ghanaian-American. In keeping with the findings of Zhou & Bankson (1996), their responses suggest that participation in religious activities slows down acculturation.

Although the participants attended ethnic churches where the services and social activities were conducted in their ethnic language, they are nevertheless comfortable
communicating with God in prayer in English. When asked what language they use when praying, they responded with the following comments:

(a) I go to church every Saturday. I pray in English because I feel I can better express to God what’s deep in my heart in English being as that I can speak English more fluently than Twi.

(b) I pray to God in English—and in Twi when I can’t find the English words to describe how I’m feeling. I was taught to close my eyes and kneel down. I use English the most.

(c) English because I’m better with English than I am with Twi. I don’t think I’ve ever prayed to God in Twi—ever.

(d) [I] pray mostly in Twi and English. I do not know why both. It just happens.

These responses confirmed what I observed in the two Ghanaian churches I visited in the Bronx. When children came forward to recite memory verses from the Bible, they all recited them in English. When I asked why they recited the memory verses in English, I was told that this would enable them to compete with others when they go to their various christian schools. Some of these same children, however, sang songs in their ethnic language.

**Theme IX: Cultural and social activities**

Ackah (2003), Atta-Poku (1996); & Obeng (1998) asserted that acculturation is lowered when immigrants attend social activities that are based on the culture of their home country. With this point of view in mind, I asked the participants whether or not they had attended any Ghanaian social activities or festivals. All the participants
indicated that they attended a Ghanaian festival at least once. Some stated that they had attended Ghanaian festivals on numerous occasions. Among the social activities they mentioned having attended were Ghanaian picnics, marriage ceremonies, funerals, outdoorings, naming ceremonies, and more. Some of their responses follow:

(a) I attend Ghanaian events often. My dad is a chief back in Ghana. So we all attend events with him. I attend the picnic. I didn't attend this year, but I'll be back next year. I like those events and I like to sit down with the old people and have a conversation. The picnic is just a time to have fun and be around other Ghanaians.

(b) I observe most of the time. I sit back and I watch. At the picnic, it’s a different thing. It’s time for me to see all my high school friends, see people from Ghana I haven’t seen in a while. So that’s more of an interaction thing—networking basically. But weddings—which I enjoy—I sit there and watch how things are being done. There’s so much culture involved in a Ghanaian wedding and I know mine is going to come soon. So I just want to see how it’s done so I prepare myself.

(c) When my family has parties, I go. And we used to go to the Ghana picnic, but we stopped going because my aunt go mad because the last time we went, somebody got shot so she decided that we shouldn’t go anymore. When we went, we just stayed with our family. We didn’t really associate with anybody else. My aunt knew some people from the association, but the rest of us—we just stayed by ourselves and walked around. It was nice until the shooting started. It was like being home, so that was nice.
As long as parents or relatives of the participants continue to expose Ghanaian cultural values to their children in the context of such festivities and social activities, there is the possibility that some of these values will register in their minds. Unfortunately, it would appear that some of the participants have been scared off from participation after the shooting and fighting that took place during one of the recent annual Ghanaian picnics held in New York City. Despite this obvious deterrent, as young Ghanaian men and women continue to attend Ghanaian cultural activities in the city, they have opportunity to gain a greater awareness of the types of clothes Ghanaians wear, the variety of foods that are eaten in Ghana and other cultural phenomena. Such events can only encourage the youth who attend them to recognize and appreciate their identity. These participants gave no indication of belonging to the category of Ghanaian immigrant children described by Obeng (1998), who reported that they have no interest in Ghanaian ethnic activities and see them as a waste of time. All of them expressed an appreciation for the events they had participated in thus far.

Theme X: Trying to fit in.

Because the way an individual dresses reveals which country or region of Africa, or continent for that matter, he or she hails from, immigrants who wish to maintain their identity tend to wear traditional dress much of the time. Virtually any immigrant who is proud of his or her culture will convey that pride by wearing native dress. Cunningham & Lab (1993) emphatically stated that dress is a barrier to assimilation. To the extent that wearing native styles of dress reinforces one’s ethnic identity and encourages one to retain ethnic values, this conclusion is certainly valid.
As in any other country, Ghanaians have their own way of dressing. People may point fingers at those who are dressed differently, particularly if they consider the style of dress odd or queer. With this in mind, it was my aim to learn the participants’ views on certain styles of dress commonly observed in the United States. Of primary interest to me was the custom of wearing pants so prevalent among American females.

Traditionally, the women of Ghana do not wear pants. As a result of the influence of western culture, however, one will observe some Ghanaian women wearing pants in public today. When asked directly about the new trend in Ghana, participants conveyed that they see nothing wrong with Ghanaian females wearing pants either here in the United States or in Ghana. Interestingly, the female participants were dressed in pants during the interviews. Participant comments on this issue included the following:

(a) I don’t think it’s fair that just because you are a female, you have to wear a skirt.

   I think a person should be allowed to wear what they want to wear as long as it’s not hurting anybody else.

(b) If they want to wear pants, then they should wear pants. I have no problem with it.

(c) It’s their choice, I think. It’s cold in the winter. They [Ghanaian women] can choose to wear pants. . I don’t understand why you [females] can’t wear what you want to wear. Wearing pants doesn’t signify anything.

(d) I can’t say I agree with that. Even though it’s important to bring certain values and traditions from Ghana to America, you can’t continue everything because everything is not the same. You’re in a different environment—a different culture—and things are going to be different and you just have to accept them.
Significantly, none of the participants expressed any concern regarding the fact that Ghanaian females wear pants these days. As mentioned previously, all female participants were wearing pants at the time of the interview and this despite the fact that none of the interviews were conducted during the winter season. Although the point raised by one of the participants concerning wearing pants during cold weather is reasonable, it is not only in winter that Ghanaian females are observed wearing pants. During the warmer seasons, some Ghanaian women wear pants to work, to parties, and to other events. My assumption is that Ghanaian females who wear pants do so primarily because they have been influenced by American styles of dress, as have their male counterparts.

A concern directly related to the influence of American dress on Ghanaian immigrant males is the prevalence of ear piercing and earrings among Ghanaian males in America. Ear piercing among males in Ghana is highly unconventional. In the society of Ghana, earrings are intended to be worn solely by females. I shudder to think how Ghanaian parents in Ghana would shout at their male child if he should ever come home wearing earrings. In Ghana, one sees a man wearing earrings only in the context of entertainment—in a concert party, for example, where an actor is playing the part of a woman. Beyond such exceptions, it is unthinkable for a Ghanaian man to wear earrings. If a man were to be seen wearing earrings, he would likely be viewed as having lost his mental faculty. Huisman’s & Hondagneu-Softelo’s (2005) observation that dress tells the society what we have been and what we are becoming is well taken here.

The participants’ comments on this question were mixed, as evidenced by the following responses:
(a) I have been wanting to get earrings for myself, but my parents will not let me. So until I am in a better situation—not with my parents—I will still get my earrings. Because in Ghana it’s not allowed, but here it’s a big thing, so that’s what I’m trying to do—make my social life better.

(b) I think if a person wants to get their ears or whatever else pierced or wear a particular type of clothes, I think it’s their prerogative. As long as it’s not hurting anybody, that’s their choice.

(c) I put on my earrings when I’m outside my house. It’s kind of an American thing. I do put on my earrings. I don’t really care. I walk around with my earrings on. But when I get back home, I take out my earrings right away because I know the first thing my father is going to see. My father could not see me for five years and I could walk in. He won’t even say hello to me if I have my earrings in. The first thing he would say is, ‘I told you not to wear that thing. Why are you wearing it?’ So as soon as I get into his house, I’m respectful and I take out the earring.

(d) Earrings are for females to begin with, although my brother has pierced his ear. My parents don’t approve of it, but then again this country is totally different. I think that’s how gays have come about. Men are doing more female stuff. Even on TV, male actors have make-up on their faces. Doing things are changing—piercing, do-rags, body artworks that are not necessary.

(e) I won’t just allow my children to wear earrings unless you’re out of my house. I don’t agree with it. I hate to see that. The Bible says we should not adorn ourselves with ornaments. My heart hurts when I see especially men wearing
earrings. I see them that they are going out their minds, and some Ghanaians are copying. My children can never do that…. How?

Unlike the question of females wearing pants—an issue upon which the participants were in agreement—the issue of males wearing earrings proved more controversial. The majority of participants expressed an objection to Ghanaian men wearing earrings. It is also apparent from the interview responses that some participants do not have the freedom to do as they might like in this arena. The varied responses on the two issues thus reveal the selective nature of acculturation and the role played by individual perspective.

The notion of females wearing shorts as an acceptable form of dress is not on the radar screen in the Ghanaian culture. In Ghanaian schools, however, females can be seen wearing athletics pants or shorts for physical education activities. Similarly, for women to dress in such a way as to expose the lower part of the abdomen is unusual in Ghana’s culture. In rural regions of Ghana, one might run across children or older women whose stomach or chest is exposed, but a woman is never seen dressed this way in public. Whenever one encounters women in rural areas with their breasts or stomach exposed, this is a clear indication of their poverty level. They are dressed this way only because they cannot afford to dress otherwise.

In Ghana, if a woman dresses in such a way as to expose the thighs or the lower abdomen to the public, she will readily be classified as a woman of weak morals. Even mini-skirts are not tolerated in the Ghanaian culture. The public considers this style of dress indecent. In light of this, it is not surprising that the President of the Methodist Church Singing Band in Ghana recently prohibited women from wearing mini-skirts to
church (http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/). The church defended this action by stating that it refused to allow this style of dress lest it breed fornication and adultery in the church. Such modesty, however, is consistent with traditional secular Ghanaian dress. Traditionally, married women in particular would never attempt to dress in such a way as to expose either the stomach or the thighs. That one occasionally encounters unmarried Ghanaian females exposed in this way is purely a reflection of the fact that we now live in a global village. Some women are copying the styles they see in the media or the forms of dress migrants are bringing into Ghana from other countries.

A recent report from Ghana News (August 30, 2007) reflects the current concern about appropriate styles of dress in Ghana. According to the report, the Chairman of the Centre for National Culture is calling for parents and students alike to speak out against inappropriate forms of dress:

Professor George P. Hagan, Chairman of the Centre for National Culture has said that the patronage of indecent dressing by the youth would soon be a thing of the past. Professor Hagan suggested that parents and schools should speak against the excesses and with time the exposing of several parts of the female body will change. (http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/)

The report went on to state that Professor Hagan drew the attention of Ghanaian youth to traditional values, norms of dressing, eating, and walking, and other aspects of Ghanaian culture.

A similar comment was offered by a queenmother in Ghana when she was asked in an interview with Daily Guide about how women should dress. “[W]omen should protect their vital parts instead of adopting the ‘I am aware’ foreign culture that has
negatively caught up with them.” She went on to say, “Women are precious gems created
by God to bring happiness to mankind and it is therefore unacceptable for them to expose
their hidden treasures to the general public.” Both thought-provoking and insightful, her
final observation was, “[I]f God had purposed it for women to be exposed, he would not
have put Adam to sleep before creating Eve.”

To discover the level of interest in this particular type of dress in America, I asked
the participants to express their personal views on the issue. Some of their responses are
as follows:

(a) I don’t dress exposing my body to the public because within my household
we have a certain way of dressing. We’re told what to wear, but we know
what is respectable and what is decent to wear out in public. So we never
wore anything that is too exposing or anything that would give anybody the
idea that we were raised in a home that was less than what we are exposing.

(b) I don’t think Ghanaian women should be exposing themselves like that
because it’s kind of an American thing in a way. So that’s the reason I
frown upon it, I guess.

(c) I don’t dress like that. Even though I’m not a huge person, I don’t feel
comfortable exposing my body. Some people who are thin—they don’t see
a problem with it. Like ok, I’m not fat, so I can wear this. And ok, you can
wear it but, but if you expose your body, then what is the moral in it? I
wasn’t brought up that way. I think they do it for attention. But then if you get the wrong attention, then it’s a problem.

(d) I don’t dress to an extremely revealing point. I wear shorts, sure, but I’m not showing all of my thighs or part of my posterior.

(e) I would say there’s no problem with it as long as you don’t treat yourself as a prostitute. Females can dress exposing the stomach or her thighs.

(f) I dress however I feel like. I show skin. It’s my body. I’m not married and I’m an adult, so I get to do whatever I want. When I was in Ghana, I wore jeans. I wore pants. My aunts live here and they sent the clothes. I wore jeans, shorts.

Almost all the responses from the participants indicate disapproval of female styles of dress that expose the thighs and the lower abdomen to the public eye. It is clear, at least in some cases, that the participants have no interest in dressing this way themselves because of the way they were brought up. On the other hand, a few of the participants expressed their conviction that there is nothing wrong with Ghanaian females, including them, dressing in such a way. When asked specifically about summer attire, however, all expressed some reservations about how some females dress to reveal themselves.

Another issue examined in this research is that of body art in the form of tattoos. It is quite common in America to see people with tattoos on their bodies. As for Ghana, some ethnic groups are known to have a practice of making small and long or, in some cases, small and short cuts on the cheek, the sides of the face, or the stomach. Essentially tribal markings, these cuts are made several weeks after a child is born to identify to
which ethnic group the child belongs. A different type of cuts, introduced by traditional medicine men, is traditionally intended to protect one from disease and evil spirits. Such practices, however, are not common today. With the advancements of medicine, society is recognizing that such markings are no longer necessary. Of the 25 participants, only one had a tattoo. She indicated that she had hidden it from her parents because she knew they would not approve. According to Ghanaian custom, even though this young lady is above eighteen, she does not enjoy the freedom to do whatever she pleases with her body. In Ghanaian culture, young adults are not given license to do whatever suits their fancy, particularly when it is contrary to cultural norms. Only when young Ghanaians get married or move out of the house to begin their career are they considered independent and free to make their own decisions. The participant with the tattoo on her lower back was afraid to let her parents see it because she had not sought their consent and she was aware that such an approach to the situation was synonymous with disrespect. The remaining 24 expressed disapproval of tattoos, indicating they see nothing good in them. Among their comments were the following:

(a) I hate tattoo. I do not like it. I behave different from some Americans—like the way people dress, body art, like tattoos and piercing, showing skin. I’m different in that way because my parents don’t allow that, and I wouldn’t want to do it even if I was given a chance.”

(b) My body is the temple of God. I do not see any importance of doing that on my body. (This participant’s facial expression seemed to ask, “Why should I do that?” Her contorted face showed all indications of disgust for tattoos.)
In Ghanaian culture, males typically wear a hat or cap, and women wear headgear. It is generally only in concert parties that you can see males in head kerchiefs. When a male, regardless of his age, dons headgear, those observing him will whisper, asking what is wrong with him. It is not uncommon to see headgear among males in the United States, however, particularly on the street, on campuses, and in the malls. The participants’ thoughts regarding males who wear headgear are as follows:

(a) My parents are saying it’s all 'gangster' or whatever. They don't understand that just because you wear a do-rag doesn’t mean you're a gangster or anything. People wear it for style, waves, hair. There are other things besides just trying to say you're a thug or whatever. I mean, my parents—sometimes Africans, they just don’t understand. They think they know everything, but they don’t understand.

(b) I don’t see it as awkward for Ghanaian men to wear headgear because I see it all the time. So it’s normal.

(c) You mean a do-rag? I don’t think it’s appropriate for any male regardless of nationality. I personally don't like it. I just find it disgusting, especially when I see Ghanaian males or African males trying to emulate that behavior. It’s disappointing.

(d) The wearing of headgear is not associated with gangs and stuff like that. But my parents viewed it as something completely different—as if it was associated with gangs and stuff like that. But as long as it isn’t a part of that, then I have no problem with it.
(e) I think it’s okay for young people to wear headgear, but for older men I just don’t think it’s…because they’re trying to be young and it’s just…it’s part of the young culture, not the older culture.

(f) When I first saw a Ghanaian male wearing headgear, a do-rag, bandannas, I looked at it in kind of a funny way because I wasn’t used to it. But now it’s more out there. Some grownups I’ve seen actually have head wraps and stuff.

(g) It used to be an eye-opener for me, but now it’s like natural. I’ve seen it over and over. I don’t want my kids to wear headgear or something…

(h) I know my father would never let my brother pierce his ears or walk out with a do-rag on his head or with his pants sagging down to his knees or anything like that. Like I said before, when Ghanaian children—especially the males—come to America, they try to find a way to fit in with the American culture so they do things that they see American boys doing such as piercing their ears or wearing baggy clothes or speaking a certain way. I think it’s all about fitting in when you come from Ghana.

(i) Actually I think that is against our culture for a male to wear a headgear. Women do that. They shouldn’t do that because that’s just not the way. I don’t want to abandon my culture because it’s a unique culture and I want to stand out. I don’t want to be blending into the crowd. Secondly, once you’re from a different place, people here will never regard you as part of them. They will regard you as different. So show them you’re different, that you’re not part of them.
As suggested by the responses above, the majority of the participants see nothing wrong with Ghanaian males wearing headgear. One argued that wearing do-rags and such is part of the youth culture and therefore inappropriate for older males. Overall, there was little concern about Ghanaian males wearing do-rags. A significant finding under this category is related to the fact that Ghanaian children are not free to do as they please due to parental control that extends beyond the age of 18. Some of the responses recorded above clearly indicate that a good portion of the participants continue to respect their parents’ values regardless of their own personal views. Even though the majority of the participants see nothing wrong with males wearing headgear, they do not wear them themselves. Only three of the male participants stated that they sometimes wear headgear.

**Theme XII: Educational mobility**

In the United States, education is highly encouraged, if for no other reason, because individual and national development are dependent on education. By contrast, even though the government of Ghana encourages parents to send their children to school, not all Ghanaian parents are in a position to respond to the government’s promotion of education because of poverty. Other factors contribute as well, namely lack of interest on the part of illiterate parents, large families for whom tuition is prohibitive, or inaccessibility of quality education programs in rural areas.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, many children in urban centers and rural regions are attending school. Nearly 99% of Ghanaian parents have realized the importance of education in general and higher education in particular since more schools
have been opened both by the government and the private sector. Admission to the country’s universities is now highly competitive due to the large number of students graduating from high schools as compared with the small number of universities established in the country.

It was my assumption that Ghanaian immigrants who come to the United States do so in large measure to establish better lives for themselves and their children. This study proved to validate that Ghanaian immigrant parents indeed see their children’s education as a high priority. All the participants are attending school and the majority of them are studying at the college level. In most cases, the participants’ parents themselves have received a college education. I was curious to learn the participants’ views on their education and their hopes for the future. Among their responses are the following:

(a) If you’re going to stop going to school after high school, then you’re not looking for a high paying job because there’s no job out there that’s going to be a very good paying job for you to live comfortably with just a high school degree.

(b) I want to make something out of my life and high school diploma is not enough to do that. I want to make enough money to support my family and my parents because they are paying for my college to get me where I am right now. And through my education and my degrees, I can get a better job.

(c) Yes, I want to do 4 years of college and continue to be an RN. I’ve wanted to work in a hospital since I was young. Technology is building everyday and in today’s society you can’t really get pretty much anywhere with a high
school diploma. With a college degree, like in years to come, you will need a
master’s or Ph.D. to get ahead in the world.

(d) Science student to become a doctor. If you want money, then you have to
have higher education to get more money. You do not have to end at high
school diploma. Because I’m interested in psychology and I love the way the
brain works. Yes, my mom mostly, my mom always wanted me to be a
doctor. And I’ve always wanted to be a psychologist. So just to make my
mom happy and make me happy, I decided to do it.

(e) My parents would have kicked me out of the house if I had ended at high
school as some people do over here. I would like to go to law school.
Because the amount of money I would accumulate would not equal the money I
could potentially make with my college degree. So it’s a sacrifice. There’s no
such thing as a free lunch. The opportunity is come out of high school and make
$20,000 a year or stay in school, spend $10,000 a year, and then when I graduate
make $60,000 a year and then I will grow. But in high school, you only have
your high school diploma and you’re going to reach a ceiling eventually and not
be able to make as much as you could potentially make with a college diploma.
So if I want to go home and invest and build hospitals and schools in Ghana, I
can’t do that with a high school diploma and making minimum salary. People
who just get out of high school and go to work just don’t have any positive
influences in their lives and they want to hurry up and rush out and they just need
some direction.
(f) I wanted to be a basketball player, but right now I’m changing my mind. I think I want to be somebody very important, a medical doctor.

The participants expressed a clear desire to continue their education—in some cases beyond the undergraduate level. Although parental influence is undeniable, they have also been influenced by the American culture, where education is a high government priority. Despite efforts on the part of the U.S. government to promote education in this country, there are those students in America who will choose not to pursue a college education. It is evident from the participants’ responses, however, as well as from the level of education already achieved by some, that these Ghanaian immigrant children do not fit into that category. They will not settle for a high school diploma only to go the way of those whose career options are limited by their lack of education.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the participants’ responses is that Ghanaian immigrant parents value higher education and take pride in their children when they are able to receive a higher education degree. Medical doctors, academic doctors, lawyers, and accountants are highly esteemed professions in Ghana. Those parents who can afford to do so will encourage their children to pursue such academic programs. Generally, Ghanaians look down upon the teaching profession—particularly at the elementary and junior high levels. This is likely the case because this category of teachers is considered poor since they are unable to afford to build their own houses or own their own cars. For this and other reasons, Ghanaian parents tend to discourage their children from pursuing a teaching career, as well as other lower paying professions. In general, it is Ghanaians from poor families who attend Teacher Training Colleges because there are no tuition fees for this type of education. By contrast, lecturers in
institutions of higher education are highly respected in Ghanaian society. Most of them are granted government bungalows and often own a private car or motor bicycle, not to mention their own home. In short, they live more comfortable lives than other categories of workers. It is conceivable that due to parental influence, this aspect of Ghanaian culture became part of the participants’ thinking on the matter of education and career pursuits. That might explain why none of them expressed a desire to become an elementary school or high school teacher, or a university professor for that matter. Since American educators enjoy more respect and earn a substantially better income than Ghanaian teachers, it would be an unfortunate mistake on the part of Ghanaian parents to discourage their children from becoming school teachers in America.

Theme XIII: United Nations of friends

In addition to parents, who influence immigrant children to become either acculturated or enculturated, another agent of acculturation is that of friends. If, for example, a participant’s friends are dominated by Ghanaians, the probability that they will maintain most of their cultural values will be high. If, on the other hand, their friends are Americans, they will more easily become acculturated into American society. One of the participants was well aware of this phenomenon, pointing out that “If you have a good family that keeps and supports their culture, and also if you make friends with people who share that same culture, ideas and beliefs,” immigrants can more easily maintain their culture in the United States. Tadmor & Tetlock (2006) argued in similar fashion, maintaining that people internalize the voices of those with whom they have a strong relationship. In keeping with the saying, “Show me your friends and I will tell you
who you are,” they pointed out further that should the immigrants’ circle of friends come from both their ethnic group and the host country, they are likely to become bicultural.

With these trends and tendencies in mind, I asked the participants about their friends. Their responses included the following:

(a) Most of them are white, Hispanic, and some black Americans. And I have Ghanaian friends, too.

(b) I have the United Nations of friends. My best friend is from Guinea. One of my closest friends is from Brazil, Central America. Another one of my friends is from South America. I have a lot of Jamaican friends and I have a lot of white American friends.

(c) I like to learn new stuff. I think diversity is good. A lot of people say I don’t have a lot of African friends. None of them is a Ghanaian, but I don’t really care about that.”

(d) People that I call my friends have to be from Ghana or relate to me in a kind of way. Most of my friends are Africans. I don’t have many, but those that I have—they are Ghanaians and one Nigerian.

(e) My friends are mixed. I guess because of the fact that I grew up in the Bronx and my neighborhood had mostly Ghanaians in it, most of my friends are Ghanaians.

(f) Most of my friends are Ghanaian. Then some are Caribbean. I have a few black American friends, not that much and some Spanish. Well, since they're Ghanaian, they can help me learn the language. That's what I've been doing at school.
Based on the responses above, which indicate that the participants’ circle of friends includes people from diverse ethnic groups, chances are good that the majority of participants will become bicultural. Participant (b) made specific mention of having few Ghanaian friends. Participant (c), who explicitly stated that she has no Ghanaian friends and emphasized her appreciation for diversity, will easily acculturate into American society. Interestingly, the majority of the participants made no mention of white friends, a fact which would suggest that provided their friends are not acculturated, they will have little impact by way of encouraging the participants to adopt American culture.

**Theme XIV: Self identification**

As reflected in their responses, the participants articulated their thoughts clearly on a number of themes. An analysis of individual responses provides a rather clear indication of which participants are acculturated in which theme areas. Nevertheless, it was appropriate to learn from them directly how they view themselves in terms of national or ethnic identity. It is important to note here immigrants belonging to the third or fourth generation who are citizens of this country identify themselves variously as Americans, for example, or Irish-Americans or Indian-Americans. In the current study, it has already been established that some of the participants were born here while the rest migrated to the United States and have since become permanent residents and/or citizens. When asked how they identify themselves in this country, some of the participants responded as follows:

(a) I call myself as an African. That’s just how I call myself. Yeah, I would say so.

It’s just that as a Ghanaian you have to…if it’s an African asking me where
I’m from, I would say Ghana, but if it’s someone other than African asking me, I would say I’m African.

(b) I say I’m Ghanaian. My whole culture is Ghanaian. I don’t want to say just black. When I say I’m Ghanaian, it gives more meaning.”

(c) I call myself Ghanaian. I say I’m African. For one, I’m still a Ghanaian citizen. Maybe when I’m naturalized, I’ll start calling myself a Ghanaian-American.

(d) I’m African for one and I’m Ghanaian to be more specific. I’m proud to be a Ghanaian. There's nothing wrong with being a Ghanaian.”

(e) I believe Ghanaian American falls into that category. My parents hail from Africa, so I’m an African. But I was born here, so I am an American.”

(f) I call myself Ghanaian. My aunt always tells me that I’m Ghanaian—the same aunt that always wants me to speak to her in Twi—and she would always say if anyone asks you, then you are Ghanaian.”

(g) Whenever someone asks me, I tell them that I’m Ghanaian but I live in the Bronx. But first I tell them that I’m Ghanaian because that’s what I am…because I was born there.”

(h) I identify myself as a Ghanaian-American. I have to include the fact that I’m American because I was born here. I tell them I’m from Ghana. I don’t say I’m American just because I was born here.”

(i) I see myself as Ghanaian. But I am Americanized. It depends on who I am talking to.
As indicated in Table 1.1, three out of the 25 participants claimed they are neither Ghanaian nor Ghanaian-American. The rest, even those who were born in the United States, identify themselves in one way or another with the Ghanaian culture. This larger category is likely to socialize their children and grandchildren in such a way as to encourage them to identify themselves as Ghanaians or Ghanaian-Americans. This transmission of identity will become effective only if the participants in question marry fellow Ghanaians with a similar sense of Ghanaian identity. Because the majority of the participants determined that they would marry without consideration for whether or not their future spouse is a Ghanaian, however, it is likely that some of the participants’ offspring will lose their ancestral identity. The fact is, as Alba (1990:164) aptly put it, “the taproot of ethnic identity nestles in families.” In the event of intermarriage, the parents may not agree to nurture their children according to ancestral values since these values may very well be in opposition to each other.

Under this sub-theme, the majority of the participants demonstrated that they are aware of their national identity, commenting that this makes them different from others. As Dasgupta (1998) pointed out, commitment to one’s identity is not the same with every individual. Rather, it is contingent upon the degree to which an individual has identified him or herself with the host country or has involved him or herself in the ethnic culture.

**Conclusion**

The participants have a strong desire to maintain the ability to speak their ethnic language. Twenty-two out of the total sample are able to speak their ethnic language, and
17 of them speak it all the time at home. In no case were there any rules governing which language the participants were to speak at home. Nevertheless, the greater percentage of participants is able to speak their ethnic language.

The participants’ eating habits are considerably more varied than their language patterns. All the participants reported eating both Ghanaian and American food, but 14 indicated they eat more Ghanaian than American food. Even though they all eat Ghanaian food, 21 participants indicated that they do not enjoy the Ghanaian custom of eating with siblings or friends from the same bowl.

Except for the participants who were in middle school or high school and the participant who expressed no interest in dating, all participants are currently dating. Interestingly, every participant views spanking or physical punishment as an appropriate approach to disciplining children. This is totally contrary to current American values.

As for dress styles, participant views are somewhat divided. Some object to certain American styles of dress while supporting others and vice versa. All participants feel that Ghanaian females should be able to wear pants if they wish, but most are not in support of men wearing earrings. Apart from the one participant who has a tattoo, the participants are repulsed by the thought of getting a tattoo themselves.

All the participants are highly motivated to get a college education and some are interested in pursuing education beyond the undergraduate level. It is probable that in this regard they have been influenced by American society. Participant responses reveal that they do not belong to that category of young people who, upon obtaining a high school diploma, will seek to produce an income and thus enter the job market without any thought of further education.
Chapter Five

This chapter is devoted to a summary of the results of the research and an examination of their implications. As explained in chapter 3, this case study research focused on Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx. Due to the nature of the study, I employed a qualitative approach in an attempt to learn to what extent the participants have maintained their ethnic values. The data was gathered primarily from interviews and observation. I interviewed 25 participants and observed two churches in the Bronx. Ranging in age from 14 to 24, the participants had been living in the United States for a minimum of 7 years at the time the interviews were conducted. The study sample was constructed via the snowball sampling technique. Open-ended interview questions were designed in such a way as to encourage participants to express their perspectives in detail. The essential question to be addressed by the study was: have Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx become susceptible to the melting pot phenomenon or have they been able to maintain their cultural identity? In other words, to what extent have the participants adopted American values at the expense of their ethnic identity.

Introduction

With increasing diversity in the United States resulting from the post-1965 influx of immigrants from many countries, the question of acculturation into American society has received increased attention. Some of the more recent immigrants have arrived with young children and others have given birth to a number of children after their arrival. In
any event, the number of immigrant children in America has grown substantially. In light of this growth, it is imperative to research to what extent this portion of the immigrant population has acculturated into American culture. The current study examined the acculturation of Ghanaian immigrant children, looking specifically at their acculturation in terms of the following indicators: use of language, choice of foods, modes of eating, attitude toward particular styles of dress, selection of a future marriage partner, physical punishment, religious beliefs, and education. The aim was to examine how acculturation affects language use, eating habits, dress, childrearing, religion, dress, mate selection, and education.

Some researchers have concluded that language shift is the primary indicator of acculturation. This study probed deeper, however, by attempting to assess the participants’ level of acculturation on the basis of their language use. The fact is that some immigrants already speak English prior to their arrival in this country. In such cases, it makes little sense to use English as the measuring stick for acculturation. This study encourages researchers in the field to recognize the importance of considering additional indicators when assessing acculturation.

All study participants fall within the category of second generation immigrant children. Fourteen participants can be classified as second generation children. Because they migrated to America prior to reaching adulthood, the remaining 11 belong to the 1.5 second generation (Zhou, 1997). It should be noted that both of these categories of immigrants acculturate more readily than their older counterparts.
Summary

The study was guided by key concepts, such as acculturation, biculturalism, assimilation, integration, and marginality. As the study progressed, I discovered that certain attitudes were common to the majority of participants while others were not. When participants were asked to offer their comments about Ghanaian women wearing pants in America, for instance, all of them without exception conveyed that they see nothing wrong with this. Some even argued that the cold weather characteristic of the United States makes it appropriate for Ghanaian females to wear pants in this country. I did not fail to observe, however, that despite the fact that the interviews were conducted during the summer season, all of the female participants wore pants during their interviews. Clearly their choice to wear pants on this occasion was not based on a need to dress appropriately for cold weather. One can safely conclude that these young Ghanaian women wore pants because they had adapted, at least to some degree, to the style of dress in this country.

By contrast, their comments regarding tattoos reflected an almost exclusively negative attitude. Only one of the participants, who revealed that she had a tattoo on a hidden part of her body, demonstrated any personal interest in tattoos. She indicated that she had felt a need to hide the tattoo from her parents for some time because she knew that they would disapprove. Despite the fact that this woman was over eighteen years old when she got the tattoo, she was afraid to tell her parents. This is easily explained by the cultural attitude of Ghanaians, who generally discourage their children from taking liberties with their bodies, particularly liberties of an indelible nature. Her parents eventually saw the tattoo and, although they frowned on their daughter’s choice, it was
too late for them to prevent her from making the choice. This particular participant’s behavior is a clear-cut case of the influence of society in the arena of body art.

A different set of responses emerged on the subject of ear piercing and Ghanaian males wearing earrings. Here there was no unison in the participants’ responses. Some participants raised no objection, commenting that the few Ghanaian immigrant males who wear earrings likely do so in order to fit in. Moreover, they see it as a fashion issue, a matter of personal taste. On the other hand, the majority of the participants expressed their sense that it was wrong, adding that in their native culture, earrings are to be worn solely by females. Interestingly, though some of the male participants did not condemn Ghanaian males who wear earrings, none of them wore earrings themselves at the time of the interviews. One of the female participants, who indicated she abhorred this form of body art, stated emphatically that her future male children will not be free to make the choice to wear earrings while living under her roof. She added that her children will only pierce their ears once they have matured enough to leave home. In the Ghanaian family system, children continue to live with their parents when they are eighteen, nineteen, or twenty years old and older. Not surprisingly, therefore, all of the participants were living with their parents in the Bronx at the time of the interviews. They lived apart from their parents only while attending school in other states or towns. This is important in that it shows the trend among Ghanaian immigrants, whereby children—regardless of age—are not free to do as they please while living under their parents’ roof. The socialization process thus continues in Ghanaian families independent of the age factor. Even as adults, Ghanaian immigrant children are required to show respect to their parents and other adults by obeying them.
All of the participants spoke in favor of interethnic marriage. Even though a few of them indicated that they intend to marry a Ghanaian in future, they were opposed to the idea of parents forcing their children to marry a Ghanaian or arranging a marriage for them to someone from the same church. Some participants argued that in a life-long affair such as marriage, love that must be the decisive factor. This perception is very much in keeping with what Athens (1996) had to say about “Greek Americanism,” the notion that ever since this world was created, love has no ethnic boundaries. Marriage, therefore, can have neither ethnic nor religious boundaries. These findings are contrary to what Zhou & Bankston III (1998) observed among the Vietnamese sample they studied. They found that those who attended church regularly desired to marry someone from within the church. By contrast, Ghanaian immigrant children, whether they attended church regularly or not, indicated they will marry from among any group of people. For them, it was love and compatibility that took precedent.

In light of their thinking on the selection of a marriage partner, it is not at all surprising that these participants are either presently dating or plan to date in the future. The fact that some of the participants are presently dating and others want to date in the future may be due to environmental influence. Certainly this is consistent with the pattern of American youth. By contrast, it is inconsistent with traditional Ghanaian culture. Granted, it is not uncommon in Ghana today to hear of boys having girlfriends and vice versa. Within the context of such relationships in Ghana, premarital sex is certainly not unheard of—surprisingly, without fear of reprisal from either parents or community. On the other hand, such pre-marital dating relationships are not encouraged. Typically, boyfriends do not formally introduce their girlfriends to their parents. Nor do
girlfriends introduce their boyfriends to their parents. To do so is simply not part of Ghanaian culture. Moreover, parents do not pressure their children to find a boyfriend or girlfriend. They would prefer instead that their children remain single long after they are of age to marry. According to their cultural understanding, it is respect, hard work, and a strong family reputation that prospective marriage partners are looking for in a mate. Nevertheless, the contemporary attitude of Ghanaian youth toward the boyfriend/girlfriend phenomenon persists. It has in fact produced a sharp increase in teenage pregnancies, illegal abortions, and unwed mothers in Ghanaian society.

It is considered a disgrace to family when a daughter became pregnant before she was married. It was only about four decades ago, in fact, that measures were taken in some ethnic groups when a young woman became pregnant prior to puberty rites. In such cases, the girl and her parents were summoned to the chief’s court with a demand that the gods of the land and the ancestors be pacified. During such assemblies, a sheep would be slaughtered to appease the gods of the land and cleanse the land from contamination. With urbanization and the influence of Christianity, however, this custom is fading out, though it remains in effect in rural regions of Ghana.

Consensus also emerged in matters pertaining to food. All participants were able to name a number of Ghanaian dishes, a likely indication that they are familiar with these foods because they have partaken of them. Second, the majority of participants indicated that they eat more Ghanaian food when they are home with their parents and that they actually prefer Ghanaian food to American food. This preference would strongly suggest that in the case of those who arrived in the United States in early childhood as well as in the case of those who were born here, the bulk of participants were effectively socialized
by their parents to eat Ghanaian foods. Interestingly, this is in direct contradiction to the research conducted by Satia-About et al (2002) about Chinese immigrant children living in Seattle and Vancouver. Two thirds of the Chinese immigrant children in question found Western food more appealing than Chinese food. In a study of Koreans, however, Kang & Garey (2002) made a discovery more consistent with the findings of the present study. It was their observation that Koreans who had lived in the United States for more than five years exhibited a preference for Korean food. The majority of the participants in the current study are perhaps best likened to Asian-Indian immigrants, who maintained their taste for traditional Asian-Indian food even after adapting to American culture. It should be noted that despite the clear preference for Ghanaian food exhibited by most of the Ghanaian participants who were born in the United States, this same group has abandoned the customary Ghanaian practice of drinking water with meals in favor of soda.

All the participants share a common ideology on discipline. None of them see physical punishment or excessive spanking as wrong. This is somewhat peculiar in light of the fact that spanking is a breach of law in the United States. It is their understanding, however, that parents should have the right to discipline their children by any means including spanking or physical punishment—if necessary. These findings are consistent with what Foner (2009); Booth, Crouter, & Landale (1997) reported about the Haitian and Caribbean cultures, where corporal punishment or spanking is exercised as a means to train the child and to encourage good citizenship within the community.

Not surprisingly, all of the participants condemned the notion that children are free to call the police when spanked as a consequence for disobeying parents or failing to
respect their elders. Nevertheless, it is likely that some Ghanaian parents in America will refrain from spanking their children, even as a last resort, for fear that they will be reported to the authorities or lose their children to protective custody. Should all Ghanaian immigrants who would be inclined to use physical punishment as a form of corrective discipline cease to do so, whether out of fear or for some other reason, spanking and physical punishment could very well become a thing of the past. Because parents tend to discipline their children as they were disciplined themselves, as Ghanaians succumb to pressure from American authorities in the matter of discipline, physical punishment is likely to give way to other forms of discipline within a generation or so.

Another commonality among the participants was their participation in Ghanaian festivals or social gatherings, or attendance at Ghanaian churches. Attendance at events of this kind is significant for the very reason that Ghanaian culture is on display in a variety of ways in such contexts. At marriage ceremonies, outdoorings, and funeral cerebrations, for example, Ghanaian customs are in full view. When these cultural events are attended with any regularity, they are not soon forgotten. Those who participate in them are likely to transmit the Ghanaian values reinforced on such occasions to future generations. Should such practices continue, Ghanaian culture is likely to remain intact among generations of Ghanaian immigrants to come. If this proves to be the case, then the theory stating that immigrants in the host country lose their native culture over time will not hold true for the participants examined in this study.

Because Ghanaians in American have established their own churches, where sermons and classes are conducted not in English, but in Ghanaian languages, Ghanaian
immigrants who attend such churches continue to have a sense of their Ghanaian identity. In some such churches—for example, the First Ghana Seventh-Day Adventist Church where I once worshipped—some Saturdays will be declared “Go traditional.” On these occasions, members attend services in Ghanaian dress. These traditional Saturdays serve to remind them—and their children in turn—where they come from. The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Bankson III & Zhou (1998), who, based on their study of Korean-American churches, concluded that religious activities promote and enhance ethnic identification, ethnic binding, and cultural maintenance. The Ghanaian churches in the Bronx promote transmission of cultural traditions to the next generation by conducting services in their ethnic language and using hymnals printed in the ethnic language.

Ghanaians who attended school in Ghana do not have much difficulty speaking English since English language is the language of instruction in all Ghanaian schools. The chief problem they have to contend with in the United States is their accents. Some of the participants migrated to this country when they were young, but they have not lost their mother tongue. Among those who were born here, that is, those who are not expected to be able to speak their mother tongue because of environmental influences, the majority in fact able are able to speak Twi. These findings are significant if for no other reason than that they demonstrate that if parents speak their native tongues to their children at home, the mother tongue will be maintained in the host country. The clear implication here is that if these participants speak their ethnic language to their future children and their children do likewise, it is theoretically possible for the ethnic language to be maintained for generations to come. During one of my observations in a Ghanaian
church, however, I noticed that most of the second generation children conversed with their peers primarily in English, and some of the children speaking in Twi had an accent. On the other hand, some second generation children speaking in Twi had no accent. In that particular church, I observed that nearly all spoken language that I heard or overheard was in Twi. As for the other Ghanaian church I observed, the first part of the service was conducted in the native language. The second part—which was led by the young people—was carried out entirely in English with the exception of the sermon, which was preached in the native language, and the interjections of the facilitator, who peppered her speech with a few words from the native language. I learned that these young people are able to understand their native language, but unable to speak it. The preacher, however, grew up in Ghana. No complete or consistent generalizations can be made based on these observations.

Finally, the findings from the study do not support what Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002) concluded, namely that highly educated parents will stress that their children speak English at home. Although most of the parents of the participants have college degrees, a high percentage of them speak their ethnic language. This serves to demonstrate that most of the parents of the participants place a high priority on transplanting their culture in the United States. As Portes & Rumbaut (2001:122) put it, “parental characteristics weigh heavily on second generation adaptation to the host culture”.

Limitations to the Study

The first and most obvious limitation of the present study is that participants may have been influenced by the fact that I am a Ghanaian. In this sense, they may have been tempted to provide responses which they anticipated would please me. It was my aim, however, to facilitate trust and create an open climate for the interviews so as to generate candid responses.

Second, because the study was limited to participants living in the Bronx, which is part of Metropolitan New York, the study cannot be generalized to include all Ghanaians undergoing acculturation in the United States. Ghanaian immigrant children living in small towns and villages may very well have a different acculturation experience. Furthermore, the sample size was not large enough to make generalizations of this magnitude.

Third, because the parents of the participants were not included in the interview process, this may have skewed participant responses. In their absence, participants may have shifted blame to their parents—as in the case, for example, of those participants who claimed that they could not speak their ethnic language because their parents did not teach them.

Recommendation

The disadvantages of employing the qualitative method for this study cannot be discounted. First among such disadvantages is the sample size. Using a quantitative approach, researchers are able to construct a larger sample and produce generalizations more readily. Because data collection relies primarily on survey results, the quantitative
approach places fewer limits on the geographic reach of the research. Quantitative follow-up analysis is therefore recommended to assess whether the conclusions drawn here about Ghanaian immigrant children in the Bronx can be generalized to include the broader population of Ghanaian immigrant children in the United States.

The present study examined immigrant children only. A comparative study of second and third generation Ghanaian immigrants is recommended. By including parents in a study similar to the present study, the researcher will be able to measure the parents’ level of acculturation against that of their children, thereby testing a number of acculturation theories. Such a study would also highlight the ways in which parents influence their children to adapt to the dominant culture or to maintain their ethnic values.

Future research might also address the continuing acculturation of Ghanaian second-generation children once they leave home and begin to live on their own. The relevance of such a study is evident particularly when one considers that parental influence in traditional Ghanaian families continues independent of a child’s age provided that child is living at home with his or her parents.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to assess the acculturation level of Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx. The findings demonstrate that the question of acculturation is complex. Acculturation levels vary from participant to participant and from indicator to indicator. It is therefore impossible to generalize about acculturation,
assimilation, biculturalism or integration in an all-inclusive manner. Rather, this section will address the issue of how the findings line up with those of previous research as reflected in the literature.

The participants’ responses to questions pertaining to education revealed a significant interest in college education. This would suggest a high level of acculturation in the arena of education. This finding is consistent with the argument put forth by Alba & Nee (2003), according to whom acculturated immigrants tend to pursue education beyond the secondary level, often attending four year colleges and graduate school. It should be pointed out that the general outlook on education is different in Ghana than in the U.S., as is the motivation level. In Ghana, the bulk of the population lives in rural regions and is engaged in agriculture. These farmers are largely illiterate with little to no interest in higher education. Well educated role models who would motivate parents and children alike to pursue higher education are typically sorely lacking. Under such conditions, it is highly unlikely that the participants would have been motivated in Ghana to pursue higher education. Additional deterrents include the stress involved in gaining admission to Ghanaian universities and limited job opportunities upon graduation. The situation in the United States, however, is dramatically different. Clearly, the participants’ thinking on higher education has been influenced by American society.

Interestingly, although the importance of education is stressed in the United States, a surprising number of American students drop out of high school to enter the job market. This attitude was not at all reflected in the participants’ responses. On the contrary, the participants' desire to finish high school and pursue education at the college level was consistent across the board. This would suggest that Ghanaian immigrant
children have not been influenced by some of the more lax American attitudes toward high school education. In other words, acculturation has not affected them in terms of a tendency to drop out of high school.

The participants’ attitudes toward education are worthy of further attention. It can be assumed that the participants’ desire to become educated arose from their interest in pursuing the American dream. That is to say, they want to reach the mainstream in the future. Most of the participants commented that because America is a land of opportunity, they intend to take advantage of the opportunities while they last. It has already been established that such opportunities are lacking in Ghana. The country has numerous Senior Secondary Schools (high schools) in place, but high tuition costs deter a good number of strong candidates from continuing on after completing their Junior Secondary education. University attendance is limited as well by the existence of only a few government universities. The number of universities in Ghana is quite small even when compared to the number of universities in a single American state. Not surprisingly, some young people in Ghana end up with only a Junior Secondary School or Senior Secondary School Certificate. No doubt the participants in this study are aware of the shortcomings of Ghana’s education system and do not want to pass up the educational opportunities available to them in the United States. Because some of them are also aware of the poverty level in their home country, they view college education as a way to avoid a similar situation for themselves in the future. Recognizing that those with only a high school education or less generally end up working poorly paid jobs, they are looking for something better. Finally, it is probable that their parents have encouraged them to obtain a higher education degree because they have received a college education.
themselves. As for parents with less education, they may have encouraged their children to acquire more education than they so that they will be able to get better jobs with higher pay.

All things considered, it is clear that Ghanaian immigrants value education—regardless of their financial status. Leaders at social gatherings promote education by encouraging parents to send their children to school whether they can afford to do so or not. They educate them about financial aid programs and encourage them to apply for student grants and loans. Some of the 1.5 second generation participants pointed out, in fact, that their parents were motivated to come to the U.S. because of the educational opportunities offered here. Clearly, one of the top priorities of Ghanaian immigrants is their children’s education and the higher standard of living that education affords.

According to the findings of Portes & Rumbaut (2001) and an observation highlighted by Zhou (1997), the attitudes of second generation immigrant children living in underprivileged neighborhoods tend to be adversely influenced at school by native-born peers who have little hope for the future. These native-born peers, according to Zhou, would pressure these immigrants to resist assimilation. The results of the current research, however, show that even though the participants come from minority communities where poverty is rampant and the gang activity level in schools is significant, their educational aspirations are high. The study data therefore demonstrate that participants in this study have adapted to the American higher education system while managing to separate themselves from the increasingly common American practice of ending one’s education with a high school diploma or dropping out from school altogether. Contrary to the findings of Portes & Rumbaut (2001:61), the attitudes of
participants towards education have not conformed to the expectations of their American peers, who often convey the notion that education does not pay and that discrimination against people of color will prevent them from succeeding in life. This positive attitude toward education on the part of the participants can be attributed at least in part to their cultural values and practices, as well as to parental discouragement from excessive Americanization.

That the larger percent of study participants speak and understand their native language should not be overlooked, particularly when considered together with the participants’ interest in higher education. This, too, runs contrary to Zhou (1997) findings, which suggested that immigrants must abandon their old culture before they can begin to rise up from marginal positions. If higher education indeed facilitates upward mobility, then it follows that the participants of this study will not remain in marginalized positions despite their choice not to abandon their culture or their identity as Ghanaians.

An analysis of Table 6, which summarizes the data pertaining to the frequency with which the participants eat Ghanaian and American food, reveals that participants are bicultural in terms of the foods they eat. Most of them indicated a preference of Ghanaian food to American, however, because they view Ghanaian food as more healthy than American food. These data support the findings of Kang & Garey (2002), who, in their research of Koreans who had been in the United States between five and twenty years, discovered that they ate more Korean food than American. On the other hand, Satia-About et al (2002) indicated that while 90% of the parents of 1,534 Chinese immigrant children living in Seattle and Vancouver prefer their ethnic food, more than two thirds of their children prefer the Western diet.
Even though many of the participants in this research project enjoy eating ethnic foods, a high percentage of them do not necessarily adhere to Ghanaian eating customs. In the Ghanaian culture, for example, people often eat together with siblings or friends from the same bowl or plate. Few of the study participants practice this custom. Indeed, as indicated in Table 7, 21 of 25 expressed that they dislike eating with others from the same bowl. Similarly, Ghanaians traditionally drink water with meals, but the majority of the participants prefer soda to water with meals.

Another area in which the study participants were found to be acculturated is that pertaining to the selection of mates. Twenty-one of the participants accept as appropriate the American thinking on dating, which runs contrary to traditional thinking in Ghana. Conventionally, Ghanaian parents desire that their children marry Ghanaians, preferably from their community or ethnic group. The results of this study clearly indicate, however, that some of the participants have adapted to the American approach to marriage, whereby individuals choose their mate based on compatibility irrespective of ethnic identity or association. Yet another typically Ghanaian factor in connection with mate selection seems to have faded in importance for the participants. Traditionally, Ghanaian families prefer that their sons and daughters marry only after the family history of the prospective mate has been carefully scrutinized in terms of illness, character, work ethic, intelligence level, and personality. Lastly, none of the participants offered any comments about same sex marriage, a practice considered anathema in Ghana. In traditional Africa, it is expected that a wedded couple will have children. This expectation is shared by the parents of the newlyweds, the community, and the couples
themselves. In light of the importance of procreation in the lives of Ghanaians, it is not surprising that none of the participants advocated the gay lifestyle.

All of the participants spoke disapprovingly of the American attitude toward child discipline that views spanking as child abuse. All expressed their opinion that it is appropriate to spank or hit children when they disobey or show disrespect to authority figures. They also expressed disapproval of the notion of children reporting their parents to the police when spanked or physically punished. Some of the participants, who had been spanked or physically punished, conveyed that they understood that they had done something wrong and, therefore, deserved the punishment meted out to them. To them, it was unthinkable that they would have called the police to have their parents arrested because they had been spanked or hit. They argued that spanking or physical punishment should not be considered child abuse because the intent is correction, which is in the child’s best interests.

Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002) maintained that language is the most accurate gauge for acculturation. They recognized that language is an important social indicator of cultural differences as well as a marker of ethnic differences. Portes & Rumbaut (2001) pointed out that adult immigrants seldom abandon their native language, whereas their children often do. According to their findings, immigrant children of the past rapidly shifted to the host language in America. This, they maintained, is no longer the case. They emphasized that in theory, there are two potential outcomes of language shift for immigrants: first, that second generation youth may acculturate slowly and retain their mother tongue as primary and second, that they may become bilingual while maintaining primary allegiance to the mother tongue. The data of the current study reflect that 22 of
the total 25 participants are able to speak their mother tongue. This is consistent with the thinking of Portes & Rumbaut (2001) regarding a slow shift to the host language on the part of immigrant children. On the other hand, it would not be accurate to state that the participants in this study belong to the category of Portes’ and Rumbaut’s second outcome, whereby immigrant children become bicultural while maintaining the host language as primary. This was not found to be the case with the Ghanaian immigrant children in question. It was apparent from their responses as well as from their interactions in the church settings that the participants’ choice of language use is dictated by their environment.

The findings of this study with regard to language use are not consistent with the conclusions of Portes & Hao (1998), who found that English is alive and well among second-generation youth, whereas their mother tongue is not. With three exceptions, all of the Ghanaian immigrant children speak both English and Twi. Twenty-two of the participants speak their mother tongue because their parents speak to them in their ethnic language.

The findings of the study are likewise not consistent with the theory according to which faster loss of mother tongue occurs, resulting in rapid conversion to English monolingualism in cases of immigrants living among people from numerous linguistic backgrounds (Portes & Schauffler, 1994). Home to all 25 study participants, the Bronx Borough is characterized by a mix of cultures and numerous languages. South Americans, Asians, Central Americans, Africans, Europeans, North Americans, and Caribbeans live side by side in the Bronx (Salvo, J.L. & Ortiz, R. J. (1992). (See Appendix G for the residential distribution of immigrants in the Bronx.)
Although the majority of the respondents are able to speak their native language, the general pattern is that they do so more at home with family members than with others outside the home. This can be easily explained by the fact that they are interacting with ethnic friends who speak different languages. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Arriagada (2005), who concluded that the native languages of immigrants are confined at home, whereas the dominant language is spoken in public. It is also supported by the research of Portes & Rumbaut (2001), who contended that second generation youths speak English at school and the ethnic language at home, where it is encouraged. It is clear from the present study that the Ghanaian immigrant children would not speak their ethnic language were it not for the fact that their parents encouraged them to maintain their mother tongue.

It is important to realize that if these Ghanaian immigrant children should choose to intermarry and their spouses come from ethnic groups speaking languages other than Twi, the medium of communication in their homes will have to be English and their children will grow up speaking English only. Because the majority of the participants indicated they will marry for love without consideration for nationality or ethnic background, chances are good that the participants’ children will lose their mother tongue. Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002) reported that intermarriage yields undeniable results by way of mother-tongue loss.

Study results would seem to suggest a link between the participants’ use of the ethnic language and maintenance of their ethnic identity. There is strong evidence suggesting that inasmuch as they speak Twi, they also cling to their Ghanaian identity. Rather than identifying themselves as Ghanaian-American, the participants made it
known that they think of themselves as Ghanaians. Even those who were born in the United States claim their Ghanaian identity. This is consistent with the conclusion drawn by Portes & Rumbaut (2001), who argued that language loss is seen as a loss of a part of oneself that is linked to one’s identity and cultural heritage. Similarly, Alba (1990) maintained that immigrants who eat ethnic food, attend ethnic social activities, and pepper their speech with words and phrases from the mother tongue more successfully maintain their ethnic identity. This may in fact account for the choice that most of the participants made to speak their mother tongue.

The data from the current study contradict the findings of Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002), who established a link between prior knowledge of English and a rapid shift to the dominant language of the host country among second generation Filipinos. According to the authors, the Filipino immigrants under examination were familiar with English prior to their arrival in the United States. Interestingly, 4 of every 5 second-generation Filipino children spoke English only. This is not consistent, however, with the data of the current study. Although a number of the Ghanaian immigrant children arrived in the United States with some previous knowledge of English, they are not monolingual. It should be noted that Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults (2002) found that the percentage of monolingual speakers is high in certain Asian groups—Koreans among them—who come from countries where English is not in common use. Two of every five second generation Korean immigrant children speak only English at home. Again, this is contrary to the findings regarding Ghanaian immigrant children.

On the whole, the outcome of this study in no way suggests that Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx are totally acculturated into America culture.
Rather, the results are illustrative of such concepts as biculturalism and enculturation. Assimilation, an extreme form of acculturation, is altogether absent in the findings. Foner (2003) reported that many immigrants tend to become bicultural, acculturating to mainstream American culture while retaining some aspects of homeland culture at the same time. This is clearly the case with the Ghanaian immigrant children under study here.

In keeping with the research findings demonstrating that immigrants who are able to speak their native language generally retain and reinforce their ethnic culture, participants have successfully maintained their ethnic identity. The majority of the participants have not forgotten their roots. Most of them choose to maintain their Ghanaian identity by speaking their mother tongue and identifying themselves as Ghanaians. Clearly they have not succumbed to the “melting pot” phenomenon in the sense that they have not totally abandoned their native culture in favor of the American culture. This finding is consistent with that of Bernal & Knight (1993), who maintained that the ideological melting pot is not consistent with reality. Despite the years that they have lived in the United States, the Ghanaian immigrant children have maintained their ethnic identity in numerous ways. They are not like the proverbial color-shifting chameleon that adapts in no time to its new environment (Ng 1998).

Because of the implications for acculturation, it is important to note that the participants are closely knit with family members and with the larger Ghanaian community in the Bronx. Along these lines, Portes (1996:201) pointed out the “relevance of the Durkheim theory of social integration, which states that individual behavior cannot
be properly understood apart from the level of that individual’s integration in society”. 

According to Portes, Durkheim postulated that when integration into a social group is great, the control of the group over the individual is likewise great. Portes explained further that immigrant children who are well integrated into their ethnic group tend to follow the norms and values established by the group. Again, the findings of this study show that participants are more integrated into the ethnic group than the host country as a result of their willingness to participate in ethnic events, such as church services and programs, annual independence day picnics, funeral celebrations, and installations of Ghanaian kings and queens.

It is clear from this study that most of the participants have chosen to retain their core values in large part, though adding some American values to the mix. That the majority of the participants, including some who are U.S. citizens, identified themselves as Ghanaians is indicative of their desire to maintain their ethnic identity. Granted, they are adding certain American values, as evidenced by their inclination to date and refrain from judging males who wearing earrings or headgear and females who wear pants. Like many Americans, a good number of the participants have also formed the habit of drinking soda rather than water with meals. For the most part, however, these 1.5 and second generation immigrant children have retained their cultural values, due in large measure to strong parental influence and a significant level of social integration within the larger Ghanaian community. As Ackah (2003); Atta-Poku (1996); & Ciment (2006) observed, social activities tend to lower immigrant children’s level of acculturation by virtue of their capacity to foster an appreciation of cultural values. An additional contributing factor in the case of Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx is that
Ghanaians are scattered throughout the Bronx Borough. As Foner (2001) reported, Ghanaians are numerous in New York and are characterized by tightly knit communities.

Finally, the findings of this study compliment existing studies in the field while making a new contribution to previous findings. In order to assess whether or not a group of persons from a particular country has acculturated, research of the issue must be conducted in depth with attention to a range of variables. For example, participants in this study have not abandoned eating their ethnic food. Yet the practice of eating together with others from the same bowl, customary in Ghanaian culture—particularly among the Akans—is absent. In this case, we must say that they have adopted an American style of eating while maintaining a preference for their ethnic food.

Furthermore, second generation immigrant children, such as the participants examined in this study, may speak their mother tongue. This factor alone should not be used to measure their level of acculturation; other variables must be taken into consideration as well. Classifying immigrants as totally acculturated is thus a far more complex issue than the literature might suggest. Acculturation is in fact a multidimensional and ongoing process.
References


BBC World news (5:00am) May 7, 2007


2002 Yearbook of immigration statistics.

2000 census PM 5% total U.S. (www.cis.org)

WWW.Ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php


www.ganaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php


Appendix: A

Assent Agreement

I am James Asare, the principal investigator of a research project entitled “Ghanaian Immigrant Children Living in the Bronx: A Case Study of How Children Have Adapted to the American System of Culture.” I am a doctoral student in Humanistic Studies at the University at Albany in New York State. My supervisor for this research is Professor Kwadwo Sarfoh of the Department of Africana Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY.

I would like to obtain your consent for an interview on the above-mentioned topic. The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx have been influenced by American culture in terms of language, food, religion and education. Interview questions will be related to my research topic and will be of a general nature. Some of the questions will touch on family relationships and interaction between household members. The interview will be conducted face-to-face and will take between an hour and an hour and a half. All interviews will be conducted in individual homes with individual subjects.

The interview will be recorded by an audio tape recorder. I will later transcribe the interview. Everything that you will tell me will be kept confidential. To protect your identity, I will use a pseudonym, which is a made up name. I will be the only person who has access to the tapes. I will keep the tapes locked in a cabinet until the end of the study, at which point they will be destroyed. No published or unpublished data will disclose any traceable information. I intend to interview twenty-five subjects in this project. There are no expected risks attached to your participation in this research.

In the event of any inconsistency between your parents’ consent and your assent, the following rule shall prevail: You are under no obligation to participate if you do not want to even if your parents have given their consent.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any time. In other words, you may refuse to answer a question at any time during the interview or withdraw from participation altogether.

If you have any questions about the research at this point, please allow me to answer them for you now. Should you have questions at a later point in time, my contact information is below:

James Asare
Department of Humanistic Studies
If you have any further questions concerning your rights as a research participant or if you would like to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at 800-365-9139 or orc@uamail.albany.edu.

This study will help us to learn about how people keep their traditions when they move to a new country. In the future, this information may allow us to help other families who are making a similar move. It is important that you understand the nature of the research project and what your participation entails. Your signature below indicates that the information in this agreement has been read aloud to you and that you have been given opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the study. By signing this document, you are also giving your consent to participate in the study with the understanding that you can change your mind and withdraw that consent at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

______________________                                                 ________________________
Signature of Investigator                                                     Date

______________________                                                _________________________
Name of Participant                                                             Date

______________________ _________________________
Signature of Participant                                                       Date
Tape Recording Consent Document

I hereby agree that the investigator will audio taped. (Please indicate your consent by signing below.)

______________________                                                   ________________________
Signature of Investigator               Date

______________________                                                   ________________________
Name of Participant                Date

______________________                                                   _______________________
Signature of Participant                Date
Parental Consent Document


I am James Asare, the principal investigator of a research study entitled “Ghanaian Immigrant Children living in the Bronx, New York State: A Case Study in Acculturation.” I am a doctoral student in the Humanistic Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY. My supervisor for this research is Professor Kwadwo Sarfoh of the Department of Africana Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY.

I would like to obtain your permission to interview your child on the above-mentioned topic. The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent Ghanaian immigrant children living in the Bronx have adapted to American culture in terms of language, food, religion and education. Interview questions will relate to my research topic and will be of a general nature. Some of the questions to be asked involve family relationships, including how people interact in the household. The interview will be conducted face-to-face and will take between an hour and an hour and a half. All interviews will be conducted in individual homes with individual subjects.

The interview will be recorded by an audio tape recorder and transcribed after the interview. Everything that your child will tell me in this study will remain absolutely confidential. I will protect his or her identity by using a pseudonym, which is a made up name. I will be the only person who will have access to the tapes. They will be kept in a locked cabinet until the study has been completed, at which point they will be destroyed. No published or unpublished data will disclose any traceable information. I intend to interview twenty-five subjects in this project. There are no expected risks in your child’s participation in this research.

In a case where there is inconsistency between your consent and your child’s assent, the following rule shall prevail: A “No” from your child allows him or her not to participate in the research even though you may have given your permission for him or her to do so.

Your child’s participation in this study is totally voluntary. He or she is free to withdraw at any point during the study. In other words, your child may refuse to answer any particular question during the interview or withdraw from participation altogether.

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you later have questions, you may contact:

James Asare
Department of Humanistic Studies
State University of New York at Albany
New York, NY 12222
E-mail ja8379@albany.edu
Telephone # (518) 438-1964

If you have any questions concerning your child’s rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or you wish to report any concerns about the
study, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at 800-365-9139 or orc@uamail.albany.edu

By signing this document, you are indicating your awareness that your child has been properly informed of the research project and that all of the above information has been read aloud to him or her. Without your consent, your child will not be able to participate in the study.

This study will help us to learn about how people keep their traditions when they move to a new country. In the future, this information may allow us to help other families who are making a similar move. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you have agreed to allow your child participate in the study. If your child does not agree to participate in the study, however, he or she will be free not to participate even if you have provided consent.

_______________________                                               ________________________
Signature of Investigator                                                     Date

_______________________                                               ________________________
Name of Child                                                                     Date

_________________________ _________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian Date
Tape Recording Consent Document

I would like you to give me permission to record the interview by audio tape recorder. If you agree please sign below.

________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Investigator                                          Date

________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Parent                                          Date

________________________________________  _________________________
Name of Child                                            Date
Appendix B

Brief Descriptions of Individual Participants

Ata is 20 years old. Born in the United States, Ata is attending college and majoring in history. He intends to become a lawyer in the future. He lives with his parents.

Lai is 19 years old. Born in the United States, he is in twelfth grade. Although his plans are not firm at this point, he hopes to become a medical doctor in the future. Lia lives with his parents.

Atobam is 17 years old. Born in the United States, he is an eleventh grade student. He is not sure what program he wants to pursue in the future, but he may become either a lawyer or a politician. He is also interested in banking and finance. He lives with his parents.

Yaawa is 14 years old. Born in Ghana, Yaawa migrated to the United States with his mother to join his father. He is in the 8th grade and has lived in the United States for 12 years. His initial plan was to become a basketball player, but he now wants to become a medical doctor. He lives with his parents.

Eta is 20 years old. Born in the United States. He is a college student hoping to graduate with a degree in psychology. He lives with his parents.

Krobo is 15 years old. He was born in Ghana, but has lived in United States for 9 years. He lives with both parents and attends high school student in the 8th grade. His dream is to become a lawyer.
Kootwea is 16 years old. He was born in the United States and presently lives with both parents. He is in the 9th grade. His desire is to become a pediatrician like his uncle.

Aso is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, he has lived in the United States for 12 years. He is a junior at college majoring in economics. He intends to go on for an MBA.

Adoa is 20 years old. Although he was born in the United States, he was sent to Ghana to live for some years. He has lived in the United States for 12 years. He is a junior at college majoring in economics. He lives with his mother.

Nsoa is 18 years old. Born in Ghana, he has lived in the United States for 10 years. He is a junior at college with an undecided major despite his parents’ hope that he becomes a pharmacist. Nsoa lives with his parents.

Budu is 20 years old. She was born in the United States and lives with her mother and her stepfather. She is a college student majoring in accounting. Her hope is to become an accountant one day.

Obooba is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, she has lived in the United States for 8 years. She is a junior at college. She has decided on a public policy major. Obooba lives with her father and stepmother.

Asuo is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, she has lived in the United States for 12 years. She is majoring in biology at college and wants to become a pediatrician. She lives with her parents.
Taawoto is 22 years old. She was born in the United States. She is a college student majoring in business. She is presently living with her mother, though for the previous eleven years she lived with both parents.

Gabi is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, she has lived in the United States for 15 years. She is in college and hopes to become a registered nurse. She lives with both parents.

Kutu is 22 years old. Born in Ghana, she has lived in the United States for 9 years. She is a senior in college majoring in psychology. She lives with her mother.

Fameyo is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, she has been in the United States for 11 years. She is an undergraduate student hoping to become a medical doctor in future. She lives with both parents.

Dantwi is 22 years old. Born in Ghana, she has lived in the United States for 9 years. She is at college majoring in criminal justice and political science. Her hope is to become a lawyer. Dantwi lives with her mother.

Wansam is 20 years old. Born in Ghana, he has lived in the United States for ten years. He is a college student hoping to become a lawyer. Wansam lives with his mother.

Pra is 20 years old. She was born in the United States. She is in college and hopes to become a psychologist.

Kuntun is 20 years old. She was born in the United States. She is in college majoring in biology. She wants to become a medical doctor. Kuntun lives with her parents.
Bodua is 20 years old. She was born in the United States. She is a college student interested in becoming a medical doctor. Bodua lives with her parents.

Ananse is 20 years old. She was born in the United States. She is in college and hopes to become a lawyer. She lives with both parents.

Adobuta is 20 years. She was born in the United States. She is a college student and wants to become a Social Worker. She lives with her parents.

Duaater is 21 years. She was born in the United States and hopes to become an Accountant. She lives with her parents.
### Appendix C

*Socioeconomic background of participants’ families.*

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of Household Members</th>
<th>Mother’s Education</th>
<th>Father’s Education</th>
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Appendix D

Interview Questions

*Interview Questions Pertaining to the Acculturation of Ghanaian Immigrant Children Living in the Bronx.*

General Questions

1. When were you born?

2. Where were you born?

3. Describe your household composition.

4. How long have you lived with your parents?

5. Do you have other family members living in the U.S.?

6. Do you have other family members living in Ghana?

7. Do you like living with your parents or guardian? Explain why or why not.

8. Tell me why you sometimes do not want to stay with your parents.

9. Tell me about the educational background of your parents or guardian.

10. Tell me the efforts that your parents have made to mold you according to their values.

11. How does your parents’ socialization policy sometimes influence you to change your behavior?
Questions on Language

1. To what extent, if at all, are you replacing your Ghanaian language with English?

2. How well can you speak your ethnic language?

3. Do people in your home speak your ethnic language very often? If not, what language do they use all the time?

4. Explain why a particular language is commonly spoken in your house.

5. Describe how the community where you live has influenced your way of speaking your ethnic language.

6. How often do the people who live in your home speak your ethnic language?

7. Which language do family members use when speaking to you? Explain.

8. When you talk to your parents, what language do you use most often? Why?

9. Explain why you speak English or your ethnic language most of the time.

10. Comment on why you speak a particular language to your friends.

11. How do you see the importance of continuing to use your ethnic language when most people in the United States speak English?

12. Please comment on the notion that your ethnic language is the most important aspect of being Ghanaian.

13. Describe how you would feel if you went to Ghana one day and were unable to speak your ethnic language to your grandparents who never went to school.
14. Some people think it is important that Ghanaian children in the United States learn to speak their ethnic language. What are your thoughts on that and why?

15. Is there a set of rules as to what language you are to speak when at home? If so, what do you think about such rules? If not, explain why there can’t be such rules at home.

16. How important it is for all Ghanaian children in the United States to learn to speak their ethnic language? Explain.

17. In some Ghanaian homes, the parents determine that English will be the language used. What comments do you have about that?

**Questions on Food**

1. Name some Ghanaian foods that you know.

2. Could you tell me what type of foods you have been eating for the past six years?

3. You may eat more Ghanaian or American food. Explain why you make that choice.

4. Describe how your family comes together to have their meal when all of you are at home. How have you enjoyed eating from the same bowl with your siblings, relatives or friends?

5. To what extent do you desire to eat the special foods or dishes of your ethnic background?

6. How would you agree or disagree with the statement that it is good to maintain eating your traditional food even when you are away from your native country?

7. How would you explain why your parents prepare their food at home for the household?
8. Tell me how you have enjoyed the food your parents prepare at home.

9. The foods prepared at home are mostly from your ethnic background. What comments would you make if this statement were true?

**Other General Questions**

1. To what extent, if at all, are you replacing your Ghanaian culture with the cultural norms of the US in terms of food, language, religion, and education? Why?

2. Do you think it is possible to retain one’s culture in the U.S? If so, how?

3. How do you choose your friends?

4. Are most of your friends Ghanaians? Black American? White? What are some of the qualities that you look for in a friend?

5. If asked to go and stay in Ghana with your extended family, how would you react? What would make you act in that way?

6. Do you sometimes behave as a Ghanaian and sometimes as an American? Describe an instance of both.

7. If you have ever been discriminated against, do you believe that it is because of your ethnic background?

8. Can you tell me something about your last episode of discrimination?

9. Of what value do you think the Ghanaian social and cultural activities, such as annual pinics, funerals, outdoorings, that you have attended are?

10. Do you know any Ghanaian customs? Which do you like or which do you dislike?
11. How do you like or dislike them?

12. Have your parents taught you something about your ethnic background? Describe some of the things they have taught you.

13. Why do you think your parents teach you about your ethnic background—such as homeland, food and tradition?

Questions on Religion

1. What is your parents’ or guardian’s religious background? Were you raised in this religion?

2. Do you believe there is a God? If so, explain how you came to believe that there is a God.

3. Do you believe that God must be worshipped? If so, how do you worship God?

4. If you are a Christian or a Muslim, how many times a month do you go to the mosque or church?

5. What language is used in your place of worship? Comment on why you think the language used in your church is appropriate or not appropriate.

6. Do you think it is good to use a Ghanaian language in church services?

7. How has your attendance at church and church events or activities helped you to become aware of the values of Ghanaian societies?

8. Explain why you pray to God in English or your ethnic language.

9. What aspects of going to church do you enjoy?

10. Do you plan to continue to participate in church services when you have your own
11. Do you attend ethnic religious churches? How important is it to attend such churches?

12. Some Christian denominations advocate that their members must marry from the same church. What are your thoughts on this?

13. What comments do you have about some Ghanaian parents who insist that their children marry from the same church they attend and that their partners must be a Ghanaian?

14. What will be your reaction if you are asked by your parents to do the same?

15. How would you explain why some parents force their children to marry from their ethnic groups?

16. Dating is not practiced in Ghana. Do you intend to date in the future? What will make you date or not date?

Questions on Education

1. Have you decided where to focus your education?

2. How did you choose that focus?

3. What appeals to you about your chosen profession?

4. Did your parents influence your choice of profession?

5. Explain what has motivated you to get a college education when you can get a job and make money with only a high school diploma.
Questions on Dress

1. In Ghana, females do not wear pants (trousers) as you see in the U.S. What do you think about Ghanaian females wearing pants? Explain.

2. Some Ghanaian males in the U.S. wear earrings, but in Ghana that is not so. Please comment.

3. In Ghanaian culture, females do not expose their thighs or midriff to the public as American females sometimes do. Some Ghanaian females, however, have adopted this American style of dress. What comments would you like to make about Ghanaian females who dress this way?

4. How do you see Ghanaian males who wear headgear similar to that of women in public?
Appendix E

Pictures showing marriage ceremony of Ghanaian couples.

Bride and Groom With Extended Family Members of the Groom
Bride Exchanging Vows With Groom, With Extended Family Members in Background
Appendix F.

Pictures of Ghanaians celebrating Palm Sunday in the Bronx and Harlem.

At Mount Morris Ascension Presbyterian Church in Harlem, worshipers of Ghanaian descent took part in celebrating Palm Sunday two weeks ago.
About 500 worshipers, many from Ghana, filled the Church of the Pentecost in the Bronx on Palm Sunday.
Pastor David Tekper, center, of the Church of the Pentecost in Williamsbridge, the Bronx, held one Palm Sunday service in English and one in Twi, a major language of Ghana. He was joined by Apostle Albert Amoah.