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## PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

### An evaluation of marriage-divorce-remarriage issues among Ghanaian Christian migrants as blamed on the radical impact of western and African cultural clashes in the UK

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**Title:**

**An Evaluation of Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage Issues among  
Ghanaian Christian Migrants as Blamed on the Radical Impact of  
Western and African Cultural Clashes in the UK**

## **Dedication**

This study report is dedicated to Elizabeth my wife and our children Walton, Oliver and Debora who have supported and encouraged me throughout this period of studies.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many people have contributed into making this study what it is today. While some like Dr Robin Routledge my supervisor had to go through the pain of both encouraging and sometimes through constructive criticism, others had to endure my persistent demand for attention, explanation of specific issues as related to their profession or personal experience. Yet others, like my wife had to forgo her personal comfort and many times slept with headlights on to allow me to study. My children described me as becoming too busy. Church leaders, members and friends alike were equally very considerate on my limited time. To all of them I say thank you for your support.

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Finally my total appreciation goes to the Almighty God for bringing me thus far, to God be the glory!

## **Glossary of abbreviations and foreign words**

Abusua: literally means family. In the Akan context family implies every member of one's matriclan relatives and excludes any conjugal relations.

Akan: A cluster of Ghanaian tribes with linguistic proximities.

ANE: Ancient Near East.

Awaree: Marriage.

"Awaree dee ne kwan ware": marriage is supposed to travel over one's life time (literally marriage compares with an endless journey).

"Awaree enye sumiie na wode wotiri ato so" (literally marriage is not like a pillow to trust one's head on; meaning marriage is only a means to an end not the end itself)

Fn: Footnote (for internal cross-references).

GACM: Ghanaian Adventist Christian Migrant.

NT: New Testament.

OT: Old Testament.

PNDC: Provisional National Defence Council.

SDA: Seventh-day Adventist.

*Tiri nsa*: part of bride price, a token of drinks offered by a groom and received in recognition as the bride's family's acceptance of a man to marry her among Akans. A return of such token drinks means the woman's family no longer recognise the marriage and has by that gesture nullified it.

UK: United Kingdom.

WWI: World War 1

WWII: World War 2

## ***Abstract***

This study critically analyses an assumption that Ghanaian marriages, while in Britain, become difficult and that many do not survive. This is blamed on, the Impact of Britain's Western culture. Many migrant marriages apparently endure stressful deterioration that often leads to separation, abusive loveless co-habiting and sometimes divorce whilst resident in Britain. It consequently evaluates and discusses some practical issues facing Pastoral Ministry and counselling concerns of marital relationships especially of the Ghanaian Adventist migrants. It also discusses participant views on the Ghanaian migrant Seventh-day Adventist Churches' leadership approach and their implication on members' marriages including ethical issues regarding offenders' active participation in the church. This research was limited to a cross-section of the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Christians in Britain for manageability and focus. It is anticipated that patterns found could be repeatable where Ghanaians are found elsewhere in the Western civilisation. This project objectively explored the above assumption to question, investigate and determine possible causative factors to help move from assumption to referable data and thereby inform and improve pastoral care ministries. The study concludes that Ghanaian Adventist Christian Migrant marriages actually endure occasional multifaceted destructive problems of unrealistic expectations from a community of relatives, friends, in-laws and the church as well as the couples themselves.

# Table of Contents

Title:.....	1
Dedication .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	2
Glossary of abbreviations and foreign words.....	4
Abstract.....	5
List of Figures .....	12
List of Tables .....	12
1 Introduction .....	13
1.1 Background and Justification of this Study .....	14
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	19
1.2.1 Research Objectives: .....	20
1.2.2 Limitations .....	22
1.2.3 Hypothesis: .....	23
1.2.4 Research Questions:.....	23
2 Literature Review .....	24
2.1 A Look at Some Related Works .....	24
2.2 Related Articles in Journals .....	28
3 Methodology .....	31
3.1 The Choice of the Qualitative Research Method .....	31
3.2 Justification for the Inclusion of Quantitative Research .....	34
3.3 The Multiple Methodologies .....	37

3.4	Research Design.....	40
3.4.1	Scope of research.....	41
3.4.2	Expected Outcome.....	42
3.4.3	Sampling.....	42
3.4.4	Analysis.....	44
4	Conceptual Framework: The Traditional Context.....	47
4.1	A Brief Context of Marriage reviewed: the African Setting.....	47
4.2	Contemporary Challenges on African Family-Life Traditions .....	49
4.3	The Context for Ghanaian Marriages .....	52
4.3.1	Traditional Expectation of a Ghanaian Marriage .....	52
4.3.2	Male Dominance, a Traditional Pattern of Conjugal Role: Kwahu rural context .....	53
4.3.3	Marital Instability: probable Reasons .....	56
4.3.4	The Structure of Marital Stability at Abutia .....	58
4.3.5	Bride Price Emphasis at LoWilli and Gender Roles among Tales.....	59
4.3.6	Modernisation and Conjugal Continuity at Avatime .....	60
4.3.7	The Interstate Succession Law of Ghana .....	61
4.4	A Panoramic View of Current Marriage: the Ghanaian setting .....	63
4.4.1	Current Prospects for a Ghanaian Marriage.....	64
4.4.2	Innovations among Religious Groups .....	65
4.4.3	Suggested Reasons for Existing Marital Difficulties .....	65
5	Conceptual Framework: The Christian Context .....	68



5.1	The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Marriage-Divorce Issues ....	68
5.1.1	Ellen G. White on Christian marriage and marital issues .....	71
5.1.2	The Sanctity of Marriage: Placing the Church in Control.....	73
5.1.3	Some Contemporary Adventist opinion leaders' views .....	75
5.1.4	A Summary of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs: A biblical love .....	79
5.1.5	Summary.....	80
5.2	Some Christian Marital views shared by Adventists .....	81
5.3	The Ideal Ghanaian Adventist Christian Marriage .....	84
5.4	Making sense of the ideals, purposes and the variety of views to this study .....	86
5.5	Making Marriage Work .....	91
5.6	Different Views on Divorce and Remarriage .....	95
5.6.1	The Interpretations of the Old Testament Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage .....	95
5.6.2	The Inter-Testamental and New Testament views of divorce and remarriage: Hillelites, Shammaites, Jesus' and Paul's grounds and exceptional clauses .....	102
5.6.3	The Diversity of Christian views on divorce and remarriage.....	106
6	Migration, Cultural Marital Orientation and Change .....	114
7	The Quantitative studies: Presentation of analyses and interpretation of the questionnaire data.....	122
7.1	The Quantitative Analysis:.....	122

7.1.1	GACMs Perception of Marriage among Migrants in Britain.....	122
7.1.2	Effects of Western Culture .....	124
7.1.3	The Ease of Meeting Divorce Requirements in Britain.....	126
7.1.4	The Benefit System’s Impact in Britain.....	128
7.1.5	Relatives’ Remote Control.....	130
7.1.6	Communication Gaps and other Concerns .....	131
7.1.7	GACMs’ Contemplation of Divorce.....	133
7.1.8	The Church and Marital Issues .....	136
7.1.9	Conclusions.....	142
8	Presentation and Interpretation of Analysed Interview Data .....	146
8.1	Introduction .....	146
8.1.1	The marriage institution in the Ghanaian context: exclusive heterosexual union.....	146
8.1.2	The Akan Meaning of Family in Ghana: A philosophical view ...	149
8.1.3	The Consent to marriage and the reception of a Dowry .....	150
8.1.4	The Dowry as a symbol of responsibility .....	152
8.1.5	Marriage Expectation and Cohabitation .....	159
8.1.6	Marriage, Polygamy, Divorce and Christian Beliefs .....	162
8.2	Britain’s Divorce Policy Awareness: Impact on Ghanaian Immigrant Marriages .....	170
8.2.1	Marriage stability and Divorce .....	171

8.2.2	Declaration of Single parenthood: the socio-economic impact on Ghanaian marriages in Britain.....	173
8.3	The influence of technological advancement and power balance issues .....	175
8.3.1	Quality time and marriage in Britain and Ghana.....	177
8.3.2	Planning among migrant couples .....	179
8.3.3	Communication between married couples .....	181
8.3.4	Financial security and cultural concerns: a root cause for marital confusion and instability .....	183
8.4	The Ghanaian Adventist Churches' approach towards marital stability .....	188
8.4.1	Domestic issues and the Ghanaian Adventist churches' stance on domestic violence.....	191
8.4.2	The impact of divorce on role participation of divorcees in church .....	193
8.4.3	The role of the remarried and divorcees in the church .....	196
8.5	Some differences of marriages in Ghana and Britain .....	200
9	Discussion of the Main Study Results.....	205
10	Conclusion.....	215
11	Recommendations.....	219
12	Appendices.....	222
12.1	Participant Information Sheet.....	222

12.2	Interview Questions.....	223
12.3	Questionnaire:.....	225
12.4	Correlation Table.....	228
12.5	Qualitative Analysis (sampled answers to interview questions grouped) .....	230
13	Bibliography.....	233
13.1	Books and Articles from Journals.....	233
13.2	Bibles .....	245

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Marriage Becomes Difficult in UK.....	123
Figure 2 Western Culture is to be Blamed.....	125
Figure 3 Western Divorce is Easier .....	127
Figure 4 UK Rewards Divorcees .....	128
Figure 5 Relatives in the Background are to Blame.....	130
Figure 6 Can Poor Communication be Blamed? .....	132
Figure 7 Divorced or Contemplating Divorce .....	133
Figure 8 Blame Awareness of Personal Rights for Difficulties .....	135
Figure 9 How Churches in Ghana Respond to Divorce .....	136
Figure 10 The Churches' Approach to Settle Marital Issues.....	138
Figure 11 Members Opinion for the Church's Approach.....	139

## List of Tables

Table 1 Correlation of Variables .....	141
Table 2 Correlation of the Questionnaire Variables .....	228

# 1 Introduction

This research is presented in thirteen segments. The introductory section provides some background and includes the study objectives, limitations, statement of the problem, hypothesis and the research questions. Section 2 explores available documentary resources to acknowledge and establish defining contexts for the Ghanaian Christian's circumstances. This sets the stage for answering the question of why there is need for this research. Section 3 argues for the methodology adopted.

The "conceptual framework"<sup>1</sup> discussions, sections 4 and 5, supplement the gap created by the lack of enough relevant data for a background study in section 2. Culturally, two broader contexts: Africa and Christianity are considered naturally related platforms. Ghana and Seventh-day Adventism form the third and fourth narrower key contexts in these sections where closer available data were utilised for analyses of traditions deemed of practical importance to this study.

Consequently, I ensured that the cultural traditions acknowledged in this study are representative enough to cover the major Ghanaian platforms of inheritance; paternal and maternal lineages that may directly or remotely explain the practical perception and behaviour of couples today. However, not every detail is highlighted as too many similarities exist. Therefore, emphases were made on some peculiarities of relevance to the sampled population's experiences. In section 6 a

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<sup>1</sup> 'Conceptual Framework' is a borrowed caption from Kasomo. Daniel W. Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion: Customary Marriage in Africa* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).

limited but informative discussion on migration in a globalised cultural context is included. Sections 7 and 8 report the primary respective results from the qualitative and quantitative studies. These are followed by a combined discussion of the studies in section 9. The conclusion and recommendations are situated in sections 10 and 11 followed by the appendices at 12 and finally section 13 for the bibliography.

The history of marriage and divorce in any given human society reveals problems. Worthington points out that marriage is confronted by a multitude of difficulties with each one creating unique stresses.<sup>2</sup> Ethicists, social scientists and other specialists, are concerned about the impact and implications of broken homes, that often end in divorce, and on the fabric of society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The Ghanaian community and specifically Ghanaian Adventist Christian Migrants (hereafter GACM) sampled in this study, highlight a variety of views which are expressed well in the academic and professional debates on divorce and related issues among Christians. I begin with the background to the study.

### ***1.1 Background and Justification of this Study***

Dynamic trends regarding Christian marital issues require regular, updated studies, in an attempt to eliminate 'fatal' ignorance. Peter Brierley, quoted Tidball's observation; "...something is seriously wrong with the church" and Riddell's "...the

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<sup>2</sup> Everett L. Worthington, Jr, *Hope for Troubled Marriages: Overcoming common problems & major difficulties* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> 'Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit', ed. by Robert M. Milardo, 2, 63 (2001), 446–457 (pp. 446–449).

church is in trouble and doesn't know it".<sup>4</sup> Among these troubles are the increasing situations of marital difficulty that apparently compromise certain Christian traditions in general and the Ghanaian Adventist<sup>5</sup> Christian migrant couples in particular. Though examples of statistical records abound<sup>6</sup> and generally testify to emotional scars suffered by many with their corresponding effects on society, the trend continues unabated.

It is believed within the Christian community that biblical Christianity proposes a possible lasting happy marital relationship, in which selfless love may signify Christian maturity. Yet, the reality of existing marriages including that of GACMs, apparently misses the mark. While it may be considered normal elsewhere, with staunch non-negotiable traditions of strict organisational (SDA) interpretation of Scripture in some circles, coupled with corresponding African cultural influences, GACMs find almost everything wrong with difficult marriages especially when they end in divorce.

In almost every culture, divorce affects more than the couples involved. While several victims endure misery in silence being short of other options, the traditional GACMs, particularly women, experience some social stigmatisation for being divorced. Consequently some couples hide difficulties even from friends and the

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Brierley, *The Tide Is Running Out* (Eltham, London: Christian Research Vision Building, 2000), p. 66; Rev Dr Derek Tidball, 'Where Is the Church Going?', *European Christian Bookstore Journal*, 1999, 3 (p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> *UK Church Statistics 2005-2015*, ed. by Peter Brierley (Kent: ADBC, 2011), chap. 11.1.6 The Ghanaian Adventists form sub-set of the Seventh-day Adventists classified statistically among smaller denominations in Britain.

<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Divorces in England and Wales 2010', *Statistical Bulletin*, 2011.



church. Though the final decision is between the married couple, the victim scale for GACMs include immediate and remote relatives as well as friends. In other words, entire communities traditionally have a stake and might suffer some disconnection for relatives' marital tensions. Such marital issues whether they end in separation or divorce still carry with them many victims. In effect, such a decision might impact on the very survival of a peaceful co-existence of involved communities.

First of all, this study investigates possible reasons behind marital difficulties noted among Ghanaian migrants specifically GACMs in Britain which often create fears and suspicion among couples and community leaders. Anecdotes of true situations abound (among GACMs) of how couples' behaviour and attitudes suddenly change following settlement in Europe. Consequently some Ghanaians prefer a long-term separation and determine to leave spouses in Ghana for peace of mind. I am concerned with these unexpected changes observed by community members that seem to confirm and raise further suspicion of an unproven in-group perception that in Britain, Ghanaian marriages are bound to become difficult with a high probability of ending in divorce.

Secondly, the intention of this study is to question and analyse the basis for these assumed fears to confirm or disprove such claims among the population sampled. Consequently, this study deems it appropriate to end the era of assumption, by providing empirically tangible data to use for further improvement.

In addition, it is noted within the sampled group that marriages are under threat with fears due to uncertainties. Furthermore, the group's leadership apparently faces the realities of acculturation and legal restrictions, coupled with a misunderstood cultural perception of their own issues within a 21st century's non-absolute environment. Other additional issues for the leadership include:

- Dealing with increasing divorce rates,
- Indefinite separation of couples while in Britain with accompanying suspicions,
- Non-commitment issues such as co-habiting believers (Understandably frowned upon by the conservatively oriented GACMs)
- The status of such in the Adventist Church
- The desire for possible solutions.

Yet, other practical issues are often observed or witnessed among GACMs by concerned Christians including myself. For example, some GACM leaderships face accusations for heavy-handedness with irregularities of increasingly ethical and dogmatic arguments against their handling of marital concerns. Contentious and often debatable church disciplinary anomalies, follow co-habitation, separation, divorce and remarriages thus affecting subsequent church participation in an attempt to maintain church discipline.

I have also observed that common trends of often hidden destructive yet preventable marital concerns such as arguments, are in the ascendancy within Ghanaian Christian communities generally as never before. Regardless of the background or reasoning, some of these occurrences end in separation or even divorce. Randomised observations<sup>7</sup> of the sampled GACMs approached in non-formal post-study discussions suggest increasing in-group relationship deterioration. Some opinions were that something ought to be done to help stall a further upsurge of this social situation within GACM communities before many more Christian marriages, particularly GACMs, end up as part of the divorce statistics.

Existing statistical documents<sup>8</sup> seem to suggest that probably the rate of increase in the general Christian divorce dilemma is in proportion<sup>9</sup> to the Christian church's need to address and contextualise the practical realities of contemporary episodes in churches today. Moreover, it is most likely that there are several victims of these marital dilemmas within the Ghanaian cultural orientation while children and other victims get swept along by the collapse of Ghanaian marriages. A critical analysis of some related 21st century's challenging ethical, cultural and burning issues of ministry and realities in the light of perceived ideal Christian marital relationships among GACMs, specifically those in Britain, is spotlighted in this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Willie van Peer, Frank Hakemulder and Sonia Zyngier, *Muses and Measures: Empirical Research Methods for the Humanities* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 77–79 Observation, is classified as an elaborate descriptive primary method of empirical study by van Peer et al.

<sup>8</sup> Brierley, *UK Church Statistics 2005-2015*, bk. 2005–2015.

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Divorces in England and Wales', pp. 2-4.

## ***1.2 Statement of the Problem***

Among GACMs there is a largely muted; yet, open secret, and an unproven assumption that marriages brought over to the West (and in this study Britain) will become difficult with time. These hushed fears of imminent difficulty (blamed on migration and the Western cultural impact, in Amoah's report<sup>10</sup> for instance), seem to negatively influence the important decisions of many couples, thereby, creating suspicion and distrust which is manifested sooner or later in marital difficulties. Moreover, it is feared that marriages contracted here in Britain begin to exhibit similar concerns which almost confirm the accompanying fear that many migrant marriages do not survive the Western culture. I am concerned about perceptions of trends of difficulty that have brought about indefinite separation between couples. Some become suspicious and fear the consequences of exposure and thus determine never to bring spouses to Britain.

Furthermore, different interpretations of biblical and SDA Church Manual principles often compound the situation for affected believers. In the ensuing studies I explore possible related underlying issues as a basis to either disprove or establish this observed fear (see fn. 12 p. 25). I therefore investigate the GACMs context in Britain for evidence that may explain, disprove or confirm aspects of the perception through the ensuing study sections in an attempt to establish whether the GACMs

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<sup>10</sup> John K. Amoah, 'Development of Seminars To Improve Family Relationships and Spiritual Experience Among Ghanaian Emigrant Families in Adventist Immigrant Churches in New England' (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University, 2011), chap. 4.

experiences may qualify as an acceptable part of a grounded theory on marital difficulty issues.

### **1.2.1 Research Objectives:**

I set out to investigate and document findings of GACMs' marital fear issues in Britain. I expect to offer an informed awareness to improve future Christian ministry with positive options for education, pastoral care and counselling. Also, a sound and updated theological understanding, for the GACM's circumstances of marriage is envisaged. One of the ultimate benefits anticipated is to reinforce interest in facilitating enrichment of Christian marriages, especially for the sampled GACM, and positively influence the immediate communities. I also hope that the GACMs specifically targeted in this project will be exposed to certain aspects of the issues investigated. However the main objective of this study first of all, is to discourage complacency by questioning the basic unproven assumptions believed by GACMs concerning marital difficulties, usually blamed on the influences of the Western Culture.

The second main outcome is to objectively critique the generalised assumptions based on the findings, whether GACM's marriages do not actually survive the British Culture. The third outcome is to investigate and suggest a sound practical and ministerial approach, necessary for pastoral care and counselling for the specific needs of GACM couples. The final objective is to make recommendations, for more critical further studies into GACM relationship issues.

The contribution of this study therefore is initiating the GACM cultural diagnosis for certain remote sources of cultural norms and traditions that preceded and shaped contemporary cultural practices. It will utilise modern research methods to present findings which provide some awareness and referable evidence, with positive options for updating pastoral care and counselling, and also commend informed theological as well as cultural understanding of the Ghanaian Christian relationships particularly on marriage among GACMs.

Furthermore specific issues will thus be addressed which are expected to offer a window of understanding in order to disentangle existing complexities in GACM marriages in applicable environments. This should improve and inform future Christian ministry.

In addition to questioning a generalised assumption, I also intend to fill the gap between the hypothetical assumptions of knowledge of marital problems with the provision of a written document as evidence in relation to what is available for investigating marital issues noted among GACMs. In other words, in-depth studies on the subject are overdue and studies done and books written so far apparently assumed the usual generality for the causes of marital difficulties of GACMs.

One of the ultimate benefits anticipated as an additional contribution, will be to reinforce the enrichment of Christian marriage in the SDA as it is hoped that on a wider spectrum, Christian marital successes will positively influence immediate communities. It is also hoped further, that the specific Christian group targeted for

this project will be exposed to some of their own believer-writers' legacy on the issues involved.

Furthermore, this study's contributions include questioning the key assumption, held among the GACM population group concerning marital difficulties, that are usually blamed on the influences of the Western Culture on immigrant marriages. In addition to the critical approach to the assumptions, the results must lead to other outcomes as follows:

- That marriages brought over or contracted in the West by GACMs may be facilitated to survive and even thrive in the developed and enabling Western Culture.
- That further investigations and suggestions, with recommendations for sound practical and ministerial resource materials and approaches, necessary for pastoral care and counselling for the specific needs of GACM couples are initiated.

### **1.2.2 Limitations**

This research does not exhaust every related issue, as the institution of marriage is too broad. In addition, it does not promise the elimination of problems as each period of human history bears its own peculiar problems to life. Discussions therefore featured issues surrounding heterosexual relationships only as within the scope, and known among GACMs now, to maintain focus. The study utilised a few related but generalised materials to establish a broader premise before narrowing down to specifics. Not much has yet been written on the sample population, consequently, other information sources that addressed the issues, were utilised for their specific contributions to help investigate and understand issues.

I am also aware of the difficulty involved in getting people's consent to participate due to their busy work schedules. Thus extra attention was paid to make it possible for people to do so at their own convenience. The following hypothesis has been set to help narrow the study as there seems to be more involved that cannot be covered in this research.

### **1.2.3 Hypothesis:**

- Many Ghanaian migrants believe marital relationship becomes difficult in the Western environment.
- The arbitrary role of some Ghanaian Adventist Church leaders in handling marital issues often makes it hard to exit a difficult marriage and in some cases, equally hard to manage very basic issues.

### **1.2.4 Research Questions:**

The following main question is considered: Do GACM marriages become difficult as a direct result after settling in the UK? Subsidiary questions: Is the Western culture to blame for GACMs marital difficulties, and, if so how? Does an explanation exist for the intensification of marital difficulties among GACMs following settlement in Britain? Are there other possible reasons why the GACM marriages may encounter difficulties? What efforts are being made to ratify the issue of marital difficulties among the GACMs' marriages in the West and to what effect?



## 2 Literature Review

This section looks first at the contexts that directly or indirectly provide an understanding of the GACMs' experiences that triggered this study. The rationale for including the indirect material (not too distant culturally) is to fill the gap of non-availability of the desired direct resources and the absence of enough closer ones. For example other African authors are utilised where they provide similar cultural or customary practice information in the absence of local documents.

I also attempt to explore the basis of some broader issues that are directly related to GACMs because of shared interests in terms of Christian beliefs or as recognised opinion leaders within SDA and GACMs with some common traditional values. A typical example of the latter category is Ellen White's writings known and applied among SDAs worldwide and (often hyped by fundamentalists) among GACMs. Further to these is a discussion on ethical dispute issues touching on related views on marriage, divorce and remarriage held in the wider Christian setting and also found within the SDA and GACM leadership. Finally, a discussion in yet another presentation follows after the methodology and conceptual framework sections aimed to remind GACMs on the need to understand the impact of globalisation on migrants' cultures like the GACMs.

### ***2.1 A Look at Some Related Works***

In February 2011 a Ghanaian SDA minister, John Amoah, completed the closest related study designed to benefit a GACM community in the USA. I look at his work and consider its importance to this study. First, the purpose of Amoah's

project was to develop “Seminars to improve family relationships and spiritual experience” for Ghanaian migrants in his churches and to those who might find them useful. I sought his permission for access and he emailed a copy for which I am immensely grateful. His work provides one major fact which solidifies my study so that I can now write with confidence about the once rumoured assumption of marital difficulty of Ghanaians migrating particularly to the West. He shows the significant impact on GACM family relationships when he wrote, “...family relational problems are on the rise”.<sup>11</sup> Much as I appreciate Amoah’s project for its possibilities, I start with the requisite diagnosis before I consider any prescription for healing.

Part of my reservation stems from the fact that I cannot agree with the idea that provision of spiritual solutions, such as rebuilding the family altar, will be enough to eradicate family problems and for this study specific marital difficulty. There is a need for a greater understanding of major contributing factors which could be multifaceted. Amoah admits there are family difficulties, and that most of the information of these difficulties is also anecdotal observation which in his own words “...begs for systematic study and improvement.”<sup>12</sup> This study takes a closer look at the potential basic systemic details relevant to this issue raised from the UK version of the Ghanaian Adventist group, purposely to meet that requirement.

Kordzo Adonu in his study of psychosocial predictors of marital satisfaction compared couples’ satisfaction within both Ghanaian and British cultural settings.

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<sup>11</sup> Amoah, ‘Development of Seminars to Improve Family Relationships...’. The Abstract page.

<sup>12</sup> Amoah suggested in his statement of the problem and continued to reaffirm the need to investigate GACMs marital difficulties through his study report.

Adonu did detailed analyses in comparing the cultural constructions of the British and the Ghanaian marriages as his objective. Particularly relevant to this study are the relationship beliefs and marriage role expectations on the part of the Ghanaian couples. With a completely different objective Adonu's work (assuming the difficulties), did not concern itself with the basic issues being addressed in this study. However, as a Ghanaian scholar involved in research related to Ghanaians, sections of his findings contain items potentially relevant to this study. For instance he concludes that Ghanaians abide by collective decisions whereas Westerners are mostly individualistic.<sup>13</sup>

Oppong's book is a product of her PhD on the issue.<sup>14</sup> She concerns herself with issues relating to a section of the Akan community, Akan senior civil servants of Ghana living and working in Accra. Her comparison concentrates on the relationship between a couple's conjugal life and the power struggle between the couple.

Gyekye, a Ghanaian philosopher, discusses much that relates individual identity within the communal practices and philosophy of Ghanaians, particularly the Akans. One such noted philosophical thought is embedded in a discussion in which he deals with the individual and his or her community. Who needs the other most; the individual or the community that gives identity to the individual?<sup>15</sup> He quotes

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Kordzo Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction in British and Ghanaian Cultural Settings' (Brunel, UK: Brunel University, 2005), chap. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Christine Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 38–39.

Mbiti's famous "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,"<sup>16</sup> and supports it with Menkiti's "...in the African understanding human community plays a crucial role in the individual's acquisition of full personhood"<sup>17</sup>. In the Ghanaian context, as in the rest of Africa, the community always comes first; thereby swallowing up individualism in most cases. His discussions therefore cover many Ghanaian philosophical and cultural traditions.

Kasomo, researching about the Luo of Kenya, reveals certain general cultural practices such as the communal expectation of any normal person in Africa to get married. Kasomo implies it is unforgiveable when individuals refuse to marry as he or she offends society and that polygamy (polygyny) is normal. Fertility is a common issue that may put much stress on a woman who must bear children for her husband.<sup>18</sup> Other relevant practices include payment of a dowry or bride price in some contexts and the respect and willingness to belong to and maintain membership of one's communities such as church and family. Perhaps the most striking similarity and additional relevance to this study is the matrilineal inheritance<sup>19</sup> culture which is well known among the Akans of Ghana. Yet other similarities centre on the fact that marriage is always a community affair and happens not just between couples but their respective relatives as a whole.<sup>20</sup> In short, much similarity exists; thus the relevance of Kasomo's book to this study.

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<sup>16</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 52; John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 72.

Erben asserted in his thesis (focused on understanding Protestant divorcee's problems) that the role of a person's religion, as a variant in divorce adjustments, is quite significant. Erben made a significant claim that: "In conservative protestant denominations the permanence of a heterosexual marriage is emphasised as a divine prescription."<sup>21</sup> Conservative Protestants here relevantly included the SDA Church to which the GACMs belong.

## ***2.2 Related Articles in Journals***

This section takes an initial look at the articles I have found relevant to this study. They will be considered in detail in the context of a conceptual discussion.

Awusabo-Asare's article, in the Canadian Journal of African Studies, focused on the importance of the Intestate Succession Law promulgated by the PNDC government in June 1985. The PNDCL111-114 is the most recent since 1884 and tries to change traditional succession laws deemed unfair in Ghana. The article provides indispensable information on marriage and succession traditions considered useful for this research.

Caldwell<sup>22</sup> discussed fertility attitudes in three regions of Ghana. Included in his submissions is the fact that traditionally a desire for large families serves as social security for the aged. Thus, fertility has a communal interest and any decline causes social concern. Ayisi,<sup>23</sup> Klomegah,<sup>24</sup> DeRose et al,<sup>25</sup> Kannae<sup>26</sup> and Takyi<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Andreas Erben, 'Predictors of Divorce Adjustment Among Members of Three Conservative Protestant Denominations' (Michigan, MI: Andrews University, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> J. C. Caldwell, 'Fertility Attitudes in Three Economically Contrasting Rural Regions of Ghana', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 15 (1967), 217-238.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Ansah Ayisi, 'Ghana: Family Values', *Africa Report*, 38 (1993), 64-66.

wrote separately but share a common emphasis on similar traditions of cultural attitudes on fertility and economic changes notable among Ghanaians especially in the rural areas. Like Caldwell, their discussions on the perception of the social need for large families as a reason for the community's interest in designing fertility rules and their maintenance, are relevant to this study.

In volume 42 of *Social Forces* (1963), Omari<sup>28</sup> analysed the traditional structure of the Ghanaian family. Parental priority, he stressed, remains a required expectation despite waves of modernisation and individualistic changes as far as marriage is concerned. In the *Journal of Social Psychology*, Kline<sup>29</sup> however, concluded in his tests on items that may influence these cultural decisions that responses are different depending on cultural and historical experiences.

Brydon,<sup>30</sup> Geest,<sup>31</sup> Goody,<sup>32</sup> Oppong<sup>33</sup> and Verdon<sup>34</sup> form another set of contributors to journals who particularly inform this study from a variety of other local

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<sup>24</sup> R. Klomegah, 'Socio-economic Characteristics of Ghanaian Women in Polygamous Marriages', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 28 (1997), 73–88.

<sup>25</sup> Laurie F. DeRose, F. Nii-Amoo Dodoo and Vrushali Patil, 'Fertility Desires and Perceptions of Power in Reproductive Conflict in Ghana', *Gender & Society*, 16 (2002), 53–73.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Kannae and Brian F. Pendleton, 'Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 29 (1994), 65–76.

<sup>27</sup> Baffour K. Takyi and Yaw Oheneba-Sakyi, 'Gender Differentials in Family Size Among Ghanaian Couples', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 32 (1997), 296–306.

<sup>28</sup> T. Peter Omari, 'Role Expectation in the Courtship Situation in Ghana', *Social Forces*, 42 (1963), 147–156.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Kline, 'Cultural Differences in Item Endorsements in a Personality test-Ai3Q-in India, Ghana, and Great Britain', *Journal of Social Psychology*, 94 (1974), 137–138.

<sup>30</sup> Lynne Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatieme, Ghana', *Africa*, 49 (1979), 97–111.

<sup>31</sup> Sjaak Van Der Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 38 (1976), 572–578.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Goody, "'Normative", "Recollected" and "Actual" Marriage Payments Among the LoWiili of Northern Ghana, 1951-1966', *Africa*, 39 (1969), 54–61.

<sup>33</sup> Christine Oppong and Wolf Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children: Some Evidence from Kwahu, Ghana', *Africa*, 52 (1982), 15–33; Christine Oppong, 'From Love to Institution: Indications of Change in Akan Marriage', *Journal of Family History*, 5 (1980), 197–209.

<sup>34</sup> Michel Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 52 (1982), 48–66.

traditional areas thus enriching this study. Their relevant contributions are discussed in more detail within the conceptual framework discussions below after the methodology section.

I discuss the methodology next.

### 3 Methodology

This section presents the choice of study method and design, participants and procedural approach and argues for the processes adopted. I briefly explain and discuss the components of related methodology adopted below.

#### *3.1 The Choice of the Qualitative Research Method*

This study purposely begins with the Qualitative research method. Notably, it covers a variety of approaches, including narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the Qualitative method's broad and complex spectrum could elicit more information. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln highlight its complex quality of crosscutting fields of discipline as well as subject matters that might inter-connect in the wake of its enquiries.<sup>36</sup>

Denzin and Lincoln's recognition of the complexity of qualitative research methods is further shown by their inclusion of concepts, terms and assumptions of traditional associations that are foundational in nature.<sup>37</sup> They make a further claim that any attempt to define qualitative research should take cognisance of the total historical complexity behind it. I acknowledge therefore, that, adequate traditional knowledge forms the backbone and is essential in this empirical study in order to make sense of GACM perceptions.

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<sup>35</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), pp. xi-xiii.

<sup>36</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, p. 2.



Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln claim it involves utilisation of diversities of empirically observed and organised collections through ‘...case studies; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview...’ that effectively explain problematic routines. It is therefore a naturally ‘situated activity’ that authentically locates observers within a specific environment and attempt to explore primary realities for the reader through the observer’s work.<sup>38</sup>

This study thus opted for the inclusion of interviews and data search for the qualitative aspect for possible grounded theories. This decision emerged from the methods’ trusted credibility and in-depth revelations of conceptual truths. Richards<sup>39</sup> is apparently in agreement with Oppenheim that, choices of research instruments of measurement necessarily ought to establish validity and reliability.<sup>40</sup> Hakim emphasised further the importance of maintaining focus on the ‘purpose’ and the related ‘intellectual strategy’.<sup>41</sup> Strategic choices are, therefore, meant to help unearth possible factors of dynamic cultural sentiments at play among GACMs and bring them to light.

A further defence reinforcing reliability in a case study strategy is endorsed by the application’s additional merits of proximity where the object of study is within a natural environment. Glaser and Strauss maintain that a discovery of theories in an empirical setting generates and exposes a grounded theory. Whether such theories

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<sup>38</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Lyn Richards, *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*, 2nd edn (London: SAGE, 2009), p. 186.

<sup>40</sup> A. N. Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement* (London: Pinter, 1992), p.6.

<sup>41</sup> C. Hakim, *Research Design, Contemporary Social Research* (London: Allen Unwin, 1987), p.8.

were speculated previously or not does nothing to negate their fitness or reliability as long as they have been generated from existing data.<sup>42</sup> Cohen et al refer to several combinations that categorise a research project as grounded theory. These include similarity of data, common purpose in the application of more than one method in a project, more observers on an issue, or a combination of approaches in investigation.<sup>43</sup> Thus, to discover a grounded theory, this study strategically reinforces validation through the utilisation of several qualitative methods.

The strategic application of case study emerged therefore, as the underlying natural empirical tool of choice to accomplish these investigations of GACMs. It is therefore anticipated to assist in dealing with the phenomenological real-life issues facing GACMs being studied through its utilisation of a multi-method approach.<sup>44</sup> For instance, Stake suggests it is not the method.<sup>45</sup> Stake and Robson apparently agree that case study is not necessarily a methodological option but the situation or object of study itself.<sup>46</sup> Yin's opinion is that it is relevant when solving life issues with the 'why' and 'how' questions.<sup>47</sup> He maintains it is "...the preferred strategy" particularly

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<sup>42</sup> B. G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago MI: Aldine, 2000), pp. 29, 30.

<sup>43</sup> L. Cohen, L. Manion and K. Morrison, *Research Methods in Education (5<sup>th</sup> edn)*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 113.

<sup>44</sup> Colin Robson, *Real World Research: a Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-researchers* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> R. E Stake, *Case Studies in Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 1994), p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> R.E. Stake, *Case Studies in Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p 236. C. Robson, *Real World Research*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 51

<sup>47</sup> R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 1.

“...when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context”<sup>48</sup>  
as in the instance of these GACMs.

Interestingly, subjectivity is also its major criticism by which challenging critics consider it unscientific. Reliable, positive and objective results have therefore been argued in defence of the strategy when Robson, Yin, Denzin and Lincoln defend the reliability in the application of vigorous validity touchstones. The sum of their defence suggests that, unlike inanimate objects, the researchers’ explanation of their progressive scientific experiences inform the observed, thus making it scientifically reliable.<sup>49</sup>

### ***3.2 Justification for the Inclusion of Quantitative Research***

This research also utilised the quantitative method which processed data to assist in drawing reliable and closer conclusions for its comparatively proven scientific approach through collection and analysis of data. The method is considered beneficial to the study for its qualities and capabilities in studies of this nature.

For example, Morris considers the mathematical approach used as practically business-oriented that is quick and effective in problematic decisions.<sup>50</sup> Hackett and Caunt claim the method is regularly indispensable to several business functions and

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<sup>48</sup> Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edn (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc, 2009), v, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, 3rd ed (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 12 See Robson, *Real World Research*, p. 194.

<sup>50</sup> Clare Morris, *Quantitative Approaches in Business Studies (4<sup>th</sup> edn)* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1996), p. 5.

problem resolutions. Further, justification for including the approach is its data collection requirements that follow certain rigid rules technically, thus robustly providing a reliable analysis and therefore being able to forecast dependable solutions.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, Brewer acknowledges its utilisation as a direct approach to observe logical inferences. He commends the effectiveness of the quantitative approach's influence in any probabilistic prediction or generalised social science research, that it is possible to objectively study both people and natural phenomena.<sup>52</sup> As a result of limitations, I intend to harness quantitative analysis for a broader, cross-sectional view instead of settling for just the qualitative views of the GACM interviewees. In addition, I deemed it worthwhile to enlist it for emphasis within the study's sample. Based on the highlights above of the diagnostic technique of quantitative study, I apply it to the questionnaires to contrast or confirm the interview data for analysis and discussion.

Consequently, this study pursued this triangulated approach for the input from the participants' point of view in pursuance of generalisability. It is hoped that the presentations will foster a greater understanding of issues that have led many among the GACMs' population to believe the unproven claim that marriages brought over or contracted among the GACM community in Britain are bound to be difficult or

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<sup>51</sup> Graham Hackett & David Caunt, *Qualitative Methods an Active Learning Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), p. xi.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Brewer, *Your PhD Thesis: How to Plan, Draft, Revise and Edit Your Thesis* (Abergele: Studymates Limited, 2007), pp. 20-21.

even fail. It is hoped therefore, that the findings within the referred community will establish some basis upon which informed conclusions, further studies and possible future solutions could be based. Admittedly, to some extent, the small sample size of the GACM community studied reasonably limits any absolute generalisability claims of the conclusions. That notwithstanding, this study offers (at least) a starting point as a hypothesis that could be tested and potentially help other groups who might share similar concerns anywhere in the world.

As a rule of thumb I have ensured that data collected were in line with the statistical requirements that would ensure and maintain reliability.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the final results will be repeatable for any subsequent measurements. A further important reason for the maintenance of reliability is the consequent assurance of a non-biased approach and thus the validity of the study's design and measurements. The descriptive, correlation and regression analyses are utilised as the quantitative study means to establish the factual views and extent of correlation between variables as well as the predictability from the intervals of variables strengthened by the regression analysis.

Only participants aged 18 or above are considered as qualified respondents. Also, participants' vital information were scrutinised in order to ascertain credibility of opinions prior to incorporation into this research. These respondents consisted of

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<sup>53</sup> Loraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight, *How to Research*, 4th edn (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), p. 245.

males and females for gender balance. I discuss the importance of utilising a multi-method next.

### ***3.3 The Multiple Methodologies***

As suggested above, study methods serve specific importance. These are usually listed under the two main classifications, qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Several comments and opinions thrive either for or against legitimising ideas, objectives and usages of these noted study approaches. Oppenheim, for instance, touched on the indispensability of specifying a method designed to deal with "...measurement, quantification and instrument building", thus "...making sure that our instruments are appropriate, valid and reliable."<sup>54</sup> Robson, Cohen et al, and Hakim commend the crucial need of designing a research method.<sup>55</sup> That "...whether innovative or solidly traditional" Hakim maintains, "...deals with the aims, purposes, intentions and plans within the practical constrains of location, time, money and availability of staff".<sup>56</sup> The role of applicable methods in this study, thus, offers the conceptual safeguard to ensure achievement of internal and external credibility, reliability and validity.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A. N Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*, New ed (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Robson; Louis Cohen and others, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2000); C. Hakim, *Research Design: Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 38, 73, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Hakim, *Research Design, Contemporary Social Research*, p. 1.

A. N Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*, New ed (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edn, pp. 40–41.

Available documents (Brierley's statistics, for instance), abound and seem to suggest how the emphasis of specific methods and approaches for investigation may vary and essentially tend to favour and validate specific fields of research studies.<sup>58</sup> For the specific purposes of this study I opted for a multi-method study approach triangulated through a combination of data extracted from questionnaires, interviews and documentary evidence.

Silverman argued that sole dependence on quantitative correlation falls short and neglects the variables' socio-cultural constructs<sup>59</sup> while Kirk and Miller commend further discussion by survey researchers as appropriate.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Hakim discourages the idea of ranking one method above another stating "...no one type of study is inherently inferior or superior to others,"<sup>61</sup> a view shared by Bryman, Brewer and Hunter, Bell, Robson, Cohen and Manion, Yin, Mason and Cohen et al.<sup>62</sup> To Hakim for instance, the "...purpose and the intellectual strategy, rather than methods or technique"<sup>63</sup> matter most. Peer et al also discourage mono-methodology for inherent limitations adding "...there is no single omnipotent research method."<sup>64</sup> Neill, for instance, argued '...all research ultimately has a qualitative grounding'. Neill summarises further that qualitative methods analyse data using sources such as

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Brierley, *Major UK Religious Trends 2010 to 2020* (Kent: Peter Brierley, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 3rd edn (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> J. Kirk and M. Miller, *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 1986), p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Hakim, *Research Design, Contemporary Social Research*, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> A. Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); J. Brewer and A. Hunter, *Multimethod Research: a Synthesis of Styles* (London: Sage Publications, 1989); Robson; Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 1994); Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edn.; J. Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage Publications, 1996); Cohen and others, *Research Methods in Education*.

<sup>63</sup> Hakim, *Research Design, Contemporary Social Research*, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Van Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier, *Muses and Measures*, pp. 57–59.

artefacts from objects, pictures from videos, and words from interviews while a quantitative approach indulges in numerical data analyses.<sup>65</sup>

Neill observed rather, that, such arguments seem to pitch the methods in hostility, but maintains that an integrated use of methods has benefits probably not yet known to some academic debaters.<sup>66</sup> I understand these debaters confirm that specific methods are guided by particular designs, which in turn are deemed helpful for maintenance of the aim and focus of this research.<sup>67</sup> I aim at internal and content validity, with multi-method, in agreement with Cohen et al for their observation that absolute perfection of research does not exist in reality except as its ultimate objective.<sup>68</sup>

Hence, as a practical theological study, the use of a multi-method approach is expected to help increase knowledge and also to encourage “...transformative mode of action”<sup>69</sup> among GACMs. Yet, this section does not promise to absolutely exhaust the complexities of the known methodologies in this particular enquiry. It must be pointed out therefore, that, a researchers’ choice of investigative strategy determines which traditional approach and specific methods will be applicable. Furthermore, I am convinced that the triangulation of methods for this study and the designed

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<sup>65</sup> James Neill, *Qualitative versus Quantitative Research: Key Points in a Classic Debate*. [www.google.co.uk/search?source; http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar](http://www.google.co.uk/search?source; http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar) [accessed 12/02/2009]. Neill quotes from Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 40) in this on-line comparison.

<sup>66</sup> James Neill, *Qualitative versus Quantitative Research: Key Points in a Classic Debate*..

<sup>67</sup> Robert Brewer, *Your PhD Thesis...*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>68</sup> Cohen and others, *Research Methods in Education*, pp. 105, 107, 109.

<sup>69</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. 255.



strategy, as determined by the approach will finally underline the strength of assumptions and claims of knowledge.<sup>70</sup>

From the above discussion I adopt the multi-method's approach to investigate the hypothetical questions of marital difficulties and the observed escalation often associated with the settlement of many GACM couples in Britain.

### ***3.4 Research Design***

This study is designed to explore claims of the dilemma faced by the population studied. It intends to initiate an action to drive determination for investigation into the basis of possible assumptions and thereby add to the limited local, as well as the growing international data, on related global marital issues to inform and improve future pastoral ministry and counselling needs. Among expected beneficiaries are primarily the GACMs being studied and other Christians who might share similar concerns. Issues of marital difficulties are better dealt with effectively in a cultural context. Consequently, a brief discussion on migration and the possibility of subsequent cultural changes to be expected (that GACMs also experience as migrants) has been included in section six below for its relevance.

I adjudged that this empirical investigation and its study analysis are the preferred principal method applicable for exploring GACM perceptions to either refute or confirm the noted assumptions. This study therefore seeks documentary information from relevant records as available, personal observation and interviews.

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<sup>70</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd edn (London: Sage Publications, 2009), p. 4.

Internet search was utilised as appropriate. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires alongside the interviews was designed to enable a robust analysis of the GACMs' perception and thereby achieve by pin-pointing possible generalisable elements as answer to the research question. It has therefore been an all-inclusive study approach, a triangulation, incorporating existing literature.

The ultimate design therefore is to find out and analyse the assumed reasons particularly adjudged as underlying the difficulties among GACM marriages. This study questions and investigates GACM's existing assumptions in order to inform and thus update and address specific practical ministry and counselling needs among believers at home and abroad. I aim to discourage complacency of any kind when managing marital issues and rather encourage accountability, openness and contextualisation especially in response to traditionally proscribed areas among the sampled Adventists.

### **3.4.1 Scope of research**

This project focuses on the ethical and practical ministerial aspects of the title as related to GACMs. The underlying cultural and traditional influence issues of marital difficulties among GACMs are discussed as appropriate from the data generated by the study. The study seeks to suggest further studies needed and recommend a possible relevant approach necessary for pastoral care and counselling for the group studied after investigation and analysis.

### **3.4.2 Expected Outcome**

It is hoped that this research will provide and initiate some referable documentation of findings of marital issues with specific focus on GACMs. Further, specific issues found, are expected to offer a window into future complexities, thus providing an informed awareness for GACM Christian ministry. It is hoped that the findings will instigate further studies, provide positive options for pastoral care and counselling and update theological understanding of the GACMs' marriages.

On a wider spectrum, it is anticipated, that GACM marital successes will positively influence communities. It is also hoped, that the GACM group targeted for this project will be exposed to their own believer-writers' legacy on the issues involved. It will also equip me to educate myself and other people with the findings as applicable; and hopefully produce future journal articles and books. However a major outcome of this study is primarily to initiate questioning of some basic assumptions held among GACMs particularly for this study, the observed marital difficulty that is usually blamed on the influences of the Western Culture on immigrant marriages.

### **3.4.3 Sampling**

The sampled population focused for this study comprised a heterogeneous group of GACMs. Despite cultural diversities of tribal and linguistic subsets, the group is unified patriotically as Ghanaians and by several commonalities including subscription to a Christian faith, SDA, and the common use of the Akan dialects, (an unofficial *lingua franca*), with which internal communication, business and services

are conducted. One volunteer was coached in each church to assist the researcher by collecting questionnaire forms after they were completed.

Purposive sampling<sup>71</sup> was employed to single out particularly churches for the studies. Furthermore, church leaders, divorcees, married, the remarried and counsellors were among those from whom a selection was made from willing participants in their limited category to ensure fair coverage of a variety of experiences for the interviews. Only three of the five Ghanaian SDA churches within London were chosen for the purposes of accessibility, typicality and manageability in this study of the group.

A hundred and fifty sets of structured questionnaires were distributed to willing participants in the three churches where permission had been granted by their ministers for this study. Due to financial constrains these churches were considered adequately representative, relevant and accessible enough for this initial study of the five Ghanaian Adventist churches within London. Out of the 150 copies 110 answered questionnaires were returned with 81 properly answered as specified by the instructions. These comprised 42 male and 39 female participants. Of these, those between ages 18-30 were 21, with 7 males and 14 females; 29 31-40s with 15 males and 14 females; 23 41-50s with 14 males and 9 females and finally 8 over 50s with 6 males and 2 females.

Consequently the 81 constituted the quantitative data for the SPSS analysis. The interviewees target of seven was exceeded as ten agreed to participate. These

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<sup>71</sup> Cohen et al, *Research Methods in Education*, p. 103.

included leaders, counsellors, married, divorced and remarried members. Thus finally a purposive sampling was used specifically for manageability, variety and for relevance. Open ended questions were used to collect interview data and were manually analysed.

The Bangor University's ethical requirements for empirical researchers have been observed. Researchers are expected to respect and observe the ethical and legal rights of participants in line with the British Sociological Association. This responsibility includes participants' right to informed consent, respect for their cultural and vulnerability issues, and freedom from being pressured either by reward or penalty. Consequently, potential participants were approached individually. The project was explained to them. They were advised that they could withdraw at any time or request for specific information to be excluded. They were also assured of their anonymity and that their information will be treated confidentially. Every effort was made to ensure that there was no pressure in the form of reward or penalty on them. In addition potential participants who were in any way vulnerable were excluded. Those who agreed to participate were asked to sign the approved Bangor consent form as proof of agreement. They were given a copy for their records.<sup>72</sup>

#### **3.4.4 Analysis**

The SPSS analytical program and a word tracking program were the study tools chosen for this study. SPSS enabled the closest analytical precision and thus

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<sup>72</sup> Cohen et al, *Research Methods in Education*, pp. 49, 60 See Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edn, 2009 and Robson, *Real World Research*, 2002. Cultural issues are important ethical elements in this discussion and will be considered further in section six.

established accuracy, significance and relevance of respondent perception on how marital matters are regarded within their cluster groupings. Secondly, utilisation of the program's application with its detailed frequencies and descriptive statistical, as well as correlation analysis (in diagram presentations) will serve as one of the triangulation approaches to help answer the research questions.

The SPSS program was used to analyse responses to the questionnaire. Participant reactions to questions have been considered relevant for consensus building and thus their inclusion for an in-depth perspective to this study. Other procedural analyses carried out are located in the appendix as relevant, in order to avoid cluttering the report with too much material hence the summarised chart presentations of the analyses. The results represent 81 participants out of the 110 who returned answered questionnaires for analysis. The application of these analytical programs is expected to help in determining the general attitude of the sampled GACMs toward the issues this research project investigates.

On the other hand, word tracking, a Windows manual program, was also utilised to bring out themes from the transcribed interview data after they were reduced by eliminating simple errors that had no relevance within sentences such as participant mannerisms for instance. It was after the analytical processes of recording, transcribing, selecting to reduce and to focus the data by organising them that final conclusions were drawn and discussed for this study.<sup>73</sup> It must be pointed

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew B Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1994), pp. 10–11.

out that the grammatical errors of the interview participants are left unchanged to avoid tampering with their expressed views.

Finally, the following discussion sections were included to explore further information and confirmation partly for the lack of enough relevant works resulting from non-availability of direct data on GACMs. This solely emerges from the fact that I know of no studies have yet been conducted on this particular group. Thus, other circles of communities to whom GACMs relate and share certain views as projected in the introductory section, are therefore featured for better understanding.

## 4 Conceptual Framework: The Traditional Context

This section serves a dual purpose for the study: First, it looks for related resources into the broader context of Ghana and Africa as well as the wider SDA Church and Christianity, to which the sample already belongs. Secondly, it discusses specific aspects of cultural traditions that have potential influence on the sample studied. I am convinced this trend of traditional backgrounds must be understood for their potency on the GACM's perception for couples in Britain.

### 4.1 *A Brief Context of Marriage reviewed: the African Setting*

Marriage, as an institution and universally known culture<sup>74</sup> underlies traditions across Africa. Several contributors writing on Africa or sections of the continent often provide information relating to issues and practices of African marriage. Particularly noted as an example are African communities' marital norms and rites to fertility and gender role issues for which Kasomo<sup>75</sup>, Takyi<sup>76</sup>, Ashur<sup>77</sup>, Ibrahim<sup>78</sup> and Onstine<sup>79</sup> have informed researchers. The relevance of these literary legacies is crucial. Some of them will be highlighted below.

For example, the ancient African civilisation of Egypt is worth noting. Like Ghanaians before modernisation ancient Egyptians depended on farming and

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<sup>74</sup> John R. W. Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999), p. 319.

<sup>75</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp.72-76.

<sup>76</sup> Takyi and Oheneba-Sakyi, 'Gender Differentials in Family Size Among Ghanaian Couples', 296-306

<sup>77</sup> Amir Ashur, 'Protecting the Wife's Rights in Marriage as Reflected in Pre-Nuptials and Marriage Contracts from the Cairo Genizah and Parallel Arabic Sources', *Religion Compass*, 6 (2012), 381–389.

<sup>78</sup> Mohammed Zaky Ibrahim, 'African Islam: Marriage, Mobility and Education of Women in Dan Fodio's Nineteenth Century Reforms', *Religion Compass*, 3 (2009), 168–181.

<sup>79</sup> Suzanne Onstine, 'Gender and the Religion of Ancient Egypt', *Religion Compass*, 4 (2010), 1–11.



therefore needed more hands on their farms. Turner and Helms suggest this need for more farm hands made early marriage necessary. Males could be married as early as 15 while females' averaged 13.<sup>80</sup> Inheritance among the Egyptians was by matrilineal descent. Though men ruled in marriage, the property of his wife was only available to him while the wife lived. Cleopatra is mentioned as a typical illustration of sibling marriage and of matrilineal inheritance. Divorce was fairly easy and properties shared after divorce in present-day marriages also have their parallel in the history of ancient Egyptians.<sup>81</sup> Relevance of matrilineal inheritance as known among ancient Egyptians has historical resonance, almost parallel to that of the Akans of modern Ghana.

Marriage, irrespective of geographical setting or religious affiliation, is fundamental to African communities and, as Reid points out, it creates and promotes ethical obligations for families and nations.<sup>82</sup> Its significance within human communities in general and African Christians in particular, can therefore never be overemphasised. Despite dynamic changes creditable to modernisation and globalisation, interests in the dynamics of African marriages continue to attract researchers' attention including this study of some Ghanaians.

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<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey S. Turner and Donald B. Helms, *Marriage and Family: Traditions and Transitions* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), pp. 32, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Turner and Helms, *Marriage and Family*, p. 33-34.

<sup>82</sup> Charles J. Reid Jr, 'Untying the knot: marriage, the state, and the case for their divorce', *Journal of Church and State*, 53 (2011), 132–133 (p. 132).

## ***4.2 Contemporary Challenges on African Family-Life Traditions***

African lifestyles, particularly marital perceptions, seem challenged with the increasing influence of a globalised community. While some Africans optimistically welcome the inclusive developments, some seemingly wish to turn the clock back to the era of traditional beliefs and customs. In her response to *The Plight of the African Child*, Gecaga emphasised how the traditional African culture suffered great losses when it came face to face with globalisation. The greater parts of her concerns apparently are for the disrupted traditional practices occasioned by global modernisation. To her, African customary practices around “...birth, childhood and adulthood” among others, are family related and should happen in a marital home.<sup>83</sup>

Bateye, a Nigerian on the other hand seems impressed (by the social changes), and commented on what would seem as impossible a few decades back concerning the evolution from women being once hidden among their peers to being women in leadership in churches within the noted stronghold of “...patriarchal traditions” in Africa. Believing certain African traditional practices have been imposed on the African woman, Bateye claims however, that elements of these customary practices can still be identified within the traditional churches.<sup>84</sup> Olukemi optimistically thinks the influence of the European culture on that of Africa should sometimes be considered liberating to women. This is especially so when it

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<sup>83</sup> Margaret. Gecaga, 'The Plight of the African Child: Reflections on the Response of the Church', *Studies in World Christianity*, 13 (2007), 142–159.

<sup>84</sup> Bolaj Olukemi Bateye, 'Forging Identities: Women as Participants and Leaders in the Church Among the Yoruba', *Studies in World Christianity*, 2007, 1–12 (pp. 1–12).

addresses issues of the dominant one-sided issue of polygyny in which women had to put up with a husband's insatiable taste for a number of concurrent wives.<sup>85</sup>

Yet, there are also inclusive viewpoints found such as Togarasei's emphasis on the cultural attachment of most African communities to their ancient traditions. Regardless of how old a tradition may be, people noticeably cling to it and might even be inflicting some hardship on others just by upholding some traditional claims irrespective of how distant in terms of relevance to contemporary circumstances. Togarasei laments, "...despite living in a modern city, traditional world-views still persist in the minds of many Harare women."<sup>86</sup> Togarasei's emphasis here confirms the traditional unfairness often meted against women mostly to the extent that there are those who still believe as she indicates, that it is the woman's fault when a marriage does not result in children born to the couple.

Consequently, many such women, as Togarasei wrote, end up in churches where they hope for a miracle to undo their perceived infertility and thus help restore their deteriorating marriages, while men in those kinds of marriages are encouraged to seek additional wives to produce offspring.<sup>87</sup> In other words traditionally, men, Togarasei suggests, could not be blamed for infertility, a situation scientific advancement concludes differently today.

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<sup>85</sup> Bateye, 'Forging Identities: Women as Participants and Leaders in the Church Among the Yoruba', pp. 1–12.

<sup>86</sup> Lovemore Togarasei, 'Images of Jesus Among Christian Women in Harare', *Studies in World Christianity*, 2007, 160–169 (pp. 160–169).

<sup>87</sup> Togarasei, 'Images of Jesus Among Christian Women in Harare', pp. 160–169.

Togarasei's view perhaps exposes a situation where many ancient traditions have survived through the centuries into contemporary contexts from which also possible marital perceptions persist and confuse modern relationships. For example, one of the traditions, as deduced from Togarasei's journal contribution, is about the expectation of every female to get married and to bear children within most of the African settings, a typical situation some Ghanaian women apparently face today (See Fn. 97 p. 54).

However, others think contemporary individualistic perceptions should rather be blamed especially when they foster marital disintegration. The subsequent fact of such individualistic tendencies on marriage is that stability declines significantly and could be widespread<sup>88</sup> For instance Amato et al commented on the view, that, certain contemporary trends do offset and discourage marriage as a response to the increasing unpopularity of the age old institution in favour of cohabitation. Thus Amato et al suggest, the contemporary egalitarian role of sharing developments is noted as being a welcomed improvement by some wives, but it is contrarily considered depressive by some African husbands.<sup>89</sup>

Marriage, as a human institution, is dynamic. Consequently, changes must be expected as time moves on. It will be quite unrealistic, for instance for any couple to move from Africa to Britain and after some years expect to remain uninfluenced. In his comparison of marital atmosphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Amato believes

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<sup>88</sup> Paul R. Amato and others, 'Continuity and Change in Marital Quality Between 1980 and 2000', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65 (2003), 1–22 (p. 1).

<sup>89</sup> Amato and others, 'Continuity and Change in Marital Quality Between 1980 and 2000', p. 1.

that sharp changes in marriage culture, as statistics prove were dramatic, and have borne far-reaching consequences.<sup>90</sup> Could Amato be right then, with his concerned suggestion, that, personal improvements with “increasing economic independence of women” in addition to other rising expectations<sup>91</sup> might be responsible factors accountable for the contemporary difficulty of marriages like the GACMs? I discuss specific contexts for Ghanaian marriages next.

### ***4.3 The Context for Ghanaian Marriages***

#### **4.3.1 Traditional Expectation of a Ghanaian Marriage**

Marriage in Ghana is generally a community enterprise. Any couple engaged in it must comprehend their duty to meet communal requirements. Ethical standards originate from and are influenced by communal traditions. Gyekye contends that individuals cannot disassociate themselves from their communities<sup>92</sup> at least in Africa. As such, like other Africans, every normal adult of age is expected to get married, Kasomo<sup>93</sup> and Togarasei are in agreement with all the Ghanaian contributors imply above and as related generally in later discussions below. It is worth noting then, that, Ghana holds and shares these community-owned traditionally endemic beliefs and practices in common with the rest of Africa.

Commonly noted also is the fact that recognised marriages in Africa, traditionally, do not simply happen between the couple only; rather, they involve others on a broader spectrum uniting entire sub-community units of extended

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<sup>90</sup> Paul R. Amato, ‘The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children’, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 (2000), 1269–1287 (p. 1269).

<sup>91</sup> Amato, ‘The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children’, p. 1269.

<sup>92</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p.70-71

families behind couples. A second traditional anticipation also noted in the literature, is the fact that procreation is generally the primary prospect of marriage.<sup>94</sup> A couple of Ghanaian descent particularly the Akans, must therefore understand that bearing children is their duty to a community, (“her children belong to her lineage”<sup>95</sup>), that precisely is to the wife’s extended family. Community goals are therefore upheld over individuals who must depend on the community for identity.

By implication, The Akan traditional perception, for example, limits marriage to an almost conjugal relationship only (a possible source of couples’ insecurity) and does not offer the Western understanding and privileges of family. In other words women and their children, in Akan tradition, are not members of the husband’s family and vice versa.<sup>96</sup> Kwahu, Abutia, LoWiili, Tallensi and Amedzofe Avatime are among some examples of writers from whom traditional information on roles and norms is being referenced in this study.

#### **4.3.2 Male Dominance, a Traditional Pattern of Conjugal Role: Kwahu rural context**

Available literature on Kwahu, an Akan sub-group in Ghana provides a pattern of traditional roles and norms considered informative for this study. Both Geest and Oppong and Bleek reveal information relating to these territorial marital practices as worthy of note. Geest considered whether there have been any changes in gender oriented roles and expectations that existed in the past as compared to when the

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<sup>94</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*, p. 33; Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 70; Kannae and Pendleton, ‘Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees’ p. 73; Oppong and Bleek, ‘Economic Models and Having Children...’ p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> Oppong, ‘From Love to Institution...’, p. 201.

<sup>96</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*, p. 2.

younger generation at the time were being interviewed for their opinions. Geest admitted conclusively, that, role segregation persisted especially in the rural areas though it had decreased during the time of study especially in urban centres and significantly when a couple have their privacy, such as when residing alone in their farm house.

Furthermore, Geest's analysis observed bits of ambiguity that whereas women were projected as second rate persons externally, there were equally signals of their practical authority in most cases particularly pertaining to these matrilineal Akans, among whom the study was conducted. For example, Geest wrote of the ambiguous traditional norms expected of a married woman, that, a wife: could not eat with her husband and should be submissive to her husband in speech; do all house chores including cooking and must serve husband with water in the bathroom. In short, a wife was never openly equal to her husband. Her status in the societal norm comparatively fell alongside the children.<sup>97</sup>

On the contrary there seems to be enough evidence too, within Geest's report that suggests some Akan women have been in control of their own affairs (a point supported and well noted by Oppong and Bleek<sup>98</sup> and Verdon<sup>99</sup> among others) even at the remote rural level. Akan women own and directly inherit any property their children acquire.<sup>100</sup> The inconsistencies of the men's answers, Geest observed, apparently signal latent internal proof for a revolutionary move away from certain

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<sup>97</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573.

<sup>98</sup> Oppong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', p. 57.

<sup>100</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*, p. 34.

traditional norms, a potential reason why the elite women preferred an egalitarian relationship to a male dominant autocratic traditional code of practice. Doubting the real point of departure from tradition and of how widespread role segregation operated in the past Geest, offered some possible explanations:

First, that Western education favoured men mostly by enhancing their status over the women. Secondly, that the traditional roles did function mainly in marriages within poorer socioeconomic areas where a couple's expectations remained quite low, as, wives remained dependant on the maternal relatives to help bear the parental burden. A typical explanation (I deduce) mostly could be the fact Geest suggests, that most men were economically incapable of the needed support. Finally, that the observance of conjugal role segregation did not imply subservience, rather, that women felt and remained in control while allowing the outward display of male dominance only as a cover up of their want for authentic supremacy.<sup>101</sup>

In addition, Geest cites Rattray who apparently took a long time to discover the women's authority among Akans, some of whom when once answering Rattray stated:

The white man never asked us this; you have dealings with and recognise only the men; we supposed the European considered women of no account, and we know you do not recognise them as we have always done.<sup>102</sup>

In other words the Akans apparently responded to Rattray at that time in a way they thought might be compatible with this foreigner's beliefs. Besides being the focus of

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<sup>101</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573

<sup>102</sup> R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 84 In Sjaak Van Der Geest's Role Relationship between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 38, No.3 (Aug., 1976), pp. 572-578.



descent and inheritance in the matrilineal system, Geest's report suggests, women played important roles even within the traditional settings and were noted for the public powers they wielded in politics, religion and the degree of economic independence as well as freedom to enter, remain in, or even end a marital union.<sup>103</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Marital Instability: probable Reasons**

Further to Geest's rendition of Kwahu traditional practices, Oppong and Bleek add additional highlights which I consider informative due to their relatedness to certain practical issues of marriage that may be addressed concerning this traditional setting. Issues particularly highlighted include; fertility and childbirth, breakdown of social controls, marginalisation of husbands and family allegiance of the couple, which apparently may function as a major source of external control and interference between couples.

Any Ghanaian couple must have children. In their report on economic models Oppong and Bleek relate the great traditional importance attached to having children as a couple. The reasons ranged from the economic motive of providing more helpful hands from one's own children as a cheaper labour source on farms to the more demanding purpose, a demand from the wife's extended family (among Akans) for procreation to continue propagation of the maternal lineage. First, the extent of one's farm size determines to some extent the need for farm labourers in this arable agricultural economy. Thus, for his own sake a man cannot afford not to have children as a farmer. This is a very strong reason why a man may have to marry

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<sup>103</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573.

additional wives to ensure enough children are born to him for that purpose. However, the wife's desire is not only hers for children but also as a requirement of her entire matrikin's.

Consequently, the second and strongest reason for fertility concerns in a marriage according to Oppong and Bleek emerges from the extended matrilineal relatives of the wife. It has thus been noted among Akans that inability to have children with a wife is traditionally enough reason for her relatives to demand an end to the marriage contract. Oppong and Bleek sum up the point, that, marriage as an institution is therefore fragile in such a context because a couple's "Primordial attachment and dependence lie in most cases with the matrilineage and not with the conjugal partner", suggesting this is "...a norm which is not ambiguous is that in conflicts people must side with their matrilineage, if need be against their partner in marriage."<sup>104</sup>

Such external authority of relatives enables them to step in anytime to end a woman's marriage and those relatives could give her to another man. Regardless of whoever may fulfil the matrikin's demand for descendants for the lineage, it is considered a necessary evil as long as it satisfies fertility goals<sup>105</sup> and that can only happen through the female's offspring. In other words the wife's matrilineage owns her children and could step in to end a marriage with the final decision as and when deemed appropriate to them.

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<sup>104</sup> Oppong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' p. 23.

<sup>105</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*, p. 34; Oppong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' pp. 22, 26–28; Caldwell, 'Fertility Attitudes in Three Economically Contrasting Rural Regions of Ghana', p. 236.

Furthermore, another potential cause of marital instability which Oppong and Bleek report concerns the breakdown of social controls and subsequent marginalisation of a husband within the matrilineal system. Society as a whole establishes “structural principles” by which a

...high value to marriage can be summarised in two basic processes of social control: (a) the elimination of normative ambiguity through fixed conjugal rights and ceremonialisation of the marriage bond; and (b) the rewarding of conformity to and the punishment of deviance from marital norms.<sup>106</sup>

Oppong and Bleek<sup>107</sup> further suggest that the Kwahu’s regard for marriage and conjugal rites has become apparently ambiguous and no longer valued. Therefore the respect and submission to the structural principles is generally non-existent, hence another major explanation for the presence of several unstable conjugal relationships because no longer could anyone be rewarded or punished by such (non-existing) structures. The Akan maxim *“awaree enye sumiie na wode wotiri ato so”* translates literally: marriage is not a pillow to trust one’s head on; meaning, marriage is only a temporary arrangement, a means to an end not the end itself, helps to explain this further. And, in this case, the end for which marriage serves on the wife’s part is to fulfil her duty of reproduction to her extended maternal lineage.

#### **4.3.4 The Structure of Marital Stability at Abutia**

Marital instability and subsequent divorce were reportedly not common before 1890 when Abutia, a small village, came under German colonial rule.<sup>108</sup> In her journal article Verdon narrates the process of first marriages, arranged, mostly for

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<sup>106</sup> Oppong and Bleek, ‘Economic Models and Having Children...’ p. 22.

<sup>107</sup> Oppong and Bleek, ‘Economic Models and Having Children...’ p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Verdon, ‘Divorce in Abutia’, p. 48.

infants of both genders for which this patrilineal community assumed protective responsibility until after the bride's puberty when the couple matured enough for marriage. Parental control was indispensable in order to ensure the family's gifts and services invested from groom to in-laws were not wasted. Verdon credits such traditional successes to lack of privacy in the village and emphasis of sexual prohibitions reinforced by the application of the "strongest religious taboos" as well as parental decisions imposed in every situation on the youth.

However, traditional events with associated controls disappeared. After WWI, new changes such as economic migration and easier communication exposed Abutia citizens to interaction with city life. Verdon concluded that both migration and economic improvement resulted in duo residence and fostering replaced parental supervision with subsequent loss of parental control. New codes of permissive practice emerged with the introduction of boarding education. Verdon inferred that though marital instability did exist in Abutia, she seems to blame external influences such as the arrival of the Germans, migration and subsequent individualistic freedoms enjoyed with the emergent economic and personal independence from the institutionalised community where individual privacy was previously non-existent.<sup>109</sup>

#### **4.3.5 Bride Price Emphasis at LoWiili and Gender Roles among Tales**

The LoWiili and Tallensi, patrilineal North Ghanaian communities, also make additions to the traditional cultural context that may help explain the Ghanaian migrant's behaviour to some extent. Writing on dowry and bride price payments

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<sup>109</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49–50.

preceding a LoWiili marriage, Goody revealed the high costs involved with the expected series of demands for more from the bride's family from whom consent was reached after several rejections. Goody's report suggests a series of such payments stretch over long periods. Thus it was hard for her to bring her field work to a conclusion. Cross-cousin marriages are thus preferred and encouraged to safeguard family property (as less or nothing is paid) and also help to avoid the institutionalised tradition of the humiliation families endure through dowry rejections.<sup>110</sup>

The Tallensi traditionally train their young early through role-play games in addition to asking them to offer real assistance to parents or guardians through household chores. Bass' report highlights that male-female role segregation is a common pattern across Sub-Saharan West Africa and more pronounced along territories occupied by Islam. For the Tallensi "...economic duties and activities" may begin as early as five for both genders when boys engage in building and cattle herding games while girls imitate mothers in house-keeping tasks.<sup>111</sup> Bass argues that the traditional social concept of male over female hierarchy, though not exclusive to the Tallensi, is emphasised through this kind of reproductive training.

#### **4.3.6 Modernisation and Conjugal Continuity at Avatime**

Avatime, another patrilineal community, features a noteworthy mixture of modernisation and continuity as found in Brydon's article. Tracing a historical

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<sup>110</sup> Goody, "Normative", "Recollected" and "Actual" Marriage Payments Among the LoWiili of Northern Ghana, pp. 54-61

<sup>111</sup> Loretta E. Bass, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 20-25.

migration centuries ago from matrilineal Ahanta, the patrilineal Avatime now occupy the hilly areas north of the Volta region. Modernisation has increased women's assertion, for example, "...procreation and marriage do not necessarily go together"<sup>112</sup> and "...they no longer in general migrate at the instigation of another person, either a parent or a husband."<sup>113</sup> Brydon also describes former practices such as infant girls' betrothal with periods of bride services, living together with close kin, gender role segregation and the church's often controlling role in exercising moral and religious authority in the believers' community.

Modernisation's influence is felt though, Brydon maintains, it has not changed certain practices of Avatime. For example, despite digression from traditional conjugal stability, women still want to bear children and also work for economic independence and will rather send younger children to older relatives or fostering than not having them.<sup>114</sup> Avatime women cannot ignore entire community expectations.

#### **4.3.7 The Interstate Succession Law of Ghana**

In his article in the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Kofi Awusabo-Asare examines the PNDC Law 111-114 (which attempts changes as a follow up from similar ones since 1884) also reviews particularly Akan<sup>115</sup> customary laws relating to

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<sup>112</sup> Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatime, Ghana', p. 104.

<sup>113</sup> Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatime, Ghana', p. 107.

<sup>114</sup> Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatime, Ghana', pp. 103–104, 107–108.

<sup>115</sup> Kofi Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliny and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*, 24 (1990), 1–16 (p. 5) The Akans form about 50% of Ghanaian population.

traditional marriage and succession laws. This document is considered relevant to this study for its primary informative value. The article maintains the fact that both patrilineal and matrilineal traditions do strongly function in Ghana and that every Ghanaian normally belongs to one of these lineages. However, at certain critical moments some Ghanaians by virtue of their parentage are denied inheritance while others may enjoy a double heritage depending on the backgrounds of their parents in these lineage systems. The explanation is simple, that, surviving children of patrilineal parents must inherit from their father's family line; while matrilineal descendants inherit from the maternal uncles and their relatives in that lineage.

Awusabo-Asare traces the Ghanaian communal practices that simply are noted for not only providing social status of *abusua* to individuals but must also be consulted for consent in social matters including particularly marriage. *Abusua* means "family" which in the *Akan* context refers only to people from one's matriclan. Both Awusabo-Asare and Oppong observed that the absence of an *Akan* word for the conjugal family rather emphasises the "dominance of the corporate clan", indicating why "maternal siblings take precedence over the spouse in many spheres of life."<sup>116</sup> The first Marriage Ordinance Law, passed 1884, served as an alternative to customary marriage. The rationale for this was to help legalise marriages that had been rejected customarily for lacking *abusua's* (extended family members') consent. A second objective was to address the succession issue of deceased spouses or

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<sup>116</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliney and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', p. 5; Christine Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981).

parents.<sup>117</sup> The absence of an exact word for a couple as a family cannot be an issue as *aware* capably describes the conjugal relationship.

However, certain practices like polygyny and certain succession laws, regardless of all attempts, often failed at the traditional authority as well as parliamentary levels with instances in 1909, 1961 and 1983. Further recognition includes the fact that practices of dowry or bride price payments, acceptance of polygyny as traditionally legal and inclusion of the traditional marriage as the basic requirement together with any others such as Ordinance or religious marriages are both legal and respected in Ghana.<sup>118</sup> On the whole, Awusabo-Asare's analyses seem to suggest that individualism has accompanied education, employment opportunities and migration among others. Yet, despite progress made with all the attempts to modernise traditional customs, it could still be considered that customary practices like *abusua's* consent in marital matters (and pro-polygyny for instance), may continue to be die-hard customs in Ghana.

#### ***4.4 A Panoramic View of Current Marriage: the Ghanaian setting***

Among his educative books, Isaac Ayertey has taken steps to leave a legacy of analysable information that relates to marriage and culture within the current traditional confines of Ghana. He defines marriage traditionally in the Ghanaian context as only between a man and a woman and only after they have satisfied some established traditional requirements. In agreement with Opong, Gyekye and

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<sup>117</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliny and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', pp.1-16.

<sup>118</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliny and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', pp.1-16.



Kasomo; Ayertey relates that marriage in the traditional sense is not simply between a man and a woman who have agreed to commit themselves to each other. Rather, it also involves the whole community and especially all of the immediate as well as the extended family, which includes very distant relatives of both the bride and groom to be.<sup>119</sup>

#### **4.4.1 Current Prospects for a Ghanaian Marriage**

In his discussion of the purposes as well as benefits of marriage, Ayertey lists benefits or existing purposes. The list begins with “procreation”, “socialisation”, “companionship” and a “legitimate sexual access”. The list continues with other factors such as “economic functions”; “social status”; “peace and unity”; and finally “love”. Ayertey continues with a dual classification of marriage in the Ghanaian sense. To him the dichotomy lies between the period of preparation towards the traditional marriage and the living together of the new couple after the marriage has been consummated.

Further to his discussion is what he terms the “...processes or preparations of marriage”. Under the processes of marriage Ayertey lists three different kinds of marriage that are recognisable among Ghanaians. These are: The Traditional or Customary marriage; Religious marriage- either Christian or Islamic; and marriage under the Ordinance or Civil marriage.<sup>120</sup> Traditional marriage, Ayertey claims, is the common platform upon which every Ghanaian marriage stands regardless of notable

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<sup>119</sup> Isaac Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies for Senior Secondary Schools* (Accra: Excellent Publishing & Printing, 2002), II, p. 261.

<sup>120</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 262.

differences. Ayertey refers to such commonalities as “the shared processes”<sup>121</sup> of the traditional approach.

#### **4.4.2 Innovations among Religious Groups**

In addition to the traditional system of marriage, Ayertey informs readers of yet other forms which include the religious classifications of Christian, Muslim and that of civil marriage also referred to as ordinance marriage. With the exception of the marriage under ordinance, the religious ones seem to virtually add choice of spouse, discourage underage and baby betrothal, but also include courtship, weddings and parties. In addition, whereas Muslim males may marry many wives, Christians generally encourage monogamy which is also recognised in the civil marriage system<sup>122</sup> According to Ayertey, certain features of the civil marriage can also be referred to as church marriage.

#### **4.4.3 Suggested Reasons for Existing Marital Difficulties**

Like other places in the world, marriages in Ghana do have difficulties. For the possible causes of marital difficulties Ayertey had the following list which probably might be his personal assessment in order of hierarchy. Fertility issue of “childlessness” heads the list as a major cause for difficulties in many marriages.<sup>123</sup> Kanae noted recently in a survey that Ghanaian men consider fertility and therefore procreation, as of paramount importance quoting ‘...there is nothing more to a

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<sup>121</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, pp. 262–263.

<sup>122</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, pp. 262–273.

<sup>123</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 279.

marriage relationship than reproduction'<sup>124</sup>. A childless marriage is therefore intolerable.

The rest of Ayertey's list includes: interference from in-laws, disagreements on finances and family size issues, cruelty and domestic violence, infidelity, lack of quality in communication, disagreement on religious interests and abandonment and incompatibility issues. Klomegah suggests other reasons in addition to the infertility issue by adding that some West African men practice polygamy as a sign of affluence, whereas for the rural poor it is for the economic benefit of more farm hands as a cheap and ready labour force.<sup>125</sup>

Janice Stockard suggests the anthropological importance of knowing people's cultural concepts and perceptions to better understand their marital practices. In her own words she claims, "... marriage is best understood within the context of all other facets of culture, including polity and economy, kingship and marriage, and religion and ideology".<sup>126</sup> She therefore sums it up as, "... marriage can be understood only as a product of a specific culture, within a particular history and environment". She continues that, culture constructs and therefore determines the shapes, values and meanings of institutions and social practices.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Kanae and Pendleton, 'Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees' p. 73.

<sup>125</sup> Klomegah, 'Socio-economic Characteristics of Ghanaian Women in Polygamous Marriages', 73-88

<sup>126</sup> Janice E. Stockard, *Marriage in Culture: Practice and Meaning Across Diverse Societies* (Belmont, CA: Harcourt, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Stockard, *Marriage in Culture...*, p. 2.

For example, no husband and wife are considered as proper family members. In the Akan culture; they belong to separate matrilineal families<sup>128</sup> (see fn. 95, 96 p. 53). Hence, relationships may practically be motivated by hidden individualistically breakable conjugal bonds.

In summary, although globalisation has helped by modernising some older traditions, blending many with relative positive outcomes; it has also introduced some cultural dilemmas with the understanding of family for example. The meaning of family today is particularly complicated. Now, family for the Ghanaian may mean completely different things depending on the setting, whether they are in Ghana or in Britain. This dilemma might also complicate issues consequently for GACMs' marital stability.

In the next section I discuss the Christian context which also influences GACMs' perceptions.

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<sup>128</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite...*, p. 2.

## **5 Conceptual Framework: The Christian Context**

This section continues with the Christian context of the conceptual framework discussions as a supplementary provision for contexts relevant to the GACMs in the existing data.

### ***5.1 The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Marriage-Divorce Issues***

This sub-section utilises some documentary resources within the Seventh-day Adventist Church that are related to or address aspects of, the marital difficulties and are to some extent relevant to the cultural perceptions of the GACMs in this study. Even though living outside Africa, Ghanaians are noted for their strong ties with their traditional and cultural roots and practices which sometimes clash with, their practical church-life expectations. It is hoped that documented information such as found below will generate even more future research for answers to these issues.

Recognised literature among SDAs is sometimes noted for or interpreted with, apparent fundamentalist views regarding marriage and marital issues. These traditional SDA literatures are authored by known opinion leaders such as theologians, pastors, counsellors, administrators etc., and often by select committees. Below is a brief reference to a few of many such resources utilised by the church and specifically by the GACM community. It should be noted that the GACMs in this study and their leaders treat these resources with great respect and are guided by them.

For instance, the introduction to the current version of the SDA beliefs states one of the basic governing principles of the church this way:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.” That, “these beliefs constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture” and that “revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.<sup>129</sup>

In addition to the above; SDA’s worldwide governing position for practice is stated at length in the Church Manual subject to updates during General Conference sessions. Relevant updates are thus done during the five yearly sessions by principle in line with new understanding regarding contemporary issues. However, local church practices differ as leaders often stick to old ways either out of ignorance of changes, misinterpretation or due to the sheer conservative ideals of the leadership. Lippy’s comment “...over the years Seventh-day Adventism has taken on more of the appearance of conservative Protestantism”<sup>130</sup> sheds light on what could be driving decisions and practices at the GACM local church levels regardless of updates.

The above reference highlights the stance of the SDA church as a world-wide organisation which may partly interpret the unflinching practice of the GACM group’s constant appeal to “The Bible and the Bible alone” approach on any matter that relates to any kind of GACM religious experience. Other sources providing these

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<sup>129</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd edn (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), p. v.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Millennialism and Adventism’, *Encyclopedia of the American religious experience*, ed. by C.H. Lippy and P.W. Williams (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), p. 836.

guiding principles considered as authoritative to the group include the Church Manual. However, most influential among these are the writings of Ellen White one of the founding members of the SDA following the Millerites Movement in 1844.

Among her books compiled and copyrighted for the church are *The Adventist Home* and *Counsels for the Church* and many GACMs own copies. They form a regular source of inspiration leading them into the biblical foundations of the SDA's doctrines as regards marriage and related issues.<sup>131</sup> On the point of the SDA's unflinching doctrinal decisions Schwarz and Greenleaf wrote:

Denominational leaders have long been ambivalent toward new theological and prophetic interpretations. At the same time they have feared to adopt a formal creed which, in effect, would lock them into fixed positions. They have tried to keep the door open to accept new truth if indeed it is biblical. With varying success church leaders have exercised deliberate caution to balance the two extremes of complete openness on the one hand and immovable positions on the other.<sup>132</sup>

On the point of anchoring in biblical foundations, Newman's conclusion is in apparent agreement with the Adventist and specifically the GACM believers' perceptions of the place of the Bible when he stated that the Bible has had great cultural impact on modern Western democracies. Newman argues therefore that it is not a surprise that current debates on family life even by critics do concentrate on some biblical values that have been imparted through the centuries.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, eds. *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), p. 607.

<sup>132</sup> Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, p. 607.

<sup>133</sup> Jay Newman, *Biblical Religion and Family Values: A Problem in the Philosophy of Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), p. 14.

Yet, another point Crider and Kistler emphasised was the non-compromising Adventist Church's emphasis on marital stability, a "...regulated family life...and no divorce."<sup>134</sup> Consequently, Crider and Kistler conclude:

It is sometimes difficult for a Seventh-day Adventist to state that he or she is divorced. For one thing, the church is a very conservatively oriented religious body and has long been opposed to divorce. Except in cases where one of the spouses has been unfaithful, the church affirms that remarriage involves adultery, and is thus a violation of the seventh commandment. This teaching has obviously had an influence on the members of the church. Divorce represents personal failure and could be looked on by some as evidence of a lack of faith and love.<sup>135</sup>

Crider and Kistler's statement above raises concerns of significant chronic embarrassment that may discourage many Adventist couples with difficulties. Erben seems accurate when he suggested such situations complicate one traumatic experience with some Adventist subculture's moral disapprovals. Erben apparently accepted a more considerate view and suggests biblical divorce rules were "...probably not intended to be the kind of unbending absolute"<sup>136</sup> they have become.

### **5.1.1 Ellen G. White on Christian marriage and marital issues**

In her counsels White provided biblical exposition on marriage and marital issues in broad details. She maintained that a believer's marital experience will definitely affect his or her life both here and now and in the hereafter.<sup>137</sup> Her down to earth detail and zealous concern about issues of marriage, apparently left no room for doubt concerning her non-compromising wish that every doctrine must be

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<sup>134</sup> C.C. Crider and R.C. Kistler, *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study* (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> Crider and Kistler, *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study*, p. 196.

<sup>136</sup> Erben, 'Predictors of Divorce Adjustment Among Members of Three Conservative Protestant Denominations' pp. 5, 6.

<sup>137</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2001), pp. 45, 49, 68, 71, 72, 80, 84, 94.



biblically proven. In a partial summary of her related writings on marriage, Brown points out, that love was never enough premise as “she advocated growth before marriage” thus she discourages a plethora of premature decisions for marriage.<sup>138</sup>

As a founding member of the SDA church White zealously guarded the decisions and doctrinal basis for the church. The leadership of GACM, in line with many SDA leaders do stick to this stance as a safeguard and worthy principle which upholds White’s counsels for the church.

SDA institutions have thus established sections of institutional libraries for research and other purposes. Occasionally, though readers may have reason to question certain items in terms of their relevance and applicability for certain contemporary settings. They seek clarifications just as many Christians might find with the Bible today. It must however be noted that though zealous in guiding the church with high standards, White never encouraged insensitivity to the plight of erring believers. Erben<sup>139</sup> and Pearson<sup>140</sup> confirm this considerate legacy of White’s teachings.

As noted above, White left a great legacy of writing behind after years of her ministry among SDAs around the world. Her take on the issues of the believer’s family life in general are held with great respect among SDAs today. For instance her counsel for a believer’s marital life particularly, finds resonance with the Ghanaian

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<sup>138</sup> Jeffrey O. Brown, ‘Effects of Adventist Engaged Encounter on Role Expectations and Growth in Premarital Relations’ (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University, 1992), p. 38.

<sup>139</sup> Erben, ‘Predictors of Divorce Adjustment Among Members of Three Conservative Protestant Denominations’ p. 47.

<sup>140</sup> Michael Pearson, *Millennial dreams and moral dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Pp. 188-189.

SDA's traditional culture generally and particularly with the Akans' perceptions in terms of her collective view about such decisions for marriage. She encourages young people to respect and seek parental counsel in order to eliminate impulsive decisions which often may describe the inexperienced youthful decisions particularly, and serve as a recipe for unhappy and difficult marriages.<sup>141</sup>

White counsels Christian couples to establish matrimonial unions only as they are in tune with the biblical principles. She maintained that marriage is God's own institution and that Jesus' interest in it while on earth, signifies his support for the restoration, sanctification and elevation of the marital institution to its original glory.<sup>142</sup> The controlling role of the church comes next.

### **5.1.2 The Sanctity of Marriage: Placing the Church in Control**

GACMs as Adventists give due recognition to church principles. Owusu-Mensah's conclusion agrees with Ishii that Ghanaians, particularly the Akans, are a very religiously inclined people.<sup>143</sup> As such the church influences every aspect of the Ghanaian's life including marriage. Despite its gradual fall into insignificance the current place of churches in the marital affairs of the laity is still quite influential<sup>144</sup> to

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<sup>141</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), chap. 18.

<sup>142</sup> White, *Counsels for the Church*, chap. 20. Among Seventh-day Adventist especially Ghanaians, Mrs White's counsels are held very high and to them it helps explain many biblical themes with her exposition of the Scriptures. It is simply part and parcel of many believers' cultural experience as Christians.

<sup>143</sup> Kofi Owusu-Mensa, 'The Akan Saturday God Heritage in Ghana', *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, 1 (1995), 86–109; Miho Ishii, 'From Wombs to Farmland: The Transformation of Suman Shrines in Southern Ghana', *Brill, Leiden, Journal of Religion in Africa*, 35 (2005), 266–295.

<sup>144</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 371–373 MacCulloch maintain the laity's private affairs including intimate live issues as marriage were gradually turned into a sacrament in the process to regulate members' private life. Married clergy were made to choose between payment of fines in order to keep wives as concubines or become celibate by annulment of any existing marriage.

the extent that members in church communities like the GACMs can do nothing without the express approval and permission of the church leadership. It might of course be questioned, by some contemporary minded critics as to how any group of people in these days could be so governed, by the views and wishes of opinion figures in a church society such as found among Ghanaian Christians and particularly the GACMs. To the GACM, the church plays such an important role in every aspect of life as confirmed in the interview and questionnaire responses below.

Roberts, a Christian writer on related issues of marriage, adds that the church has ever wanted and maintained control of marriage in general (by idealising celibacy for instance particularly among Monks and clergy) and discouraged widows from remarrying as well as encouraging the innocent party to divorce unfaithful spouses following the apostolic era. Roberts believes that these trends of the Early Church Fathers' approach has effectively influenced modern Christian believers' opinions and ethical debates on the issues of marriage, divorce and remarriage today.<sup>145</sup> MacCulloch<sup>146</sup> (see fn. 144 p. 73; 413 p. 214) shares Robert's view on such sacramental doctrine and the variety of opinions passed on through influential leaders in the past. This attitude is also noted in several schools of thought within the SDA church and therefore among GACMs today.

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<sup>145</sup> Barbara Roberts, *Not Under Bondage: Biblical Divorce for Abuse, Adultery and Desertion* (Ballarat: Maschil Press, 2008), pp. 137–139.

<sup>146</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 371–373.

### 5.1.3 Some Contemporary Adventist opinion leaders' views

Despite the apparent general agreement of the church's principles for doctrinal standards, challenging issues often emerge and demand relevant answers to certain unexpected situations. Typical situations worthy of notice are the realities of polygamous practices that continue their side by side existence within the African context in general and the Ghanaian society in particular. Du Preez critically questioned and examined the SDA's stress on monogamy for all cultures and its effect on spreading the gospel within specific polygamous cultures. Other similarly challenging issues addressed by Du Preez include the persistent demand for some laxity in the divorce and remarriage legislations of the Adventist church.<sup>147</sup>

In addition to his quest for answers to whether there is any need to redefine marriage, Du Preez also deals with questions such as whether the Bible really supports polygamy? And whether polygamists must divorce? These questions are identifiable with many within the Ghanaian community. Some wonder what makes the difference between the people God set aside for himself when single or monogamous who later became polygamists in the Bible. Apparently none was asked to divorce.<sup>148</sup> If so, one may ask, why then should the SDA insist on fundamental stances such as monogamy even among traditionally polygamous cultures such as in Ghana?

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<sup>147</sup> Samuel Koranteng-Pipim ed. *Here We Stand*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005), pp. 481–483 Both individuals and some congregations of the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventists apparently do have issues with the understanding and applicability of the church's stance on contra-faith marital restrictions, biblical interpretations on divorce and remarriage issues by various ministers and some local churches.

<sup>148</sup> Koranteng-Pipim, *Here We Stand*, pp. 601–634.

Contrary to Du Preez's argument, Koranteng-Pipim, a Ghanaian SDA theologian, critically challenges the world level organisation of the church for the amendment and inclusion of justification for divorce based on abandonment in the SDA manual during the General Conference's session in Toronto following the quest for additional biblical grounds for divorce as a church.<sup>149</sup> These variations often generate heated discussion between African Adventist theologians and leading thinkers, and this is a clear sign that certain issues on marriage matters are far from solved.

Commenting on a related issue from the Ten Commandments (as SDAs still uphold all the Ten Commandments) Dybdahl argued for instance, that an adulterous spouse not only breaches the trust with his or her human partner but sins against God. In other words, Dybdahl's opinion by interpretation suggests an offense by either party does include God who is the originator of the marital covenant. To Dybdahl, "...those who covenanted with Yahweh were expected to keep their marriage covenant faithfully." In addition, that it was not only necessary "...for the sake of family" but also required by God. Therefore, Dybdahl concludes, any "...serious violation of either covenant was grounds for death."<sup>150</sup> Consequently, Dybdahl regards any marital distraction as an interruption to the family's relationship with God.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Koranteng-Pipim, *Here We Stand*, pp. 495–497 Koranteng-Pipim is a Ghanaian Adventist minister who believes the church must maintain the integrity of the scriptures with no compromise.

<sup>150</sup> Jon L Dybdahl, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Exodus* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), p. 188.

<sup>151</sup> Dybdahl, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Exodus*, p. 188.

Mueller, another theologian and minister, joins the argument also for a non-compromising maintenance of integrity to SDA biblical foundations in his contribution in which he blamed the influence of postmodern ideas on Christianity. To support his claim he quotes what he termed as a sarcastic comment by Kohlrusch. Kohlrusch invited women to congratulate one another for winning the equality battle and thereby she is blamed for increased family and child abandonment. The abandonment of absolute truth and acceptance of pluralism, Mueller claims, has made humans the ultimate goals. Consequently any element of pain or suffering is unacceptable and particularly as noted within marriages now<sup>152</sup>

Mueller's argument seems to uphold the role expectation view that has often become the bone of contention among some Ghanaian migrants particularly the GACMs in the centre of this study. Getui, an African Adventist lady, in a journal article, voices a representative concern for the African Adventist woman and against certain fixed leadership styles in some African SDA churches. Getui argues against the strong presence of gender taboos, lack of female privacy during counselling sessions (held by male pastors), role segregation and discrimination against women even in the church which often can be likened to the non-believers' community practices. One such comment Getui made reads:

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<sup>152</sup> Koranteng-Pipim, *Here We Stand*, pp. 511–512 Ekkehardt Mueller served as Associate Director, for the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

...many women opt not to seek counsel from a male pastor, a male council of elders or a male-dominated church board because their problems will either be ignored, misunderstood or misrepresented. Often when a woman goes to see the pastor, the pastor is likely to 'leave the door open' to bar any suspicion but in the process the woman's privacy and confidentiality is compromised. There is therefore a need to have female ministers, elders and a fair female representation in decision-making bodies of the church.<sup>153</sup>

As one of several possible (sense of belonging in a group)<sup>154</sup> reasons, some African Adventists women may find it difficult to either leave or remain in a marriage, as implied above. I find Getui's condemnation of the apparent occasional lack of respect for female confidentiality needs coupled with biased practical compromises against their interest, quite representative for many African Adventists including GACMs. Furthermore, Ondari, in his discussion of African SDA leadership, concludes that Christian leadership must be characterised with attitudes of love and spirituality instead of being mechanical or manipulative.<sup>155</sup> Comments and queries like Getui's and Ondari's, signal the need to update church leadership orientation for a better ministry at the local level to ensure trust and fairer treatment of believers.

Brown, an academic and a leading SDA minister, calls for the need to study deeper into the influence of role expectations on couples and their subsequent contribution towards marital growth and success in the areas of marital conflict and conflict resolution.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Mary Getui, 'Women and Mission in the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church in Kenya', *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, 1 (1995), 75–85 (p. 82).

<sup>154</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, pp. 38, 52.

<sup>155</sup> William O. Ondari, 'The Practice of Leadership Among Seventh-Day Adventist Associations', *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, 3 (1997), 54–66 (p. 64).

<sup>156</sup> Brown, 'Effects of Adventist Engaged Encounter on Role Expectations and Growth in Premarital Relations', pp. 9–12.

As a word of caution against any form of imposition, Schwarz offers general yet timely advice to Christians from a theological angle particularly concerning religious and dogmatic excesses of paradigmatic views.<sup>157</sup> Such occasional fundamentalism and extremist approaches, Schwarz maintains, whether as liberalist or legalist, as might be observed or experienced among people such as the GACMs who have deep passion for their religious beliefs, fall short and miss the mark by exacerbating difficulties in the Christian's experience.

#### **5.1.4 A Summary of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs: A biblical love**

The following summary of Adventist beliefs outlines that: Jesus confirmed marriage as a permanent union between a man and a woman with a common faith, a covenant commitment to God and divinely sanctioned from Eden; that the fabric qualities of love, respect, responsibility and honour must reflect the relationship between Christ and the church; that Jesus taught, except for fornication marriage should be permanent and any other reasons for remarriage equals adultery; that marriage is for loving companionship and through procreation the place for raising God-fearing children in love and fear of God through the Holy Spirit.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, concerning divorce, the SDA manual recognises biblical teaching that acknowledges abandonment the exception for an unbelieving spouse.

There is also additional provision that recognises civil government rules regarding a

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<sup>157</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart resources, 1999), pp. 7–8, 98–100.

<sup>158</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, pp. 329–330.



plethora of abusive offenses for which divorces are permitted.<sup>159</sup> I have identified a double standard often when some GACM leaders find it very comfortable to apply the civil rules when marrying couples. Contrarily, some show less interest when there is the need to apply the same civil rules during difficult times of divorce.

Among the many themes discussed under marriage and the family within SDA doctrines is a summary of the couples' love relationship. It is regarded as an unconditional affection and intimate devotion between couples that is meant to encourage mutual growth spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. It is simply "the *agape* love described in the New Testament- the selfless, all-for-other love that comprises the foundation of true, lasting marital love."<sup>160</sup> Further, the biblical definition cited as support is the idea of a covenant as in Mal. 2:14 and Prov. 2:16, 17 with God as the witness.

### **5.1.5 Summary**

In summary, sections four and five above have recognised the fact that marriage, as an institution, was and still remains important in African history and has survived the different cultures, specifically among SDAs in Ghana. In many ways available records and analysis of historical practices do confirm that marital complications resulting in instability are not just a contemporary occurrence or invention in Africa. Rather, that marriage and the observable complications

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<sup>159</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th edn (Hagerstown, MD: The Secretariat, GCSDA, 2010), pp. 151–154.

<sup>160</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, p. 334 Both Jesus and Paul's take on the meaning of love are cited here as biblical support relevant for an unconditional love between partners in marriage, 1Cor. 13:4-8.

experienced today cannot be isolated from any section of African, Ghanaian, ethnic, tribal or church history.

In addition, the variety of traditions with their designated cultural norms and expectations are in themselves proof that no single study will be equipped enough to exhaust the latent problems behind the Ghanaian's marital difficulties.

Finally, the SDA, a world-wide church to which the GACM belong as a very small group, may rightly own a manual with policies and codes of practice, rules and regulations; yet the cultural dynamics might never make it simple to establish any kind of uniformity across cultures of such diversity. Not even among the GACMs. However, the SDA belief agrees with the GACMs' cultural belief that, aspects of family, except conjugal intimacy in marriage as God's design, are not exclusive.<sup>161</sup> As a result, I hold the view that there is enough grounded information to justify a study of this nature to improve and inform pastoral ministry to the sampled GACM population.

## ***5.2 Some Christian Marital views shared by Adventists***

This section briefly reflects and relates existing GACM ideals, practices and beliefs as grounded in Christian beliefs and concepts shared by SDAs of whom the GACM forms a subset and thus are relevant to the study.

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<sup>161</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, p. 343.

The SDAs hold Bible based views which include the purpose of marriage shared by other Christians. For example Adventists teachings<sup>162</sup> agree with writers like Bishop and Mrs. Baughen who conclude that marriage in general is God ordained but that a Christian marriage should be exceptionally wonderful. Included in their argument are the two-fold central purposes of marriage from the Genesis 1 and 2 accounts; companionship and procreation. Furthermore, that Christian marriage becomes exceptional with a rather fortified relationship with Christ as head and therefore central partner of this companionship relationship.<sup>163</sup> It is within the companionship aspect that further details such as self-sacrificing love, are modelled. Baughen points out, “Christian marriage is in the context of God’s love” and therefore God-centred.<sup>164</sup>

Another shared concept is the Christian expectation of church leadership to maintain marital permanency. For instance McManus blames Christian Churches and their leadership (particularly in America) for ignoring their responsibility thus contributing to the soaring divorce rates among Christians.<sup>165</sup> In addition McManus’ rationalises that bad marriages are avoidable among Christians in the first place; that 90% of existing ones could be improved and that if the churches were to co-operate,

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<sup>162</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, pp. 145–155; Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, pp. 329–344.

<sup>163</sup> Michael Baughen and Myrtle Baughen, *Your Marriage*, ed. by John Stott (London: Three’s Company, 1994), pp. 8–11 Baughen and Baughen quote Ephesians 5:21-33 and emphasise that Christ is the ultimate head of the Christian’s marital relationship .

<sup>164</sup> Baughen and Baughen, *Your Marriage*, p. 104; Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, pp. 329–344.

<sup>165</sup> Michael J. McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping your friends and family stay married* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), pp. 253–255.

many more marriages could be saved.<sup>166</sup> The view of avoiding and possibly saving marriages from what distresses couples into divorce receives support from Gottman et al in their reciprocity reversal model for repair and damping within relationships.<sup>167</sup> These Christian ideals are also shared by both Adventists in general and GACMs in particular.

The Ghanaian SDA understanding is often illustrated by their attempts to save marriages, as and how they know and understand best, even from their cultural traditions. On a popular level these views are shared further by Stott who defines an ideal Christian marriage, as a permanent recognised relationship with the following five characteristics in mind where: first, a Christian “marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant”. Secondly, it is a union “between one man and one woman”; thirdly, that it bears God’s seal of approval as originator; fourth, a public event; that calls for “leaving” one’s original family to “cleave” to the spouse to start a new home; finally, that it is consummated conjugally and may normally be blessed with children.<sup>168</sup> Some GACM leaders strictly follow these ideals and will not hesitate in some circumstances to disfellowship or censure any deviant regardless of emotional circumstances of or consequences to those involved.

However, Stott has also advocated for an open-minded plan and some possible reconsideration after evaluating the church’s treatment of cohabiting

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<sup>166</sup> McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping your friends and family stay married*, p. 256.

<sup>167</sup> John Mordechai Gottman, *The Mathematics of Marriage: Dynamic Nonlinear Models* (London: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 180–190 Couples with positive attitudes are able to encourage each other to turn bad situations around by repairing instead of dampening potential issues from deteriorating their relationship.

<sup>168</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 323.

couples as biblically illegitimate, coupled with some media treatment of cohabitation. I however disagree with apparent protesters to Stott claiming that the reciprocity of pledges of love and fidelity as well as conjugal consummation in cohabitation is as good as married regardless of elaborate formality deficiencies.<sup>169</sup> Stott however validates the GACMs' perception further that, cohabiting comes short of two basic expectations. First, there is the omission of a life-time commitment. Secondly, cohabiting misses the community ownership mark of the Ghanaian perception of the marital institution by being too private, casual and clandestine as against the public and permanent context requirements of leaving and cleaving as obligated.<sup>170</sup> In brief, proper commitment is missing here and remains a potential serious issue to the GACM ideals. Next, I discuss the context of a GACM marriage.

### ***5.3 The Ideal Ghanaian Adventist Christian Marriage***

Human societies in general do function on certain communal principles. The SDA Church as a worldwide organisation also has its own tradition of standards. Similarly the African and in this case the Ghanaian citizenry, has culturally an in-built traditional benchmark for almost every aspect of life. This generalised view of lifestyle is mostly and readily recognised in the Ghanaian conduct of marital rites. Among the GACMs, these principles tend to inform, direct, encourage or discourage social practices including marriage. The constitution of an ideal Ghanaian Christian marriage essentially, will therefore take into account the cultural traditions, which

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<sup>169</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 324.

<sup>170</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, pp. 324, 325.

always include aspects of religious beliefs already hinted above. It is of interest to note therefore, that, the GACMs are guided religiously by a complicated mixture of traditions including denominational ideals.

The GACMs in this study are members of the worldwide SDA church. As noted earlier, they claim the Bible officially as their universal and only creed.<sup>171</sup> Consequently it is considered expedient among GACMs to find possible biblical guidance as foundational. Explanatory answers to any question on ideal standards begin with their beliefs and practices and they are guided thereby although they are often subject to localised interpretations. The underlying perceptions of these Bible believers have accordingly been considered as one of the possible ways to discern their way of life by identifying certain basic underlying factors of their understanding as a people. The SDA Christian's basic orientation generally, is to seek biblical insight and interpretation for unfolding the world's historical and personal events and thus provide a guide for daily activities.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the basic understanding that a typical Ghanaian marriage contains a consistent mixture of traditional ideals and religious beliefs, there is also a variety of localised differences in details of practice. Thus, the nature and constitution of an

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<sup>171</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, p. v The Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist are also members of the world-wide organisation with one General Conference headquarters in America. This group of Christian believers are basically guided by the world-wide agreed upon fundamental beliefs, in which is the major claim that the bible is the only creed for the life and practices of the organisation. .

<sup>172</sup> Nancy L. Van Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage* (Review and Herald Pub Assoc, 2000), pp. 141–170 Van Pelt is one of the many examples of Adventist specialist authors who demonstrate the Adventists' constant reference to the Bible as support and guide for a believer's life in general. Pelt designated a whole section of four chapters, pages 141-170, in which she emphasises the need to recognise God's original plan as one of the many subjects treated for a highly effective marriage experience.

ideal marriage may vary from one local culture to another. The rationale and functions of marriage to the postmodern mind-set (for instance) often needs to be carefully addressed. Studies already done as well as books written, confirm the concerns that marital difficulties do bring some damage upon couples and relatives around them.<sup>173</sup> Despite the universal nature of the marital institution<sup>174</sup>, the practicality of a common understanding in such a dynamic component of this human institution is difficult to come by. For instance, two separate major forms of lineage inheritance exist; and members within GACM congregations who unite in marriage might duly invoke PNDC Law 111-114<sup>175</sup> inheritance concerns with these differing backgrounds.

Moreover, a common agreement may ideally be desirable but is easy to say and might not happen even among people from a common background like the GACMs. Such anticipated difficulty simply could be driven by inherent traditions that remotely define individual GACMs.

#### ***5.4 Making sense of the ideals, purposes and the variety of views to this study***

I look at the question considering: whether GACM marriages do become difficult after settling in the West and is there any explanation for the intensification of difficulties while settled in the UK?

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<sup>173</sup> *The Mathematics of Marriage*, pp. 6–7 Marital issues are often very complicated. Gottman and co mention among several potential damages the harmful effect of persisting hostility at home which children have to put up with. The damage Gottman claims is enormous.

<sup>174</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1989), p. 277.

<sup>175</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliny and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', pp.1-16.

As stated earlier, the GACMs though only a sub-set of similar Christian migrants represent and demonstrate a variety of views and opinions in both of the two main studies below for this research. Looking at the traditional information available to this study certain features emerge as indicators of latent difficulty waiting to happen to modern day couples anywhere, whether in Ghana or abroad. First, the traditional social status of women generally in Africa and in Ghana for this study makes it a challenge for capable women to ambitiously seek some personal freedom no matter what the cost. The African communitarian culture of male dominance is so widespread such that even among the matrilineal Akans, women's freedom was and is still limited by male friendly taboos and norms.

A second issue revolves around a couple's dilemma. For instance the Akans in a modern marriage are torn between loyalty to the nuclear family and the traditional family (the extended maternal relatives). Even in the church people still have to cope with a Christianised form of these usual traditions as Gecaga, Togarasei, Bateye and Getui all testify above. Perhaps the third issue on these ideals to me is the other side of the community ownership (Ayertey, Opong and Gyekye's discuss) of individuals thus swallowing up individual wishes, fears and feelings for the common good even in church. Good as it may seem it is often the excuse by which pertinent issues like the emotional struggles with an abusive spouse, are silenced mostly to the disadvantage of women in traditional styles by both family and the church. Individuals need to hang in there and the wish to remain



a member of a particular community is sometimes utilised against personal wishes<sup>176</sup> (see fns. 170 p. 84; 278 p. 120; 291 p. 126; 329 p. 152).

Thus, McManus emphasised that churches need new models and that preaching alone is no longer enough to deal with marital instability.<sup>177</sup> There have also been significant clues to the possibility of couples living in distressful circumstances though seen from the outside as vibrant; yet struggling to tell their stories in order to receive the necessary attention.

Eppinger adds that ministers may perform their professional functions with a touch of excellence but cautions that the clergy also need to pay attention to their own intimate family life requirements.<sup>178</sup> Arguably, Baughen adds “The primary intention of marriage is companionship”.<sup>179</sup> A general consensus, though, might not be possible for a particular worldview or opinion especially as it relates to marital issues. It is worthy to note that these complex matters are expected, as they do exist and often feature within probably a number of similar smaller groups.

This study seeks therefore to remind Christian leaders at all levels that there is the need to arouse and expedite actions to study, enable and restore the values of unity and harmony as a working agreement for fellow Christians. This will establish communities that live in harmony regardless of individual or sub-group differences or

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<sup>176</sup> Gyekye, p. 52; Daniel Levi, *Group Dynamics for Teams* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping your friends and family stay married*, pp. 52, 57 McManus suggests there is more to do about marital issues among Christians than simply praying and preaching.

<sup>178</sup> Paul Eppinger and Sybil Eppinger, *Every Minister Needs a Lover* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), pp. 15–21.

<sup>179</sup> Baughen and Baughen, *Your Marriage*, p. 62.

traditional exceptions. Nydam calls for attention to ethical ideals. In his article regarding the messiness and knottiness in marriage he argues for the need for tougher ethics (debatable), proper care and support for people in distressful relationships and the need to nurture a sense of forgiveness and longsuffering between couples which is apparently overdue.<sup>180</sup>

Furthermore, concern has been expressed (from the study responses) that certain practical idealist's approaches to the issues of marital difficulties have stressed and even ruined, the lives of many believers. Specifically responses from both interviews and the questionnaires have hinted at the issues regarding the complexities of actions of different congregations towards divorce and remarriage issues. Consequently, I speculate that a thorough study could be done later to delve into the potential cultural views of individuals and churches regarding a rising concern of church disciplinary issues surrounding marital issues, including divorce and remarriage and the modalities thereof as they are being practiced within the SDAs both in the UK and in Ghana as noticed by Getui<sup>181</sup> (see fn. 153 p. 78).

Moreover, Christian communities whether a small group or a mega-church and especially the GACMs, probably need to appreciate and celebrate the presence of diverse views and developments with accompanying prospects of positive enculturation as a dynamic aspect of life. There will be that flow of harmony within congregations as well as families and couples when these varieties of views are

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<sup>180</sup> Ronald J. Nydam, 'The messiness of marriage and the knottiness of divorce: a call for a higher theology and a tougher ethic', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 40 (2005), 211–226 (pp. 211–226).

<sup>181</sup> Getui, 'Women and Mission in the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church in Kenya', p. 82.

understood and practiced as necessary. Furthermore, though interpretations of the biblical content may differ as noted even at the local level, such exposure could be a compliment for a group's tolerance instead for the benefit of sharing other views from a different perspective.

Respect for other people's point of view is essential and quite needed for a better view of known circumstances in life for open-minded people.<sup>182</sup>

In addition the Ghanaian by tradition is religious to the core even when not subscribing to any established religious organisation. Studies done by Ishii<sup>183</sup> and articles written from insiders like Owusu-Mensah<sup>184</sup> confirm this aspect of a traditional cultural belief in the existence of God hence the Ghanaian lifestyle<sup>185</sup> including folklore like other Africans could be superstitious too. For this reason it is my aim to draw attention to the fact that to reach the Ghanaian psyche and thus make sense for any reason should necessarily begin from the individual or groups' belief systems for an accurate assessment and appraisal of issues at stake.

Lastly, as a human societal blessing yet saddled with dilemmas, Christians in general do find issues of concern in their marriages similar to other human couples. Osterhaus, for instance, believes many Christians are possibly unaware that they face similar difficulties and issues that cannot be simply eradicated with prayer

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<sup>182</sup> Hugh Dunton, *Bible Versions* (Grantham, Lincolnshire: Autumn House, 1997), p. 15.

<sup>183</sup> Ishii, 'From Wombs to Farmland: The Transformation of Suman Shrines in Southern Ghana', pp. 266–295 Ishii studied some traditional groups in Ghana and shares how the typical Ghanaian's daily life is lived by religious belief and expectations.

<sup>184</sup> Owusu-Mensa, 'The Akan Saturday God Heritage in Ghana', pp. 86–109.

<sup>185</sup> Owusu-Mensa, 'The Akan Saturday God Heritage in Ghana', pp. 86–109 Kofi Owusu-Mensah is an Akan born citizen of Ghana and brings both academic and traditional experience in a common package as it is in this article.

alone. That may explain why there are a number of questions Christians particularly ask behind closed doors during counselling sessions.<sup>186</sup>

In brief, this section recognised grounded parallels of diversity identifiable with the population studied on religious and ethical issues of cultural and traditional ideals, beliefs and possibilities around marriage. Noted also are the persistent idealists' intolerance and adherence of conflicting concepts between unlimited permissiveness and non-negotiable legalistic stances at play within GACM perceptions. Next, I discuss whether others share the GACMs' perception that marriages can and must work even with the influences from a globalised multicultural environment.

### ***5.5 Making Marriage Work***

Marriage, in any Ghanaian cultural setting is expected to succeed through some conscious effort and good will from the couple and their families. The traditional Ghanaian motivation and perception suggests marital arrangements must work. Hence, the confirmation, that, a failing marriage stigmatises the couple particularly the woman (see fn. 364, 365 p. 174; Figure 3 p. 127). In other words, marital problems must have marital solutions (see fn. 344 p. 163). Thus recognition of a marital problem alone is not good enough, but only, as a step towards a vital solution.

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<sup>186</sup> James Osterhaus, *Questions Couples Ask Behind Closed Doors* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), p. xi. Despite the foundations from belief systems, Christians, like other people, very often find themselves with the same issues and questions around marriage as non-Christians.

Whitfield seems to suggest a confirmation, that, good marriages are never dependant on love alone as might be claimed or believed by many, but rather, that successful marriages thrive on hard work. Furthermore he suggests that the success of marriages depends on how conflicts, disappointments and disagreements are handled<sup>187</sup> (see fn. 138 p. 72; 117 p. 63).

In addition Becks reveals “What attracts partners to each other is rarely enough to sustain a relationship”.<sup>188</sup> Dominian adds further, that, working hard towards marital success requires meeting the basic needs of one’s spouse.<sup>189</sup>

Gottman and Silver also list a seven principle guide to help make marriages work. These are: “enhance love map”, nurturing “fondness and admiration”, cultivating romance, finding common grounds by allowing a partner’s influence, compromise and compliment instead of engaging in criticism, dialogue instead of grid-locking and finally have and observe family rituals that bind together (as marriage is not a routine for making love nor children nor sharing chores). However in their book they suggest all marital conflicts could be grouped under two main categories: resolvable and perpetual conflicts. Furthermore these could range from ordinary “mundane annoyances” to “all out wars”.<sup>190</sup> To Gottman and Silver it is imperative for a couple in a marital conflict to identify and thus customise the

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<sup>187</sup> Keith E. Whitfield, *Fighting for Your African American Marriage* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>188</sup> A.T. Beck, *Love Is Never Enough: How Couples Can Overcome Misunderstandings, Resolve Conflicts, and Solve Relationship Problems Through Cognitive Therapy* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 46.

<sup>189</sup> Jack Dominian, *Marriage: The Definitive Guide to What Makes a Marriage Work* (London: Heinemann, 1995), p. 55.

<sup>190</sup> John Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (London: Orion Publishing Group, 1999), p. 129.

category of their conflict in order to work things out successfully. They suggest “compromise” as the absolute cure for marital conflicts.<sup>191</sup>

Davidson suggests prospective couples need to spend time studying each other in several social contexts and situations and often in the company of each partner’s family. Davidson includes the need to ensure commonality in religious faith and that mutual personal values exist between couples. Further Davidson counsels against indulgence in pretences and the occasional “unrealistic expectations”<sup>192</sup> among other things.

In addition Davidson seems to counsel against practices like speed dating in which prospective suitors, by his assessment, have taken decisions in seconds based on physical attraction or other qualities regardless of their deficiencies in the long-term benefits. Though opposites do attract, Davidson points out, they will eventually turn into attack and that the long-term effect of different personalities and abilities may invoke conflicts.<sup>193</sup> Love and forgiveness for each other could be the basis of the Christian marital success and Davidson proposes couples apply God’s love as it potentially conquers all adversities.<sup>194</sup>

Nelson-Jones believes couples’ hidden unrealistic expectations, coupled with fixating on negative instead of positive aspects of the relationship, engaging in mind-reading and attributing malicious motives without checking their own inaccuracies of

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<sup>191</sup> Gottman and Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, p. 181.

<sup>192</sup> Graeme Davidson, *When the Vow Breaks: Contemplating Christian Divorce* (London: SPCK, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>193</sup> Davidson, *When the Vow Breaks*, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>194</sup> Davidson, *When the Vow Breaks*, p. 14.

facts and explanations lessen compatibility.<sup>195</sup> To Nelson-Jones, unlike ordinary relationships, inflexibility and communication deficiencies kill marital harmony.

Collins, on the other hand focuses on dealing with matters that tend to build protective fences instead of bridges between feuding couples. Such procedures thrive when couples in difficulty resolutely commit to non-hurting attitudes such as being less critical and avoiding negative comments toward each other. To Collins, couples must understand marriage has challenges but they need to communicate about and accommodate each other's faults, instead of nagging about them as it degenerates with time into major conflicts. Collins' preventive measures also expect couples to seek help early and actively contribute positively towards their emotional bonds.<sup>196</sup> Collins summarised practical sources for marital instability to include business, role confusion, inflexibility, religion, value and personality differences, boredom and money issues among others.<sup>197</sup>

Among contributors on preventing or managing marital difficulties Van Pelt apparently agrees with Whitfield,<sup>198</sup> Dominian<sup>199</sup> and Gottman and Silver<sup>200</sup> on working consciously for marital success through prevention of discord. Pelt however highlights the need for unconditional acceptance of each other and avoidance of

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<sup>195</sup> Richard Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling & Therapy*, 3rd edn (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 341.

<sup>196</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd edn (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), pp. 561–564.

<sup>197</sup> Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, pp. 566–567.

<sup>198</sup> Whitfield, *Fighting for Your African American Marriage*, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> Dominian, *Marriage: The Definitive Guide to What Makes a Marriage Work*, p. 55.

<sup>200</sup> Gottman and Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, pp. 129, 181.

destructive habits like nagging, angry outbursts, criticism and irritating and annoying behaviours that undermine relationships.<sup>201</sup>

In summary, the discussion suggests that marriage can be made to work. The GACMs' experience of seeking every reason to make or encourage marriages to work therefore finds resonance with contributors featured in the discussion above, that, marriages may or may not work anywhere without the conscious effort for the purposive maintenance required to keep it going even in the absence of the institutionalised community's settlement approach GACMs seem to be so used to. I discuss some views on divorce and remarriage among Christians next.

## ***5.6 Different Views on Divorce and Remarriage***

The variety of Christian views on divorce and remarriage is well illustrated by the book edited by House which describes four main interpretations of the teaching in the Bible.<sup>202</sup> This is significant because, as I have shown, SDAs believe that the Bible is their only doctrinal authority.

### **5.6.1 The Interpretations of the Old Testament Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage**

Several Christian opinions suggest the importance of these issues and the need for tolerance of opponent's views. Laney for instance favours a "No divorce and no remarriage" consensus and contends that any study of the biblical stance for marital issues including divorce must of necessity delve into its foundations as the portal for meaningful investigation. Laney argues that the provision is intact in

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<sup>201</sup> Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage*, pp. 47–67.

<sup>202</sup> *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990).



Genesis 2: 24, a passage that formed the basis for such discussion recorded in the NT; (Matthew 19: 5 and Mark 10: 7-8).<sup>203</sup>

In addition, Laney maintains that often the interpreters of Genesis 2: 24 are tempted to credit Adam with what only God could comprehend at the time. For example, in the passage when answering one of his critics in Matthew 19: 4-5, Jesus' comment credits God not Adam as saying "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh". Laney suggests that it is in this passage that the three indispensable constituents of biblical marriage, namely: leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh are embedded. Laney reiterates that any firm and successful marriage must have taken cognisance of these essential elements<sup>204</sup>

Heth supports Laney's view about the OT's place specifically in the first two chapters of Genesis, that, they formed the basis of Jesus' teaching on the subject of marriage. With a slight element of doubt, Heth stated his agreement to the fact that Jesus' appeal to the passages on marriage in Genesis formed his conceptual framework of an ideal marriage. Heth points out that the term "cleave" in Genesis 2: 24 is a covenant conventional terminology and consequently confirms marriages as one such pledge.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> J. Carl Laney, 'No Divorce & No Remarriage', in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 16–17.

<sup>204</sup> Laney, 'No Divorce & No Remarriage', p. 17.

<sup>205</sup> William A. Heth, 'Divorce, but No Remarriage', in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 74–75.

Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 is another related OT passage on the issue of divorce. Stott referred to it as a significant passage for being the first biblical passage in the OT that provides both grounds for and procedures towards divorce.<sup>206</sup> Stott again picks up some three noticeable points from the passage concerning certain ethical issues of marriage. First, that this passage neither recommended nor sanctioned divorce. Secondly the passage does not promote divorce. Indeed, it makes provision for what is permissible in case it happens, evidenced by proof of indecency. Lastly, that remarriage was permitted once the woman receives her certificate of divorce as recognisable within the rules.<sup>207</sup>

Furthermore, Stott emphasises that these OT legal codes were in no way an isolated document from the nearby ANE cultures. Mention is made particularly about the code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi which coincided with the migration of Abraham from Ur.<sup>208</sup> It has been suggested that these rules protected women who lost favour with their husbands. In other words they prevented men from reclaiming a divorced wife after another man had married her and subsequently divorces or abandons her. Thus, to some extent they were aimed to discourage men from abusing the woman's right to a substantiated divorce.<sup>209</sup>

Information, as recorded in the OT exposes inequality and legalistic issues of interpretation and application of practical marital laws within the Israelite society. Instone-Brewer, for instance, clarifies things further by citing parallel issues that

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<sup>206</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 326,327.

<sup>207</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, pp. 327, 328.

<sup>208</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 328.

<sup>209</sup> Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p. 328.

possibly influenced the Israeli culture. He discloses that it was a practice of the surrounding cultures of the Near East, where divorced women experienced difficulty to remarry. This was for the fact that some men could return anytime to reclaim their right against a remarried woman as the legal husband and benefited from the woman's inability to prove otherwise. Consequently, the OT's introduction and adoption of the divorce certificate served to protect divorced wives from such men against forestalling the entitlements of women as Moses established.<sup>210</sup>

Instone-Brewer advocates a reversal of institutionalised formality perceptions surrounding marital issues. He recommends Christians to read scripture with both cultural and traditional sensitivities bearing in mind for a better understanding what it meant to the original recipients. In this way he indicates Christians will come to understand both Jesus' possible opinion on the Hillelite-Shammaite views and also Paul's interpretation and application of scripture. Instone-Brewer intimates that both Jesus and Paul agree on the OT principles of marriage that require husbands to provide food, clothing and love also interpreted pragmatically further as physical and emotional needs, the neglect of which a marital contract could be considered broken. However he proposes that both disagreed with the pharisaic legalism suggesting further that ministers contemplate practically "keeping marriages together" plus ministering forgiveness to the needs of the divorced and the remarried.<sup>211</sup> It is

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<sup>210</sup> David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 300,301.

<sup>211</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 301–306; David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 15–35.

important to note that OT legislations favoured men as suggested, in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4, under the Hebrew economy with often unequalled decisive powers.

Routledge argues against male-female superiority hierarchies in marital relationships adding that God's intention for creation could rather be fulfilled through male and female union. This connotes a covenant relationship signifying God's relationship with his people. It also signifies the interdependence of both through faithfulness.<sup>212</sup> It is worth noting that God declared initially that things were good. It must be remembered therefore, that the fall brought degradation to the perfect world, which affected the marital institution. Divorce was legitimised in the OT teaching though, but, only as a provision and not a command to end marriages for any cause. Citing Exodus 21, Instone-Brewer discusses the significant place of the OT canon as related to contemporary marital issues as one of the many principles on which modern-day laws are based.<sup>213</sup>

Richards refers to a series of Jesus' comments on the OT issues and concluded that these books of the OT present "God's ideal of righteousness" but in imperfect contexts and expressions.<sup>214</sup> Legislating on divorce and remarriage in church, Richards suggests, does not benefit anyone. Rather, the metaphorical

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<sup>212</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2008), pp. 109, 141.

<sup>213</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities*, pp. 34–35 David Instone-Brewer brings life to portions of the Old Testament and thus makes lots of sense by establishing how significantly lots of modern laws, though much more complex sometimes, are based on these biblical principles of antiquity.

<sup>214</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), pp. 234, 235.

example, which suggests longsuffering and forgiveness between Yahweh and Israel might help while the church acknowledges the biblical standards.<sup>215</sup>

Patterson recounts the figurative usage of metaphors as of significant importance through which God shares his ideals of the marital relationship in daily human experiences.<sup>216</sup> Consequently God's use of metaphors, Patterson suggests, did make his purpose and words the more memorable by interpretation and as a vivid reminder of the marital covenant between himself and Israel. Zuck concurs thus:

...remove the metaphors ... from the Bible and its living spirit vanishes. The prophets, the poets, the leaders of men are all of them masters of imagery and by imagery they capture the human soul.<sup>217</sup>

Ryken emphasised that, "metaphors and similes" serve therefore as an invitation to meditate and "ponder how one thing is like another."<sup>218</sup> In this case the sanctity and permanence of marriage is likened to God's relationship with his chosen bride Israel. Patterson summarises:

"God's covenantal relation with Israel is often depicted as that of a husband for his wife. By way of contrast with Israel's polytheistic neighbours" whose monotheistic stance separates them from prostituting with their polytheistic neighbours with special honour as emphasised figuratively through monogamy.<sup>219</sup>

The idea of a marriage covenant is further supported by Richards. In his opinion, he sees relationship parallels between husbands and wives as a reflection

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<sup>215</sup> Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 235.

<sup>216</sup> Richard D. Patterson, 'Metaphors of marriage as expressions of Divine-human relations', *Journal of the Evangelical Society*, 51 (2008), 689–702 (pp. 689, 690) Unlike the neighbouring nations practice of polytheism God's monotheistic ideals also implied its application as pro monogamous as Israel's faithfulness to her husband was jealously required.

<sup>217</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1991), p. 143.

<sup>218</sup> Leland Ryken, *Words of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), p. 100.

<sup>219</sup> Patterson, 'Metaphors of marriage as expressions of Divine-human relations', p. 691.

of “God’s covenant commitment to his people”.<sup>220</sup> Thus, God’s declaration of his hatred for divorce in Malachi 2:16 refers to his displeasure in unfaithfulness to the covenant stipulations thereof. Lawrence agrees that certain biblical teachings “may not be unequivocally clear” due to the many options of interpretation. Regardless of that, he points to the strong framework of Jesus’ exposition as the bench mark for a safer Christian interpretation.<sup>221</sup> Richards welcomes other views that maintain the permanence of marriage and the permissibility of divorce but concludes these are not the best of solutions to marital difficulties.<sup>222</sup>

Instone-Brewer challenged the metaphor by which God is viewed as divorcing his unfaithful wife Israel. He believes that, that might not be the case after all. Contrarily, he seems to believe the prophets’ take on the issue, for example, meant that God suffered divorce resulting from her unfaithfulness instead. Instone-Brewer<sup>223</sup> is of the view therefore that the prophets Jeremiah and Hosea for instance, prophesied of reconciliation between God and his estranged wife while Malachi states God’s hatred for divorce as a final conclusion. Israel abandoned her marriage to Yahweh by following other lovers to the dislike of her husband. Yet he did not surrender her to the requirement of the law, namely a death sentence.

That decision probably is because God chose to abandon her briefly for her unfaithfulness instead of a permanent divorce to which he was entitled by right. According to Instone-Brewer God remarrying Judah or Israel would be guilty of

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<sup>220</sup> Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 233.

<sup>221</sup> Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 232.

<sup>222</sup> Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 233.

<sup>223</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 38.

breaking his own law of Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 for divorcing them after their unfaithfulness with other lovers as it was sacrilegious. Instone-Brewer suggests he could not take her back after divorcing her. Quoting Jeremiah 3: 18-22, Instone-Brewer apparently deduces from Jeremiah's prophecy that it is about anticipating reconciliation between God and a united (Israel-Judah) nation as his wife, Israel.<sup>224</sup> Though Hosea 2: 2 suggests a literal rather than metaphorical divorce between God and adulterous Israel, it is the prophet Ezekiel's prediction of a transformed and sanctified bride for Christ<sup>225</sup> as spouse that gets recognised in the NT symbolism.

#### **5.6.2 The Inter-Testamental and New Testament views of divorce and remarriage: Hillelites, Shammaites, Jesus' and Paul's grounds and exceptional clauses**

In the course of time views and interpretations of biblical legislation on marriage evolved that often complicated matters. The interval between the OT and NT for instance has been noted for the rabbinic arguments and opinions that sometimes reflected views of the neighbouring nations.<sup>226</sup> Some of these views that were borrowed or assimilated into the rabbinic concession apparently rationalised marriage as a common contract instead of a covenant between the couple and God. Though the word covenant could denote the concept of an agreement and therefore a contract, I prefer a covenant as it embraces the GACMs' ideal of the sacredness of the marital relationship.

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<sup>224</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 41–42.

<sup>225</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 52-53.

<sup>226</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 74–75, 78, 81.

Whether copied from neighbours or not, divorce has always had, or should logically have, some kind of grounds for reference. This is true even of the “no fault” divorces as the rather unspecified cause might just be a lack of further interest in one’s spouse. The very fact that no ground has been stated does not eliminate the fact that there is an existing, although unstated, desire not to continue the marriage as it has been so far.

Marital rights suggest the inclusion of conjugal rights for which denying one’s spouse was considered as an offense.<sup>227</sup> Exodus 21: 11 follows with a decree that food, clothing and marital rights must be provided, failing which, even a slave having become a wife has every right to end the relationship without any debt to settle. Although marriage by nature involves reciprocity irrespective of culture and time, the historic biblical eras reflect times when women in marriage were more or less the usual victims. Consequently, the choices of men in marriage were mostly the determinants of a family’s stability.

In the NT, marital laws including the grounds for divorce, took their cue from the OT as the basis for socio-ethical and theological guidance for life. It was his noted convention that Jesus preceded his refutation of some long held beliefs and practices with “It has been said,” thus referring to a routine tradition, “‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce,’ but I tell you” contrarily “That anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to

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<sup>227</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 235 Instone-Brewer recounts a four point vow from the OT requirement. In this he singled out sexual faithfulness as one and introduced the word ‘love’ probably as a summary of ‘marital rights’ in addition to the requirement of food and clothing for a wife.



become an adulteress.” Jesus argued further, that, “anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery”, Matthew 5: 31-32. By his appeal and reference to the OT Jesus confirmed the fact that certain human innovations of apparently outmoded beliefs, teachings and practices like marital laws, could still be traced to the Scriptures that needed updating and clarification even in those days.

According to Instone-Brewer, the rabbinic debates had potentially created factions along the lines of some of these arguments. These arguments centred on the basic propositions held by the noted leaders of those schools of thought. The Hillelites, for instance were proponents of the view that favoured every cause divorce arguing with Deuteronomy 24: 1. On the other hand the Shammaites school of thought used the same passage to argue that a man may only divorce if he finds indecency in his wife.<sup>228</sup> This shows that popular ethical and theological discussions in Jesus’ time included marriage, divorce and remarriage issues. Similarly as it is among the group being studied certain passages do generate debate among believers with completely different interpretations and conclusions.

Although the Hillelite and Shammaite views still held sway, the NT accounts pay much attention to the opinions first of Jesus and later of Paul. Matthew 5:28 for instance records Jesus’ views not only on divorce but provides an extensive explanation of adultery.

Roberts emphasises that Jesus agreed with both Shammaites and Hillelites in some of their interpretations to scripture especially Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 that sexual

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<sup>228</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 110–112.

unfaithfulness is a ground for divorce but also disagreed with them even when both agreed. One such example Roberts cites, is when both schools of thought concurred on Deuteronomy 24:1 particularly that it spells out the approved biblical ground for divorce. Instead, Jesus' conclusion was that Moses endured the hard-heartedness of the people and tolerated them but did not authorise the practice.<sup>229</sup> In addition, even though both Shammaites and Hillelites agreed that a man was only guilty of breaking the seventh command when he has sex with a legally married woman, Jesus refuted and expanded this perception by asserting that even lustful looks were sinful and that men are guilty when they abuse any system to sanction selfish divorces.<sup>230</sup>

SDA beliefs agree with Chapman who suggests marriage should be viewed as a covenant between a man and a woman and above all with God. Specifically a covenant singled out the other person as of major and unconditional importance, for which reason his or her interest in the relationship needs to be paramount.<sup>231</sup> According to Jesus, only sexual unfaithfulness may lead to a permissible though not commanded divorce, Matthew 5: 27-30. Matthew also reports on Jesus' discussion on divorce certificates, in verses 31-32. However, it is in Matthew 19 that his exceptional clause opinion is given in detail in response possibly to the scheming representative factions.

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<sup>229</sup> Roberts, *Not Under Bondage*, pp. 132–135.

<sup>230</sup> Roberts, *Not Under Bondage*, p. 135.

<sup>231</sup> Gary D. Chapman, *Covenant Marriage: Building Communication & Intimacy* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), pp. 13–24.

Chapman counsels that every effort should be made both to maintain the marital covenant and avoid divorce.<sup>232</sup> It is only after every method known has been exhausted, probably to a point of hopelessness that divorce may become a reluctant option. In the NT surprisingly, Jesus did neither directly support nor condemn Moses' apparent permissive stance. Rather he chose to blame the hard heartedness of the people whose indifference coerced Moses to act as he did. However, he made his stance quite clear, that the people have misunderstood and misinterpreted Scripture, and thus, the focal point of biblical marriage as a whole, and have therefore missed the mark.

### **5.6.3 The Diversity of Christian views on divorce and remarriage**

This section discusses the fact that a variety of views are traditionally tolerated among the Western Christians hosting the GACMs. I have also observed, that, the complexity of a variety of views is reflected and might even be more profound and complicated for certain non-tolerant groups within the GACM population. It is probably much more complicated on individual levels depending possibly on every single case of concern and how individuals relate to certain situations. Consequently, the varieties of stances often foster contention among minority groups. They could be sources for fragmentation which potentially may destabilise other relationships including marriage.

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<sup>232</sup> Chapman, *Covenant Marriage...*, pp. 211–214.

Schwarz, for instance commends the positive aspect of the existence of a variety of opinions and emphasis<sup>233</sup> within the body of the Christian church. Beaman in her article upholds the positive side of diversity and decries the lack of it particularly in the American and Canadian societies by blaming the domination of protestant orthodoxy.<sup>234</sup> However, Gill critiques her article and says that, by likening the issue to being lost in the supermarket, she shows that she has misunderstood what is happening. To Gill religious liberty exists with a very commendable diversity in favour of the general good.<sup>235</sup> In other words, variety provides options and with options freedom of choice. However freedom offered through diversity may not necessarily result in agreement in practice.

Many Christians as inferred above, in conformance to the mega-society, reflect the dilemma of finding a unified and definitive answer to the question and aftermath of divorce and remarriage among believers.<sup>236</sup> The variety of interpretations of scripture may testify to the intensity of such a dilemma for Christianity today. Instone-Brewer described it as an apparently incongruous and strange decision to refuse divorce to a believer who lives in an abusive marriage for

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<sup>233</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking* p. 100.

<sup>234</sup> Lori G. Beaman, 'The Myth of Pluralism, Diversity, and Vigor: The Constitutional Privilege of Protestantism in the United States and Canada', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42:3 (2003), 311–325 (pp. 312, 313).

<sup>235</sup> Anthony Gill, 'Lost in the Supermarket: Comments on Beaman, Religious Pluralism, and What It Means to Be Free', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42:3 (2003), 327–332 (pp. 327–331).

<sup>236</sup> 'Remarriage, Cohabitation, and Changes in Mothering Behavior', ed. by Robert M. Milardo, 2, 63 (2001), 370–380 (pp. 370–380) Studies reported in this article have shown how difficult it is to ignore the societal need for marital stability at least for the sake of providing consistent stability for children.

instance.<sup>237</sup> Like the Hillelite and Shammaite factions, Christians are divided on this issue probably more than in Jesus' time although Jesus apparently sided with some of the Shammaite arguments.<sup>238</sup> It appears there could not be any common-ground answer to the issues regarding the biblical injunctions for divorce and remarriage among Christians.

Looking at applicable grounds for Christian divorce today, Instone-Brewer counts "from zero to infinity". Following that he established the apparently two main grounds considered as conventionally argued and accepted by the traditional views of the church fathers.<sup>239</sup> Even for these two, Instone-Brewer maintained the established churches debated that of adultery mostly making it a one ground subject. To him it was Erasmus who brought back the two ground recognition into the debate, later adopted by the Protestants. Yet, Erasmus' inclusion of the second ground and consent for remarriage before death of the separated partner, as it is somehow believed Paul stated, appeared irrelevant to them as only death was the true separation and therefore the only grounds for remarriage.<sup>240</sup>

The grounds, as noted above, vary and Instone-Brewer discusses the following namely; first, a two ground" argument; secondly, "no ground" except death argument; thirdly, "other grounds found in the OT" which included a false non-

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<sup>237</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 268.

<sup>238</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 186–186. Instone-Brewer wrote 'Jesus used the same terminology as the Shammaites, in the same context, at the same time period, and in a debate where Shammaites or their rivals the Hillelites were present. We may therefore confidently assume that he meant to convey the same meaning by these words that the Shammaites were trying to convey ... Therefore, when Jesus used the same phrase in this same debate, it would be extraordinary to conclude that he meant something different' p.186 .

<sup>239</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 269.

<sup>240</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 269–270 To the majority of the debaters, when an unbeliever deserts a spouse it was divorce as separation had already occurred.

virginity charge as in Deuteronomy 22: 19 and the war slave concubines issue Deuteronomy 21: 10-14; the fourth argument is that different cultures come with a variety of societal norms and practices and therefore must have different grounds as applicable. As his conclusion, Instone-Brewer agreed with the traditional churches' two grounds of adultery and desertion as acceptable grounds for divorce and goes on further to accept an additional two, the emotional and material neglect as implied in 1Corinthians 7: 3-5, 32-34 with its assumed origins from Exodus 21: 10-11 from where Paul and the Rabbis possibly based their arguments.<sup>241</sup>

As a contribution to the Christian views on the issue of whether Christians are permitted to divorce and if so on what grounds, Laney is of the view from his survey of the Bible that, marriage, as an original intention, was meant to be permanent. That can only mean till death and that "neither God" nor "Moses commanded divorce". Laney maintained that Paul obviously agreed with Jesus that God's original plan should be observed to the letter. His view also recognises the fact that Moses only responded to the hardness of the people and that is not a worthy example to follow either.<sup>242</sup>

Laney's view, as summarised above accepts remarriage only on the grounds that such ought to be a Christian widow marrying another unmarried believer. To Laney any other form of remarriage including marrying another divorcee may constitute adultery. And finally in the case of a divorce, a believer's options are; staying single or reconciling with one's estranged spouse. In effect, Laney maintains

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<sup>241</sup> Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 269–275.

<sup>242</sup> Laney, 'No Divorce & No Remarriage', p. 48.

there should be no divorce and no remarriage. To him, marriages today are short of real commitment in the biblical sense.<sup>243</sup> Laney's non-compromising concluding view was challenged by Heth who shares an almost similar view with a slight exception. Heth questions Laney's absolutist insistence on unconditional prohibition of divorce. He argued, citing hypothetical situations of an abusive or incestuous and destructive marriage, as a typical practical situation for reconsideration by adherents of Laney's point of view.<sup>244</sup>

In his argument Heth formatted his disagreement with Laney by establishing the permissibility of divorce as biblical. However, he threw his weight behind Laney's argument against remarriage. Heth appealed to scripture, citing 1Corinthians 7:11 in support of his view that reconciliation and forgiveness must be sought for by all married believers. To clear possible questions about situations of irreconcilable marriages Heth cites both Scripture (Matthew 19:9) and Bromiley's conviction which emphasised the consistency of "divine reconciliation as a constant fact in human life" which in turn connotes "mutual reconciliation" as a practicable fact, making "indissoluble union a practical and attainable goal even for sinners"<sup>245</sup> Heth is convinced that grace is not given to encourage sin citing Romans 6:1-2. He claims further that any remarriage prior to the death of the former spouse constitutes adultery.

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<sup>243</sup> Laney, 'No Divorce & No Remarriage', p. 48.

<sup>244</sup> Heth, 'Divorce, but No Remarriage', p. 59.

<sup>245</sup> Heth, 'Divorce, but No Remarriage', p. 114; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), p. 47.

Therefore, there should be no remarriage except after the death of a former spouse and only to a non-divorcee who has no former spouse alive.<sup>246</sup>

Laney praises Heth for his ability to exegete and for proving that even adultery does not necessarily dissolve marriage. Laney however corrects the Protestants' use of Erasmus' sacramental opinion of marriage, which to him was based on charity and therefore not biblical and wrong. To him, such views are a deviation from the apostolic traditions of the church as a marriage bond was and is never based on sexual union alone. Consequently the acceptance of sexual infidelity as grounds for divorce could never be supported scripturally as the sole determinant of breaking a marital union.<sup>247</sup>

In response to the indissolubility stance of both Laney and Heth, Edgar and Richards wrote their separate views with a common agreement on the dissolvability of Christian marriage and permissibility of remarriage. Both have argued exegetically appealing to the OT that the provisions made and further statements in the NT, compliment the fact that marriage is dissolvable. Furthermore, remarriage was and is permissible today since a divorced person could be eligible for remarriage in the Mosaic stipulation. Richards for instance queries Heth's exposition suggesting that he was imposing his own views based on what he set out to prove which in the end tempted him to arrive at such conclusions.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Heth, 'Divorce, but No Remarriage', p. 115.

<sup>247</sup> Laney, 'No Divorce & No Remarriage', pp. 131–132.

<sup>248</sup> Larry Richards, 'Divorce & Remarriage Under a Variety of Circumstances', in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 144–145.



In defence of his own view Edgar argues in favour of “Divorce and remarriage for adultery or desertion”. To Edgar, marriage is God’s concept that man needs to maintain. However, in a difficult situation the burden of blame should not be laid upon both the innocent and the guilty together. As a result Edgar sees no basis valid enough for the rejection of both Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings which are both only confirming existing provisions made in the Mosaic stipulations. Edgar disagrees with any presupposition or dogma that attempts to reinterpret passages of Scripture to teach anything contrary to the clear statements like that of Matthew 19: 9; or 1Corinthians 7:15. In a barrage of rhetorical questions Edgar infers that this anomaly is not because of any shortage of intellectuals as that is never the case, as compared to the mere imposition of some preconceived presuppositions in the way.<sup>249</sup>

For his part in the debate Richards argued in defence of “Divorce and remarriage under a variety of circumstances.” Richards apparently wants to present his defence from the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century point of view. In his argument he warns of the danger of being sympathetic to people who hurt and by so doing rebel against God when carried away to the extent of rejecting or ignoring direct instructions from God’s word. Secondly he sounds the alarm for the possibility of becoming insensitive to the human need by strictly applying scripture in a rather legalistic manner (as often noted among GACMs), thereby missing the real point of

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<sup>249</sup> Thomas R. Edgar, ‘Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion’, in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 191–193.

God's word.<sup>250</sup> However Richards is also concerned about the many believers who find themselves in a society whose culture interferes so much with their hopes in life.

This subsection has been included to show that, not only SDA's but Christians in general, interpret the Bible teaching on divorce and remarriage in different ways. This partially explains why SDA churches act in different ways towards couples experiencing marital difficulties and those who have been divorced.

Next I discuss the reality of the dynamic cultural shock to expect and the transformation GACMs might experience or have to learn as migrants.

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<sup>250</sup> Larry Richards, 'Divorce & Remarriage Under a Variety of Circumstances', pp. 215–217.

## 6 Migration, Cultural Marital Orientation and Change

The perception of marriage in any culture is complex. It becomes more complicated and misunderstood when practiced in a foreign country. In a traditional Ghanaian context, marriage is seldom a private matter (see fn. 20 p. 27). Its concepts are established with the provision of social sanctions. Marriage culturally sustains and protects traditional values for the Ghanaian family for example, as a union limited to only a man and a woman<sup>251</sup> (see fn. 119 p. 64; 318-319 p. 147). However, worldwide migrations have effected dynamic global changes that threaten marriages. For instance, Western-bound migrations, driven mostly by economic difficulties particularly raise GACM concerns of cultural disconnection. I submit in this chapter that migration and cultural changes have correlations that migrants must be prepared to encounter with an open mind.

Ilcan has attributed evidence of such global changes, with their associated dismantling of interconnectedness as noticeable in these social relational value systems, partly, as she clarifies, to the “expanded mobility of populations” with a series of consequential “shifting of boundaries,”<sup>252</sup> of ideas and practices with particular reference to several traditions of established cultural practices. The minority settlers’ cultures often risk the possibility of relegation to the margins or extinction in the acculturation, enculturation and assimilation processes.<sup>253</sup>

However, culture, as observed by some anthropologists is a complicated word<sup>254</sup> and so it is not easy to provide a simple definition. Recognising its Latin roots *cultus* Eller for instance went on to include in his multi-dimensional view of the word an understanding that recognises culture to also meaning a people’s ideas or

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<sup>251</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 261.

<sup>252</sup> Suzan Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>253</sup> Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement*, p. 3.

<sup>254</sup> Jack David Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), p. 25.

beliefs. Hiebert concurs with Eisenstein, Whitefield and others that cultures and the corresponding worldviews are parts of human systems known to experience constant fluctuation and changeability thus making approximation the sole outcome for any attempts for a fixed definition at any given time.<sup>255</sup> In other words culture, irrespective of noted taxonomic consistency has generally non-static attributes for any given people.<sup>256</sup>

Schech and Haggis believe culture as a word is used by many with different meanings. In the course of their argument they suggested anthropologists apparently share the view that culture is “A discrete, bounded entity” which consists of “...particular sets or structures of social relations, practices, and symbolic systems which forge a cohesive unity for the group, whether as a society, nation, community, or class.”<sup>257</sup> In other words culture has relatively described specific people, or some practical aspects of the same over the years.

Culture as an ideology Barker explained, is the “lived experience” of a people. It refers to a body of such systematic ideas which functions as a unifying factor, cement or an ideology of a diverse group of people with common social elements as ideas or beliefs.<sup>258</sup> Eller quotes an earlier definition from Tylor’s book “Primitive Culture” for a broader scope as:

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<sup>255</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 31.

<sup>256</sup> Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews...*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>257</sup> Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis, *Culture and Development: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell publisher, 2000), pp. 16, 22.

<sup>258</sup> Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 4th edn (London: SAGE, 2012), p. 67.

Culture or Civilisation...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.<sup>259</sup>

Eller argued that no one is born with any particular skills such as language, politics or even religion. Contextually, Eller claims all these are learned eventually as part of one's culture and therefore cannot be found wrapped inside anyone at birth.<sup>260</sup>

Hiebert points out that worldviews are generated and integrated into cultural taxonomic constructs<sup>261</sup> which in effect direct certain involuntary cultural behaviour. Since culture is outside of any individual in the first place before it is learned, Eller maintains, similarly, culture can be shared when people live in any form of proximity<sup>262</sup>, hence enculturation. Culture therefore can be produced within a particular environment via practice and thus can be circulated through its dynamic social means.<sup>263</sup>

Stockard emphasised that marriage as “an intimate relationship” cannot be separated from the broader context of a public arena featuring the “social, economic, and political life” of people.<sup>264</sup> Stockard's comment suggests marriage as a human institution is part of a broader context, people's way of life, a culture that gives a holistic meaning to its practices and functions. Beside the broader socio-cultural environment Amato and DeBoer conclude that cultural complexities continue to influence and potentially determine certain social characteristics across

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<sup>259</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, p. 25 Eller quoted Tylor, E. B., from *Primitive Culture*, New York: Haper Torchbooks, 1958.

<sup>260</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, p. 26.

<sup>261</sup> Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews...*, pp. 36, 48–49.

<sup>262</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, pp. xvi, 28–29.

<sup>263</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>264</sup> Stockard, *Marriage in Culture*, pp. 1–2.

generations.<sup>265</sup> Amato and DeBoer in a two generational study of relationship skills and marital commitment predict likely behaviour from their findings that:

Parental divorce approximately doubled the odds that offspring would see their own marriages end in divorce. ...Divorce was most likely to be transmitted across generations if parents reported a low, rather than a high, level of discord prior to marital dissolution. These results, combined with other findings from the study, suggest that offspring with divorced parents have an elevated risk of seeing their own marriages end in divorce because they hold a comparatively weak commitment to the norm of lifelong marriage.<sup>266</sup>

Picking up on the issue of cultural orientation and intergenerational transmission, Vollebergh et al warn and question the likelihood of rushing into conclusions like Amato et al stating that late adolescence is practically a formative period of development during which internalisation of cultural orientations are guided by psychological processes. Vollebergh et al claim that adolescents experience diminishing susceptibility of parental influence as they mature into adulthood.<sup>267</sup> An alternative view of Vollebergh et al's claim of diminishing susceptibility could be one of many repercussions of issues such as parent-child relationship difficulties generated from globalisation. In other words the findings of Amato et al might be factual, yet generalising the results in every situation could be overstated, hence the possibility of complete social deviations between generations in a globalised context.

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<sup>265</sup> Paul R. Amato and Danelle D. DeBoer, 'The Transmission of marital instability Across Generations: Relationship Skills or Commitment to Marriage?', *Journal of Marriage and Family, Marital Stability*, 63 (2001), 1038–1051 (p. 1038).

<sup>266</sup> Amato and DeBoer, 'The Transmission of marital instability Across Generations: Relationship Skills or Commitment to Marriage?', p. 1038.

<sup>267</sup> W. A. M. Vollebergh, J. Iedema and Q. A. W. Raajmakers, 'Intergenerational transmission and the Formation of Cultural Orientations in Adolescence and Young Adulthood', *Journal of Marriage and Family, Marital Stability*, 63 (2001), 1185–1198 (p. 1185).

Globalisation is often associated with cultural cohesion difficulties within communities at home and abroad. This invariably magnifies subsequent inequality issues within host cultures. Bass, for instance, blames the increased child exploitation existing in the culture of Sub-Saharan Africa on poverty as a dominant factor necessitated by socio-economic inequality facilitated by globalisation.<sup>268</sup>

Bass believes that industrialisation, modernisation and extension of capitalism influenced family and traditional segregations further through rural-urban migration occasioned by infrastructural inequality and offered protection for the invisible practice of child labour.<sup>269</sup> Globalisation has thus widened the gap of rural-urban inequalities resulting in subsequent one way migration with associated family life difficulties as observed among the GACMs.

Nelson-Jones suggests unmet minority equal opportunity expectations have given rise to a mainstream-minority cultural dichotomy.<sup>270</sup> Citing Kempen's<sup>271</sup> observation, Nelson-Jones suggests however that concepts of "independent, coherent and stable" cultures seem irrelevant within an interconnected world community.<sup>272</sup> This section considers a few relevant cultural concerns particularly acculturation matters resulting from possible enculturation and cultural shocks that migrants face in unpredictable environments.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Bass, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p. 39.

<sup>269</sup> Bass, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa*, pp. 30–33, 182–183.

<sup>270</sup> Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling & Therapy*, p. 422.

<sup>271</sup> H.J.M. Hermans and H.J.G. Kempen, 'Moving Cultures: The Perilous Problems of Cultural Dichotomies in a Globalising Society.', *American Psychologist*, 53 (1998), 1, 11–20 (p. 1) See Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling & Therapy*, p. 422.

<sup>272</sup> Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling & Therapy*, p. 422.

<sup>273</sup> Nelson-Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling & Therapy*, pp. 421–423.

For this study some four classifications of acculturation by social scientists' are briefly considered for the analyses. Sam<sup>274</sup> and Berry et al<sup>275</sup> for instance categorised these social interactions under: assimilation, integration, marginalisation and separation. These social scientists' arguments suggest that a minority groups' cultural interactions with the dominant host cultural practices create conditions that influence these four categorisations. By assimilation they suggest the minority embraces the dominant culture and discards their own. In integration the minority combine and respect both cultures. In marginalisation the minority misses out in both their own and the host cultures. Finally in the separation model minorities become inward-looking, isolate and segregate themselves from outsiders.

Bowskill et al recognise Berry and colleague's four-fold taxonomy of acculturation explaining them as the basic reflection of people's acceptance or rejection of particular cultures. In these they defined "cultural maintenance" and "cultural contact" as the degree at which their own cultural elements are retained and how much there is contact or avoidance of the outsider group's culture. Bowskill et al admit the positive aspects of integration with its optimal strategic privileges. However they also consider latent limitations including that cultural practice cannot make sense in a relatively unfavourable context. Secondly both integration and

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<sup>274</sup> L.D. Sam, 'Acculturation Attitudes Among Young Immigrants as a Function of Perceived Parental Attitudes Toward Cultural Change', *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 15 (1995), 238–258 (pp. 238–258).

<sup>275</sup> J.W. Berry et al, 'Acculturation Attitudes in Plural Societies', *Applied Psychology: An international Review*, 38 (1989), 185–206 (pp. 185–206).



assimilation pose the latent intrinsic problem of trivialising individual concerns and thus eliminate or denigrate their variability from the equation.<sup>276</sup>

Levi considers a group as more than a collection of people. Rather, that a group recognise and share membership bonds with common goals and aspirations.<sup>277</sup> Levi adds further that:

Formal and informal rules and roles of the group control the interactions of group members ... people in a group influence each other, and the desire to remain in the group increases the potential for mutual influence. Finally a group satisfies members' physical and psychological needs, so individuals are motivated to continue participation. They are defined by social identification and social representation.<sup>278</sup>

The patterns of group dynamics, individual worth and subsequent classifications of acculturation presented above find relevance in the analyses of the migrant GACM community.

Ilcan questioned whether there will be dynamic interchanges with the outside cultures and beliefs<sup>279</sup> (see fn. 252-253 p. 114). In other words, certain idealistic expectations of permanent structures should be avoided in the course of migration struggles through which changes unsettle or resettle relations. In addition Padilla and Perez maintain that "Cognitive and behavioural changes do not always follow the same time progression when we are examining changes due to intergroup contacts" despite the facts of improved knowledge and documentation on acculturation. Rather, to Padilla and Perez, the experiences of some immigrants suggest that

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<sup>276</sup> M. Bowskill, E. Lyons and A. Coyle, 'The Rhetoric of Assimilation: When Integration Means Assimilation', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46 (2007), 793–813 (pp. 793–813).

<sup>277</sup> Levi, *Group Dynamics for Teams* p. 3.

<sup>278</sup> Levi, *Group Dynamics for Teams* p. 4.

<sup>279</sup> Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement*, pp. 1, 3.

“certain types of cultural adaptation” may be “preferable or beneficial ... to a condition of survival.” Though earlier models held views with conclusions that viewed acculturation as a product of two cultures coming together, Padilla and Perez suggested otherwise and pointed to several existing constraints of environmental and social conditions that might form a greater contributory part in determining individual and group changes.<sup>280</sup>

In summary, this chapter has recognised that culture is learned and that migration encourages cultural changes. Consequently, this study shares Padilla and Perez’s conviction among others, that, acculturation is a mutual process that involves both the dominant and minority ethnic cultures based on the cultural differences and associated mutual power relationships. It is however suggested that the possibility of a minority cultural group’s willing participation in the dominant culture depends on the attitudes of the dominant group towards it and this to a large extent, determines the concerns of the subordinate culture.<sup>281</sup> The subordinate cultural group’s concerns, in this case the migrants’, are with the behaviour patterns of their group members.<sup>282</sup> Existing and prospective migrants need to be well informed of the realities awaiting them and must be willing to accept certain impacts of the Western culture as an essential part of the choice to migrate.

The next section is the quantitative study report.

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<sup>280</sup> Amado M. Padilla and William Perez, ‘Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective’, *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 25 (2003), 35–55 (p. 39).

<sup>281</sup> Padilla and Perez, ‘Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective’, p. 39.

<sup>282</sup> Padilla and Perez, ‘Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective’, p. 39.

## **7 The Quantitative studies: Presentation of analyses and interpretation of the questionnaire data**

This section presents the analyses, interpretations and conclusions of the quantitative research work done. A discussion follows in a later section together with the qualitative study analysis of findings in order to explain likely trends of contributing factors towards GACM marital difficulties. The rationale is that this approach of primary stage information gathering, will ensure GACM consensus and that measures are taken for validation of GACM's challenges studied in order to address subsequent perceptions in conclusions.

### ***7.1 The Quantitative Analysis:***

#### **7.1.1 GACMs Perception of Marriage among Migrants in Britain**

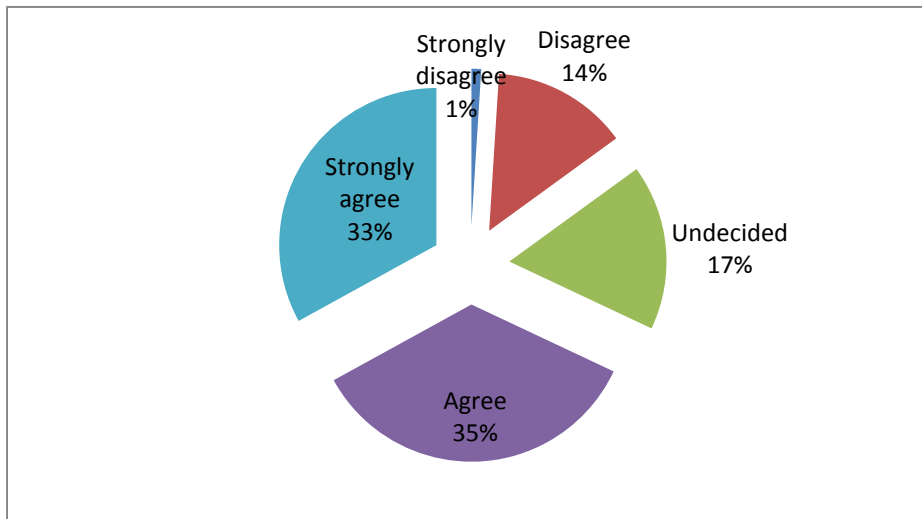
It is perceived that Ghanaian migrant marriages, whether brought over from Africa or contracted here in Britain, do not survive the Western Culture. Amoah hinted on this claim when he suggested in his abstract the need to deal with the impact of the Western culture on GACM family stability (see fn. 11 p. 25). Verdon has also inferred<sup>283</sup> (see fn.109 p. 59), that, though marital instability did exist in Abutia for instance, she thus blamed the arrival of the Germans and the subsequent individualistic freedoms that emerged for the cultural changes. Figure 1 analysed 81 participant responses to the statement: It is generally claimed that Ghanaian migrant marriages brought over from Africa as well as those contracted here in the West do

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<sup>283</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49–50.

not survive the Western Culture. This statement investigated participants' views on whether GACM marriages do not survive in Britain.

**Figure 1 Marriage Becomes Difficult in UK**



The statement considered in Figure.1 above was aimed at participants' agreement or otherwise of whether the perception that marriages brought over from Ghana do not survive the Western culture. Analyses of respondent views on perceived problems encountered by migrant marriages in Britain revealed a strong apprehension of the non-viability of migrant marriages in Britain within GACM communities.

The results show a significant majority of 68% agree with the perception that GACM marriages brought over to Britain do not survive. Out of this, 33% of the respondents strongly agreed that migrant marriages brought to this country do not survive. Furthermore, about 15% of respondents disagreed of which 1% strongly disagree to the correlation of this problem while 17% were undecided. This research found that there are several factors that act in concert to create these problems, some of which will be discussed below.

Marriage is a social institution as supported by Gyekye, et al<sup>284</sup> and therefore influenced by changing value systems in the society where it is practiced. For instance Verdon<sup>285</sup> (see fn.109 p. 59) blamed marital instability on influences from migration citing the arrival of the Germans in Abutia for instance. Migration comes with advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, the Western cultural influences do the same wherever it is experienced. It will be of interest to note therefore, that, regardless of these negative views about the Western cultural influences, many still choose to migrate to Britain. These are GACM marriages being practiced in a Western society.

I discuss the cultural significance next.

### **7.1.2 Effects of Western Culture**

Culture is learned and shared as Eller noted<sup>286</sup> (see fn. 260-262 p. 116). A further discussion on culture by Bass, Vollebergh, Nelson-Jones, Baker, Herbert and Amato et al above for instance, demonstrates support for Eller's point. This suggests that, potentially the dynamic effects of Western cultural idiosyncrasies on marriages remain a formidable barrier to the traditionally institutionalised GACM marriages while in Britain. The next discussion analyses participant's opinion on the statement: Westernised traditions contribute to the difficulties of GACM marriages in Britain.

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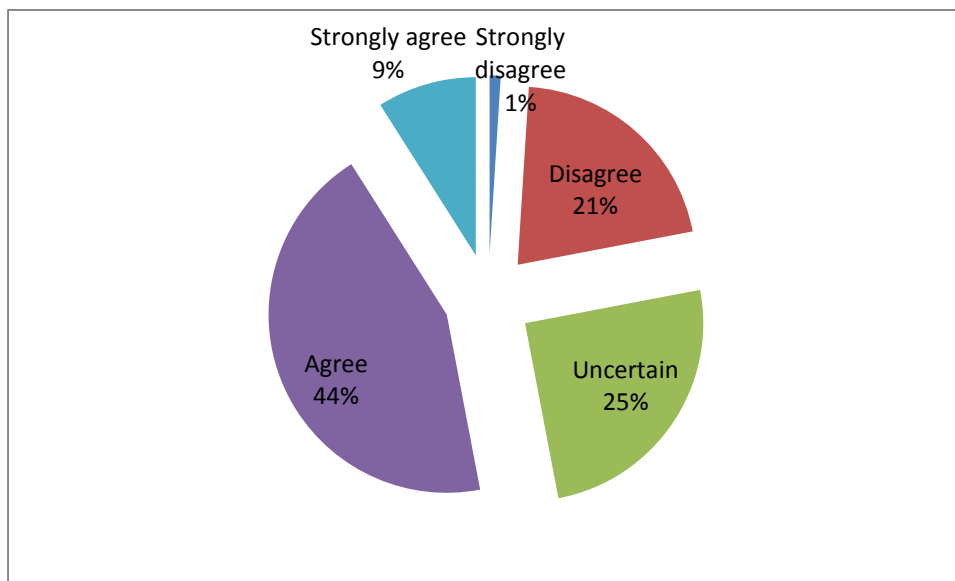
<sup>284</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*; Onstine, 'Gender and the Religion of Ancient Egypt', 1-11; Ibrahim, 'African Islam: Marriage, Mobility and Education of Women in Dan Fodio's Nineteenth Century Reforms', 168-181; DeRose, Nii-Amoo Dodoo and Patil, 'Fertility Desires and Perceptions of Power in Reproductive Conflict in Ghana', 53-73; Ronald A.G. du Preez, 'Does Leviticus 18:18 Deal with Incest or Polygamy?', *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, 3 (1997), 7-19; Ron du Preez, 'Monarchs and Multiple Wives: A Re-Evaluation of Deuteronomy 17: 16, 17 and Solomon's Polygamy', *Journal of Adventist Thought in Africa*, 4 (2001), 7-24; Ayisi, 'Ghana: Family Values', 64-66; Oppong, 'From Love to Institution...'; Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage*; Omari.

<sup>285</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49-50.

<sup>286</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, pp. 28-29, 34-35.

Figure 2 presents the analysed participants' opinion on the statement: The modernised traditions of engagement, dowry payments and expensive weddings among others contribute to the difficulties of the migrant marriages in Europe. A five-point scale was used to assess the view that the Westernised traditions contribute to the GACM marital difficulties.

**Figure 2 Western Culture is to be Blamed**



The Respondent's perception on whether post-settlement issues involving difficulty in marriage could be blamed on the Westernised culture revealed significantly that about 53% of respondents believe that Britain's culture has an adverse impact on migrant marriages. While 9% of those strongly hold this perception, 44% simply agreed. However 25% remained uncertain about the actual impact of Western culture on migrant marriages. This leaves 22% who believed that cultural factors could be neutral. As Levi pointed out, both "formal and informal rules and roles" of cultures "control the interactions"<sup>287</sup> as long as people choose to remain within the

<sup>287</sup> Levi, *Group Dynamics for Teams* pp. 3–4.

confines of a culture. Some respondents thus believe these group motivations confirm their suspicions.

The impact of globalisation suggests that no culture can remain unchanged. In Kwahu, Abutia and Avatime discussed above, Opong and Bleek<sup>288</sup>, (see fn. 104 p. 57), Brydon<sup>289</sup> (see fn. 114 p. 61) and Verdon<sup>290</sup> (see fn.109 p. 59), suggest those areas experienced some cultural changes even at their door step in Ghana. The individual freedom is every person's desire, though African communities do swallow up individual quests for such freedoms.<sup>291</sup> Furthermore, although culture is learned, as Eller suggests, this can be both ways.<sup>292</sup> Therefore, the effects of globalisation can be felt either way.

Britain's divorce requirement's impact on GACMs is discussed next.

### **7.1.3 The Ease of Meeting Divorce Requirements in Britain**

A five-option scale measuring the strength of GACMs perception on Britain's presumed easier divorce requirement is considered. Figure 3 responds to: Divorce happens among migrants because it is comparatively easier in the West.

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<sup>288</sup> Opong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' p. 23.

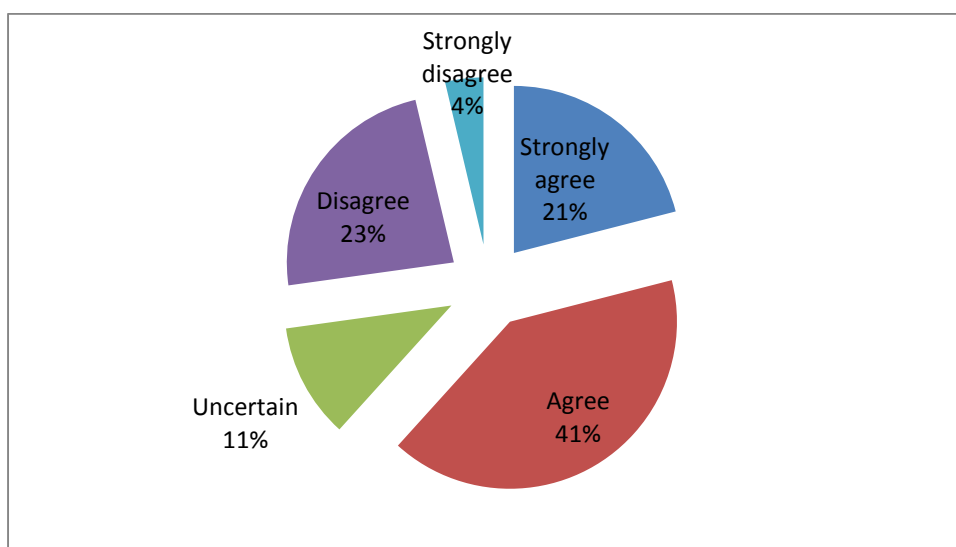
<sup>289</sup> Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatime, Ghana', pp. 103–104, 107–108.

<sup>290</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49–50.

<sup>291</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 52; Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*.

<sup>292</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, p.26

Figure 3 Western Divorce is Easier



The study also found (Fig. 3) that divorce requirements are easier to meet when compared with the respondents' country of origin. This relative ease within the dominant culture, as determinant of internal change,<sup>293</sup> remains a formidable challenge to the sustainability of migrant marriages while in the UK. A couple in Ghana cannot (on their own) end their marriage (regardless of whatever happens) without the expressed consent of the supporting families in the background. Contrarily, the extended family certainly do not possess that right in Britain. Ilcan's observation, that, movements usually come with dynamic cultural challenges of interchanges to ideologies whether as refugees or immigrants<sup>294</sup> is significant here. The interview responses generally, particularly PIJA10, PCA19 and PDA15 (see fn. 369 p. 177; 381 p. 189; 383 p. 192) suggest the practice of Ghanaian communities is

<sup>293</sup> Padilla and Perez, 'Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective', pp. 35–55, 39.

<sup>294</sup> Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement*, p. 3.



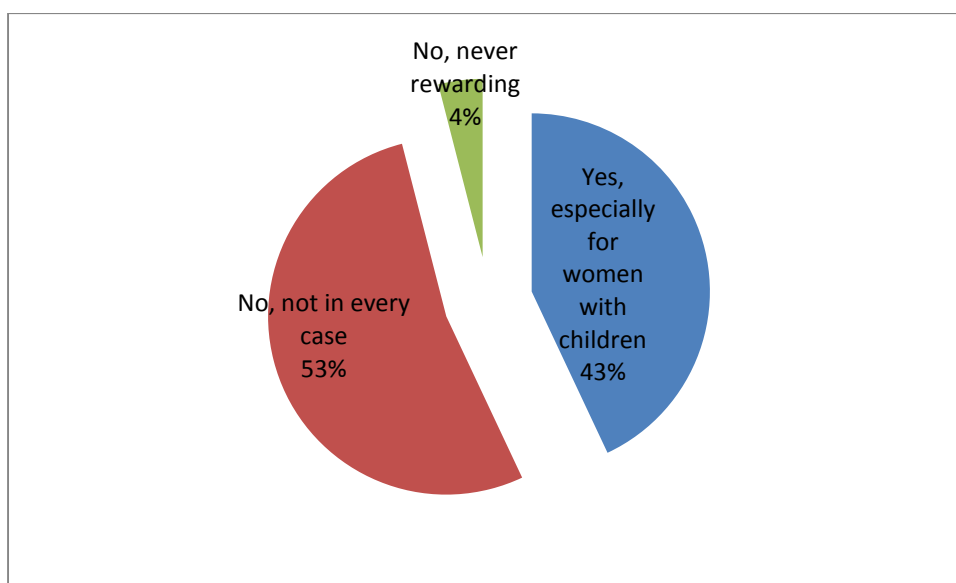
to solve marital issues to eliminate the stigma of divorce. In so doing however, PD particularly is concerned about the poor treatment of some couples.

It apparently explains why individuals will go for the easier options Britain provides as the statistic shows. Thus 62% subscribed to the perception that the comparatively easier requirements are blameable for migrant marital difficulties. However, for over 11% to remain neutral and over 27% disagreeing is significant by concluding it might not always be the case. Comparatively respondents' views suggest British residents' right to personal freedom seems to explain this behaviour better. I discuss the impact of British benefits on GACMs next.

#### 7.1.4 The Benefit System's Impact in Britain

One of the major issues highlighted by respondents to both studies is the British benefits' influence on some Ghanaian marriages. A three-option scale is utilised for Analyses in Fig. 4 considering the question: Could anticipated personal rewards after divorce in the West be a reason behind some difficulties of the couple?

Figure 4 UK Benefits System Appears to Reward Divorcees



The results show that Britain's social benefit system's impact was adjudged as not blameable by 53% of respondents. However 43% believed women with children are particularly motivated by them and may be lured to opt for the exchange against marital traditions. Contrarily, approximately 4% did not find the social benefit motivation sufficiently formidable to warrant being a contributory factor for marital difficulties. In confirmation as possible reason(s) for these results, PIJA16<sup>295</sup> (see fn. 359 p. 171) relates a testimony of a member who became interested in Britain's social benefits. Her experience, although being the only one sharing her story, PIJA16 suggests is one of many but Ghanaians keep such information to themselves.

This study considers that humans cannot remain static within a globalising environment. Culture is learned, Eller suggests<sup>296</sup> (see fn. 262 p. 116) whether directly or indirectly and Verdon<sup>297</sup> (see fn. 109 p. 59) informs this study that globalisation comes with cultural dynamics of change. These facts may partly address Amoah's quest<sup>298</sup> (see fn. 10 p. 19) for investigation into the rising Ghanaian marital difficulties he raised. However, solutions may not simply be found in running repair programmes alone but in addition addressing the rather more complicated issues altogether. Furthermore, the benefit system could also be praised for its

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<sup>295</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues Among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. 16.

<sup>296</sup> Eller, *Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives*, pp. xvi, 28–29.

<sup>297</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49–50.

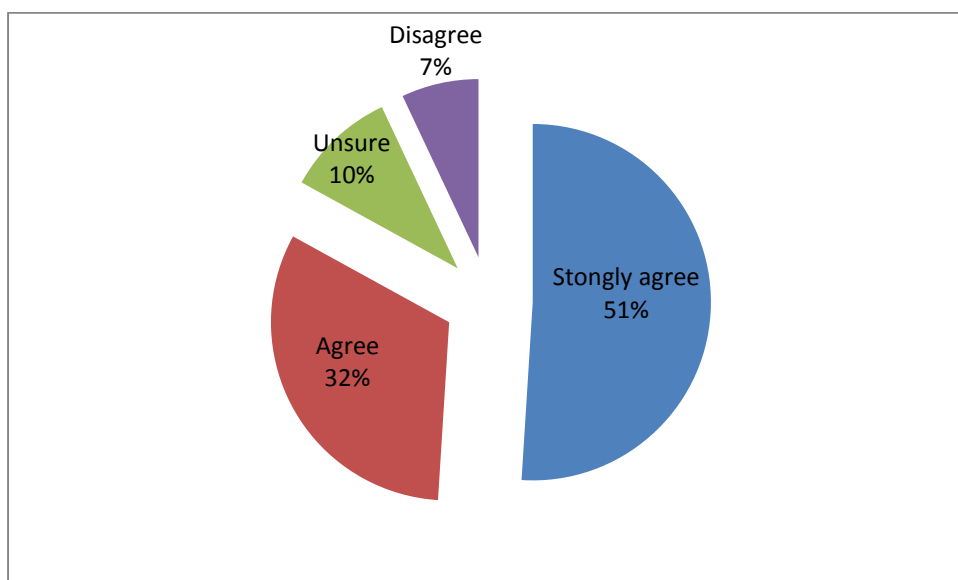
<sup>298</sup> Amoah, 'Development of Seminars to Improve Family Relationships...' chap. 4.

positive impact on those who genuinely access and depend on them in times of need. The next discussion is on relatives' contribution to the difficulties.

### 7.1.5 Relatives' Remote Control

The issue of relatives' influence on Ghanaian marriages has been highlighted using a five-point scale for analysis. Fig. 5 analysed whether: In some cases relatives of either couple could be the remote cause of conflict and should therefore be blamed.

Figure 5 Relatives in the Background are to Blame



The analysis of respondents' perception of relatives' impact on GACM marriage stability suggests couples' relatives could be a major concern despite distances between them. An overwhelming 83% significantly believe the extent of relatives' involvement and expectations confirmed by Gyekye and Opong and Bleek,<sup>299</sup> (see fn. 92 p. 52; 104 p. 57; 334 p. 156), have an impact on a couples' concentration on remaining loyal to the marriage. While roughly 7% rejected relatives' involvement as

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<sup>299</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 59; Opong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' p. 23; Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), p. 79.

an issue, significantly, about 10% could not disassociate but maintained neutrality. However, about 83% suggests that perhaps relatives' behaviour has not changed as Brydon concluded<sup>300</sup> (see fn.114 p. 61), and this is supported by PEA19<sup>301</sup> (see fn. 378 p. 186). Several off record discussions suggest and validate anecdotes of reports concerning relatives who take major decisions in Ghana on a couple's behalf. Some of these included important divorce-related decisions taken without first consulting the couple in Britain, for their approval or otherwise on such vital issues. Consequently, relatives (living outside Britain) have either enforced or nullified divorce decisions reached by a couple in Britain. I agree with the majority of the respondents that relatives' involvement (although not in every situation) has repercussions worth reconsidering as long as such views on marital decisions are concerned. The views expressed in the scores, with support from literature and the qualitative results, suggest relatives' behaviour could be intrusive.

Next discussion is on communication.

#### **7.1.6 Communication Gaps and other Concerns**

Another point considered as an issue for investigation is analysed on a five-point scale in Fig. 6. How much damage has inappropriate use of communication issues affected any marriage(s) you know of? The purpose was to ascertain whether

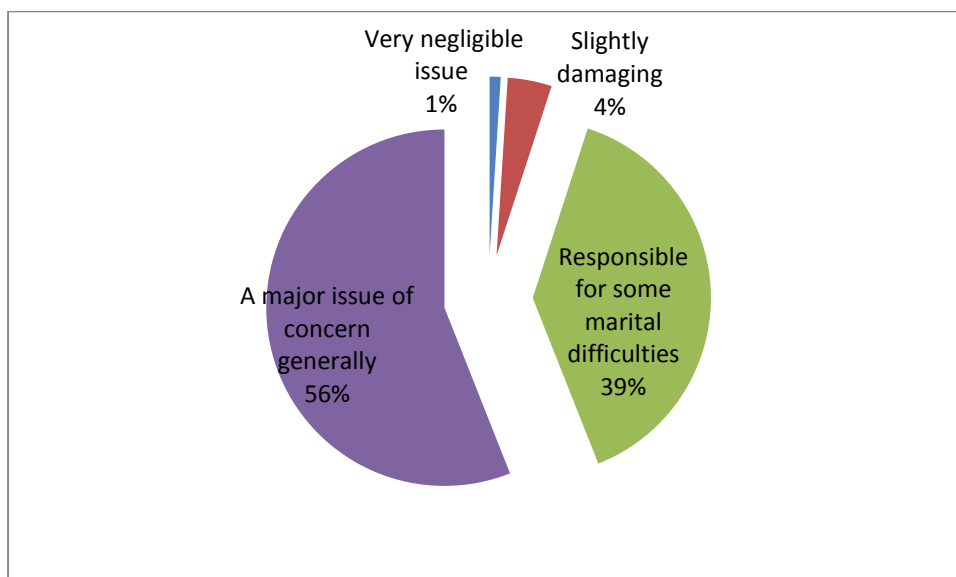
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<sup>300</sup> Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avatime, Ghana', pp. 103–104, 107–108.

<sup>301</sup> PE, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues Among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. 19.

participants believed other factors could be implicated as well for the marital difficulties.

Figure 6 Can Poor Communication be Blamed?



As an issue of domestic importance, roughly 95% in agreement blamed inappropriate communication as damaging with about 1% considering it negligible. The significance of the high cumulative 99% percentage blame on inconsiderate use of communication is quite demonstrative as it could hold relevant keys to several levels of GACM marital disharmony as suggested by respondents. Both PDA19, PFA8,<sup>302</sup> (see fn. 366, 367 p. 176) and PGA16 and A19<sup>303</sup> (see fn. 373, 374 p. 181) hinted on inequality issues and Geest's report<sup>304</sup> (see fn. 97 p. 54) suggested women could not be equal with husbands in many ways including communication. For

<sup>302</sup> PF, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. 8.

<sup>303</sup> PG, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. 19.

<sup>304</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573.

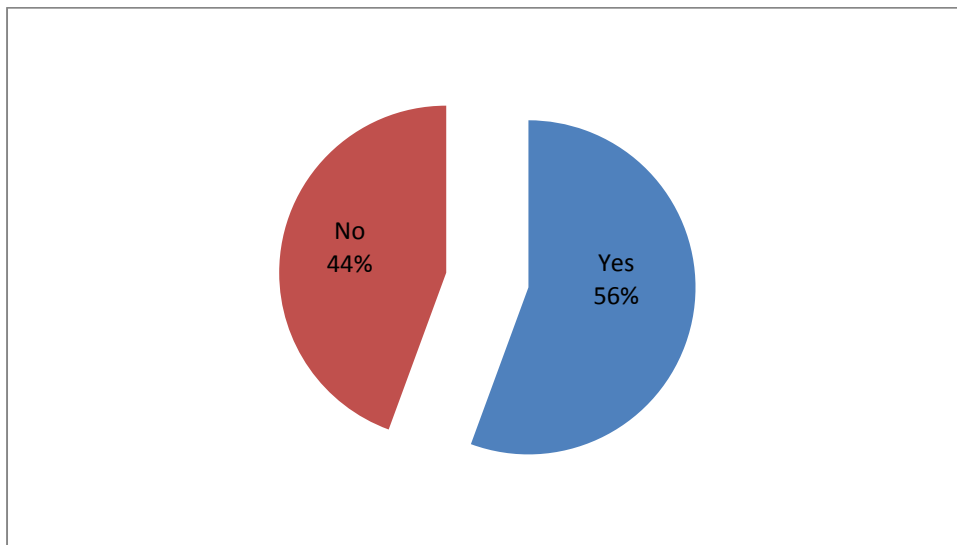
example, a GACM husband may demand priority treatment from his wife for anything he desires. However, a GACM wife offends the traditional norm should she express similar desires or demands the same way (such as asking the husband to do certain house chores for her). In other words the wife (besides exceptional cases) is expected to be extra polite if necessary or she should better not make that request at all. The husband's relatives will not tolerate her even if the husband considers it as appropriate. The significance of their claims is apparently being confirmed here.

GACMs' divorce contemplation is next.

### 7.1.7 GACMs' Contemplation of Divorce

Analysis Fig. 7 considers participant perception of their marriages following post-settlement experiences in the UK. In a simple yes or no scale GACM views are considered here.

Figure 7 Divorced or Contemplating Divorce



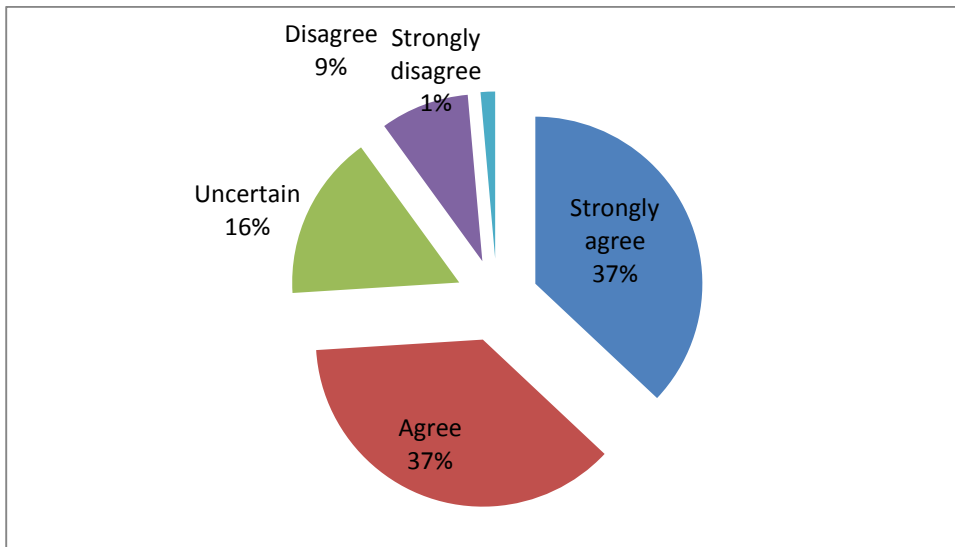
Declarations revealed that 56% were either divorced or contemplating to due to post-settlement difficulties. Contrarily 44% were still married and had no intentions of breaking up their marriages despite inherent difficulties. As Gyekye, Ayertey, Oppong and Kasomo's and PIJA11 discussions suggest, individual wishes are often swallowed up by community norms<sup>305</sup> (see fn. 291 p. 126; 335 p. 157). Marriage is a requirement in Ghanaian culture and community leaders ensure it stays so. Participants' experiences differ and so do their ideas and views on the influences from the cultural changes. For the traditional Ghanaian wife, for instance, divorce is practically not her ideal choice regardless of the marital issues. These individual experiences, coupled with the community's wishes for couples to remain married, make it difficult to identify the true wishes of these individuals in this situation. It is not surprising therefore, to find a wife defending her abusive husband just to keep her marriage intact. The results thus cannot be conclusive as some apparently do not see any relevant correlation between difficulty and divorce. Coming next is analysis on awareness.

A five point scale was used in Fig. 8 and considers the impact of exposure by analysing whether: The specific awareness of personal rights in Britain could be blamed for the difficulties that happen among migrant Ghanaian couples as hypothesised earlier.

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<sup>305</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 52.

Figure 8 Blame Awareness of Personal Rights for Difficulties



From Fig. 8 above, a significant majority of 74% of which 37% strongly agreed, were of the view that awareness of possibilities such as benefits and certain rights have motivated, and therefore could be blamed for encouraging disharmony in some marriages. While 16% remained uncertain about 10% declared disagreement to the awareness claims issue. Brydon and Verdon<sup>306</sup> (see fn. 109 p. 59; 114 p. 61) discussed earlier revealed that awareness ignites changes as noted from reports on Abutia and Avatime for instance. The interview responses generally and particularly PIJA16 and PDA14, 16<sup>307</sup> (see fn. 359 p. 171; 364 p. 174; 365 p. 174) confirm this view. The majority view concludes the perception therefore, that, the Western culture is to blame.

The church's influence is analysed next.

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<sup>306</sup> Verdon, 'Divorce in Abutia', pp. 49–50.

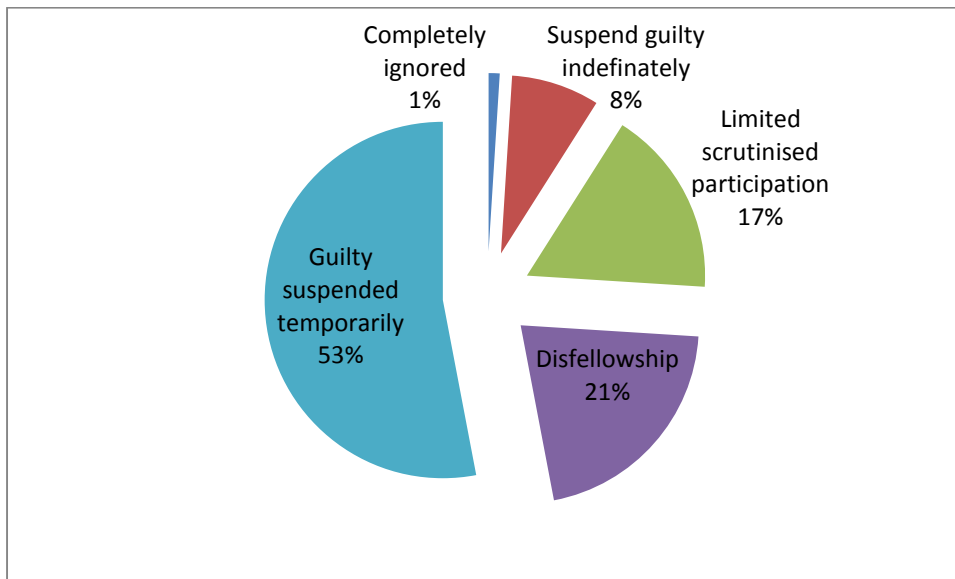
<sup>307</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. 16; PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. 14, 16.



### 7.1.8 The Church and Marital Issues

Owusu Mensah has pointed out that Ghanaians are religious to the core (see fns. 183, 184, 185 p.90). With a five-point scale Fig. 9 analyses the church's contribution to a GACM's marital perception with the question: How will the church respond to a similar situation in Ghana?

Figure 9 How Churches in Ghana Respond to Divorce



The study took a retrospective view of participants' previous church perceptions. Whereas a 53% majority testifies to temporary suspension 21% remember that offenders were disfellowshipped and 8% recollect indefinite suspensions happened. However, 17% implies some kind of leniency in disciplining offenders while 1% reiterated that no discipline took place regardless of whatever happened. In line with the discussions above, participants' experiences reflect the variety of opinions among SDA's generally, as well as the wider circle of Christian views from which names like MacCulloch, Baughen, McManus, Stott, Laney, Instone-Brewer among

others are featured in discussions above. Participants' recollections suggest certain decisions taken here could be influenced by previous standards of churches back in Ghana as benchmarks. It must be pointed out that participants belonged to different congregations in Ghana hence their different experiences.

Furthermore the disclosed disparities of decisions for specifically the same offenses suggest the existence of multiple interpretations of the mandated Church Manual in use and therefore possible inconsistencies. Similar views have been expressed in the interview responses by PDA9, 17, 18; PEA9, PIJA3, that while some churches show leniency others are absolute fundamentalists in approach. Thus members are obliged in some circumstances to sustain membership by vigorous conformity to certain church codes<sup>308</sup> at the expense of trivialising personal aspirations and choices for assimilation.<sup>309</sup>

While in Britain it is believed that certain changes could happen as a result of enculturation and acculturation<sup>310</sup> (see fn. 280 p. 121). GACMs experience of the churches' approach in Britain is considered in a five-point scale. Figure 10 The Churches' Approach to Settlement analyses: How does your church community settle or deal with those experiencing difficult marriages?

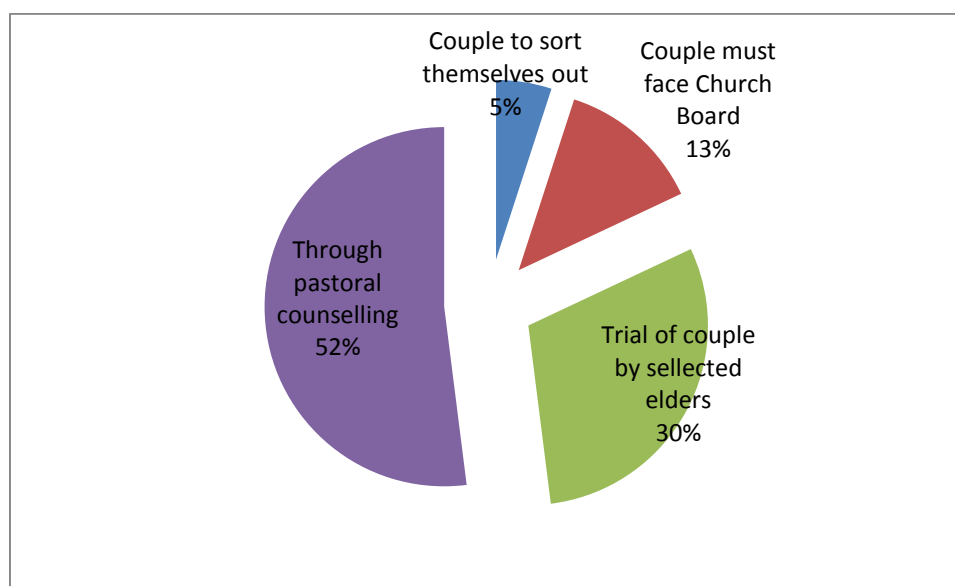
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<sup>308</sup> Berry and others, 'Acculturation Attitudes in Plural Societies', pp. 188–196.

<sup>309</sup> Bowskill, Lyons and Coyle, 'The Rhetoric of Assimilation: When Integration Means Assimilation', pp. 793–813.

<sup>310</sup> Padilla and Perez, 'Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective', p. 39. p. 39.

Figure 10 The Churches' Approach to Settle Marital Issues



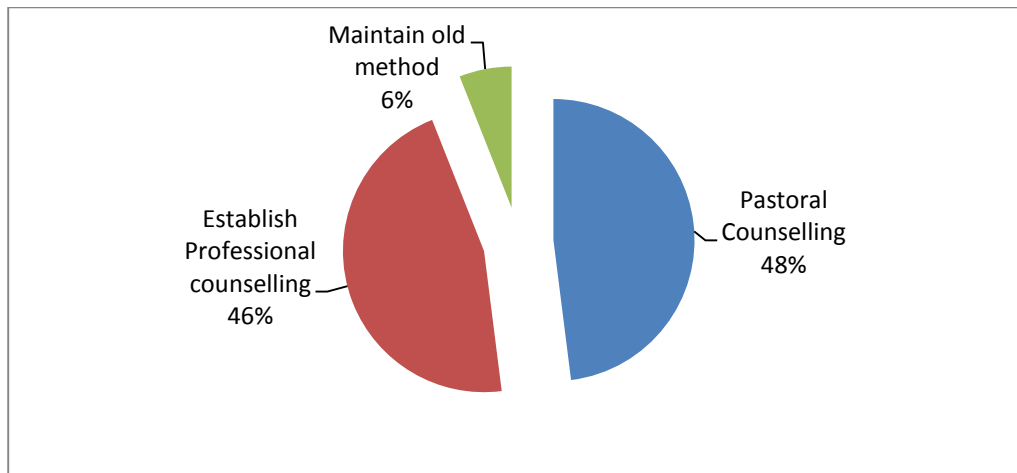
The analysis suggests a variety of approaches utilised by Ghanaian churches in Britain in the event of marital difficulties. These range between 5% totally ignoring, to 30% strictly subjecting couples to judicial forms of settlement and 13% facing the Church Board. This suggests disparity among leadership orientations in controlling<sup>311</sup> interpretations and applications both biblically and theologically depending on the church community involved. Despite the extremes, it is revealed that significantly 52% confirmed commendable pastoral counselling in many cases. However, 48% think otherwise. By implication close to 50% possibly hang-on to tradition<sup>312</sup> against personal wishes just to protect membership within the church group.

Figure 11 analyses the participants' views on: What in your opinion will be the appropriate approach for helping people with marital issues? It was my intention to recognise participants' personal opinions for the records.

<sup>311</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 371–373.

<sup>312</sup> Ishii, in Ishii's study ('From Wombs to Farmland: The Transformation of Suman Shrines in Southern Ghana'), she agrees with Owusu Mensah that Ghanaians are very religious people traditionally.

Figure 11 Views on how the Church should Approach Marital Issues



Exploring participants' opinion, an ordinal measure analysis, revealed some apprehension as about 6% stood for maintenance of the old methods. While 48% believe in the existing pastoral counselling 46% call for complete overhaul by the establishment of professional counselling within the group. The majority wins the vote democratically, however often a minority's stance could be worthwhile considering. Earlier discussions above recognised that SDAs share certain views with the larger Christian body including belief in harmonising marriage with the Bible. These shared views also permit a variety of conflicting views on practical issues (see Section 5). Significantly as much as 46% seem concerned and by implication, will prefer personal privacy issues such as marital difficulty to be treated differently within the church community.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' PD A15

The opinions suggested above give three views of which I suspect the low percentage (6%) to possibly represent the older members already in some kind of authority. The possibility is that, although these might be living in Britain longer than the others, it is unclear whether one's longer stay does influence one to become more acclimatised to the British social way of life as against holding on to the traditional ways. Perhaps this might explain why some Ghanaians avoid fellowshipping with the Ghanaian churches after they spend some time living in Britain and become used to the cultural freedoms.

Similarly, the two larger percentages (48% and 46%) might represent the majority of the ordinary members or the younger folks who probably are more likely inclined to seize the opportunity to adapt to the freedoms offered in Britain. Whatever the differences, although not so emphasised in this study, it is quite reasonable for one to expect some age related choices between those who have stayed longer to become more adapted to the more improved lifestyle in Britain.

However, that is an assumption yet to be proven by a more detailed study in future. Although not in the majority, those calling for a complete overhaul appear to be concerned about some missing elements of the existing approach. It is worth noting therefore, that, these responses could be the respondents' call for more personal privacy for instance among GACMs.

The significant correlation of some questionnaire variables are considered in Table 1 from results generated. The Pearson's Correlation significance is set at the

0.05 level (2-tailed). The result presents variable combinations that are significant in that they are considered most likely triggers of marital difficulties.

Table 1 Correlation of Variables

Pearson correlation sig- (2-tailed)	Become consistently difficult	Spouse relatives intrusion	Considered divorce before	Gender	Educational background	Income
Marriage not survive	.000	.025				
Spouse relatives intrusion	.013		.000	.028	.006	
Gender		.028				
Employment status					.022	.000
Education background		.006	.015			.000
Income					.000	

The pairs of correlations presented here are those that fell below Pearson's 0.05 correlation significance (extracted from Table 2 pp. 228-229). It is therefore of interest to note among the study findings that: first, correlations of 0.000-0.05 represent significantly stronger causes as the one noted to be a possible initiator of the other. Thus .000 score for the combination suggests marriages becoming consistently difficult due to spouses' relatives' intrusion may cause the breakage of the bond between them and therefore not likely to survive. Secondly, besides closer relatives, findings suggest that 0.000 scoring for educational background, employment and income of GACM couples indicates these combinations could become strong divisive elements behind some marital difficulties.

It must be noted here that though correlation may help by establishing the relationship or association between variables, these are only indications of the relationships and not necessarily absolute proof of causality.<sup>314</sup> Rumsey adds further that the existence of association between variables does not necessarily always represent a cause and effect kind of relationship. Rather, Rumsey suggests, the possibility of establishing a solid cause and effect relationship, will depend on an exceptionally “well-designed experiment” of “several different observational studies” to establish the certainty of a correlation or an association to mean a cause and effect relationship is indicated.<sup>315</sup> I found in this study that a persistent difficulty in the GACM’s marriage does not necessarily lead to non-survival because of the existence of some benefits.

### **7.1.9 Conclusions**

I arrived at the following conclusions from the quantitative study, that:

First of all, the perception of marriage among GACMs is one of apprehension about the suspicion of Britain’s cultural influences by which 53% (Figure 2 p.125) of respondents believe many GACM marriages will become difficult and might not survive. This negative view about the British culture has thus been interpreted by many to imply causation (where a simple correlation of variables might be the case (see fn. 315 p.142). Consequently, some GACMs opt for a long-term separation while they pursue other interests in Britain. An off record account revealed that some

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<sup>314</sup> Julie Pallant, *SPSS Survival Manual*, 4th edn (London: McGraw-Hill, 2010), p. 124.

<sup>315</sup> Deborah Rumsey, *Statistics for Dummies* (Indianapolis, In: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2003), p. 291.

wealthy people refuse their wives the right to visit any Western country with or without them for fear of exposing them to the culture.

Second, about 62% (Figure 3 p. 127) believe GACM marriages are not sustainable while in Britain. This is because there is easy access to resources to benefit women mostly without the usual stigma for being divorced. An opportunity is thus created for all sorts of schemes and ambitions that eventually flourish to the disadvantage of genuine cases. The successes of such individualistic schemes attract unwary GACMs and deepen the generalised perception.

Third, this study suggests the possibility of a third blameable variable. Relatives in the background, in this case, should rather be blamed for the pressure that results in many couples' difficulties (Figure 5 p. 130).

Fourth, with a 95% majority (Figure 6 p. 132) respondents consider communication difficulties a matter of concern especially when they create inequality between couples. This study noted the inequality between some GACM couples as a contributory factor that underlies some GACM relationship issues.

Fifth, a 56% majority indicates that some GACMs do contemplate divorce (Figure 7 p. 133) except for the reason that many fear losing their community membership either in church or the extended family. This further explains why the church (like the extended family) holds powers by which some leaders end up dictating to couples who need to keep their membership intact. To some fed up individuals the Western culture with its incentives serve as the only way out and therefore take the plunge.



Sixth, a majority (Figure 8 p. 135) believes some GACMs are attracted by the benefits and freedoms. As discussed above, access to benefits appears to be the rescue for many. To these the only option seems to be just what the Western culture has understood in advance and dealt comprehensibly with through the benefits system. Moreover, the Western culture makes it possible for people to remain as individuals and yet survive without the total dependence on any community.

Seventh, many GACM decisions seem influenced by the authority of the church leadership (Figure 9 p. 136) wielding power over members. Authoritative leaders are tempted to impose and dictate to couples regardless of their personal feelings. This swallows up their personal egos to maintain their community membership.

Eighth, church settlement of marital issues is appreciated by GACMs generally (Figure 10 p. 138), but, some suggestions are made for improvement (Figure 11 p. 139). The participants' opinions are significant when they ask the church leadership to be consistent by recognising the same Western requirements for divorce as they do for marriage.

In summary the questionnaire responses have suggested a confirmation of a general apprehension towards Britain's cultural influence on GACM marriages. Consequently, the misconception and perception of many GACM couples have either led them to divorce or are separated from their spouses. As a result of misconceptions, some of these have no intension of reuniting with their separated spouses by bringing them over to Britain. The study has also highlighted the

reservation that the GACM church leadership needs updating. This reservation apparently stemmed from the fact that some GACM leaders have not demonstrated enough convincing evidence of some cultural transformation, an expected positive impact from the host country's culture. As implied earlier a discussion on both primary studies follows later in section nine. It must be recognised however, that not every respondent agreed to the majority conviction that Western culture should be blamed for GACMs' marital difficulties.

Presentation and interpretation of the interview data follows.

## 8 Presentation and Interpretation of Analysed Interview Data

### *8.1 Introduction*

This Section presents study results from the qualitative interviews. The purpose is to achieve the research objectives by addressing the key research questions, which question and explore whether the Western culture is to blame for the marital difficulties of GACMs? The Ghanaian SDA Christians' experience when they migrate to the Western developed countries, specifically to Britain, is investigated in this study.

In this section the research sought to answer the pertinent questions restated below:

Do GACM marriages become difficult as a direct result after settling in Britain?  
Are there other possible reasons why the GACM's marriage may become difficult?  
What efforts are being made to ratify the issue of marital difficulties as found within GACMs' marriages in Britain and to what effect?

In addressing the above research questions in this section, the ultimate goal is to document the findings, partly as proven evidence, that to a certain extent affect GACM marriages in Britain.

#### **8.1.1 The marriage institution in the Ghanaian context: exclusive heterosexual union**

In light of the preceding introduction, this section presents analysis of marriage in the Ghanaian context, how it is viewed in terms of the socio-cultural as well as its religious aspect.

A general view of the information gathered from the interviews suggests that marriage in Ghana is an established socio-communal institution that is sanctioned between the two extended families of the couple who are considering a matrimonial engagement. Marriage has a long cultural and social high status among Ghanaians because it not only concerns the potential union of the married couples but also it is considered a community's sacred institution by both supporting families.<sup>316</sup> As a community matter the traditional Ghanaian marriage has the characteristics that make it acceptable in the domains of the families, and to their society. The GACMs particularly have specific orientations and qualities that determine marital acceptability and sacredness. With PNDCL111-114 Awusabo-Asare contends an undisputed perception that in the Ghanaian context acceptable marriage must follow tradition as its basic requirement<sup>317</sup> (see fn. 115, 117 pp. 61, 63) which also constitutes an exclusive union between two adults of opposite sexes. Interviewees concurred this is the case among GACMs. Two interviewees, for example, categorically stated that:

Marriage is not just between a man and a woman. It comprises of the entire family both the male and the female I mean the woman and the man. It is something that unites the two parties and doesn't just become you and your woman.<sup>318</sup>

Among Akans for example another participant commented that marriage is:

Traditionally between actually the woman and a man and then with the two families backing the marriage so in other words, that is the man and the woman and between the families of the man and the woman.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 261.

<sup>317</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliney and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', p. 5.

<sup>318</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A1.

<sup>319</sup> PB, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues Among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. A1.

By implication marriages among GACM couples in the UK must always satisfy the traditional requirements prior to any modernised approach.

Significant in the above statements is the community emphasis that marriage in Ghana constitutes more than a union between a man and a woman. Rather, that, this is a social occasion not only between or for the two individuals about to be married, but extends beyond the couple. It embraces a wider community and particularly a number of complex maternal and paternal family lineages (Figure 5 p. 130). It is important to note in this context that as much as marriage is regarded as a union of the bride and the groom, it is also traditionally institutionalized as a union of families, during which broader interactions and settlements of issues between extended relations find expression and are maintained.<sup>320</sup>

Though the actual conjugal relationship is exclusive and limited to the couple, by deduction, one may understand the importance of the traditional marriage among GACMs as a recognised institution that concerns not only the man and the woman as individuals, but also their extended families. It has the characteristics of respect, acceptance and also reveals an emphasis of an institutionalised sense of belonging originating from both extended families<sup>321</sup> (see fn. 92 p. 52; 20 p. 27).

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<sup>320</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. 1.

<sup>321</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 59; Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 72.

### 8.1.2 The Akan Meaning of Family in Ghana: A philosophical view

“Family” as a word has a very complex connotation as part of human communication. Words may be similar but may carry significantly different meanings altogether. The GACM perception was noted in the responses from the research interviews. For instance the word “family” is commonly used by people of different cultures with relatively different understanding to the extent of its meaning. PAA1 shared the following philosophical comprehension as Gyekye<sup>322</sup> and Oppong (see fn. 15 to 17 pp. 26-27; 95 p. 53) behind the Ghanaian, specifically the Akan use of the word ‘family’ *abusua* and how its communal views influence other cultural practices including that of marriage. PAA1’s comment below relates Ghanaian (specifically the Akan) understanding and why as:

In the Ghanaian culture it’s not only the agreement and understanding between the couples but also their respective families. This is because the Ghanaian philosophy of life is put simply “I am because I belong,” meaning that it is the family’s existence that gives meaning to one’s existence. Without the family you are not considered as somebody who exists. So whatever the couples do should reflect the views of the two families, which is very important to the families to have a say in the marriage. If one of them has reservations about the marriage that will pose a problem and that should be dealt with.<sup>323</sup>

The explanation above sets the stage for better understanding of the traditional practices of Ghanaians in the context of migrant marital issues. As PAA1 hinted, GACM couples, particularly females, irrespective of distance or geographical location are obliged to involve at least a number of immediate relatives when it comes to marital issues at any level as that is quite significant for her continuous

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<sup>322</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, pp. 38–39, 52.

<sup>323</sup> PA, ‘Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues Among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants’, 2011, n. A1.

inclusion in the larger family. In addition as PAA1 noted, any intentional disregard of relatives' views or reservations about such an important decision will capably undermine his or her peace of mind in the future. As confirmation Awusabo-Asare,<sup>324</sup> Oppong and PIJA4 (see fn. 116 p. 62; 354 p. 168) observed there is in fact no Akan word for the conjugal family thus stressing the fact that maternal relatives always take precedence when it comes to family matters (Figure 5 p. 130).

### **8.1.3 The Consent to marriage and the reception of a Dowry**

The aspect of consent to marriage as a cultural tradition has been well documented in the social-legal and even religious contexts.<sup>325</sup> This tradition is primarily considered vital by all concerned parties including the church before the marriage is accepted and sanctioned as a sacred one.<sup>326</sup> In his analysis of the African Churches' attachment to universal Christian laws and regulations Kanyandago laments that the African Churches have failed to adjust certain principles of the gospels to reflect the realities of the African Christian believer. The failure to rightly address it, has encouraged certain believers, who are unable to conform; to take the law into their own hands with the result that many Christians now live in "illegal marriages" which Kanyandago laments could be avoided.<sup>327</sup> These traditionally acceptable unions are considered illegal, Kanyandago

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<sup>324</sup> Awusabo-Asare, 'Matriliny and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', p. 5.

<sup>325</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 264.

<sup>326</sup> Peter Kanyandago, 'African Churches and the Crisis of Christianity', *Concilium*, ed. by John Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, *Christianity in Crisis?*, 2005, 71–75 (pp. 72, 73).

<sup>327</sup> Kanyandago, 'African Churches and the Crisis of Christianity', pp. 71–73.

emphasised, because they do not meet the universal non-contextualised Christian standards irrespective of the local cultural inclinations or traditions of the people.<sup>328</sup>

The consent to a marriage in Ghana comes in two dimensions: first of all the initial consent is of the man and woman, and the second dimension to be considered is the acceptance by the couple's extended lines of relatives (not only parents and uncles but even very distant relatives) broadly referred to as families behind the marriage. Furthermore the recognised attribute of these consents to the marriage must include the payment of a dowry.

The payment of a dowry emerged strongly in the study, because some participants to the interview noted that the dowry is the responsibility of the head of the family of the groom, to the woman's family. The reception of the dowry or bride price from a man, serves as an indication of acceptance of the man and consent to the marriage, and further, as a corporate commitment of the extended relatives to the welfare of the marriage. The continuity of the tradition and its challenge that participants noted, is that, even those abroad in any Western country who want to get married must ensure that the dowry is paid as tradition demands. However, participants hinted also that there is a challenge to this cultural practice because most of them eventually perform a wedding although it may be after years of cohabitation. This pointed to the dilemma whereby, while couples endeavour to follow the traditional marriage while in the Western world, they are equally inclined to

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<sup>328</sup> Kanyandago, 'African Churches and the Crisis of Christianity', p. 73.



include aspects of Westernised marriage culture. For instance participant PDA11 informed me that:

...we do the traditional way pay the dowry and do all kinds of things we still want to do wedding maybe by the time they do the wedding they're even having two children three children which, that is not really the practice so we want people to get us to know that we're married and wear ring. That is why wedding is done but I think we're playing double standard here and we're trying to merge the two. So I'll say it is not traditional and it is not Western, but it is Western-Tradition.<sup>329</sup>

Although the dowry is Ghanaian by tradition, the practice continues to be applied regardless of the geographical location of those getting married. A dowry is specific according to the Ghanaian tradition where the family of the groom present payment of a dowry, in cash or kind as may have been agreed upon. The concern of PD A11 apparently has to do with what appears to be inconsistent application and confusion of both Westernised and traditional cultural practice. Individuals like PD A11 prefer a complete dichotomy between the cultures and might be less friendly with merging or the integration of both.

#### **8.1.4 The Dowry as a symbol of responsibility**

I found concerns about the perception that the dowry is misconstrued as payment to the parents or the family head of the bride, to purchase the bride as a commodity. On the contrary dowry payment is used to symbolize a groom's recognition of his indebtedness to his in-laws and his commitment to assume a responsibility which hitherto was the father's, to cater for the bride's needs. In addition the study noted that honouring payment was a way of showing appreciation to the family for nurturing their daughter to make the occasion possible. I found out

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<sup>329</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A11.

that some of the interviewees are not comfortable with the way the dowry payment is portrayed to the Western world. It has apparently been misunderstood to depict the woman as a commodity to be purchased rather than a covenant sign of a commitment of love between the families involved.

The participants noted also that the dowry is received as a token by the bride's family, as a symbol of accepting the groom into the family. Beside the participant's concerns, commoditization of women through payment of a dowry is a challenge addressed in articles against marginalisation with increased domestic and sexual abuses related in social literature.<sup>330</sup> The results show that participants are of the view that a dowry needs to be appreciated as a special gift, rather than a cost payment for the bride.

The participants' problem of commoditization and hence objection is that a dowry is seen as something that undermines women's dignity and value in the African setting. Thus respondents were of the view that this perception of the concept needs to change or be better clarified as the term dowry is understood differently in other cultural traditions.

Despite the misunderstood and hence wrongful, label of commoditization, the dowry in the Ghanaian culture symbolizes an agreement for accepting the man into

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<sup>330</sup> Charles Wendo, 'African Women Denounce Bride Price', *The Lancet*, 363 (2004), 716 (p. 716); D.K. Kaye and others, 'Implications of Bride Price on Domestic Violence and Reproductive Health in Wakiso District, Uganda', *African Health Sciences*, 5 (2005), 300–303 (pp. 300–303); Gill Hague, Ravi K. Thiara and Atuki Turner, 'Bride-price and Its Links to Domestic Violence and Poverty in Uganda: A Participatory Action Research Study', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34 (2011), 550–561 (pp. 550–561).

the family of the woman being given in marriage, and it is expected to invoke a blessing on the marriage when the woman's family accepts it as symbolising their commitment to support the couple.

#### **8.1.4.1 The Dowry as a contract seal for exclusive validation of conjugal rights for the man**

The study further revealed a unanimous view of protection for the man's right in the contract-like motive. The promised assurance provided here is the legal significance of the dowry to marriage in Ghanaian communities. While other participants to the interviews probably perceive it as a contract between the woman's family and the man intending to marry, they explained that it is viewed traditionally as a seal for the contract without which the marriage cannot be valid until the payment is made. It is noteworthy also that the dowry is a form of traditional requirement that attaches value and respect to the woman given in marriage.

This sends a message that she is worth appreciation, and that the dowry is only given as a token and not as a payment. The contract becomes null and void when the man does not honour this commitment in full. In other words he might not be able to exercise the right to stop another man, from asking for her in marriage simply because the woman's family does not know him yet in terms of commitment and therefore cannot officially recognise any claim to exclusive conjugal rights. Respondent PIJ has the following to say:

The dowry is paid as a token...it is not of appreciation it is like a law when you have contracted, if you offer to contract anybody and you have not made a payment that gives the promise a substance to dwell on that contract will still be voided. Without the payment of the dowry there isn't any evidence that actions one's decision to contract the hand of the female in marriage. So the dowry in essence...if accepted is what signifies that the marriage proposal has been accepted by the family.<sup>331</sup>

#### **8.1.4.2 The Dowry as a readiness symbol for a man to enter marriage**

The study explored who is responsible to pay the dowry, the results from the interviews have shown that the man who wants to get married normally pays the dowry as a sign of his readiness to take on the commitment to provide protection and total care for the woman who is going to be married.

The responsibility for dowry payment always rests with the male not the parents of the male it always rests with the male. In fact our culture males' ability to meet the dowry requirement is considered as an important criterion for assessing the readiness of the male for marriage. A male who is unable to raise the necessary dowry is generally considered not ready for marriage.<sup>332</sup>

By implication a groom's inability to pay the dowry which in most instances is a token, like the Akans' *tiri nsa*, in itself is proof that he will not be able to shoulder the requisite responsibility expected of a deserving in-law and husband. Consequently no family will offer the required consent for a marriage after such a failure to meet their expectations. That suggests that any disregard to fulfil this obligation could be, a recipe for persistent disapproval from unhappy relatives should the marriage happen or be carried out so unsatisfactorily. Consequently a man may prefer borrowing for the occasion to living in a culturally unsatisfactory marriage.

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<sup>331</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A2.

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#### 8.1.4.3 Romance in the Ghanaian marriage

Romance between couples also emerged as an issue; PIJ A7 argued that traditional Ghanaian marriages are not openly romantic.

...traditionally Ghanaians are not romantic...couples don't engage in open romance. In certain circles it may be viewed as irresponsible... So lack of adequate tactile communications of touch of feeling... Sometimes it is too formal...<sup>333</sup>

For instance, it is culturally strange to find a Ghanaian couple being publicly romantic even with a legally married spouse. However outside Ghana, the Western cultural influence makes it possible for a couple to engage in some form of romance publicly with no fears of cultural stigma or reproach. There are some other cultural differences of marriage as it is done in Ghana compared with the UK.

#### 8.1.4.4 Traditional Suitability Checks: personal histories prior to marital commitment

The process of marriage among the sampled group has little significance in terms of comparative differences. In Ghana any marriage that is to be contracted needs to be investigated before the actual marriage takes place. This was repeatedly noted to be of the same effect among the group studied even while away in the West. Gyekye highlights the essence of this practice when he wrote that:

Marriage is contracted only after each lineage group has satisfied itself of the worthiness or suitability of the man or woman. The marriage ceremony itself involves not just the couple, but an entire retinue of immediate and distant relatives, as many of the members of the lineage groups as can attend – plus neighbours and friends.<sup>334</sup>

Although there could be one or two deviations in situations where a couple suspects relatives' disapproval, they may want to take the liberty of individualistic freedom,

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<sup>333</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A7.

<sup>334</sup> Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*, p. 79.

while in the West, and ignore these traditional requirements, that still survive as the study shows. Otherwise, relatives back home in Ghana observe every detail to the letter as much as possible to ensure that the marriage receives the required endorsements.

One of the purposes of these checks is to ascertain that those entering into these marriages, whether in Ghana or in Britain should not have any prior commitments of marriage elsewhere. The whole concept is to avoid incidences laden with potential issues of entrenched litigations involving unknown polygamous commitments. Normally in the SDA church the proposed marriage is announced earlier and in Britain, at least 21 days prior to the marriage. The UK culture is equally clear whereby the parties to the marriage have to show that they have no other marital commitments before the marriage is contracted. The exception will be that the British environment does lack the multitude of relatives who are all involved with keeping an eye to ensure the details are genuine. PIJ A11 related in addition however that:

Then the SDA, Adventist church for instance there is the family life department that is responsible for ensuring, investigating a marriage to be certain that, that marriage meets the requirements, the conditions set out in the Bible. For instance neither of the will be couple should have been in a relationship a marriage relationship because we frown upon polygamous marriages.<sup>335</sup>

Nevertheless it has been observed that Ghanaian marriages have in a sense adopted the Western culture, and yet have remained traditional. In essence, there is a cultural dilemma as to when to follow which way because of the differences in

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<sup>335</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A11.

cultural values and belief systems. A clear example is that marriages are more of a private issue in Britain as in other Western cultures whereas in Ghana marriage is not only communal and public, but an extended family occasion too. It is public because, besides a few exceptional names that require invitation everyone is expected to make time to attend the ceremonies and parties as much as it is practicable.

On the point of divorce, a defaulting marriage in Ghana, may lead to excommunication of the guilty party within the SDA church. However, conflictingly in Britain the guilty party to the divorce may not be excommunicated in some SDA churches and they are considered still as members in good standing. For instance as it is observed in the statement that:

The guilty party is generally excommunicated, could be excommunicated. If it is an outright divorce, in Ghana the person is excommunicated but in the UK that is not the case. I've seen one or two cases of divorce where the members are still considered as Adventists of good standing.<sup>336</sup>

Whereas Ghanaian couples in the West may consider themselves as co-equals; in Ghana there are notable differences in roles of traditionally assigned responsibilities clearly defined along gender lines. It is also argued that financial matters in Britain are perceived as more complex than in Ghana. Furthermore, the study highlights that marriages in Britain are better resourced financially compared to those in Ghana, but the remaining challenge is the sharing of financial resources that remains complicated between some couples.

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<sup>336</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A15.

I found out that wealth creation continues to dominate GACM marriages in Britain. Couples are tempted to devote more time working to earn money with little attention to the aspects of marital quality. As a result conjugal rights and responsibilities get undermined in the process. While in Britain some couples for instance may not struggle as much to make ends meet, because they may have access to benefits and other social support entitlements. In addition, some GACM couples in Britain tend to become influenced by the attractions to social benefits. The need to access benefits among some Ghanaian couples becomes a disadvantage and may pose a threat to Ghanaian marriages.

#### **8.1.5 Marriage Expectation and Cohabitation**

The practice of cohabitation emerged as an issue which participants consider challenging to both SDA and the traditional marriages in the Western culture where it is permitted and attracts no communal disapproval compared with those who are actually married. The position of the SDA Church (among Ghanaians in Ghana or in Britain) on this issue is quite strong that people should be married before living together or having children. This is very complicated because the traditional culture expects the marriage to produce children. The Christian marriage and specifically the sample studied on the other hand, expect the marital relationship rather to take precedence as foremost, lasting and important and therefore disagree with the idea of any cohabitation of unmarried couples living together in an attempt to settle fertility issues before marrying officially.



The African traditional marriage specifically in the Ghanaian context is seen in this light, that, in the traditional marriage it is important for a couple to have children of their own, and it is regarded that a marriage without children is problematic and makes no sense.<sup>337</sup> The participants also noted that the families of both couples sometimes expect to benefit materially from the marriage. PIJ stated:

...traditionally there are certain problem factors...where any of the couple fails to realise that the establishment of a new home in essence is a break from the family as far as decision making and money decisions are concerned. Sometimes the extended family is allowed to meddle too much in the affairs of the new marriage. ...each of the families tends to have very high expectations ...and that becomes a huge pressure.<sup>338</sup>

Some couples remain emotionally attached to their extended families even after marriage. As a result, any marital expectation of the extended families could be a contributory factor to the cause for the problems (Figure 5 p. 130). This issue arguably might have an impact on the marriages in many African cultures, and could be an area for further research.

While the traditional Ghanaian marriage focuses on material benefits including children, this could also be linked to the sociological aspects where in the African context, children are regarded as insurance or family security in old age. The absence of a reliable pension system in Africa has thus rendered people no option but to bank on their social capital as support for the later stages of their lifecycles. Contrary to the Ghanaian traditional views, in SDA marriage, children are only

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<sup>337</sup> Opong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children: Some Evidence from Kwahu, Ghana'. 15–33; Opong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*; pp.42, 138 Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, ; Brydon, 'Women at Work: Some Changes in Family Structure in Amedzofe-Avetime, Ghana', pp. 104-108

<sup>338</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A7.

perceived as products of the marriage, they are neither expected as the backbone or the purpose of the marriage. The SDA Christian doctrine of marriage is founded on the church's interpretation of the biblical concept as understood and included in the church's manual where couples are expected to be married for life. PA A4 briefed:

What is very important here is that there should be children, it's so important that if the marriage does not produce children that is a problem. It's a problem, and also one is expected to make sure that the families also benefit from the marriage in terms of material gains. In the Christian marriage, even though children are also very very important but that is not the main issue. The main issue here is partnership. The main issue here is one helping the other. If by God's grace children are given to them, that is one of the blessings of God, if they don't have any children at all, it's not a major issue. And they are to understand that and to continue to live together and love themselves. But the traditional couple um marriages if there are no issues it becomes a problem and that can even lead to separation. The families might come in here and then even advise that if it is the wife, the wife tries her luck somewhere or the man tries his luck somewhere. So that is where we have major differences.<sup>339</sup>

The traditional practices seem to have some fixed prescribed goals for the married. Thus, whether a married couple accepts it or not, might neither stop nor prevent the extended members of this marital covenant to look forward to the fulfilment of these expectations. The point of expectation also is by far not limited to that of procreation. From studies concerning marital roles,<sup>340</sup> it has been noted that ranging from household chores to every detail of marital life, clear lines have been drawn within the Ghanaian cultural traditions of who does what in everyday life.

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<sup>339</sup> PA, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A4.

<sup>340</sup> Oppong, 'From Love to Institution...'; Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage*; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*.

For instance previous studies,<sup>341</sup> have confirmed the repetition of traditionally specified fixed duties for husbands and wives such as husbands are bread winners and wives are the house keepers and child minders.<sup>342</sup> Whenever these traditional roles change it initiates some sense of distress. The lack of preparation for the changes increases irritation and tension between couples who still hold traditional Ghanaian views. Adonu, for instance, explained that women begin to participate in decision making which until now has been the husband's prerogative to his dislike; while husbands who are made to share household chores begin to relax their other responsibilities.<sup>343</sup>

#### **8.1.6 Marriage, Polygamy, Divorce and Christian Beliefs**

Polygamy emerged as one of the themes which came out of the interviews. The traditional and Christian marriages appear to have ethically different foundations in the Ghanaian culture. Whereas the traditional Ghanaian marriage permits polygamy, the SDA Christian beliefs do not allow it. Nevertheless, the participants made mention of the Akan traditional culture and what they believe on the subject of marriage. They significantly observed that current aspects of the Akan culture for example, have been influenced by the Christian moral and doctrinal values. Some of the common beliefs held among the Akans now include the belief that first, marriage is for life and that God hates divorce. The results indicate further that though the

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<sup>341</sup> Amoah, 'Development of Seminars To Improve Family Relationships...'; Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction ...'; Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana'; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*.

<sup>342</sup> Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction ...' chap. 2.4.0.

<sup>343</sup> Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction ...' chap. 2.4.4.

Bible categorically points out that God hates divorce, the Akans in principle also appear to have based their foundations of marriage on these principles.

The results show further that Christian principles on the foundations of marriage have most likely influenced and transformed the Akan traditions over the years. The study also found that in the Ghanaian culture, many of the marriages, once they are conducted, take a religious stand. This points to the findings as claimed by respondent PIJ Q5, that the majority of Ghanaian marriages are religious and are likely based on the Christian framework, PIJ A5 stated:

Today in most Akan cultures Akans has become very religious in fact... majority of Akans are Christians. So now the Christian beliefs have now been integrated into traditional cultural beliefs. As you may be able to see with the exception of polygamy and certain excesses generally the core principles of traditional marriage and Akan marriage are the same. It wasn't difficult integrating them. Religious beliefs are important because in a way saying that "*awaree dee ne kwan ware*" marriage is supposed to travel over one's life time on earth has been greatly reinforced by the Christian position that God frowns on divorce there is a verse that states that I hate divorce. Though it's a contested text but it says I hate divorce. And Akans embrace it so whenever there are problems and the problems are taken to the family the family normally points the Christians back to the principles of the Bible. Among other religious groups like the Muslims it seems that in Ghana today once marriage is contracted the religious beliefs of the couple takes over. The religious believes form about 90-95% of the framework within which the marriage is conducted. So whether or not a marriage will succeed to a very large extent rest on this parameter called religious belief. Your faith is of fundamental importance to the success of any marriage in Ghana. Christians experience less divorce than non-believers those who are not Christians. And if you bring in the Moslems the more religious a person is the less likely that the marriage will collapse. So religion and faith forms the stabilizing factor the calming factor in marriage.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A5.

The success of marriages, respondent PIJ A5 believes, hinges on the religious beliefs of the couples which have more influence among the people in Ghana, irrespective of the different cultural settings and beliefs. Consequently, the stability of a believer's marriage, as credited above, rests on the fundamentals of religious beliefs in the Ghanaian communities. By implication, the interview participants pointed out, that, couples who are religious are less likely to divorce in comparison with those who do not subscribe to any religious faith. Therefore the religion and faith of a couple is viewed as a most significant stabilizing factor for marriages in Ghana.

#### **8.1.6.1 Childbirth as an excuse for Polygamy**

Children and poverty were noted as factors that may contribute to the sanctioning of polygamy<sup>345</sup> (see fn. 18 p. 27; 407 p. 211). Participants viewed polygamy as adultery. The interviewees pointed out that temptation increases after the marriage if the couple's hopes for bearing children are delayed. For instance the temptation for the man to go for another woman is heightened and vice versa. This on the man's side might result in polygamy, and it is not considered as adultery. Whereas men may engage in polygamous affairs mainly in search for children, affairs involving women, on the contrary, with other men mostly aim at clearing themselves of the barrenness stigma<sup>346</sup> (see fn.18 p. 27; 94 p. 53) or securing financial help against

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<sup>345</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 70–71, 76; Oppong and Bleek, 'Economic Models and Having Children...' p. 27; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants*, p. 33; Kannae and Pendleton, 'Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees' p. 73.

<sup>346</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 70–71, 76.

some poverty problems. Some women who experience financial hardship in marriage might be tempted to engage in extra-marital affairs. One participant's view was stated that:

“Polygamy and financial difficulties” are “some of the marital complications”.<sup>347</sup>

It appears that polygamy and a woman's attempt to clear her infertility stigma are just a few mentioned reasons that occasion the Ghanaian couples' involvement in polygamy and extra-marital practices. Klomegah has suggested economic gains and a show of affluence in addition to infertility as possible reasons behind practicing polygamy among some West African men.<sup>348</sup>

#### **8.1.6.2 Childlessness: infidelity, drunkenness; disrespect to in-laws as reason**

The problems of marital difficulties which often result in divorce without doubt originate and are caused by several factors including child-related issues<sup>349</sup> (see fn. 18 p. 27; 94 p. 53; 104 p. 57; 254 p. 114). In this study the interview respondents mentioned children approximately a hundred times. Among them was the emphasis on childlessness after a couple's marriage and other behaviours that were considered as detrimental to their marriage stability. PIJ A4 explained:

For instance, in the case of childlessness, several families, you know there isn't a common brand on this but several families especially where the bride is an only child or the groom is an only child in their family then childlessness can be a basis for divorce.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> PA, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A7.

<sup>348</sup> Klomegah, 'Socio-economic Characteristics of Ghanaian Women in Polygamous Marriages', 73-88

<sup>349</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 58.

<sup>350</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A4.

PIJ A4 added several other reasons and possible causes for dissolving a marital union as noted above with extended relatives' involvement (Figure 5 p. 130) in facilitating divorce among the sample group. PIJ A4 included factors such as:

Irresponsible behaviour for instance chronic drunkenness could be a basis for divorce, infidelity and many such things, so traditionally maybe showing of gross disrespect to the family of the bride or the groom could be a basis for divorce.<sup>351</sup>

These suggest additional but not exhaustive reasons blameable for a number of instances of divorce not necessarily only in Europe or precisely in Britain but also in Ghana.

Thus the above statement is an indication that a couple's inability to have children in itself could be a valid reason in the traditional sense as capable of causing the termination of marriage in many traditional marriages in Ghana. It might even be possible to serve as one of the hidden agendas in a GACMs' marriage where comparable issues do not gain a similar emphasis. Being childless in the Western environment does not necessarily result in or lead to divorce though it may be a cause for concern for some couples. In the Western setting it is not strange to find, or hear of a couple, who do not want any child at all. Contrarily the Ghanaian couple can rarely speak out or convince relatives that they do not want children in their relationship except probably on medical grounds.

It is further noted from the above responses that reasons for permissible divorce in both settings may be similar in principle but it is also an area of major difference as to how it is viewed in Ghana compared with that in Britain. In Ghana as

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<sup>351</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A4.

in most African cultural traditions children are important for lineage inheritance and as provision of a support system for relatives during old age.<sup>352</sup> Kasomo included in his findings that in the Luo of central Africa for instance, the absence of children makes any marriage incomplete and could be reason for polygamy, instability, separation and divorce.<sup>353</sup> Furthermore because the foundation of marriage in Ghana is based on the entire extended families from both couples, they are expected to give due respect at least to their in-laws. If at any instance one party or the other to the marriage disrespects any family concerns, (see fn. 94 p. 53; 98 p. 54) then that could be a justifiable reason for divorce.

It is worthy to note the study's emphasis that suggests Ghanaian marriages are conjugally private for the couple but institutionally communal for extended families. In the Western culture marriage is respected basically as between two and the extended families are not expected to interfere or take a lead in deciding the future of the marriage. Nevertheless respondents' comments suggest in the Ghanaian context, marriage is believed, and normally perceived, as a lifetime union between the couple first and then between extended families. The following statement supports this argument:

Generally at marriages couples are counselled to realize that marriages are not contracted to be broken. In fact the *Akan* word for marriage, "*awaree*" simply means/translates 'long distance'. It is something a relationship a social contract that's supposed to travel even beyond life time.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 57–59.

<sup>353</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 58.

<sup>354</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A4.



Thus marriage among the *Akans* for instance becomes a social covenant which is viewed as a permanent contract; it is denoted as *awaree* which implies a long-term bond that is not to be broken.

Moreover, even in the event of death of a man, the relatives especially brothers traditionally propose to inherit the widow. In the process of inheriting the woman after the death of her husband, it is expected in the traditional Ghanaian culture that the successor is obliged to make a formal proposal to the widow for marriage. Furthermore, when the marriage ends through death of either party, there are special ceremonial rites which are conducted to declare the end of the marriage especially when the expected proposal is unsuccessful. It was noted from the study that, any behaviour considered socially as irresponsible could be reason enough to end a traditional marriage.

The study also highlighted that in Ghana, Christian marriage generally and SDA's particularly, is formally between one wife and one husband. However, there are some Christian denominations for instance the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church<sup>355</sup> particularly, do not strongly or at least publicly object to, nor teach against polygamous marriage actively, and do not also enforce polygamy as a reason for divorce. As a traditional alternative to church formalisation Kasomo confirms that "...most Catholics would take up polygamous marriage and avoid divorce which is prohibited by the church"<sup>356</sup> among the Luo. In contrast the SDAs and the Charismatic or Pentecostal Churches actively discourage both divorce and

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<sup>355</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 59.

<sup>356</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 59.

polygamous marriage as Christians; and polygamy is seen as a reason for divorce. In addition members of the Adventist Church who engage in polygamous marriage are disciplined by being disfellowshipped from church membership as the most severe punishment. PIJ A4 related that:

“Generally among Christians marriage cannot be broken on any grounds except there is a substantiated case of infidelity, adultery and death as well.”<sup>357</sup>

The above statement shows that in the Christian domain, and, particularly among Ghanaian SDAs marriage is hard to break except in cases of adultery, infidelity or death in the Ghanaian setting. However polygyny or polygamy and infidelity need to be substantiated beyond any shadow of doubt.

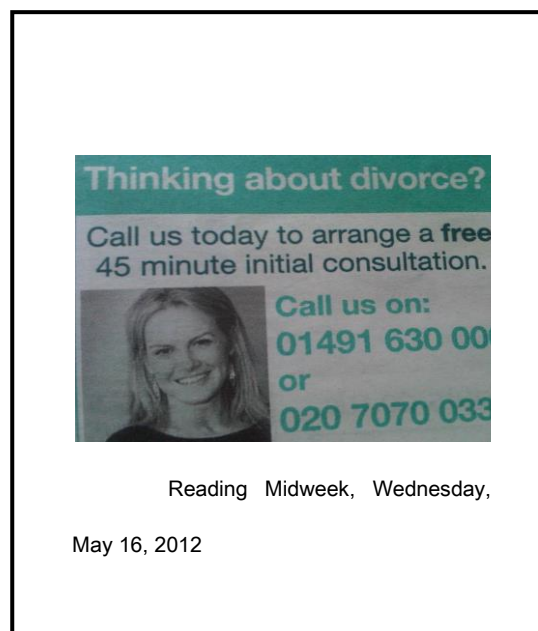
The impact of the British policy awareness is next.

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<sup>357</sup> PIJ, ‘Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...’ n. A4.

## 8.2 Britain's Divorce Policy Awareness: Impact on Ghanaian Immigrant Marriages

The study found that married Ghanaian women are eventually exposed to the available incentives within Britain's policy for divorced and single women while in Britain. These women are made aware (Figure 8 p. 135) that here in Britain, divorce means the woman gains access to support resources not available otherwise such as housing and finances for their children and



themselves. That is one issue that divorce advocates allegedly championed, (See Reading Weekly's divorce advert inserted<sup>358</sup>), and advised women to implement. The responses suggest some women, with limited understanding of the consequences involved coupled with the short-term gains, take these options against marital stability. Consequently marriages may break up irrespective of potential victims like children to experience hurt in the long run, contrary to Ghanaian traditional expectations.

Moreover, these decisions may eventually lead to possible divorce related complications. One participant shared more details in the following:

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<sup>358</sup> KJ Smith, 'Thinking About Divorce?', *Reading Midweek* (Reading, 16 May 2012), pp. 1–40 UK divorce advocate cites include [www.quikie-divorce.com](http://www.quikie-divorce.com) and <http://info.legalizoom.com/file-divorce-ad-newspaper-20645.html>. [accessed 20 May 2012]

To a large extent, you see Ghanaians coming from our background with poverty and all that lack of education have traditionally been brought up to look up to the West as the master of all that there is to oblige... So those are very positive things Ghanaians ought to imbibe and incorporate into their marriages, but it has also brought with them a lot of the Western garbage. For instance in the West divorce is not frowned upon in fact if you examine the English benefit system it seems to sometimes encourage divorce. There are certain benefits if you are a couple you can't obtain... If the couple broke up the council will easily step in to provide a dwelling place for especially the woman etc so all those you know has gone to encourage needless break ups in marriages. There is an instance in my church where a lady who needed support from the council was told that you are married so you can't have this. She said yes but how can I ... He said go and break up with your husband and you'll qualify. It is a case of one person who reported. But generally if you examine the benefit system very well they seem to be an incentive for breaking down marriages. That has had such a poisonous influence on marriage.<sup>359</sup>

In addressing the problems which lead to divorce, participants' views seem to suggest that couples need counselling (Figure 11 p. 139) to understand the fact that in marriage, the couple came from different families with different orientations of background to bond up for life. Thus, understanding this may lead to reasonable compromises and accommodation of circumstances that couples encounter in each other and subsequent social challenges that arise from Britain's policies.

### **8.2.1 Marriage stability and Divorce**

In the light of the preceding discussion, marriage stability to the population studied is an aspect which appears to be affected by the Western culture (Figure 3 p. 127). The stability of Ghanaian marriages of couples living in Britain, appears to be influenced by the fact that the Western culture embraces divorce as a fact of practical life and is considered normal. Yet, marriages, whether in a Ghanaian or

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<sup>359</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A16.

Western context have similarities. Relationship survival for prevailing challenges includes the understanding of cultural values of where these marriages are practiced. In Britain, social policies may understand certain needs better and thus support the divorced and single families for particular reasons.

Hence, participants noted however that, this has had a negative influence on the stability of many migrant marriages. To some respondents, the British culture has apparently lost much of the Christian values it was known for, hence the effect on the marriage institution. Comparatively, separation and divorce are notably easier in Britain than in Ghana; and moreover, the community's apparent acceptance of the separated and the divorced without stigmatised labels (Figure 8 p. 135) seems to encourage individuals to opt out of difficult marriages.

It is suggested therefore, that, certain influences from the Western culture have crept into GACM families, yielding consequential marital instabilities. One respondent's opinion however was that,

...the western culture plays a bigger role in the marriage stability. So if Christ is on your side it's very difficult for your marriage to be unstable.<sup>360</sup>

The view of participant PK A19 on beliefs suggests that among Ghanaians it is perceived that, when properly observed, higher Christian standards are upheld as very important for marriage stability, even if one is exposed to the pressures of Western culture.

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<sup>360</sup> PK, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. A19.

Participants also noted that it is important for migrant couples to assume responsibility to adopt the Western values that are good and necessary for marriage stability and discard those that can jeopardize marriage stability as expressed in PIJ A16<sup>361</sup> (see fn. 359 p. 171). One problem that has been highlighted is when migrant couples entirely abandon traditional values of marriage to assimilate into the Western culture<sup>362</sup> (see fn. 281 p. 121) their marriage stability most likely will be compromised or undermined. One participant contested that the married couples need to integrate the different traditions but subscribe to only the good values from both sides, (Britain and Ghana), in order to have a balanced life. However those who embrace the new cultural values wholesale are deemed to find each other caught up in the “political and religious seesaw”<sup>363</sup> as claimed by PA A19. PA A19 arrived at a conclusion that in such a situation there is no chance the marriage can survive in either the Ghanaian or British cultures.

### **8.2.2 Declaration of Single parenthood: the socio-economic impact on Ghanaian marriages in Britain**

Despite the social problems associated with single parenting, it appears the single mother is given priority over the still married women. This is an aspect of the Western style of marriage which is institutionalized in the concept of the welfare system. In Britain for instance, participants mentioned that a single mother has priority to financial support, social housing, and other entitlements that a married woman is disallowed (Figure 8 p. 135).

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<sup>361</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A16.

<sup>362</sup> Padilla and Perez, 'Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective', p. 39.

<sup>363</sup> PA, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

For instance PD A14 argued that many African couples, and for this study Ghanaians, adopt attitudes of greed and prefer easy access to public funds regardless, simply because the associated Western culture encourages it. An excerpt of the comment reads:

I think the cultural setting here also allows divorce because people are seeing that when they're single parents especially the women they get a lot of money. So what they do is do everything they can to chuck the man away ...here there are so many loopholes which do not happen in the African context. So here because of money, laziness and other things the divorce rate is high, why? ... I think that is wrong.<sup>364</sup>

In a further comment the participant added about the impact of Britain's provision in favour of single motherhood and its implications on the maintenance of cordial relationship in at least the migrants' marriage.

One thing is here as long as you don't like your husband you can go and divorce. And when you divorce as I said, as a single parent they give you a house they pay for you. You don't have to work and that allows it to do that. So the custom also the society has made it simple for divorce to happen. Even when the police come they can ask the man to leave the house and that is really very sad.<sup>365</sup>

Participant views like the ones above suggest how the interviewees perceive the social norms of Britain and their challenges on marriage as an institution among Ghanaians in particular to whom it is important for a couple to live together literally for better or for worse. The women are blamed however for taking advantage of these British benefits (Figure 4 p. 128), as they probably find that there is no need for them staying married as tradition may demand if they can get financial and housing

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<sup>364</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A14.

<sup>365</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A16.

support from the local authorities. On the other hand, it has become easier for some women to end abusive marriages.

Some participants felt that the Western culture is to blame because the provision of socio-economic support puts pressure on Ghanaian marriages due to the priorities for single parents. Thus one can argue that any woman interested may opt for the easier social and economic support option by declaring herself a single mum or actually becoming one by hook or crook.

### ***8.3 The influence of technological advancement and power balance issues***

The study found that GACMs perceive that easy communication through the electronic media (such as Television, mobile phones and the internet) play a specific part in advocating for GACM women's freedom and independence, and, that advice is readily accessible to everyone. These media also enhance easier divorce opportunities for any couple when they get into marital difficulties. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that significantly the cultural practices as factors among Ghanaian men do partly contribute to the problem. For instance, participant PD A19 noted that some men in a Ghanaian marriage are known to have a non-compromising final say. Two participants shared the following views:



Another thing that I think it's worrying is most of us Ghanaian men have the notion that the woman is the weakest link in marriages and the men are the boss so when we say it's final. That authoritative attitude I think has gone on for a long time and needs to be changed in a way.<sup>366</sup>

...women are not normally expected to be loud in the marriage they're expected to be quiet, they're not included in decision making. Men are mostly the ones who make decisions. When they say something its final why the women are put in that situation is they don't have a job, ... they're always at home so the man goes out to work, make the money and since they're the ones making the money they make decisions.<sup>367</sup>

The men appear to wield the powers of their sanctioned cultural authority in the house and a woman is virtually powerless in the marriage. To some men's surprise on the contrary they find out that when women come to Britain, the power balance changes as a result of many social freedom boosting factors. Some of such freedom boosters include: self financing through hard work; access to information on available rights to easier non-stigmatised divorce and housing and more. Other factors such as government policies, to some participants, apparently advocate easy divorces<sup>368</sup> (see fn. 358 p. 170) as a result of giving women too much empowerment and with possibly undue emphasis on the precedence of their human rights over marriage as understood by some Ghanaian men. The results are that many women become aware of the possibilities of these rights and this adds to the probability that many women may be motivated by any imaginable excuse to divorce when an opportunity arises.

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<sup>366</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

<sup>367</sup> PF, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A8.

<sup>368</sup> Smith, 'Thinking About Divorce?' pp. 1–40.

### 8.3.1 Quality time and marriage in Britain and Ghana

Another problem that puts pressure on marriage as noted in the study is the observance of quality time as a concept favourable for marital stability. It has been noted that other trivial issues do engage couples' attention when the married couples needed to be together to enhance and attend to aspects of their marital relationship. The factor of time is a challenge because most of the married couples work, and because of their desires to accumulate financial resources to address the socio-economic problems confronting their extended families. Couples, especially men, find it hard to reconcile the need for quality time between marriage and work. As a consequence, the lack of quality time lived together undermines the unity needs of the GACM's marriage. To the contrary in Ghana the married couples have ample quality time that serves as a necessary ingredient for the stability and continuity of the marriage. One of the examples was given by participants who claimed that in the UK most couples from Ghana:

...work too much some times by the time the man comes home he's already tired and so we don't spend quality time with each other and that also can put so many strains on the family. And, all these is because of the Western style because back home you go to work, latest by five five-thirty you're home.<sup>369</sup>

As alluded to above by PC A19, it could be deduced from this quote that there are times when both couples exhaust themselves with work and possibly see themselves as independent of each other while in Britain. These are probably the times when couples withdraw from proper communication (Figure 6 p. 132) with each other and become more concerned about other individualistic projects or even

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<sup>369</sup> PC, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Migrants', 2011, n. A19.

for the welfare of their extended relatives. They thus work harder to provide remittances to support relatives or possibly begin private projects like building a new family house or establishing a business while secretly excluding the spouse who lives under the same roof.

Amato agreed with Blankenhorn, Glenn and Popenoe and Wilson that individualistic marriages bear characteristics capable of weakening and destabilising families as they uphold individual happiness over and above any other purpose of the relationship.<sup>370</sup> Such individualistic turns between GACM couples may effectively undermine any existing trust and cooperation once enjoyed by both through the traditionally institutionalised system. This may also result in the blame game when none is willing to accept the other's views of the whole scenario making arguments more probable and thus weakening the relationship. However, regardless of geographical location, a switch from the traditional institutional love to an individualistic approach anywhere could equally be a recipe for discord within most marriages including GACMs'.

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<sup>370</sup> Peters and Dush, Elizabeth Peters and Claire M. Kamp Dush, *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*, p. 81. See also D. Blankenhorn, American family dilemmas. In D. Blankenhorn, S. Bayme, and J.B. Elshtain, eds., *Rebuilding the nest: A new commitment to the American family*, 3-15. Milwaukee: Family Service Association. 1990 J.Q. Wilson, the marriage problem: How our culture has weakened families. New York: Harper Collins, 2002; D. Popenoe, *Life without father*. New York: Martin Kessler, 1996; N.D. Glenn, Values, attitudes, and the state of American marriage. In D. Popenoe, J.B. Elshtain, and D. Blankenhorn, eds., *Promises to Keep: Decline and renewal of marriage in America*, 15-33. Lanham, Md.: Rowan & Littlefield. 1996.

### **8.3.2 Planning among migrant couples**

The idea of planning in a marriage as indicated in the interview responses underlines the importance of the participation of both the husband and wife in marriage so that they know what they need and expect in their marriage. Christian couples need to understand planning at the very onset of the marriage. Any such planning for instance may include the type of property the couple needs to acquire, the number of children and how long they want to stay in Britain. Some participants from the interviews observed that planning should start from the first day, and that they have to plan for the return to Ghana if they so choose. The call for planning by participants was that it should be essentially synchronized, so as to involve both parties to the marriage, in this case, only the husband and wife excluding any intrusion from the extended relatives.

I also found that participants believe that older couples in Britain want to return to Ghana, but it was observed that the couples have no idea how to go about deciding when they will return. A problem noted was that many Ghanaian couples do not have any plans in advance for their return home. This creates anxiety and frustrations when they realize too late. This is typical of problems which emerge later like a time bomb, that face many stable Ghanaian marriages today and might soon lead to conflict, separation and even divorce.

Savings were highlighted as an important part of marriage stability. One participant reasoned that failure to save against the future as a couple could be a

future issue in days of need, especially when people get older, or in the event when one or both of the couples are incapacitated because of ill health or accident. The respondent had the following to say:

Savings in marriage is very important, marriage is dynamic and life itself is dynamic. Healthy people can become incapacitated and because no provisions were made for such an eventuality they find that suddenly the problem has arisen and the result has trebled the distress.<sup>371</sup>

In addition, planning was considered an important aspect of marriage which could be associated with problems related to a couple's mental or psychological health. The issue that came out includes possible issues with post-natal complexities, where a woman gets an unplanned pregnancy and a child is added to the family in the process. As a result of poor or lack of planning the family experiences some sort of unexpected hardships which might lead to several complications such as post-natal depression.

This problem was considered a terminology only known in the Western marriage experience by GACMs as couples in Britain hardly get the traditional extended family support. Thus unlike the Ghanaian context, the extended social support from family is just not available but even having the child which is one of the major climatic expectations of a Ghanaian marriage becomes a big problem to deal with in the Western setting for a GACM couple especially the woman.

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<sup>371</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

### 8.3.3 Communication between married couples

The importance of intimate communication is an area that emerged strongly. Communication was highlighted as a necessary ingredient towards marital stability and it was noted that couples need to learn the art and maintenance of effective communication. The results indicated further that some men do struggle to cope with communication with their spouses. For instance a typical Ghanaian male culture does neither emphasise, nor encourage, equality (Figure 6 p. 132) in the communication of the spouses. Geest's statement<sup>372</sup> is resonated in respondent PG's repetition quoted below (see fn. 97 p. 54) that in the typical Ghanaian setting the man has more say in any discussion thus reducing the woman to only follow and sometimes possibly act on orders from the man. PG A16, 19 explains a reason behind some GACM men's dilemma in Britain as follows:

...typical Ghanaian marriage believes that there is one authority in the house and that is the man.<sup>373</sup> The woman obeys instructions and so in such situations the men are now struggling to learn properly to communicate and also because the women also come from a background where they're subdued the men say and that's it.<sup>374</sup>

It therefore appears that communication between couples in Britain has become a huge issue in that some men are facing a marital tight spot today in their confusion alongside the cultural change realities of the host environment. Participants observed that unless communication is resolved, it will continue to pose a problem between the spouses and this can lead to separation and possible divorce. Financial discussion forms another major point of controversy where mutuality in communication is a huge challenge, especially where financial decisions are involved. The respondents noted that spouses lack the transparency on financial

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<sup>372</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573.

<sup>373</sup> PG, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A16.

<sup>374</sup> PG, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

dealings, and this could spark a series of problems with mutual blockades to effective communication. It was observed that the woman or the man can be sending money home secretly to extended relatives without informing the spouse of what he or she is doing. Thus the lack of transparency creates mistrust among the parties, and this is a typical product of poor communication. For instance a response as noted in PG A19 states:

Once you have transparency becoming an issue then obviously what follows is mistrust. The question that comes is if I can't trust you how can I live with you? So these things build up without us realizing that it is building up. ...a friend ended up at divorce for such a stupid flimsy reason ... it was food, a yam. That was all because the lady wasn't communicating to the man properly the man wasn't communicating to the woman properly the lady didn't know how much the man was spending, was it all their money? So her too when her friends come and the food the man has bought for the house which is meant for the month the lady gives it out and they end up struggling for the month and they couldn't actually resolve this issue ... and as I'm speaking now they're completely divorced and these are two people that were in a marriage in the church sorry.<sup>375</sup>

The above views show that some GACM couples experience problems, mainly because of lack of effective communication. As a result though some problems may sometimes appear very flimsy; they might escalate into difficulties due to lack of transparency between the parties. Generally it was observed that marriage among GACMs is still a dynamic institution, and its stability depends on good communication among the couples. It appears however that trust issues that discourage communication may continue unabated as long as extended relatives or other types of extra-marital relationships have access. Extra marital affairs in this

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<sup>375</sup> PG, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

case do include a couple's commitment to anything else outside that is more than or equal to the conjugal relationship.

#### **8.3.4 Financial security and cultural concerns: a root cause for marital confusion and instability**

The study recognises that finances in marriage are a challenge among Ghanaians living abroad. One major reason is that though both husband and wife may work and earn money, each has added responsibilities to look after members of the families back home. Thus the extended families of both have expectations from the migrant couples. While financial pressures create marital tension to the migrant couple in the West, their relatives married in Ghana in many cases, reasonably do not have to experience similar problems of financial transparency between the parties.

The main ground that was raised is basically due to the fact that the man is traditionally the bread winner. He is expected to earn most of the financial resources for the family in the Ghanaian context. Contrarily while in Britain, the women like men are exposed to work as against being traditionally the house wife and might even earn more than the man. However because of lack of transparency, each couple could do something to support his or her traditional family back home without the knowledge of the other. Thus, problems emerge. The findings from this study have indicated that many difficulties arise in GACM marriages in Britain at least partly related to, some aspect of financial secrets and motivation.



Some respondents noted that when women come to join their husbands here in Britain, they expect the man to continue to exercise the role and responsibilities of a breadwinner. For example it was noted that many GACM women, though they are exposed to the Western culture, they do not adopt and help the man in getting the home finances sorted and this creates problems and mistrust.

The cultural influences on marriages are very significant. For the Ghanaian couple for instance, the way the woman behaves in the household and as a wife are prescribed and expected. The participants' experience is that the advice the women are given when they get married (elaborated below), is that when they gain any good thing out of marriage, they should not forget to send these good things back home. Home here (for Akans) is to her maternal relatives for safe keeping for her and her maternal relatives. Meanwhile they are also advised that when they face problems including debts or any misfortune they must take such problems to their husbands and not their parents or extended family. The impact of this traditional counsel to the married woman (mostly from maternal uncles' as they will normally assume payments of such debts) is that it plants seeds of dishonesty and mistrust, and that women who abide by this advice tend to view sending financial resources to their families back home as a priority instead of helping to meet the basic financial needs of their newly formed family. The problem with this approach is that, when discovered, some men may make up their own minds and the marriage is thrown into a risky battle with destructive potential.

The study has therefore revealed that the core of the problem could be the failure of women (also some men) who partially adopt the Western culture (as and when favourable) in which they live, and still operate in Britain with the Ghanaian mind-set based on the role concept<sup>376</sup> (see fn. 97 p. 54; 111 p. 60; 377 p. 185) of marriage especially on the idea that the husband is regarded as the only breadwinner in the house as stated below that:

They still even though they're in a different culture in a different part of the world but they still expect the man to play his role that he would play when he was back home in Ghana but things are completely different over here. So these financial issues tend to bring a lot of a problem whereby there's no transparency in issues that still got to do with finances.<sup>377</sup>

The above testimony shows the lengths the GACM woman's mind-set has been impacted by her cultural perception as a Ghanaian. Despite the fact that the majority of married women when they come to Britain do join their husbands they sometimes succeed to also find better employment which earns them more money. The study did not explore the amount women receive as compared to men. Generally this is a common experience of the majority of men who came to Britain as students and therefore had restricted working hours, hence their incomes. Women in such instances, as student dependents of their husband, were permitted by the immigration laws to work full time. The scenario suggests that some GACM women in this category are likely to earn more than their husbands. However, there is no empirical evidence now to properly support this claim academically, as this is

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<sup>376</sup> Bass, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa*, pp. 20–25.

<sup>377</sup> PE, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

considered outside the scope. A further study could investigate the earning power of women within that category in Britain as compared to their husbands in order to see how specifically this impacts and influences their marriage.

As pointed out above, some GACM women tend to take advice from their families back home rather than their husbands about financial matters that are of importance to the family. On the contrary, just as some women follow the advice that all their problems must be shared with their husbands, but their success and any good things they obtain be sent home to their parents, some Akan men equally pay much more attention to their maternal relatives. This suggests that the concept of marriage as a new home established by the couple does not appear to be adhered to. Such couples instead still do consider home as their parents' and extended relatives' home and not the home to which they are now committed in marriage.

One of the participants added that:

Women tend to stay on the phone for hours and hours ... mostly with families back home trying to take some sort of advice when you get to know of all these things it all brings a bit of problem ... When you go and ask someone's hand for marriage the advice they give is when you go and you get something good bring it back home but ... if you find yourself in debt or get any problem make sure you take it to your husband. So even though these are some sort of though a cultural thing but it ends up planting some seed in the minds of the women and when they find themselves free they tend to liaise back home more closely with their parents and their relatives back home.<sup>378</sup>

The problem of attachment to the family even after marriage is culturally influenced. To the participants, women are likely to be ill advised by the extended

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<sup>378</sup> PE, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

family members and the parents in particular. Thus one can see how the marriages in Ghana could be influenced by the parents of the woman or her extended family. Instead of becoming interrogators when a problem arises, the participants suggest the SDA church needs to define its position clearer in terms of the preservation of members' marriage stability as related to their perceptions of the cultural set up. This can be very challenging. A better contribution from the church could be helpful by avoiding the erosion of confidence of all the other parties involved by this traditional people and their prescribed expectation of participation in church members' marriages.

The family on the part of the husband may appear not to benefit from the marriage because of unbalanced support to these extended families. Women in similar African cultures, and specifically the Akans of Ghana, may tend to support the women's family more and comparatively neglect the husband's family. This creates discontentment and has negative implications to the stability of marriage because it is a potential source of conflict between the married couples and their relatives, especially the husband's relatives could be set against those of the woman.

This problem could raise issues of tension at home whenever there is a visit by relatives from one side of the couple. The concept of equity in the distribution of benefits accruing out of the marriage is very important, and it is in the interests of both parties to have a fair share of the marriage resources available even if it is meant to support the extended families. The emphasis here is that marital difficulties

among Ghanaian couples could largely be multiple issues such as the lack of commitment to the nucleus family and transparency on issues including finances within the marriage.

#### ***8.4 The Ghanaian Adventist Churches' approach towards marital stability***

The interview participants agreed with questionnaire respondents on the role of the SDA church as important because some churches work hard to meet couples' needs. They provide support through counselling and guidance through difficult times to maintain marriages in Britain (Figure 10 p. 138). Some participants hinted that the Western culture may tempt some couples to treat marriage like any other relationship because of exposures to individualistic freedoms particularly for the GACM women (who certainly find the Western environment quite enabling) and therefore potentially to break marriages at the slightest opportunity.

Consequently, some churches, as Cott argued, do assume their role to preserve their ideal models with tremendously good consequences<sup>379</sup> though with a variety of measures as responses indicated ranging from provision of practical education, counselling and mediation among others, to banning the non-compromising from membership (Figure 9 p. 136) in some situations including infidelity and divorce. Two of the many responses to questions about the church's approach concerning marital issues had these two representative views to share:

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<sup>379</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*. (Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 2000), p. 3.

Most churches I know in the UK take marriage very seriously. Because as Christians marriage is considered very sacred and ordained by God. So if some couples are going through marriage unrest, it is the responsibility of the pastors or the elders of the church first to give advice and counsel... They will have to take time on these couples and advice them because (you know) we want them to stay together, not to separate.<sup>380</sup>

However PDA15 added the following with some reservations about some churches' approach as:

I'll say the way the Ghanaian Christian churches deal with all the stated problem here related to marriage both before and aftermath I'll say emphatically wrong. It's wrong, it's wrong. We fail to help those that are affected. In fact those that run it, I've said it already, normally ... if it is the Adventist church it is the church board and how many of them are counsellors? They support and they make comments based on the person that they like and many times we fail to address the issue. We never go deep to find out what is happening and we fail and we don't even support them. Many people when something happen and they divorce the church expel them and we ignore them. Many times we find them joining other churches or they are in church without respect and they lose their faith because they're looked down upon ... and I think the church has failed and we can do something better on that.<sup>381</sup>

Couples appreciation of the Western individualistic culture might lead some GACMs to believe that marriage need not be maintained if it is problematic. In Ghana and among GACMs<sup>382</sup> contrarily, breaking a marriage or divorcing is perceived as bad news, a failure on the person and on the entire relatives (see fn. 381 p. 189). However, PDA15's expression is one of disappointment in the way issues have been dealt with which to PDA15 has almost nothing to commend. That is because PDA15 dislikes the idea and prospect that people with no counselling skills except by virtue of their board membership are continually allowed, during

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<sup>380</sup> PC, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A15.

<sup>381</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A15.

<sup>382</sup> Crider and Kistler, *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study*, p. 196.

church board sessions, to unprofessionally interrogate and dictate counsel to couples in their difficult times in an attempt to pursue traditional sentiments of church settlement of issues as usual. Perhaps the problem anticipated here by PDA15 could be comparable to an untrained person performing surgery on vulnerable patients. Thus, the probability of a patient not surviving is directly proportionate to the chances taken.

At least two participants noted that those who divorce are likely to be stigmatized. Contrary to the cultural values, in Britain and other Western cultures, divorce is not stigmatized, but is practically accepted regardless of connotations to minority communities. In this context of the GACM churches, though a variety of opinions exist, divorce and remarrying are part of Christian life for a variety of reasons and they are considered biblical among the GACM groups. It appears though, that, consensus on both biblical and Church Manual interpretations on marital issues are hard to come by even among this GACM minority. As such while some participants congratulate the efforts of the churches, others remain critical. The consensus of views is either there should not be any kind of stigma attached to people who divorce and remarry or that something better or still harder is expected from the church leadership. The prospect of falling into such protracted conflicts with non-compromising conservative views may be enough to frighten couples experiencing difficulty to hide the issue until their marriage is no longer viable.

Consequently such issues only reach the appropriate department too late to be rescued.

#### **8.4.1 Domestic issues and the Ghanaian Adventist churches' stance on domestic violence**

Domestic violence is something that is hidden as a concept that is dominant in many marriages, Western or Ghanaian. The position of the church was noted to be clear, that, domestic violence is one of the reasons for separation that may lead to divorce. In the Western culture, depending on the extent of violence, this can involve the police. In a traditional Ghanaian marriage this will normally be resolved by the families of both parties. The stance of GACM churches of having to defend every scenario with black and white statements from the Bible and the Church Manual seems to apparently make it difficult for some leaders to exercise authority in terms of permitting a divorce even in the face of what PIJ A10 below considers life threatening. PIJ A10 argued:



The church's position is merely informed on theological grounds because it is a question that can be easily answered from the Bible. It is not difficult to realize that the Bible frowns upon divorce and that marriage is supposed to be for a lifetime. So the church guided by the tenets of the Bible clearly frowns upon divorce. The question of ethics that will have to be raised you know is what is considered right? The Ghanaian church does not believe in situational ethics so where peculiar situations do arise it raises a difficulty. For instance where there is gross abuse ...sometimes you realize that safety-wise it is dangerous for the woman to continue to remain in the relationship. But in such instances the church seems to draw blank as to, they're concerned, they're concerned but clearly they don't know what to do whether they should grant divorce. Normally it is not that they do not see divorce probably will be helpful. They're afraid of the possible repercussions. So it is theological but questions of ethics do arise. Is it right in a case of an abusive husband to allow the husband to be in the marriage to be abused? Or ...allow them to go separate? But it is not that the Bible is insensitive to the needs of the wife but you see the Bible always seeks to promote what should be the ideal situation and the ideal situation is that when there are problems let us change because bad people can become good.<sup>383</sup>

PIJ A10's comment apparently nails down the fact that the GACM churches do have an issue at hand that must be addressed probably in a separate study in which a deeper search could be done for possible solutions. At the moment PIJ A10 has maintained that the best the Adventist church can afford for victims of abuse or any form of violence is to support a separation only and that as long as it is not stated biblically for an easy reference no permission can be granted for divorce as far as the Ghanaian Adventist churches are concerned. Though arguable as to whether all GACM leadership accepts PIJ A10's assertions it appears both culprit and victim will have to endure the process of having to wait till a character change probably happens miraculously or the death of one of them.

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<sup>383</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A10.

#### **8.4.2 The impact of divorce on role participation of divorcees in church**

Interview participants indicated that divorced parties face unprecedented challenges within the church. By implication church members' active participation in church roles will depend on how they are supported by the church leadership and members. The way marital conflict is handled by the church has an impact on the future participation of those involved in divorce in the church (Figure 9 p. 136). These members could be withdrawn from active participation in the church because of their assessment of the proceedings. The argument was also that because these people might be treated as sinners, it becomes difficult for them to regain their normal places in church. Consequently, some might decide to give up their faith.

The problem of divorce may appear from the surface as simple but could be very complicated to the extent that the people going through it sometimes find themselves excommunicated from the church and in this case they lose their church membership and their individual rights to full participation including voting. In such instances disqualified members feel stigmatized and looked down upon as the worst sinners and cannot expect permission to participate in roles let alone nurturing for reinstatement. Some participants viewed this kind of disciplining offenders as unfair. Respondent PD A17 had this to share:

When a church is voting for a particular issue and you can't vote because you're divorced I think that is not very fair. The fact that the Bible says thou shall not commit adultery or that is the only thing that can allow for divorce. However, in many divorce situations it could be somebody was at fault or somebody was beating somebody and because of that the person can't marry. If the person said her life is dangerous the person can move away. And if such persons can be disfellowshipped from the church because of that I think the church has failed in the long run. Such people, their spirituality goes down. They feel untouched they feel that they're inferior to the others and I think it affects their spiritual lives and that shouldn't happen. I think the church has its policy and I can't say anything about that I think something should be looked into to see how divorced people can be helped and not necessarily disfellowship.<sup>384</sup>

In view of the statement above, some participants take the church to task and suggest an appraisal to assess how this position can be made helpful to the people who experience marital difficulties, including divorce to see that the processes are redemptive enough and ensure individual divorcees are reintegrated into the mainstream of church roles as soon as possible. The study finds complications with the issues of marriage and divorce and suggests the churches need to revisit and understand the dynamics of marriage and divorce in the light of the migration challenges and globalisation issues of today. It has also been suggested that some leaders might need immediate and regular updates to specifically equip and enhance their ministry with additional skills. I submit such upgrades will especially be helpful to both ministers and members who might face relationship issues and particularly divorce problems particularly as migrants.

Participants imply that many divorced members may find that they are kept in the background away from church roles. This treatment is based on the argument

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<sup>384</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A17.

that they are unable to put their own houses in order, therefore such believers cannot be entrusted with roles to lead, out in the house of the Lord. Some participants expressed a very radical and conservative position in which they mentioned that such members are not to be given church roles, until they are able to sort out their marital issues.

The individual couples who undergo divorce respond differently to the role they play in the church depending on how they feel about the treatment given. Some parties to the divorce feel that they have been let down, and they tend to become less active and withdraw from many church activities. Others become even more active. Thus there are variations on how individuals respond to divorce and separation. Thus ministers and the church in general, need to address the aspect of divorce case by case - each case on its own merits and demerits.

Those who undergo divorce might find it hard to regain their status and self-esteem. As such there could be feelings of guilt that cause their cultural images in society to be tarnished. A general observation of respondents suggests marital separation or divorce cannot be a simple thing to do in a typical Ghanaian culture. In the Ghanaian context and particularly among GACMs,<sup>385</sup> the persons who divorce are challenged to survive the label of failure (see fn. 135 p.71) for being unsuccessful in marriage. A major reason is that divorce is neither welcomed nor encouraged easily in any Ghanaian context, church or society at large. This is even

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<sup>385</sup> Crider and Kistler, *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study*, p. 196.

worse in the estimation of the church where it is seriously frowned on as unacceptable, save for the exceptional circumstances of adultery. Even then, the offended party may face consistent pressure or encouragement to forgive the offender and continue with the marriage.

A participant's comment below highlights about sanctions and censorship, whereby the parties to the divorce are either completely prevented from involvement in or limited in church activity participation as:

The innocent party though will be able to participate in church activities, as said attitude, the question is not moral or theological but it's attitudinal and they are perceptive in nature. It depends on how a particular church decides to conduct an issue of this nature. They can participate but when you're censored then you can't actively take part in church activities you can return your tithes thankfully. You can return your tithes you can return your offerings but you'll not be given an official role official responsibility or be invited to do many things.<sup>386</sup>

#### **8.4.3 The role of the remarried and divorcees in the church**

One of the questions, explored whether those who have divorced and remarried should be allowed to serve in the church. The participants observed that it is important for the church to follow the biblical principles and the way God requires the people to treat those who have divorced. The role of the church as a community is to continue to integrate these people into the church, pray for and with them so that they feel part of the church. Those who undergo divorce need to feel that they are still recognised and valued by the church. Some participants observed that there is a problem in the church with people who commit offences. For example it was

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<sup>386</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A17.

noted that as a church it is easier to punish those who sin, but it was noted that the problem is that the people within the church look at the people who have sinned as outcasts, and this is likely to isolate them from the church community. PA A18 noted that it is important to hold the people by their hand to support them socially and spiritually. This approach is likely to bring them closer to God, part of the statement pointed out that:

To these people and that is what I'm strictly against. So we try as much as possible to hold them by the hand so that they will retrace their steps and then come back to know God.<sup>387</sup>

Furthermore, it was noted that marital status should not be used as the only measure of a spiritual standard. A participant noted for example that Paul had no wife but carried out the gospel work effectively. It can be argued that the Bible is at least open and clear that a person may decide to marry or not. To marry therefore depends on the individual's choice and ability to cope with or without a life partner. The participants also observed that sometimes the church decisions are too fast in some congregations and do not properly consider the dynamics of marriage. Thus such decisions of those churches can negatively affect the church members because of failure to take pertinent issues into account such as things which might have happened within the marriage. Members who happen to do something wrong need to be treated with care. One participant mentioned about Peter and Judas Iscariot and drew a parallel of how Jesus treated them despite the fact that he knew both Peter and Judas will respectively deny and betray him. PB A18 explained, in answer

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<sup>387</sup> PA, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A18.

to the question: In your opinion, should those who are divorced, separated or remarried be allowed to serve in the Christian church?

I will simply say yes! Because, a person's religious stand ...it's not only measured by the marital status. Somebody like Paul, at a point didn't want to marry but he carried the gospel, he was ... flag bearer of the gospel to the gentiles. So I think your marriage status should not affect your participation in the church, and... sometimes I think the church makes a lot of mistakes. Because it's only God who knows what is happening in the homes, and in the marriage life of every family than the church and many at times I think the church has taken hasty decisions which eventually has affected some of the members of the church.<sup>388</sup>

Within the parallels above the participant makes it clear that Jesus did not weed out Judas or Peter because of their imperfection but worked with them allowing them to continue in the company until a point where each one made a firm and final decision. Inferring from this analogy the participant suggests Christians who fail need to be disciplined appropriately but also nurtured to ensure that they are given the opportunity to retrace their steps to God. Thus the conclusion drawn by some participants at least, saw no justification for denying divorcees the right to participation in church activities positing that inclusion should not be based on one's marital status.

Despite the wider views that divorced members should be allowed to serve in the church, some other participants had a different opinion that when one divorces, there are certain positions he or she should not be allowed to hold in the church. There was no specific rank mentioned but it appears that there are other positions

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<sup>388</sup> PB, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A18.

which such people may safely fit. Again this signals a conflict of perceptions and therefore it is clear to me that there is a dilemma among the church members and different groups of the same denomination. The position of the church however remains firm on marriage, divorce and serving the church. Respondents argued that to preserve the standards of the church, people should only divorce and remarry when all avenues to solve the marriage have failed. This argument is based on the view that if the church condones divorce then it is likely that people will divorce or separate on flimsy grounds and this may not be very healthy for the Ghanaian SDA church.

The participants also noted that it is important to send a message to the church members that those who cannot put their house in order have no right to lead the church. The point here addresses the dilemma on which positions divorced or remarried members could be allowed to serve in the church. Furthermore, participants noted that there are required criteria that one needs to fulfil before being allowed to serve in particular positions in the church. The bottom line is that the SDA church expects members to be able to use the Bible as the only point of reference in defence of any doctrine<sup>389</sup> particularly in this instance on what the church believes about divorce and remarrying. For example the following is another view of one interview participant:

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<sup>389</sup> Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, p. v Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.



To the divorced person I think the innocent party should be allowed to carry out their duties as normally as possible. And the guilty party should remain suspended until maybe they have remarried because allowing them sends a wrong signal. If you entertain divorce in your church it's a seed you are planting and every single example will be a point of reference, will be precedence in future decisions to be taken.<sup>390</sup>

The above statement suggests that there are two dimensions to this argument on participation; the first is on what the limits of the guilty party should be. Secondly, what functions the innocent party can be permitted to perform. The discrimination of the guilty party is to suspend him or her from performing church activities until they have resolved their marital issues to the church's standards. This is a challenging position as the church needs to explore available and possible expertise that ensures opportunity for the guilty parties to be provided with support and shown fairness as applicable to their specific circumstances.

### ***8.5 Some differences of marriages in Ghana and Britain***

This section explores the difference in marriage in Ghana and in Britain. The results have shown that there are significant socio-cultural differences. Nevertheless the marriage principles are the same within the context of the church. One of the key and notable differences is that in Ghana a man may marry more than one wife and this is traditionally ethical and accepted<sup>391</sup> in every Ghanaian region and tribe (see fns. 18 p. 27; 347, 348 pp.165; 356 p. 169). Thus polygamous marriages (in the Ghanaian setting polygyny)<sup>392</sup> are ethical, and they are not viewed as an immoral act

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<sup>390</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A18.

<sup>391</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 59.

<sup>392</sup> Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, p. 275 'Polygamy in its broad sense does not exist in Ghana. It is only one aspect of it- polygyny which is popular in Africa ...' Polygamy in Ghana therefore is priority for males only.

traditionally under any circumstance. Traditionally, in Ghana it is usually symbolic of, affluence, success or social position, to marry more than one wife, although the position of some Christian churches like the SDAs remain firm on monogamous marriage in principle.

In Britain, marriage is strictly and officially monogamous for everyone involved. This makes a major difference between marriage in Britain especially with an official limit whereas in Ghana there are no restrictions for capable men. There are at least two arguments that can be developed in the Ghanaian context. The first one is that traditional marriages appear to embrace and deal with the needs for the extra numbers of single women in the society.<sup>393</sup> The second aspect could be based on changes in economic conditions which are forcing people to settle for a monogamous marriage because they may find it impossible to cope with the maintenance of multiple wives. However there are instances beyond this study whereby many women do take care of themselves making it possible even for a less wealthy man to have competing self-supporting wives.

The Western world and the role of the church have influenced the traditional marriage in Ghana. Another point observed is that many people in Ghana are beginning to appreciate the importance of monogamous marriage as it is in the Western world. The point of departure is divorce. In Ghana traditionally divorce in marriage is actively discouraged. It is not a common thing and it is not condoned. It

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<sup>393</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 62. Kasomo's research, like other writers, confirms the fact that polygamy in some African settings is considered as a solution for the extra unmarried women in society.

is also frowned upon within the Christian communities in this case the SDAs. In Britain and the rest of the Western world in general, divorce is comparatively a common thing, apparently encouraged to some extent as discussed earlier and that marriage is more or less treated as a normal private relationship that can be broken without the Ghanaian stigma if it seems difficult.

The study also emerged with another comparison about work and marriage. In the Western cultural setting the couple is expected to provide some contribution for the family irrespective of whether one is the husband or the wife. Contrarily in the Ghanaian cultural setting the husband is expected, and has the sole responsibility of providing the livelihood for the family. As such, any contribution from the wife may start controversies as her relatives may disapprove. In the traditional marriage the woman's place is that of a house keeper and depends on the man and expects him to work hard and provide for her and any other dependants including vulnerable parents. Decisions in the marriage are therefore dominated by the man. To the contrary in the Western culture, and particularly in Britain, decisions are not solely the man's, but they are shared between the couples.

Despite the traditional and cultural set up in Ghana, this study observed that there has been a shift especially due to changes in education and economic life. Some married couples have the privilege of education and employment, and women involved, if employed, may even earn more than their husbands, and this has at least provided a variety of perceptions that could be considered. For instance the men may have to adopt the egalitarian culture of mutual role sharing by which both will be

multi-tasking in the interest of fairness to the wife. Equality, by sharing maintenance and other family responsibilities especially when the woman is also employed, could be simpler without third party interferences from extended relatives.

A shift is now notable because, education, civilisation and the growing economic changes of some females have granted the previously unusual possibility and privilege of women earning more than their husbands. In such instances the general social expectation is that, provided the man does what is expected of him, he works hard enough, does his best, even if the wife is richer, he should have no fears of his place as head even in the traditional relationship. Thus the man could be respected for taking care of his family. The Western world in a way has consistently influenced African marriages including Ghanaian ones in many ways and continues to, particularly through education, civilisation and religion and this has heightened couples' fears and suspicion of practical cultural shifts.

Despite the shifts and influences that have been brought about by educational and religious shifts there remains a significant difference of marriage between traditional Ghanaian and the Westernised marriages especially as noted while couples are in Britain. Generally the traditional marriage in Ghana is founded on both the community and the individuals' responsibility, and the role each party plays. In a Ghanaian marriage the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in terms of who does what; the man as breadwinner and the woman as home manager. Meanwhile in Britain and generally in the Western culture, there are no such clearly defined

roles and responsibilities along gender lines. Each person is expected to fit in responsibly to perform genderless but mutually shared roles as necessary.

The Christian marriage again may differ from the traditional and that of the Western based culture, due to the fact that the Ghanaian SDAs marriages are based on the perceived biblical teachings and prayers as PIJ A4 categorically states:

With the Christian marriage, I have noticed that the main difference is the Bible, prayer and the service and advice around this all centred on the Bible and what Christ would like us to do whiles in the traditional marriage, it could be, they may be pouring libation, it could be an advise ... and Christ is not the main aim of the marriage... So I think that are the main difference.<sup>394</sup>

It has been argued as a matter of difference to realise that when the couple in a Ghanaian culture marry, they are still focused on the extended family, which in some instances may assume an upper hand in the marriage, for example on decision making around finances. This is different in the context of marriages in the Western countries, particularly in Britain, where decision making is expected to be mutually shared between husband and wife together. In Britain practically, the extended families are not expected to exercise control over the married couple's daily affairs. Arguably these couples who allow the cultural values to dominate the marriage where in-laws and the general extended family have a share in decisions, the danger is that it brings pressure to the marriage because of the higher expectations of the extended family which the couple cannot cope with.

In conclusion, I agree with the findings of the quantitative study on the issues concerning the GACM's marriage. I discuss them together next.

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<sup>394</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A4.

## 9 Discussion of the Main Study Results

I set out to investigate and question the relevance and acceptability of the generalised concern among the sampled population, that, marriages brought over or contracted in Britain become consistently difficult, and that, many of them do not survive. Secondly I also sought to establish if acceptable blame could be laid on the Western culture, for the identified marital relationship difficulties among the GACM group studied. In order to arrive at such a conclusion a triangulated study approach was adopted to derive sources of reliable study information using quantitative and qualitative methods of interview and documentary sources including investigation of the available literature.

This section discusses the results from the two main study approaches utilised. The initial intention was to pursue a primary study through interviews to begin with and later prove the validity of results by preparing a questionnaire out of the responses and check for consensus, relevance and authenticity from a larger group of the same population through the questionnaire.

In the above analyses of findings as well as historical legacies found in the form of grounded theory in literature, it has been observed that marriage and marital practices have been determined by influences over the centuries from neighbouring cultures through civilisations<sup>395</sup> (see fn. 80, 81 p. 48) and by traditions of proximity

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<sup>395</sup> Turner and Helms, '*Marriage and Family*', Turner and Helms traced and recorded marital practices of traditions and transitions as a written legacy.

through local ancestral legacies.<sup>396</sup> These findings apparently confirm that dynamic ancestral traditions as demonstrated among GACMs are still communicable over a period of time. The following observation was made even with the manual analysis: Some words appeared so many times as a possible emphasis of their thematic importance to participants. Words that featured most in descending order from the manual analysis were: marriage, 506 times with marry and married 68 and 63 respectively; church, 274 times; family 180 times; tradition, 150 times; Ghana or Ghanaian, 153 times; divorce, 136 times with divorced, 17 times; child and children, 99 and 69 respectively; West and Western, 71 and 60 respectively.

This study found unreserved confirmation<sup>397</sup> that traditional culture simply expects normal mature Ghanaians to get married (see fn. 92, 93, 94 p. 52-53). Circulation of rumours, doubts and concerns spread when a person does not get married. Then, closer friends and relatives begin to wonder and may seek explanation and look for possible default solutions.

Both studies have suggested that Ghanaians especially the Akans are culturally very religious and like to practice their beliefs anywhere. This point is confirmed that, though many GACMs might disagree with church authority<sup>398</sup> (see fn. 15, 16 pp. 26-27; 95 p. 53; 116 p. 62; 183, 185 p. 90 and 388 p. 198) in many ways

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<sup>396</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*; Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*; Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite*. Oppong, 'From Love to Institution...'; Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*.

<sup>397</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 70–72; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants*, p. 33; Kannae and Pendleton, 'Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees' p. 73; Oppong and Bleek, p. 27; Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 59.

<sup>398</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, pp. 38–39, 52.

including reasons related to personal and private matters as illustrated in (Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11, pp. 136, 138, 139), yet they will continue to subscribe to and stay in that religious community to maintain a status of belonging against all odds. Furthermore the Ghanaian life is guided by a set of societal norms for every action or practice such as normal people get married<sup>399</sup> (see fn. 92, 93 p. 52). It is to such social norms and superstitions on what people consider to be the right way that prompts extremist approaches in everyday life. However, while many of these seem superstitious or conjecture, some cultural practices may be traced to the OT.<sup>400</sup> This gives churches a hold on Bible believing Ghanaians, and leaders might be tempted to entrench and abuse this respect and trust by sometimes even resorting to dictating to believers.

Other themes already highlighted in both studies included cultural inequalities between males and females<sup>401</sup> (see Figure 6 p. 132; fn. 97 p. 54). In several ways especially in the Ghanaian traditional marital relationship, the man is the unopposed king and final authority often disregarding the female as equal by that same status as spouse. Of course silent compliance cannot be expected always despite traditional unfairness, as respondents PFA8 and PGA16 hinted, when women are treated as second class citizens for whatever reason within a matrimonial relationship. For example, a woman complained bitterly (in an off-record discussion after the

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<sup>399</sup> Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 59; Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>400</sup> In 'The Akan Saturday God Heritage in Ghana' Owusu-Mensa has discussed some of the religious beliefs that were already known among the Akans as confirmed in the Old Testament.

<sup>401</sup> Geest, 'Role Relationship Between Husband and Wife in Rural Ghana', p. 573.



interview), that, her maternal uncles surprisingly compelled her to kneel and apologise to her husband during a dispute settlement. They argued that a woman should not win against her husband in a marital dispute.

By implication, the study has suggested accordingly, that the quality of relationships do suffer when one party in the marriage feels unfairly over-burdened or undervalued. More so when such disrespect for equality occurs in Britain where the contrary is the case. Therefore, the impact and implications of marital inequality cannot be a matter of exclusively geographical significance as one does not need a scientific study to prove that marital difficulty is a likely component of marriage anywhere people marry.

I have observed that while an institutional marriage may thrive in Ghana, other options of marital relationships such as egalitarian or companionate<sup>402</sup> exist that can be learned and practiced anywhere. It has been deduced from the responses of both studies therefore, that, instead of couples' subscribing to the individualistic ideals which contrarily prove alien to many GACMs, couples may benefit from seminars that expose other types of marital relationships also practiced in Britain. Seminars are recommended here to help balance the apparent cultural shock of shifting from institutionalised to individualised marriage which causes difficulties for many GACM husbands.

Furthermore I identified the need to create specific awareness for GACM couples, particularly men, some of whom, are used to the traditionally-

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<sup>402</sup> Peters and Dush, Elizabeth Peters and Claire M. Kamp Dush, *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*, pp. 75–89.

institutionalised setting where they occupy absolute authority, give orders and thus stay in charge without a challenge. It may be of interest to speculate how husbands who are so used to being in-charge could become upset in a companionated relationship with the once submissive wife. The opposite, similarly, was found to be no different either. For example, PFA8, PEA19 and PGA7 agree and particularly PGA16 emphatically states that some GACM women begin to overexploit the equality status in Britain whereby a wife's assumption of egalitarian freedom may equally be turned into abuse.

Again the in-laws' expectations (see Figure 5 p. 130) from any side of the marriage have been highlighted in both studies with great concern far beyond my expectations. For instance, participants confirmed the claim that some couples phone relatives at home in Ghana on a regular basis from Britain<sup>403</sup> (see fn. 378 p. 186). It was even noted through an off-record explanation that sometimes such phone calls were for daily instructions regarding specific day to day issues from people who have never travelled to Europe and thus have no idea as to what pertains here for guidance. It appears as a result, that any selfish intention based on extracting favours from such relatives could easily be instigated to the disadvantage of the husband or the wife.

Further implications include issues of trust, allegiance, loyalty and marital permanence beliefs. For instance as stated above, one spouse bypassing the other to seek relatives' company from Ghana (see fn. 378 p. 186) automatically questions

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<sup>403</sup> PE, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A19.

and throws that individual's Christian belief of marital permanence into confusion. In other words an underlying GACMs' traditionally limited biological perception of family, Akans as example, which excludes ones' spouse and includes only maternal relatives,<sup>404</sup> is at play here. Consequently, couples are confused by trying to combine both traditional and Western understandings of family in a Western environment at the same time. In such dilemmas couples may not only turn suspicious for apparent double standards but are also drawn further into a probable strange form of individualism and distrust.

Another surprise discovery was a deep seated disapproval of some church leaders' adamant attitude which possibly facilitated some breakdowns due to either playing down responsibility, lack of professional touch or stubborn attachment to local fundamentalist views<sup>405</sup> (see fn. 381 p. 189; 384 p. 194; Figure 10, Figure 11, pp. 138, 139). The lack of regular and appropriate appraisal of knowledge and practice are likely key issues that some Ghanaian oriented churches may need to reconsider especially among GACMs.

I submit therefore, that, whereas the traditional cultural provision of support perhaps sustained marriages, it is about time for at least the migrant couple to upgrade their marital orientation and perceptions and put certain boundaries in place if they genuinely love and wish to live with each other while in Britain as husband and wife. Such boundaries only classify as to when relatives' views can be useful or

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<sup>404</sup> Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite...* Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*; Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*.

<sup>405</sup> PD, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' n. A15, 17.

tolerable to the relationship. A typical example has confirmation from Kasomo's findings whereby relatives may find a second wife for a man whose marriage suffers childlessness.<sup>406</sup> Kasomo confirms a further fertility dilemma that barren women suffered distrust as they traditionally bore the burden of proof to clear themselves of barrenness to in-laws often by becoming pregnant secretly, as Luo tradition flexibly permits, with any of the husband's relatives.<sup>407</sup>

Any polygamous practice, whether linked with provision of alternative solutions in any context for instance, could destabilise GACM couples even against church rules. In confirmation Adonu maintained that cultural and certainly "local realities" do perpetuate polygamous marriages and that even modernisation fails to clear such imprints of their enduring values.<sup>408</sup> That probably could be a decision by some relatives who see nothing wrong and especially wish to solve fertility issues by dissuading the man from being too involved with a wife's dominance of the husband's affection or relatives' concerns for infertility and childlessness issues.<sup>409</sup>

As a result, women thus come under pressure when traditions reduce the purpose of marriage solely to procreation.<sup>410</sup> An exclusive in-looking kinship pattern has thus significantly been implied as respondents neither suggested nor recognised

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<sup>406</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 61. Among the reasons why relatives may introduce additional wives are for 'provision for a larger number of offsprings... the only opportunity for overcoming barrenness by allowing family in-adoption opposed to western adoption.' Others were doing away with poverty, loneliness and ensuring availability of hospitality.

<sup>407</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>408</sup> Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction ...' chap. 2.1.4.2; R Inglehart and W.E. Baker, 'Modernisation, Culture Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values', *American Sociological Review*, 65 (2000), 19–51.

<sup>409</sup> Adonu, 'Psychosocial Predictors of Marital Satisfaction ...' chap. 2.1.4.2.

<sup>410</sup> Kasomo, *Customary Marriage in African Culture and Religion*, p. 70; Kanae and Pendleton, 'Fertility Attitudes Among Male Ghanaian Government Employees' p. 73; Ayertey, *Mastering Social Studies*, pp. 262–263; Oppong, 'From Love to Institution...'; Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite...*

adoption for instance as a possible solution to couples' childlessness even though that is one of the practices African and Ghanaian migrants including GACM interviewees have been exposed to in the West.

The major issue highlighted among themes from both studies was about the belief that marriages brought over or contracted in Britain do consistently become difficult and eventually might not survive. Both studies strangely agree that Ghanaian migrant marriages and for this study the GACMs, have shown the realities of difficulty in relationships between couples. Though the majority of views from the primary studies included the perception that the West ought to be blamed, (Figure 1 p. 123) for the permissive culture and its perceived accompanying encouragement towards individualism in marriages, significantly, a number of dissenting views felt otherwise. The few dissenters (Figure 3 p.127) thus unequivocally query (as I do) that the generalised assumption of difficulty in Britain might partially be true, yet, the basis of marital difficulty can neither be blamed nor solely determined by geographical locations. It is a typical human problem common in any community in the first place and secondly, the majority may not always be right.

In addition both studies related other causes of disharmony between couples on a daily basis that are often taken for granted. For instance correlation issues raised (see Table 1 p. 141) highlight irresponsible communication skills, intruding relatives, greed for financial wealth and secretly acquiring properties behind the other spouse, abuse and several trust issues are equally implied. Although correlation does not necessarily imply causality, these are the often ignored

contributory factors to couples' difficulties while in Britain. These factors possibly explain the individualistic trend among GACM couples who, by inference, probably meet each other occasionally while others meet on weekends. This is due to overambitious work patterns plus some couples' endless desire to acquire wealth mostly for the matrilineal relatives.

It appears also that the availability of exclusive possibilities (Figure 8 p. 135) as encouraged and thus enjoyed by married GACM women resident in Britain, has created some difficulties with this newfound individualistic freedom<sup>411</sup> as against the comparatively almost public arena with easy and unquestioned community access of friends, relatives and neighbours in the Ghanaian setting.

In other words, while visitors must obtain prior permission in Britain it is much less of an issue for visiting friends or relatives in Ghana. Consequently people's real personal characteristics naturally may be revealed when so uninterrupted in Britain. However, an observation of many respondents not considering divorce in the analysis coupled with Britain's national statistics claims, suggest some silver lining in the questioned perception. For instance national statistics suggest increasing trends of behavioural changes in Britain from 1930s particularly following WWII, blame the Divorce Reform Act of 1969 effective January 1971.<sup>412</sup> I therefore suggest that a thorough study be done on GACM divorcees alone if not all Ghanaians, to fully ascertain relevant issues.

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<sup>411</sup> PIJ, 'Marriage, Divorce, remarriage Issues...' A16. PIJ A16 cited an instance that suggests some women can only access certain social assistance or help only when they agree to break up with their husbands.

<sup>412</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Divorces in England and Wales', pp. 2–4.

Furthermore, as MacCulloch<sup>413</sup> and Roberts<sup>414</sup> confirmed earlier, I noticed the numerous similarities of controlling roles participants believe the Ghanaian churches play in some matters of privacy relating to believers' marriage and family life. I also recognise concerns of various setbacks disclosed in both studies. The apparent disapproval and suggestions of some of the respondents seem to suggest a desire for new dimensions to the issues at hand (Figure 11 p. 139). Perhaps the variety of Christian views present among SDAs discussed above, championed by many and referred to in this study<sup>415</sup> (see fns.132 p. 70; 147 to 149 pp. 75-76; 152 p. 77; 156, 157 p. 78-79; 235 p. 107) is either missing or not tolerated in some GACM churches.

Thus, participants seem to call for some kind of appraisal as to if, when, what and how, a Ghanaian church may come in to help couples with their difficult moments. For instance it is quite uncertain if GACM church members intentionally hide and avoid sharing their woes (instead of asking for the help they knowingly need) when they actually believe the church must have the final say. Perhaps their suggestions for the inclusion of some professional counselling might be a clue to their disagreement with the existing status quo.

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<sup>413</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 371–373 MacCulloch shares efforts made by the Catholic Church for instance to gain control of members private life by making marriage a sacrament.

<sup>414</sup> Roberts, *Not Under Bondage*, p. 137 The church idealised celibacy and monkship for some control of certain aspects of members' private lives. .

<sup>415</sup> Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, p. 607.

## 10 Conclusion

In conclusion, I recognise that movements of people around the world result in prototypes of dynamic changes that may reflect people's peculiarities. Therefore making sense of and properly articulating these features of settlement and challenges to connect those involved to other facets of progressive social events is commendable.<sup>416</sup>

A closer look at both studies has suggested (to my surprise) that, the perceptions this study questioned and set out to investigate and refute do exist with some evidence among the studied group. Secondly, it has also been established from the studies that indeed several marriages brought over from Ghana as well as those contracted in Britain have experienced relationship difficulties and some have divorced. However, there are also many Ghanaians as well as other ethnic couples in Britain who live together peacefully in the same environment.

Thirdly, the studies confirmed MacCulloch and Roberts' conclusions of the persistent existence of church attempts to control members' private lives<sup>417</sup> (see fn.153, p. 78; 413, 414 p. 214) as it appears among the GACM population studied. Thus, some of these Ghanaian oriented churches at times exercise considerable control with the intent to help and support the family life of couples (see 5.5 p. 91); however that by so doing many believers have been unfairly treated and sometimes

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<sup>416</sup> Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement*, p. 3.

<sup>417</sup> MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 371–373; Roberts, *Not Under Bondage*, p. 137.



experienced worsened circumstances due to the diverse approaches applied in various settings while in Britain as if in Ghana.

In this direction, both studies have also signalled some church members' wishes for a better approach to handling sensitive issues of difficult marriages between members with considerable respect for personal and privacy rights. For example some off record informants have stressed the inconsiderate measures meted to some separated spouses despite many years of enduring irretrievable breakdowns. McManus' comment<sup>418</sup> imploring churches to do more than preaching and praying seems to imply that an earlier amicable resolution could be helpful but is often missing in the process due to some leaders' apparent deficiencies or negligent attitude. Thus the emotional, physical and spiritual welfare needs of those involved in these marital issues were played down. I therefore submit that affected Ghanaian churches need to install the requisite professionalism and a sense of urgency in consonance with members' suggestions in order to achieve the aims of restoring feuding couples to normality.

Furthermore, I noted with concern, that some Ghanaian SDA church leaders hold certain local versions of fundamental interpretations concerning marital circumstances. There is a need therefore for affected leaders to update related studies to expose themselves and members to current and revised versions on the stances, meanings and contextual interpretations of the issues of marriage, divorce

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<sup>418</sup> McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping your friends and family stay married*, pp. 52, 57.

and remarriage arguments<sup>419</sup> to equip themselves for difficult decisions to treat each case as unique and as it deserves.

On the other hand, though the aforementioned conclusions have been made relating to research findings, this study rejects any interpretation that solely apportions blame, basically, on the existence of correlation between marital difficulties and their connection with the Western culture or any geographical location. While possibilities exist for correlation and causation, Pallant suggested there is equally the possibility of a third variable's influence and this seems plausible. Rather, the prevalence of a difficult marital relationship in Britain does not equal causation since correlation between these variables could indicate only an existence of some relationship<sup>420</sup> but not necessarily to be totally to blame for a couples' behaviour.

This is because there are married couples (indigenous and migrants) who still live together peacefully or relatively so, in the same Western environment including myself. Furthermore, who or what then will be blamed for the marriages that do not survive in Ghana? Finally though not exhaustively, several other factors highlighted among the numerous contributory reasons such as communication lapses and the issue of several unreasonable expectations seem to freely eat into the very fabric of what is expected to be an intimate relationship between the conjugal couple alone. Thus the GACMs' perception of the Christian injunction to leave and cleave to

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<sup>419</sup> House Divorce and Remarriage Carl Larney, William Heth, Thomas Edgar and Larry Richards are contributors of some four major views held currently by Christians on the issues of divorce and remarriage.

<sup>420</sup> Pallant, *SPSS Survival Manual*, p. 124.

become one in love, stands questioned. Couples probably remain emotionally attached to extended *abusua* and are only physically together.

## 11 Recommendations

In order to address the factors that accelerate the possibilities for marriage breakup and divorce, I note that the communities and the church need to continue conducting updated programmes to enhance marriages and to minimize difficulty and divorce tendencies. The government could help encourage migrant couples by providing specific marriage enhancement policies that recognise their particular needs while in Britain.

In addition the multicultural environment needs to be critically addressed to see to it that attitudes towards people of minority cultural backgrounds are enabled by encouraging the positive aspects of their traditional marriages. This means that it will help on the part of the government to look into and minimize factors that encourage the problem of single parenting on demand which eventually has negative consequences to the upbringing of children from such facilitated broken marriages. Apart from the problem of single parenting, fears are that children particularly of the minority groups (like the Ghanaian community) are less likely to achieve in life as compared to those who are brought up in a caring family with both parents. Secondly, such children are also more likely to become the offenders and social outcasts GACM communities frown on.

1. This study recommends that the concept of a dowry or bride-price be correctly interpreted and understood as a significant covenant token of respect, a gift and sign of responsibility rather than payment for purchase of a bride.

2. In addition, that counsellors help discourage steps taken that throw couples into debt as a result of huge dowry and wedding bills or be made to inherit existing debts as an initial condition.
3. As a result of its findings this study recommends establishment of boundaries for couples who need them for practical reasons and that premarital counselling should consider including close relatives and friends.
4. Intimate, meaningful communication skills need to be fostered among GACM couples to ensure marriages are stable, and do not disintegrate for flimsy reasons.
5. That an educative measure is developed for a better understanding of family in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century context to help improve relationships by eliminating the GACM couples' fears anywhere in the world.
6. This study recommends that a thorough study be done on GACM divorcees to fully ascertain relevant issues.
7. Regular suitable enrichment education on issues including financial matters, to be taken into consideration as an important area in which married couples need to receive adequate professional counselling to minimize the possibility of marital difficulties.
8. Churches with GACM communities to put in place positive thinking and marriage enhancement programmes, (like regular GP check-ups), that provide earlier awareness to ensure professional counselling options which foster sound marital continuity of Ghanaian couples living in Britain.
9. This study recommends that Ghanaian church leaders regularly study and expose themselves and their members to the various interpretations on

marital issues of divorce and remarriage arguments and equip themselves with options for difficult situations.

10. That Ghanaian churches treat every marital issue as unique, therefore with the respect, patience and professionalism suggested by respondents.
11. That a more focused study be carried out in the future to delve into certain specifics of underlying marital issues arising with the continuing globalisation, their effects on tradition and practical values and how they affect GACM families.
12. Finally that interpretation and application of the General Conference of SDA's stance among minority ethnic groups be revised.

The *New International Version* is used for all biblical references and quotations unless otherwise stated.

## 12 Appendices

### *12.1 Participant Information Sheet*

Dear Prospective Participant,

I am Ezekiel Okofo-Boansi. Thanks for your time spent towards this Doctor of Ministry study project about some of the marital difficulties facing Ghanaian Christian migrants in the UK. The part you are asked to play in this study is to offer your consented opinion through your availability to be interviewed, or participate in answering the questionnaire or both as might be convenient. Please be informed that the proceedings during the interview will be recorded. This later will be reduced into writing to be analysed as report and could be published in part or as a whole as appropriate as part of the dissertation anonymously. The report could also be published as part of a journal article in the same manner.

You have every right to discontinue, withdraw or disallow the use of the information you provide if you are uncomfortable with it. I will ensure your participation and contribution are treated with the greatest respect and that your right to anonymity is respected. Kindly feel free to ask questions if any by contacting me on 07984585427 or via email [boansi57@yahoo.com](mailto:boansi57@yahoo.com) for any further issues concerning this research participation. If you feel upset during or after participating in this research or need someone to talk to you can contact Dr Samuel Annor on 07837612825. Please kindly ask for and sign a consent form to confirm your willingness to participate in this study project with the above understanding.

Sincerely yours, Ezekiel Okofo-Boansi

7 Drayton Close,

Bracknell Berkshire

RG12 9AY, England

## COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

# Participant Consent Form

**Researcher's name** ...Ezekiel Okofo-Boansi.....

The researcher named above has briefed me to my satisfaction on the research for which I have volunteered. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any point. I also understand that my rights to anonymity and confidentiality will be respected.

I agree to have the interview/discussion recorded. (Delete if not relevant)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ participant

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This form will be produced in duplicate. One copy should be retained by the participant and the other by the researcher.

### ***12.2 Interview Questions***

The African Scene

1. What constitutes marriage in your part of Ghanaian culture?



2. Who is responsible for dowry payment, to whom and of what importance are these payments to the future of the marriage?
3. Are there any differences between Christian and Traditional marriages in Ghana?
4. Comparatively, what are the typical expectations of prospective Christian and Traditional couples?
5. How does a couples' religious belief influence or affect levels of anticipated marital stability?
6. How would you describe marital satisfaction and stability (life-long partnership?) in the traditional Ghanaian cultural setting?
7. What accounts for most of the marital complications in your part of Ghana?
8. To what extent are spouses' relatives allowed to have a say or able to influence the relationship between the couple?
9. How has the church reacted following marital difficulties that have led to separation, divorce and remarriage?
10. What have been the basic reasons or explanations that influence the church's decision on marriage? Is it ethical, theological, traditional or something else?

### The Western Scene

1. How is marriage done, considering traditional practices, among Ghanaians over here in UK?
2. What notable differences do you recognise as compared to the Ghanaian traditional setting?
3. Comparatively, what marital values are given prominence for migrant Christian marriages over here in the UK?
4. Kindly comment on the cultural differences observed or experienced in the UK.
5. How does any Ghanaian Christian church group you know in the UK deal with marital unrest and its aftermath? Are such people given sanctions, excommunicated, counselled, ignored or something else?

6. To what extent, in your view, are Western cultural influences to blame for marital breakdown among Ghanaian Christians living in the UK?
7. What effect have separations and divorces had on the participation of the estranged couples in church activities?
8. In your opinion, should those who are divorced, separated or remarried be allowed to serve in the Christian church? Please give your reasons.
9. Kindly comment freely on any issue that has not been covered in the above questions.

### ***12.3 Questionnaire:***

#### **Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage Issues among Ghanaian Migrants to UK**

Kindly find below two sets of questions. Tick your choice of the multiple-choice answers for sections 1.

In section 2 is a list of marital relationship issues. Kindly give your opinion in section 2 by writing the numbers against each in order of hierarchy (1-20) beginning with 1 as the highest on top of the list.

1. It is generally claimed that Ghanaian migrant marriages brought over from Africa as well as those contracted here in the West do not survive the Western Culture.  
[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Relatively [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree.
2. Marriages brought over to the West become consistently difficult.  
[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Unsure [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree
3. The specific awareness of personal rights within the Western culture could be blamed for most of the difficulties that happen among migrant Ghanaian couples.  
[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Unsure [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree
4. Most misunderstandings that led to breakdown of relationship could be blamed on the:  
[1] The Husbands [2] The Wives [3] Both equally responsible [4] Friends [5] Relatives
5. In some cases relatives of either couple could be the remote cause of conflict and should therefore be blamed.  
[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Unsure [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree

6. The modernised traditions of engagement, dowry payments and expensive weddings contribute to the difficulties of the migrant marriages in Europe/UK.

[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Uncertain [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree

7. Divorce happens among migrants because it is comparatively easier in the West.

[1] Strongly agree [2] Agree [3] Uncertain [4] Disagree [5] Strongly disagree

8. Could anticipated personal rewards after divorce in the West be in some instances a tempting reason behind some difficulties of the couple?

[1] No, not in every case [2] Yes, especially for women with children [3] No, never rewarding

9. How does/may your church respond to the need or suggestion to include divorcees in church ministry programs and responsibilities?

[1] Suspend the guilty person indefinitely [2] Guilty person given temporary censorship [3] Disfellowship [4] Limited but scrutinised participation [5] Completely ignored

10. How will the church respond to a similar situation (as in 9 above) in Ghana?

[1] Suspend the guilty person indefinitely [2] Guilty person is given temporary censorship [3] Disfellowship [4] Limited but scrutinised participation [5] Completely ignored

11. Have you or any close relative been divorced or in the process of divorcing?

[1] Yes [2] No

12. How does your church community settle or deal with those experiencing difficult marriages?

[1] By trial of couples before selected elders [2] Through pastoral counselling [3] Couple are left to sort themselves out [4] Couple must strictly face church board regulations.

13. Have you or someone you know ever:

[1] Experienced domestic abuse of any kind before? {Yes} or {No} [2] experienced intrusion(s) from spouse's relatives or friends before? {Yes} or {No} [3] considered ending the marriage as a result? {Yes} or {No} [4] felt unfairly treated by the church for how a marital issue was handled? {Yes} or {No}.

14. What in your opinion will be the appropriate approach for helping people with marital issues?

[a] by pastoral counselling [b] establish professional counselling in the church to help couples [c] maintain a church department on behalf of church board as usual d) leave matters to friends and relatives [e] let couple sort themselves out.  
15. How much damaging has inappropriate use of communication issues affected any marriage(s) you know of?

[1] a major issue of concern generally [2] responsible for some marital difficulties I know of [3] slightly damaging [4] very negligible not an issue.

## Section 2

Kindly fill this section for statistics purposes.

**(Your information will be treated with absolute anonymity)**

Vital Information:

**Your age group:** [18-30]; [31-40]; [41-50]; [51+]

**Gender:** [M] or [F]

**Employment status:** [a] Full-time employment; [b] Part-time employment; [c] Unemployed [d] retired.

**Educational background:** [a] Up to High School level; [b] Tertiary education [c] Professional training only [d] Professional training with high school or tertiary education.

**Income Bracket:** [a] Less than 14,000 a year [b] Between 15,000-20,000; [c] 21,000 and above.

## 12.4 Correlation Table

Table 2 Correlation of the Questionnaire Variables

Variables	Variables										
	marriage not survive	become consistently difficult	experienced domestic abuse before	spouse's relatives intrusion	considered divorce before	age group	gender	employment status	educational background	income bracket	
marriage not survive	Pearson Correlation	1	.600*	.081	.249*	.089	.047	-.051	-.080	.169	.155
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.472	.025	.429	.680	.651	.483	.131	.166
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
become consistently difficult	Pearson Correlation	.600*	1	.145	.275*	.157	.190	-.042	-.055	.141	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.195	.013	.161	.090	.709	.629	.211	.484
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
experienced domestic abuse before	Pearson Correlation	.081	.145	1	.207	.134	.125	-.110	.002	.176	.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.472	.195		.064	.235	.266	.328	.984	.115	.781
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
spouse's relatives intrusion	Pearson Correlation	.249*	.275*	.207	1	.382*	-.116	.244*	.131	.305*	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.013	.064		.000	.303	.028	.247	.006	.521
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
considered divorce before	Pearson Correlation	.089	.157	.134	.382*	1	-.067	.152	.031	.269*	-.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.429	.161	.235	.000		.551	.175	.784	.015	.708
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
age group	Pearson Correlation	.047	.190	.125	-.116	-.067	1	-.210	-.080	-.050	-.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.680	.090	.266	.303	.551		.059	.482	.658	.611
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81

Gender	Pearson	-.051	-.042	-.110	.244*	.152	-.210	1	.138	.119	.171
	Correlation										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	.709	.328	.028	.175	.059		.224	.289	.126
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
employment status	Pearson	-.080	-.055	.002	.131	.031	-.080	.138	1	-.256*	-.544*
	Correlation										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.483	.629	.984	.247	.784	.482	.224		.022	.000
	N	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
educational background	Pearson	.169	.141	.176	.305*	.269*	-.050	.119	-.256*	1	.432*
	Correlation										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.131	.211	.115	.006	.015	.658	.289	.022		.000
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81
income bracket	Pearson	.155	.079	.031	.072	-.042	-.057	.171	-.544*	.432*	1
	Correlation										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.166	.484	.781	.521	.708	.611	.126	.000	.000	
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	80	81	81

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows a correlation matrix indicating the relationship between the various variables. Correlations' analyses help assess and facilitate variables' validity, reliability and possible predictability of the questionnaire and their relationships in this non-experimental research.<sup>421</sup> Variables that fell within the 0.05 significant figures or below are shown in (Table 2) above.

<sup>421</sup> Pallant, *SPSS Survival Manual*, pp. 121–122.

## ***12.5 Qualitative Analysis (sampled answers to interview questions grouped)***

**Interview Q1:** What constitutes marriage in your part of Ghanaian culture?

**PA A1:** Yea, in the Ghanaian culture it's not only the agreement and understanding between the couples but also their respective families. This is because the Ghanaian philosophy of life is put simply "I am because I belong," meaning that it is the family's existence that gives meaning to one's existence. Without the family you are not considered as somebody who exists. So whatever the couple do should reflect the views of the two families, which is very very important to the families to have a say in the marriage. If one of them has reservations about the marriage that will pose a problem and that should be dealt with.

**PB A1:** In my culture, I come from the Ashanti region, and uh m traditionally uh m it's the marriage between actually uh m the woman and a man and then with the two families backing the marriage so in other words, uh m, that is the man and the woman and between the families of the man and the woman.

**PC A1:** Good evening pastor. Number 1; umm... in my culture, the couple considers to be marriage (9sic0) only after the dowry has been paid on the woman and the woman will not marry without the consent of their (her) parents.

**PD A1:** Well uh m marriage is not just between a man and a woman. It comprises of the entire family both the male and the female I mean the woman and the man. It is something that unites the two parties and doesn't just become you and your woman. Everyone is involved so it's a joy that brings the society and everyone around together. So marriage is really very paramount, it brings togetherness it involves the family.

**PE A1:** Well um from where I come from in Ghana marriage is considered to be a union between um female or a woman and a man and what makes a marriage um I mean recognised in our culture is when the man has gone in to the woman's family to ask for the hand of the woman in marriage and for the marriage to be sanctioned certain things need to be um fulfilled and I think as we go along some of these things will come out in our discussions and I'll highlight on those things as we go along.

**PF A1:** Alright in my culture marriage means a man and a woman meets and then they get married. In my culture the families are mostly involved. So what constitutes marriage is when one family asks for one's hand in marriage from another family. So marriage in meaning in my culture is two families coming together.

**PG A1:** Well, in the Ghanaian culture to begin from the marriage of where I've come from, I know before you can actually call something a marriage there is the need for an understanding between the two parties involved that is first the man and the woman and then the families. It goes a little beyond the nuclear family. It goes a bit to the extended family where you have uncles and aunties all coming in. So what constitute marriages in Ghana typically is two external families coming together to agree for their two parties to be joined together.

**PH A1:** In the Ghanaian culture marriage involves two people mainly a man and a woman and also involves the families of both parties. They both come into agreement and the families also come into agreement before it is called marriage between the two.

**PIJ A1:** Marriage is a formal relationship between male and female which has been dully contracted from the family. Normally the family of the male goes to the family of the female to request for the hand of the female in marriage. And if it is accepted that becomes a marriage after the necessary rights has been performed. It may be monogamous or polygamous. But where polygamous it is the female, um there may be one or more females, the traditional marriage since it's between male and female.

**PK A1:** from where I come from where both parents are Akan, and my mother from the Ashanti and my dad from the Kwahu Region. What constitutes marriage is a union between a lady and a man and they come together, both love each other and they will announce it to both families and they will come together and a ceremony will be perform, both families are together and friends are around just to witness that the woman and the man want to spend the rest of their lives together because they love each other. Sometimes they don't even have a big ceremony. The man will just inform the ladies family that "If you're looking for your daughter she is with me" and they (the man) will give an alcohol (an expensive alcohol) as a symbol to the girls family or in a Christian manner something that the girl's family require, the man will



give it to them Or sometimes in the ceremony, whatever they would like, it could be a celebration food, prayer, advice from the elderly and friends, they share their joy together.

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