SECONDARY SCHOOLING FOR GIRLS IN RURAL UGANDA:
CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND EMERGING IDENTITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation represents a year-long (August 2004-August 2005) ethnographic case study of 15 adolescent schoolgirls attending a secondary school in a poor, rural area of Masaka District, Uganda which explores the challenges, opportunities and potential for future identities that were associated with secondary level education. This study includes an extensive analysis of the degree to which the global objective of gender equity in education, prioritized in UNESCO’s Education For All initiative as well as the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, is promoted and/or achieved in the National Strategy for Girls’ Education in Uganda (NSGE). I consider various ideological understandings of international development in general as well as development theory specifically related to gender, and I draw on the Capabilities Approach (as developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum) and Imagined Communities and Identities (Benedict Anderson, Bonny Norton) to interpret my findings. My research reveals that girls’ educational opportunities are constrained by many “unfreedoms” (Sen, 1999), such as extreme poverty, sexual vulnerability and gender discrimination, that are deeply and extensively rooted in cultural, historical, and socioeconomic circumstances and contexts, and that these unfreedoms are not adequately addressed in international and national policies and programme objectives. I propose several recommendations for change, including: a safe and secure “girls’ space” at school; mentorship roles and programmes; counselors; comprehensive sexual health education and free and easy access to birth control and disease prevention products, and sanitary materials; regular opportunities for dialogue with male students; employment opportunities; closer community/school ties; and professional development opportunities for teachers.
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*Photographs have been rendered to protect the identities of individuals and locations
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC – Abstinence, Be faithful, Condoms (Uganda’s HIV/AIDS prevention programme)
ADF – African Development Fund
CGE – Campaign for Global Education
DANIDA – Danish International Development Assistance
DFID – Department For International Development (UK)
DRB – Domestic Relations Bill (Uganda)
EFA – Education For All
ESIP – Education Strategic Investment Programme
FAWE – Forum, for African Women Educationalists
FGD – Focus Group Discussion
GAD – Gender And Development
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GER – Gross Enrollment Rate
GNP – Gross National Product
GOU – Government of Uganda
HDI – Human Development Index
IMF – International Monetary Fund
KSS – Kyato Secondary School
KCL – Kyato Community Library
LOI – Language of Instruction
MDGs – Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NER – Net Enrollment Rate
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization NGP
NGP2 – National Gender Policy (2005)
NSGE – National Strategy for Girls’ Education of Uganda
MGLSD – Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoES – Ministry of Education and Sports (Uganda)
PEAP – Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PEPFAR – (US) President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PIASCY – President’s Initiative on HIV/AIDS Strategy of Communication to Youth
PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAPs – Strategic Adjustment Programmes
STDs – Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SWAP – Sector Wide Approach Programme
UN – United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UBC – University of British Columbia
UPE – Universal Primary Education
UPPET – Universal Post Primary Education and Training
USAID – United States
USE – Universal Secondary Education
Ush – Ugandan shillings
WCEFA – World Conference on Education For All
WID - Women in Development
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It has taken a village – a global village – to bring this dissertation into being. I feel blessed to have such an expansive and generous community to draw upon, to consult with, and to seek advice from and celebrate with. I acknowledge and thank you all profoundly.

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Finally, my profound thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the International Development Research Centre of Canada for supporting this research.
Dedication

To my darling Shakira (2003 - ), whose journey is just beginning;

And to my lovely Nana (1917-2007), whose journey has ended.
A SKY AKILTER

3:25 am. Dan and I were well into our second game of chess when we heard the tentative honk outside. Dan got up from the table and went to open the gate. I sat for another moment looking around, in the wavering candlelight, at what had been my home for the last year. True to form Mohammed had arrived five minutes early. With my headlamp I took one last look in all the rooms, although I had done this a dozen times earlier. Two heavy, bulging suitcases, one excessively overweight carry-on, my impossibly crammed backpack and my laptop, were slumped in a heap by the door. Shaki lay on the sofa, uttering fluttering, sleeping breaths. Dan and Mohammed helped me lug my bags to the car. The night was alive....swallow-sized, kami kaze bats swooped past on the veranda, geckos scampered up walls or posed, immobilized, in anticipation..rats, as always, rustled about everywhere, with attitudinal righteousness. Banda, our cat, lay in wait. The air thick with mosquitoes - the kind that kill thousands of people in Africa every day. Amelia, Dan’s wife, stumbled into the garden, rubbing her eyes, clutching a wrap around her shoulders. I hugged her good-bye, and then Dan.

I had thought that I would be overcome with sadness when the time came to leave. Instead I felt a surging sense of possibility that the future would bring opportunities beyond what I could imagine at that moment. I took one last, long, look at the exquisite Ugandan night sky, marveling as always at the spray of light, like a trail of angels, over the deep black void, studded by sharp piercings of stars.
I had learned to walk in the night without a flashlight; stumbling erratically at first, but over time, remembering where the dips, rocks, bumps and grooves were, and finally, knowing the road from the library to home intimately enough to walk and talk without having to think about it. The more time I spent negotiating the world at night, the more luminous grew the glow of the nocturnal universe. One could never truly feel alone beneath a sky alit with that kind of power. But, for me, the sky was upside-down, and every night for a year when I looked up at it, I was reminded of the temporality of my position.

As Mohammed drove the road I knew so well, I felt strangely, resolutely, calm. My leave-taking had stretched over of a month or so, and there had been no rushed good-byes. My fieldwork had come to its natural conclusion, and I was prepared to leave, more prepared than I had been to arrive. There was, of course, the inevitable, melancholic heart-tug that comes with leaving somewhere that has become a formative aspect of one’s internal landscape, but I felt that this community had rooted itself in my heart indelibly. And, if I kept the promises I had made to myself to try and fundraise school fees for the 15 girls for the two final years of upper secondary school, and to support the women’s project, and do what I could to support Dan to pursue university studies, my life would remain intertwined with this village, despite the geographical divide, for quite some time to come.

Mohammed’s car bumped across the ditch that marked the meeting of the rough, side road from the house with the rough, “main” road through the village, and the headlights illuminated familiar trees, bushes, and houses. We swerved widely onto the trading centre road to avoid the meteoric pothole at the junction,
and drove past the scraggly field on which hundreds of people would sometimes gather to watch football games, and from which wayward kicks would send balls careening to the road, colliding with passersby on foot, bicycle, boda-boda or car.

I glimpsed paths and sideroads that I had walked with the girls on treks to their homes. The trading centre was as black and as quiet as the night. We drove the rugged road to Ganda Town, passed through the dormant town centre, and met the highway, which took us past Musanda, the satellite hub of Ganda Town, where things were characteristically abuzz with ghetto blasters, kerosene lamps, food cooking over fires, clusters of people sitting around, talking, eating, arguing, laughing...

And thus began my journey back to Canada – to deconstruct, reconstruct and write about my year of fieldwork in rural Uganda, and, to reimagine my new life as a mother of a beautiful two-year old Ugandan daughter who now doubled the singularity of my pre-Uganda identity. In my arms, as the night slipped away, Shakira slept, breathing deep dreams whilst traversing new space, leading home...
CHAPTER 1: CONFIGURING CONTEXTS AND HISTORIES
TO PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY

1.1 Hitching Bits Together

*When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe* (Muir, 1911)

One of the most fascinating, as well as daunting, aspects of engaging in international research is its demand that the researcher simultaneously inhabit and link (at least) two worlds. At all stages in the fieldwork, as well as during the preparatory and reflective processes, there are, I believe, points at which one loses one’s bearings that are centered in what one knows as “the familiar”. The dislocation that comes with having to negotiate one’s way through the unfamiliar and uncomfortable unravels one sufficiently to necessitate a reframing of one’s understandings of the world; at least, that is my experience. At the beginning of the research process, whilst treading into the research context and establishing my identity (both internally and externally) as researcher, I shifted back and forth between my Canadian interpretation of the world and life as I was growing to know it in Kyato Village, Uganda. Reflecting upon this process, Chapter 1 weaves its way through the Ugandan and Canadian contexts, securing a path through this work by providing some insight into the research context, a background to the study, my research interests and questions, an overview of a key policy document, and a brief introduction to the life circumstances of the girls who participated in this study.

1.2 An Entry Point into the Research Context

*Gathered around a table in the library on a late afternoon in April (2005), the girls and I looked over the photographs that Doreen had taken of girls and boys performing tasks at school. We were considering the various differences, if any, that existed with respect to gender roles and work around the school. The girls agreed that girls and boys did the same kinds of jobs, but that the girls did significantly more work than the boys. The*
male library scholar, George, also a classmate of the girls, was sitting at the librarian’s desk, engrossed in his studies.

Shelley: At school, boys and girls do all the same things; only you girls think you do more than the boys?

Penina: We do more.

Shelley: [to George, studying in the library] George, is that true?

George: [looking up] What?

Shelley: Is it true that the girls and boys do the same work here at the school – washing clothes, cooking, and everything.

George: Yeah, sure.

Shelley: But that the girls do more.

George: No.

Girls: Yes!!

George: Like cooking food, both do it.

Shakila: For us, we cook better than boys.

George: Not better than.

Girls: More.

George: No. Both equally.

Girls: NO!!!!

George: Some boys don’t know how to cook. Some girls don’t know how to cook.

Shakila: For us, we know.

Shelley: Oh so if you know how to cook, you cook, but if you don’t know how to cook, you don’t have to cook. Is that right?

Girls: Yes.

Shelley: The girls say they do more work. Cooking, or other things, too?
Girls: Cooking.

Ireen: And washing clothes.

Shelley: Washing clothes? Do you wash the boys’ clothes?

Girls: NO!!

Louise: We wash clothes for the teachers.

Shelley: Teachers?

Girls: Yes [laughter].

Shelley: And what about the boys? Do the boys wash clothes for the teachers?

Girls: No.

Shelley: You girls, in the future, you all would like jobs, wouldn’t you? I’ve talked to [all] of you and you have said you want a job of some kind. Teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, secretaries, something – and this means if you are working, and your husband is working, and you come home – and you have kids and everything – you need to share work, right? You can’t do everything.

Girls: Yes.

Louise: But the man is not supposed to be in the kitchen. Because if the woman, if the woman tries to ask the man for using in the kitchen, maybe the woman can say “I need 5,000” to buy sauce and salt, but the man knows everything to use in the kitchen and give me 3,000 because

Girls: [laughter]

Louise: Because he knows – tomato for 100. So when you want to keep that money for your use, the man can’t agree. He just give you 3,000.

Ireen: And me [I agree]
Shelley: Ah, I see. If you don’t let them in the kitchen, they don’t know how much things cost or what is in stock.

Girls: Yes.

Louise: You can’t allow them to enter.

[Excerpt from A3-PR/FGD4\(^1\)]

By this time, there was nothing unusual about these conversations, and for me, there was always some interesting revelation. Having seen me almost every day for eight months, the girls were used to me by now in varying contexts. We had discussed all kinds of topics – relationships, family, school, hopes for the future, sex, children, politics, the environment, health and illness, and food. This was just another conversation. But in retrospect, the importance of “just another conversation” is immense. The “just another”, the “taken-for-granted”, the “mundaneness” of girls’ everyday lives in a rural Ugandan village are (or should be), in fact, profoundly significant to those who are drafting national and international policies around gender and education. Who is listening to the daily conversations of these and millions of other girls throughout the world – girls who are supposed to be supported, empowered, and emancipated through global policies and programs?

The school is a culture and an environment. It is also a symbol of possibility. Education represents imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000) to which one could possibly belong; it represents kinds of relationships, lifestyles, or opportunities that one could possibly have. Education offers the potential of acquiring capabilities, such as literacy in its broadest definition, that can empower one to negotiate power structures necessary to achieve the goals to which one aspires. Education has the potential to shape one’s identity. And, because of its potentiality, it is widely

\(^1\) See Appendix A for complete list of field methods and organization of data collected.
accepted that education leads automatically to empowerment, independence or opportunities. This, however, is a contested assumption (Fiedrich, 2004; Nussbaum, 2003a; Robinson-Pant, 2004; Stromquist, 1990; Subrahmanian, 2005; Unterhalter, 2005). The ideological underpinnings of curriculum and pedagogy, the hegemonic structures of the community, and the local cultural practices and socioeconomic circumstances all affect educational opportunities (e.g., for whom and for what purpose it is intended), as well as both the way in which it is “delivered” (e.g., pedagogical approaches, curriculum content, learning environment) and the different ways it is “taken up”, or internalized, by learners (i.e., the different messages girls and boys receive and believe about their education). In order to achieve genuine gender equity in education beyond the superficiality of enrollment numbers or examination results, all these underlying factors must be unpacked and probed.

What is meant by “education”? How is “gender equity”\(^2\) in education defined? Who benefits from education for girls? What potential does girls’ education have to bring about transformative change in society, what kind of transformative change is desirable, and does the existing educational system achieve this? Why is education for girls currently an urgent priority and what does the world expect from young women who receive an education? How much education is considered to be “enough” for girls? What do we know about these girls’ hopes for their futures or their children’s futures? What do we know about who they are? What makes them laugh? What makes them fearful? Whom do they love and respect? To whom do they turn when they are in trouble? How does education fit

\(^2\) I employ the definition of “gender equity” as outlined in the Bridge Report No. 55, “Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions” (2000). Bridge is one of a number of “knowledge services” of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom. “Bridge” is specifically concerned with gender and development and “supports gender advocacy and mainstreaming efforts by bridging the gaps between theory, policy and practice with accessible and diverse gender information” (retrieved June 4, 2007 from http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk). Bridge defines gender equity as follows: “Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources” (Reeves & Baden, 2000, p. 10). See complete definition in Appendix B.
into their lives? What can education offer them? What does education mean to them? Most importantly, what value do girls and women place on education, and why? What can be done to support girls in achieving their educational and life aspirations?

1.3 Background to the Study

_African women are the key to the progress of their societies and ultimately to Africa’s development and future._ (Amadiume, 2000, p. 2)

This case study of a group of 15 girls in a secondary school in a rural Ugandan village is concerned with the current global dialogue on girls’ education. This research draws attention to these 15 girls’ particular situations, but it also makes a contribution to the larger, international discourse on girls’ education, as many of the findings reflect circumstances for girls in many different contexts. My goal is for this study is to provide insight into the personal meaning and social significance of education to these girls, as well as document the educational challenges they face. To do this, I explore the dynamics of the school environment as well as journey with them beyond the classroom and the school ground to glimpse other realms of their lives. I aspire to secure a space in which these girls’ voices can be taken in by ears, minds and hearts throughout the world, and to build global alliances amongst those who have an interest in challenging the (neo)colonialist, patriarchal, and neoliberalist economic repression and inequities that stifle the freedom(s) and opportunities available to girls. To know these girls, their families, their communities and their struggles is to know and admire their strength, wisdom and vivacity.

The fieldwork for this study took place from August 2004 to August 2005. During this year, I lived full-time in Kyato Village, located six miles from the closest urban

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3 I have used pseudonyms for the names of the villages, the schools and all individuals who participated in this research. However, with permission, I have used the real name of the translator and librarian, Daniel Ahimbisibwe, so that he can be fully acknowledged for his important contribution to this study.
centre, Ganda Town, in Masaka District, southwestern Uganda. I worked closely, in a number of capacities, with Kyato Secondary School (KSS), the school that the girls attended. I attempted to provide and participate in as many varied contexts as possible in which to interact with the girls in order to render a complex representation, or “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), of their lives and experiences. I also wanted the girls to come to know me in a range of situations to demystify the muzungu (or “white foreigner”) aspect of my identity, and to blur the divide of difference between us as much as possible. I attempted to find creative ways in which to engage in dialogue and exchange of ideas and experiences with the hope that the girls would come to see me, too, as a multi-dimensional human being, not entirely defined by “whiteness”, “foreignness” or “Western” culture.

Nonetheless, the telling of these Ugandan adolescent girls’ stories is wrought with difficulties, in particular because of my positionality as a white, “Northern” woman. I cannot change who I am, but I have engaged in deep, on-going self-reflexivity to ascertain how my perceptions and positionalities impact/influence/determine my understandings and interpretations, and the complex ways in which they intersect with my analysis. (I address this at length in Chapter 4). I have also diligently striven to articulate my role in, and motivation for undertaking this research; my research does not emanate from a charitable (and patronizing) disposition to “help” these girls, but rather from the desire to join forces with them (Kendall, 2006). Throughout the writing process, bell hooks’ caution has resonated unceasingly:

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4 With extreme reticence I employ the term “South/Southern” to refer to “economically impoverished”, “developing”, “Third World” countries, and the term “Northern” for “developed”, “industrialized”, “modernized”, “rich”, or “First World” countries. Inevitably, making (or abiding by) such distinctions results in some degree of “othering” and essentializing, but to not acknowledge difference, whether understood as geographical, racial, cultural, colonial/postcolonial, or economic is the refusal to acknowledge the realities of acute, global, social injustice. Thus, despite my resistance to differentiate between populations or countries, I think it is essential to make such a distinction here to emphasize the social, global construct of poverty, and our responsibility, as human beings, to eradicate this divide. In keeping with current literature and discourse, I use the terms Southern/South and Northern/North to make the distinction.
...no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you are now at the center of my talk.

(hooks, 1990, pp. 151-152)

My sincere hope is that it is the girls’ lives, experiences and voices, and not mine, that the reader will perceive as constituting the heart of this work.

1.4 Thesis Format

Bringing structure to this work that stretches from village life to national and international policies, that spans the globe from Uganda to Canada, that confronts the tangled, complicated realities and ravages of a postcolonial context, that enters into the global North/South feminist debate, and that seeks grounding in narrative accounts infused amongst the analysis of data and documents, has been a challenging task. With the enormous assistance of my supervisors, Drs. Bonny Norton and Maureen Kendrick, I have mapped, reconfigured, shifted and finally woven together what is, hopefully, a dissertation that engages, unsettles, and inspires meaningful action around global issues of social justice. Chapter 1 introduces the research and my reasons for undertaking it, the research questions, and most importantly, the girls. Chapter 2 discusses the research context, the impact of international development on Southern countries in general, international education initiatives, an overview of formal education in Uganda, and a description of Kyato Secondary School. Chapter 3 considers gender and education in the international
development discourse, the historical context of gender and education in Uganda, and the theoretical considerations for this study. Chapter 4 discusses methodology, research methods and data analysis. Chapter 5 is devoted to the girls who participated in this study and provides a portrait of each of them. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are concerned with considerations of how the challenges around educational opportunities that the 15 female research participants experienced in their lives are represented, if at all, in the “barriers” identified in the Uganda National Strategy for Girls’ Education (NSGE)\(^5\): Chapter 6 examines family and community-based practices; Chapter 7 explores school-related factors; and Chapter 8 looks at the implications of the wider societal factors and conditions that constrain girls’ opportunities for an equal and quality education. Chapter 9 reflects back on the data and findings in light of the NSGE and proposes ways to move forward. Chapter 10, the conclusion, attempts to consolidate the various layers and dimensions of this research, and provides recommendations for policy concerned with girls’ education.

1.5 Locating Myself

Long before commencing the writing of this thesis, I realized that as much as I would strive to maintain a relatively dispassionate analysis and representation of policy documents, scholarly papers, and my own data and findings, I would also need to acknowledge and identify my own voice and positionality in relation to this research. From the outset, I needed to answer the questions: Why did I undertake this research? Why Uganda? Why this village? Why this topic? For many reasons, ethnographic research in general is problematic (Hammersley, 2006), but it is particularly problematic for a white foreigner conducting research in the context of an economically-impoverished country (Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000; Wolf, 1996). There is, understandably, the risk of being

\(^5\) See Appendix C for a list of the barriers found in the NSGE document
accused of having neocolonialist tendencies, and of “othering”, exoticising, and exploiting marginalized groups. And, given the long history of white anthropologists and ethnographers whose study of “exotic” cultures contributed to further entrenching differences and more deeply establishing global white hegemony (Said, 1979; Willis, 1974), this is understandable.

Although ethnographic research has the potential to do harm, it also has the potential to do good. Ethnographic research can serve to forge alliances between researcher and participants through dialogic, participatory research approaches, and establish collective objectives through sharing of experiences (Spindler & Hammond, 2000). A focus on issues of social justice will work to expose and challenge destructive and prevailing hegemonies to promote goals of equity and emancipation for the participants. Longitudinal studies are particularly valuable in that the enduring nature of the relationship between researcher and participants enables the researcher to follow the trajectories of the participants lives over a prolonged period of time, gaining important insight into factors that shape the participants’ lives and deepen, as well as perhaps shift, the researcher’s interpretations of events, contexts and relationships. Ethnographic research is not intended to provide definitive answers; rather, it is ultimately concerned with “the enlargement of the universe of human discourse” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). Thus, a central consideration in assessing the moral worth of an ethnographic study is the motivational factors upon which it is premised. The question must be asked: Does the study aim to enlarge the universe of human discourse?

I argue that this study does. Aside from the “telling of stories” (Wolcott, 1994) aspect of ethnography, there is very often an underlying agenda of transformative change. More often than not, ethnographies capture an extended frieze, viewed through critical lenses from various angles, and aim to bring about social justice by attempting to establish
a bond of empathy, respect and solidarity with individuals who, although inhabiting the
same planet, seem to live galaxies apart. I believe that youth and education play a key role
in global citizenship and transnational partnerships, and that it is crucial that we learn about
students’ aspirations and how education can meet those, to provide them with the
opportunities they need to achieve the agency necessary to participate, if they so choose, in
“globalization from below”, defined as the “widespread emergence of local organizations
challenging the forces of transnationalism and neo-liberalism” (Auerbach, 2005, p. 365;
with reference to Brecher, Costello & Smith, 2000). My interest in the area of gender
equity and education at the international level is rooted in my lifelong interest in
transformative education and social justice – education that cultivates agency and
empowerment that serves to promote equity and justice.

I do, however, approach the notion of “transformative” pedagogy with caution and
some qualifying considerations, as I acknowledge important arguments that challenge the
assumption of “transformative” being inherently good. For example, Chet Bowers claims,
“none of the transformative learning theorists recognize the importance of the culturally
diverse approaches to sustaining the commons⁶ – which are conserving in terms of natural
systems and cultural traditions of mutual aid and community self-sufficiency” (p. 4).
Bowers argues that a transformative pedagogy not only disregards and undermines
traditional knowledge, values and modes of communication, but that it also is ultimately
complicit with the “Darwinian” or “evolutionary” understandings of neoliberal approaches
to development and progress. However, I do not agree that a transformative pedagogy

⁶ Bowers defines the “commons” as: “The commons represent both the natural systems (water, air, soil,
forests, oceans, etc.) and the cultural patterns and traditions (intergenerational knowledge ranging from
growing and preparing food, medicinal practices, arts, crafts, ceremonies, etc.) that are shared without cost by
all members of the community; nature of the commons varies in terms of different cultures and bioregions;
what has not been transformed into market relationships; the basis of mutual support systems and local
democracy; in the modern world the commons may be managed and thus kept from becoming enclosed
through private and corporate ownership by being managed by local and national government—municipal
water systems and state and national parks are contemporary examples of the commons” (retrieved Nov. 19,
2005 from http://cabowers.net/dictterm/CAdict003.php)
requires that individuals reject all, most or even any traditional/Indigenous ways of life, knowing or communication; rather, my understanding is that a transformative pedagogy critically examines society within multiple spheres (e.g., local, national and international) and at various intersections (e.g., those of gender and economics, gender and educational opportunities, educational opportunities and economic independence, the impact of international policies on community life), and works toward change in those areas that are found to be unjust and unequal.

In order to contextualize my own interest in this research, I need to revisit an earlier time in my life. In November 1996, I was in Bodhagaya, a town in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India. I saw a young boy, perhaps eight years old, working with his father. He was learning how to make sugar cane juice using a manual crusher on a cart that was wheeled through the streets. I bought some sugar cane juice from the boy and his father and we chatted a little, and then they were on their way, barefoot, walking down the dirt road. For several days, I couldn’t stop thinking about that boy. I’m not sure why – I had been in India for three months, and I had seen thousands of children… but the image of this boy was persistent and unsettling. At first I thought – he should be in school. But then I wondered, what might school look like for this boy, what would it provide for him? What kind of education would he be able to get and what might he be able to do with that education? What would education mean to him? How did my understanding of “education” relate to his life, or did it? It was this boy who really sparked my interest in the nature and meaning of education in different global contexts.

Later, from 1998-2000, I worked in a small, inner city primary school in London, England, as a project leader supporting children who spoke English as an additional language. The children (or their parents) came from all over the world, but the largest groups came from Bangladesh, Turkey, and various countries in Africa, particularly
Somalia. This part of London was an entry-point for many immigrants; some children had been born in London, some had immigrated with their families, and some were refugees and asylum-seekers. Because I was able to work closely with the students, in small groups, I came to know their stories and learn about their lives both in London and in their home countries. I was saddened by how little their experiences and knowledge were valued in the school environment, and appalled by how seriously these children were marginalized within the education system.

I returned to Vancouver to pursue a Master’s Degree in Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC). I was interested in the idea of global education. Because of my work with African students in London, I had hoped to take courses in African Studies, but I was astonished to discover that (at the time) there were virtually no course offerings whatsoever on Africa. Nor was there much in the way of course offerings in “international development”. But personal circumstances constrained me to Vancouver, and through my supportive and open-minded Master’s supervisor, Dr. Carl Leggo, and an interdisciplinary program in the then Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction (now the Centre for Cross Faculty Inquiry) at UBC, I was able to pursue my educational aspirations. I also began working closely with a small, financially-flailing but tenacious global education project, the Youth Millennium Project (YMP), based at UBC, and my Master’s thesis focused on a curriculum that I helped design. I conducted a comparative study on the participation and experiences in a global education project of grade 6 students in London (at the same school where I had taught), and a school in southern Sweden. I was, as always, struck by the fiery passion youth exude when considering issues of social and environmental justice, the deep compassion they feel for those whose lives are tragically compromised by numerous disadvantages such as poverty, disease, child labour, and war.
Given the opportunity, students radiate irrepressible enthusiasm when they share their personal experiences and listen to those of others.

From my research, teaching experience, and involvement with YMP (now called YouLead), I was convinced that students possess the desire and ability to effect “globalization from below” if they are encouraged to extend their attention and learning laterally, transnationally, to ally with other youth in the world. I felt, however, that students, particularly girls, in many developing countries did not have opportunities to have their voices heard, or experiences acknowledged, and I wished to provide an opportunity for some of their stories to be shared. At this point in my life, I had taught in Canada, Japan and London, and thus had several years of experience in educational environments in Northern or “developed” countries. For my PhD research, I was interested in learning about education in a developing country, in a context in which policies, objectives and initiatives concerning education at an international level, such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, intersect with those at national and local levels, and how they are experienced, first-hand, by individual students. I had hoped to do research in Africa, but I was not sure where.

I was fortunate enough to be invited by Drs. Bonny Norton and Maureen Kendrick to attend the 3rd Pan-African Reading for All Conference in Kampala, Uganda in August 2003. There I presented a paper on my Master’s research on global education and met many African scholars doing a wide range of work in the area of literacy and education. A few days prior to the conference, one of the key conference organizers and Ugandan resident, Dr. Kate Parry, took Drs. Norton, Kendrick, another guest, and me to Kyato

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Village to see the Kyato Community Library (KCL). Community libraries are exceedingly rare institutions in Uganda, especially in rural areas, and Dr. Parry was eager for us to see the many ways in which KCL interfaced and benefited Kyato Village and the surrounding area; we were delighted to be afforded this opportunity. Closely affiliated with KCL was Kyato Secondary School (KSS), run by Mr. Masinde, who was also on the Board of Directors of KCL. We also looked forward to meeting Mr. Masinde and visiting KSS during this trip. What we had thought would be a casual, informal visit was actually a well-planned, festive, community event.

As we were walking down the ubiquitous red dirt path to the school grounds, between plots of plantain palms, we heard distant drumming. It was a slightly muffled but deeply resonant sound that thrummed in the hot air around us. As we got closer to the school, the sound gathered increasing clarity and volume; as we rounded a curve in the path, the air burst forth with the powerful beating of drums and the thrall of dozens of singing, joyous, challenging, youth. Four girls wearing traditional grass skirts and beatific smiles danced us down the final section of the path to the community library, where we received a warm welcome from Mr. Masinde, the teachers, librarians and a boisterous multitude of secondary students, along with many younger children from the local village.

[Excerpt from journal, August 2003]

This was a wonderful introduction to Kyato Village and KSS, although it was a rather brief, formal visit, and there was not much time to explore the school environment or interact with the students. Later, however, Drs. Norton, Kendrick and Parry and I discussed Kyato as a possible research site, and we decided that I should return to Kyato Village a week later, with one of the day trips arranged by the conference that involved a visit to KCL and KSS. Fortunately, Daniel Ahimbisibwe, one of KCL’s librarians was also going
on the full-day outing, and I was able to spend close to 12 hours talking to him about the library, the school, the students, and the community. During this second visit to Kyato Village, I had the opportunity to explore the school environment and engage in informal discussions with many of the students of KSS, which I videotaped. I was taken aback by the shocking lack of resources - i.e., no textbooks, chalkboards with gaping holes, no computers, dirt floors, no electricity, no running water; classroom furniture consisted of several benches that five, six or seven students squished onto, sharing a long narrow plank of wood that served as a desk upon which to write. I was more struck, however, by how were very obviously pleased and proud the student were to be in school, and they enthusiastically conveyed their interest in learning about, and communicating with other youth around the world.

I watched the video footage of that visit several times and developed a strong desire to learn more about the community. I had particularly enjoyed the footage of the girls, high-spirited and vociferous, laughing and posing and prodding each other, and I wondered what life was like for them. I learned that, in fact, these girls were a minority in Uganda where most girls are not able to attend secondary school. All of these girls had benefited from Universal Primary Education (UPE), implemented in Uganda in 1997, and thus they represented, to some degree, the outcomes of an international initiative, Education for All, implemented at a national level. I also knew that Universal Secondary Education (USE) was on the national agenda, so what could be learned from these girls’ experiences of secondary education could help inform future USE policies.

Drs. Norton and Kendrick agreed to become my PhD supervisors. They were embarking on a research project that considered the complex relationship between literacy and development, and to better understand women and girls’ participation in literacy practices associated with development. They invited me to join the Uganda team and
contribute to it through my forthcoming PhD research. Over time, the “Uganda Project” evolved to include three sites, and an expanding group of colleagues, including Ugandan PhD students Harriet Mutonyi and Juliet Tembe, studying at UBC, and several scholars, researchers, and students based in Uganda. One of the main objectives was to work in partnership with Ugandan colleagues and communities so the research would very much be collaborative, informed by the needs and understandings of Ugandans themselves. Dr. Kate Parry, who has spent many years teaching and conducting research in Africa, particularly in Uganda, also joined my committee. Dr. Parry provided invaluable advice on a number of practical matters and helped me secure accommodation in Kyato village.

From September 2003 to August 2004, I completed coursework, wrote my comprehensive examinations and my research proposal, and prepared for my fieldwork in Uganda. I was in regular email contact with the librarian, Daniel Ahimbisibwe (herein referred to as Dan), as well as the headteacher of KSS, Mr. Masinde. Dan agreed to be my translator, which was ideal, as he spoke fluent English. Also, due to his position as a librarian, rather than as a teacher, he was one step removed from KSS, but closely enough associated to know what transpired in the school environment. Together with my supervisory committee, I decided that I would like to work with the girls in Senior 3 (S3) (the equivalent of Grade 10). The school year in Uganda runs from January to December (with breaks in May, August and mid-December to mid-January); therefore, the girls who were in S3 in September would transition to Senior 4 in January, and I would be able to continue working with them until August 2005. I had previously explained to Mr. Masinde that my research objective was to understand the relationship of secondary school to adolescent girls’ lives in rural Uganda, and I asked Mr. Masinde to speak to the girls in S3 about my research on my behalf. Mr. Masinde discussed the proposed research with the girls and then assured me that the female students were very interested in participating; he
also welcomed my offer to teach English for a term at KSS as a way to become integrated into the school and community environments.

Kyato was an excellent research location in many ways. It is a typical rural Ugandan village with no running water or electricity, but the library has four solar panels (the only source of power in the whole area) that could charge my computer and mobile phone, and also provide a convenient work and meeting space. The secondary school is on the same property as the library, and the house in which I lived is a short walk away.

1.6 Research Questions

The aim of my research was to learn about the girls, their lives, the challenges and opportunities of secondary level education, and their hopes for the future so that I could contribute to Ugandan national policy around girls’ education at the post-primary level, as well as to the broader, international conversation around gender equity and education. To make such contributions, it was necessary that I spend an extended period of time conducting fieldwork, collecting multiple kinds of data, so that I would be able to gain sufficient insights into the girls’ life experiences and their aspirations. Guiding my investigation were three central research questions: i) To what extent, if at all, do family and community-related practices constrain girls’ full participation in education?; ii) What are the challenges associated with the school environment that prevent girls’ full and equal participation in education?; and iii) What are the larger societal issues (e.g., religion, socioeconomic conditions, and general attitudes towards girls and women) that negatively impact girls’ educational opportunities?

Barely concealed beneath the patina of these questions lurked root systems of infinite complexity that teemed and wriggled with further questions. Conducting research was like churning a patch of the ubiquitous red earth of Uganda that one sees but doesn’t
really come to know until one’s hands have dug around in it, and one’s feet have slipped through it after a rainstorm. Just as the red earth is ever-present, but ever-changing, the ethnographic process is never static, and never ends. Answers to questions such as those that guided my research cannot be definitively answered, but these three questions served to always re-focus my gaze and guide the analysis of my data. The NSGE, discussed below, also grounded my research in a key policy document that contributed to the framing and understanding of my study.

1.7 The National Strategy for Girls’ Education in Uganda (NSGE) Policy

The Government of Uganda (GOU) has recognized the need for the education of girls as a human right and as critical to Uganda’s social and economic development (GOU, 2002). It has also recognized that “Uganda’s achievements in advancing female education still fall far short of the typical indicators of gender parity in education” (GOU, 2002, p. 2). The NSGE is the response of the GOU’s Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to aspects of international initiatives such as EFA and the MDGs, which are specifically concerned with gender equity in education. This is reflected in the NSGE opening quote, from the EFA Conference in Jomtiem in 1990:

The most urgent priority is guaranteeing access to, and improving the quality of, education for girls and women. This means eliminating all obstacles to their participation. (Article 1, EFA Conference, Jomtiem, 1990; in GOU, 2002, p. 1)

The NSGE sets out policies and guidelines for the education of girls that are meant to inform educational practices. It also outlines a variety of programmes and initiatives that promote girls’ education and are intended to sensitize community and family members about the rights of girls. The “overarching goal” of the NSGE is as follows:
All girls in Uganda (including the destitute and girls with disabilities) will have full access to education opportunities and will be supported by their families, schools, communities, government and the private sector to participate fully in gender-balanced education programmes in order to attain their maximum potential as equal and effective citizens. (MoES, 2002, p. 22)

This goal is exceedingly broad, ambitious, vaguely defined, and consequently challenging for any kind of quantitative evaluation, yet it indicates that the GOU acknowledges the complex, deep-rooted influence of sociocultural, economic and political factors in all domains (family, school, community, government and private sector) that influence girls’ participation in schooling and educational experiences.

The GOU has given overwhelming priority to Universal Primary Education (UPE), and significant gains have been made in terms of achieving gender parity at that level. Much less emphasis has been placed on secondary education and the general enrolment rate is much lower, and the gender gap is wider. The Gross Enrollment Rates (GERs) of girls in secondary school has increased from 8% in 1991 to 17% in 2004, and with Universal Secondary Education (USE) introduced in 2007, there is an even sharper increase in girls’ attendance at secondary school. Thus, on the one hand, there is enormous potential for rapid increases of girls attending secondary level schooling. On the other hand, it is essential that girls be supported in their educational pursuits through a consortium of programmes, networks, resources and institutions for this to be more than quantifiably successful.

This new population of adolescent girls receiving post-primary schooling has the potential to bring about sweeping and profound societal change, but their specific needs must be identified and met in order to provide the environments and resources they need to develop agency and the capabilities necessary to bring about such change. Curriculum
content, school environment, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, and opportunities for personal development are all central to providing secondary level education that can have this kind of impact on girls’ lives as well as forge a strong link between primary and tertiary level education to reduce the severe attrition of girls between these educational levels.

In order to maximize the enrolment and retention rates of girls in secondary school, as well as establish actual gender equity in education (and not just equal access to an education that embraces gender inequalities), girls’ lives, educational circumstances and experiences, as distinct and separate from those of boys, must be understood and taken into consideration. The NSGE is a pivotal document in that it “identif[ies] the issues which impinge on girls’ education and the specific barriers which must be addressed to accelerate girls’ full and equal participation in education. These have been identified and extensively discussed in numerous fora and documents at international and local levels” (GOU, 1999, p. 5). As such, the NSGE is a useful frame of reference by which to examine and discuss gender equity in education.

Importantly, the NSGE views girls’ education as transcending mere quantitative measurement (i.e., access, GERs and Net Enrollment Rates (NERs)), and acknowledges the importance of the cultivation of girls’ self-confidence, autonomy, leadership skills, as well as access to knowledge and information that is relevant and pertinent to their lives. In many ways, the NSGE is concerned with the promotion of gender equity in education in order to develop girls’ capabilities and agency so that they can be instrumental in bringing about gender equity in society at large. The NSGE provides a holistic framework in which to consider girls’ education. It identifies a wide range of sociocultural, economic, political factors within the family and society, as well as the school environment that hinder the achievement of gender equity in education (and society in general). These barriers have been clustered as “Socio-Cultural Factors”, “School-Related Factors” and
“Political/Economic/ Administrative Factors”. Within each of these clusters is a myriad of constraints (socioeconomic, attitudinal, positional) that make it difficult for girls to obtain a “quality” and “gender equitable” education. The NSGE also seeks to address these imbalances through a variety of specific programmes, policies and interventions, drawing on support from a large number of national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and donors for their implementation. “The Way Forward” section of the NSGE outlines objectives, with complementary “strategies/activities” and target dates, aimed at dislodging these barriers.

As outlined above, Chapters 6 to 9 will consider the barriers to girls’ education as outlined in the NSGE, as well as those not identified within the NSGE, in light of lived experiences of the cohort of girls who participated in this study. The analysis of this study’s findings will draw upon the capabilities approach, and imagined communities and identity theory (as discussed in Chapter 3), to determine to what extent secondary level education has contributed to developing capabilities and agency that will enable these girls to achieve the functionings they need to realize their imagined futures and to participate fully and equally in their societies.

The NSGE is organized as follows: the introduction articulates the NSGE rationale and overall strategy; Section I, “Key Barriers to Equitable Female Participation in Education”, identifies 18 barriers to girls’ education, each of which is subsumed under one of three major categories – “Socio-Cultural Factors”, “School-Related Factors” and “Political/Economic/ Administrative Factors”; Section II, “Players Supporting Girls’ Education”, “key players” (e.g., organizations and groups that are involved with addressing certain barriers), the activities they are involved with, and the coverage of those activities; and, Section III, “The Way Forward”, outlines proposed strategies for each of the identified barriers, or clusters of barriers to achieve the “Overarching Goal” in which “All girls in
Uganda (including the destitute and girls with disabilities) will have full access to education opportunities and will be supported by their families, schools, communities, government and the private sector to participate fully in gender-balanced education programmes in order to attain their maximum potential as equal and effective citizens” (GOU, p. 22).

1.8 The Girls

African girls and women are often portrayed as powerless, vulnerable, weak, oppressed and victimized. African feminists argue that this characterization is fundamentally erroneous, patronizing, racist and neocolonialist. I will discuss this issue at length in Chapter 4, but I mention it here because although it is undeniable that many African girls and women do suffer gender discriminatory inequities and injustices, it is also true that possess inner as well as physical strength, capacious generosity and compassion, and remarkable, perseverance and resolute hope even in the face of dire adversity. The fifteen girls I worked with during this year of fieldwork were anything but powerless. They arose before sunrise each day, dug in the fields, planted and harvested crops, fetched water and firewood, prepared food, maintained their homes and compounds, washed clothes, cared for siblings, walked extremely long distances to and from school, suffered through regular bouts of malaria, other illnesses, and pain without medication, studied hard, and were accustomed to only the barest of necessities and often went without. Some girls sang in the choir, some belonged to the dance group, some belonged to the drumming group, some played netball, and others participated in the Straight Talk (sexual health and adolescent relationship) club or the newspaper club. Many of the girls took on the boys loudly and assertively in debates, and they engaged in incessant banter around the schoolyard.
Yet the girls faced many serious challenges and lived with chronic stress around money and their tenuous identities as students. Most of the girls did not know if they would be attending school from one term to the next or, for some, even from week to week. They lived with question marks lurking around every corner. Will my mother be able to sell the pig and raise enough money for school fees? Will my auntie give me the money I need for school next term? Will I need to stay home and help my mother? How can I find money for notebooks and pens? How am I going to find the time to study? Is there kerosene at home? Who will pay my examination fees?

This unabating uncertainty understandably resulted in acute anxiety, preventing the girls from developing an inner sense of security and stability needed to construct social identities, real or imagined, in which they could invest with any conviction, especially as the identities to which they aspired had much to do with their educational opportunities. Their positionality as students, as young women, and members of local, national and global societies was precarious and wavering. Thus, my understanding of the girls’ common struggle was that of identity and positionality within the changing social, economic, cultural and political landscape of rural Uganda, which has been heavily impacted by the forces of globalization.

1.8.1 Triple Disadvantage

These girls live in the vulnerable world of triple disadvantage - poverty, “rurality”, and gender (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Whitehead & Lockwood, 1999) – that undermines their autonomy, perpetuates gender inequities, and limits their access to schooling and educational experiences in ways that mark their

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8 This is also problematic in many other regions in the world: see Ruiz, 2000; Berhane-Selassie, 1997.
circumstances as different from those of girls living in urban, or peri-urban environments, or girls from middle class or wealthy backgrounds.\(^9\)

1.8.1a Poverty

The 15 girls who participated in this study came from surrounding villages up to nine miles away. All of these villages, where most families are subsistence-level farmers with very little cash income, are comparably poor. None of the villages has power or running water, although there is a solar panel at KCL, located on the grounds of KSS, which provides a source of light and power. The girls all came from poor households, although the measure of that poverty varied somewhat. I made the (often very long) walks home with the girls and visited their homes and families. Although I became accustomed to seeing extreme poverty, I could never reconcile myself to it, or to what it signified about the gross inequities in the world. Poverty does not mean just a lack of money, lack of clothes, household items, and the like; it also means lack of health (often death from curable diseases such as malaria), nutrition, education (if there is no money for school fees, uniforms or supplies, there is no school), and ultimately, life opportunities. Poverty can also severely impede individuals’ abilities to “lead lives…they have reason to value” (Sen, 1999, p. 85), and fully participate in their societies with dignity (Nussbaum, 2003a). In Masaka District, over half of entire households live on less than about $50 US a month, and the average household size is 5.3 persons (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002).\(^10\) Thus, the inhabitants of more than half of the households in Masaka District have a per capita income of less than 50 cents a day.

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\(^9\) I acknowledge that urban poverty has its own severe disadvantages; here, I am simply focusing on the relationship between poverty and “rurality”.

\(^10\) It is extremely difficult to report with absolute veracity the average number of people living in households because many births and deaths are not registered, and census data is therefore not accurate. It is also challenging to state with any accuracy household income levels, as they tend to vary tremendously from season to season.
Life does not get easier as time passes. All too often, particularly in the face of the large number of deaths from HIV/AIDS-related factors, grandmothers are left to raise their orphaned grandchildren. Of the 15 girls that took part in this study, seven were living either with grandmothers, or the girls’ mothers were raising orphaned children of the girls’ siblings. The need to care and provide for extra children was an enormous burden on the adoptive family. Some of the older women were simply exhausted. Digging in the fields is arduous work for a young, healthy individual; it is backbreaking for a 70 or 80-year old in fragile health.

The following is an excerpt from my field notes following a visit to one of the girls’ homes.

Grace lives with her grandmother, as do nine other grandchildren (all younger than Grace) whose parents have died. Grace’s mother died (of malaria, apparently) when Grace was three years old, and she has lived with her grandmother ever since. (Grace’s father lives not too far away, with another wife, but Grace neither sees him often, nor does he support her financially, even though Grace’s grandmother is her father’s mother.) They are extremely poor – theirs is a very small, dark house, with a couple of chairs (in which Dan and I sat), on a scrawny plot of land where the grandmother grows bananas, cassava, beans, avocados....just enough to feed the family; there is nothing surplus to sell for an income. Grace relies on an aunt in Kampala to pay her school fees.

When we arrived at Grace’s home, her grandmother was welcoming, but not effusively so. My impression was that she is perpetually overwhelmed with all of her responsibilities. She has undoubtedly worked very hard all of her life, and must continue to work hard to support her 10 grandchildren at home. The visit was very short, and no tea or soda or elaborate lunch was served, unlike at all the other
girls’ homes I have visited. It was, however, a relief not to be made a huge fuss over. We just chatted for a bit – about all the children, the land, the crops, etcetera, and then wandered around outside for a while. Grace showed us the graves, marked with red dahlia, of various uncles/aunts who had died. It is the usual practice to bury the dead in the family compound, but there had been so much untimely death in her family that the graveyard was a prominent feature of the home environment. It seemed important for her to show us these tombstones – as I suppose death has been as much of her reality as life has.

[Excerpt from “Shadowing Grace”, Dec. 8, 2004]

(Photograph 1 “Grace’s home”)

The girls were aware that if they had to leave school before they could reach Senior 6 (the final year of upper secondary, or “A-Level”), go to college, or get vocational training, their lives would likely be very similar to those of their mothers – early marriage, early motherhood, 12 to 18 hours of work a day (taking care of the family, working in the
fields, domestic chores), little access to money, and dependence on, subservience to, a husband (who may have other wives and children to support). Grace, in fact, faded away from school after S3, and did not return to begin S4.

1.8.1b “Rurality”

I use the term “rurality” to emphasize some of the characteristics of rural life that have particular disadvantages for many individuals, particularly girls and women. I consider these disadvantages with respect to the way in which they negatively affect girls’ educational opportunities. There are, of course, many positive aspects of living in rural communities, for example, less pollution, strong local communities, cultural history, and there are unique disadvantages to living in urban settings, for example, pollution, overcrowding, higher crime rates; however, for the purposes of this study, I focus on the difficulties “rurality” poses for these girls.

Home life.

There are a number of disadvantages that come with living in a poor, rural area. These include long distances to health centres, schools and markets, lack of income-earning opportunities, and lack of access (i.e., electricity, running water) to many of the resources and amenities available in towns and large urban centres (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002). Relatively simple and not particularly time-consuming activities with running water and electricity are intensely time-consuming with the lack thereof. The daily water demands of a household are high, entailing numerous trips to the local source of water, which is often far away. Water must be fetched for cooking, washing clothes, bathing, washing dishes and numerous other activities. Carrying jerry cans full of water requires an impressive amount of strength and endurance, as well as much time; thus, there are many more hours in the
day required for household chores, and commuting (long walks to school or other amenities), than in more urban areas that have access to these amenities. For students, especially girls, who typically do more domestic work than boys, there is little time for studying as the sun sets at about 7 p.m. daily, and many families cannot afford the cost of kerosene and/or candles for interior lighting.

Before Gelly started boarding at KSS, she had to walk for about two and a half hours each way (five hours total per day) to and from school. Gelly arose at 4 a.m. to do her chores before she left for school; she said that she was expected to do more chores around the home than the boys because she was a girl. When I visited Gelly’s family, due to distance and time constraints, I borrowed the headteacher’s car, and we drove to her home. It took us at least 45 minutes on a brutally rough road full of ridges, potholes and rocks. We drove past a swamp, forest, rivers, plantations, hamlets, and houses, up hills, down hills, around winding roads, and finally we arrived. Three circles of coffee beans were drying in the sun. The family home was quite an old, mud structure with a thatched roof. In rural Uganda, thatched roofs (as opposed to corrugated iron roofs) indicate a very low socioeconomic status; Gelly’s family was clearly very poor.

We were greeted by an impressive entourage of people – Gelly’s parents, orphaned nieces and nephews who lived with Gelly and her parents, and aunts. Gelly’s father is 78, and he rushed over to grasp my hand with both of his, and gave me a big smile. Gelly’s mother is 58. She too, is very lovely and warm. She also took my hand in both of hers. I said hello to the various children and aunts, and then we entered the house. I was instructed to sit in the only chair, while everyone else sat on the floor. Gelly and I had tea and a bun, but no one else ate or drank anything; I was told they had had tea earlier. One of the boys living in Gelly’s home, her nephew, was hobbling around with what looked like
a very painful leg injury. I asked what had happened and Gelly told me that he had broken his leg – the bone had actually burst through his skin. The way he gingerly moved about made me shudder in sympathetic pain. I asked if he had gone to the hospital, but Gelly replied in the negative, saying that her mother was a “mobilizer” (someone who sets broken bones,) and so she had taken care of it. All I could think of was what horrific agony that procedure must have caused with no painkillers. Gelly said this is one of the ways that her mother makes a little money.

Neither Gelly’s mother nor father went to school, and her mother married when she was very young (14, I think). They had had 12 children, six boys and six girls, but eight had died – from malaria and road accidents, I was told (although I do know that sometimes malaria can be a euphemism for HIV/AIDS). They have a graveyard in the garden beside the house, marked with concrete headstones and clusters of flowers for each of the deceased children. Now there are only three girls and one boy. Gelly is the youngest, the only one of her parents’ children living at home, although there are three or four younger children (orphaned grandchildren) who also live with them.

Gelly told me that it is her mother who finds ways to pay her school fee, because she believes that it is very important for Gelly to get a good education. However, Gelly’s mother has very limited scope to earn an income....she sells a little fruit and coffee, handwoven mats, and gets paid occasionally for her work as a mobilizer. Gelly confided in me that her mother had sold a goat - without telling Gelly’s father - in order to raise money for Gelly’s school fees last year, and even then she was unable to cover the full fee.

Eventually, we all (somehow the numbers seemed to increase), perambulated around the back of the house, where Gelly pointed out a pig that belonged to the boy with the broken leg. Gelly said that he was a very hard-working boy and that he had raised the money himself to buy this pig. Then we walked around and saw the family’s plot of maize,
beans, coffee trees, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava plants. They also have many fruit
trees – jackfruit, mango, avocado. Eventually, we ambled back to the house. Gelly’s
father rushed out with a little stool for me, and I sat down beside Gelly’s mother, who was
sitting on the ground, weaving a mat. Gelly’s father began sorting the coffee beans
(between posing for pictures for me).

Photograph 2 “Gelly and family in field”

As Gelly and I were preparing to leave, her mother bustled around commandeering
people to gather various gifts for me to take home. We ended up with a carload of jackfruit
(Gelly’s sister had to scale not one, but two tall trees, to find jackfruit that made the exactly
right hollow sound when she knocked on it), mangoes, avocados, and green. Gelly was then
instructed to take me by the pineapple plantation to get a couple of pineapples. I was
completely overwhelmed by their incredible generosity.
Girls are often needed to take over household responsibilities when there is death or illness in the family. During the second term of S4 (May to July 2005), Gelly’s father became very ill and had to spend time in the hospital. This generally means that a spouse or relative must also spend time in the hospital, washing sheets, feeding and tending to the ailing person, as there is not sufficient hospital staff to perform these kinds of duties. The several times I took girls or neighbours to the hospital, I saw dozens of women washing clothes, tending to bedpans, and cooking food for patients being treated there. Thus, Gelly’s mother accompanied Gelly’s father to the hospital, and Gelly had to remain home to look after the younger children, consequently missing a number of weeks of school.

Education.

Many, if not most, rural Ugandan schools, lack electricity and running water, have very few textbooks, extremely overcrowded classrooms, and poorly paid and often underqualified or newly qualified and inexperienced teachers. (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Murphy, 2003). Poor private schools, such as KSS, often pay teachers less than half of what they are paid in government schools (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006). For these and other reasons, the quality of education tends to be much poorer in rural areas and “the disparity between rural and urban schools has reached crisis level, where pupils in many rural based schools cannot qualify for higher education” (Kwesiga, 2002, p. 63).

Another very significant disadvantage of rural education concerns the difficulties, for both teachers and students, of coping with English as a Language of Instruction (LOI) (Brock-Utne, 2000; GOU, 1992; Parry, 2000). Although English language proficiency is problematic throughout Uganda (Critical Characteristics of Effective Primary Schools in the Rwenzori Region of Uganda, 2004), it is particularly so in rural areas.
Conditions [pertaining to English language learning] are worst in rural areas.

Research in Uganda has shown that schoolchildren lack proficiency in the English language and yet this is the language in which examinations are conducted and in which key textbooks are written. (Kwesiga, 2002, p. 64; see also Brock-Utne, 2000)

The dilemma of English as an LOI in many Southern countries such as Uganda is a major one (Mazrui, 2004). English is not just a language; it is associated with status, opportunity and possibilities for one’s future.

I taught English for one term at KSS, and this experience provided me with a great deal of insight into the English competencies of the students, and the difficulties that English as a LOI posed for them in almost all areas of the curriculum. In my estimation, the recommended English text for S4 was at least two levels above what most of the S4 students were capable of working with comfortably. The academic disadvantages of rural students became clear to me. These students were expected to work from the same national curriculum, write the same national examinations and be graded in the same way as students in the very best, expensive boarding schools in Kampala, where the students often came from wealthy, educated families who were fluent in English, and many of whom had English as a first language. The education language policy states that in urban centres, such as Kampala, English is the LOI right from Primary 1 (P1, or the equivalent of grade 1). In the rural areas, the local language is the LOI until Primary 4 (P4) and then English becomes the LOI from Primary 5 (P5) onwards.

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11 In Chapter 2 I provide an overview of the Ugandan education system. For the purposes of this discussion, I will provide a brief outline of the education structure. There are seven levels of primary school, Primary 1 (P1), the equivalent of North American grade 1, to Primary 7 (P7), the equivalent of grade 7. From primary school students may continue to secondary school. Lower secondary school consists of Senior 1 (S1), or the North American equivalent of grade 8, to Senior 4 (S4), the North American grade 11. From here, students may go on to vocational school or colleges, or continue to upper secondary, which consists of Senior 5 (S5) or grade 12 and Senior 6 (S6), grade 13.
In practice, however, this is not always (or even mostly) the case, as students, and even teachers, especially in rural areas, have typically not achieved the level of fluency in English needed to converse “naturally”; therefore, the local language is used for spontaneous communication and transmitting important messages or information. The burden on the teachers and students to work in English is immense, as English, for the most part, remains an “school” language. Outside of school (in fact, immediately outside of the classroom), the stilted awkwardness of being forced to use a language with which one is not fluent or comfortable dissipated into the unfettered chatter and laughter that comes with the ease of using one’s own language.

None of the families I knew spoke English at home, and very few of the girls’ parents could read, write or speak English beyond a few words of greeting, or perhaps reading simple headlines or posters. Thus, in the rural Ugandan context, English is typically an artificial language, used only by students for academic purposes. Being forced to learn and communicate in English seriously impeded many students’ participation in class as they often did not understand what was being said, what they were supposed to be learning, or what they were reading, yet they were afraid to ask for help or clarification for fear of punishment, often corporal. Teachers who were not comfortable communicating in English often reverted to completely teacher-centered instruction, where they dictated from notes or a textbook, and had students copy these into their own notebooks. I do not recall more than a very few times hearing a teacher and class engaged in free discussion/communication in English, even though I regularly spent time in the secondary as well as one of the primary schools. For the most part, the classroom dynamic consisted of the teacher dictating/lecturing or asking questions and the students silently writing in their notebooks or providing “correct” answers to closed questions (Kakuru, 2006; Critical Characteristics of Effective Primary Schools in the Rwenzori Region of Uganda, 2004).
English as an LOI potentially disadvantages rural students in several ways: they have a later start with English as an LOI, and this could impede their performance on national examinations, which are written in English; often the teachers assigned to rural primary schools do not speak, or are not fluent in the local language, so this can serve as a pedagogical barrier; opportunities for text-based instruction in the local language is often extremely limited as there are few resources available in local languages; and, outside of the classroom, students do not generally interact in an English-speaking environment so opportunities to acquire English language proficiency and fluency are few.

1.8.1c Gender

Implications of gender for girls and women can have particularly marginalizing and disenfranchising consequences in a patriarchal society such as Uganda (ADF, 2000; Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Gender is interwoven with the entire spectrum of socioeconomic, cultural, political, educational, community and domestic factors.

Because gender identities are integral to the construction of subjectivity and to the placing of individuals in their social world, they are central to broader issues of identity and inform discourses pertaining to the social universe, to change, community and nationhood. (Goddard, 2000, p. 3)

Gender is a central theme of this study, and it will be discussed at length throughout this thesis. I have drawn attention to it here, however, because of its central relationship to the combined disadvantages of poverty and rurality, and its intrinsic connection to identity and agency.
1.9 Possibilities

Despite the disadvantages to which these girls were subject, they nonetheless enjoyed privileges over many of their peers in that they had at least some access to secondary school. This brought problems of their own, but it helped the girls escape or postpone unwelcome alternatives, such as early/forced marriage and/or confinement to domestic chores in their family home. These girls are, in fact, representative of a new demographic in rural Uganda, one that will emerge in much of rural Africa (and other Southern countries) if the world’s commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is genuine. Adolescent girls, who would often be married shortly after puberty, are now beginning to stay in school longer, thereby constituting a population of increasingly educated, independent, unmarried young women who are not dependent upon, or subordinated to, husbands.

The girls in this study represent one of the first cohorts to graduate from UPE in Uganda, and are leading the movement of girls from poor villages into secondary school. In 2007, Uganda introduced UPPET (Universal Post Primary Education and Training), also known as USE (Universal Secondary Education)\(^{12}\), which drew unprecedented numbers of girls from poor, rural areas into secondary school and as very little research has been done concerning educational opportunities and constraints for this demographic, this study also has the potential to provide useful insights for future programming and policy considerations for gender equity in secondary school, particularly in rural contexts. How secondary schooling will translate into real life opportunities for these girls, however, is uncertain. Will it increase their political participation? Will it empower them? Will it

\(^{12}\) Throughout my thesis, I will use the term USE to refer to initiatives encompassed under the UPPET policy, to reflect the term commonly used in Uganda.
enable them to pursue careers or find employment? Will it reduce their dependency on men? Will it reduce the likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS?

The girls in this study represent, in many ways, the future of Uganda, and there are millions of girls dealing with similar circumstances in Southern countries all over the world. Ultimately, we need to care about them and their aspirations and help to provide them with opportunities to develop the capabilities and agency they need to fully participate in a globalized world. Ethnographies are portrayals of human experiences, and I hope that this study will do that effectively, compassionately and respectfully. I believe that many people in the world are interested in getting to know remarkable young women such as these; these young women, in turn, desire to share their experiences with those who are sincerely interested.

1.10 Moving between words and worlds

In order to sufficiently contextualize the society in which these girls live, it is necessary to step back and consider Uganda not only at face value, but as a country that has been subject to exogenous forces that have played a large part, over an extended period of time, in shaping Uganda into its present form. Despite the strength of its rich and vibrant culture, Uganda is one of the poorest countries on the planet. Like so many other economically-impoverished countries, this is no small consequence of colonialism and “development”. Chapter 2 situates Uganda within the macro discourses of colonialism and “development”, and then considers how those have impacted Ugandan society and the education system. This provides a larger context in which the research site of Kyato Village is explored.
CHAPTER 2 (Preface)

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

In August, 2004, after giving up my apartment in Vancouver and distributing my belongings amongst friends and family willing to store them for a year, I arrived at the Vancouver international airport with three hopelessly overweight suitcases, and two outrageously bulging carry-ons. Packed within this motley assortment of luggage were two laptops, a video camera, dozens of blank videotapes, a digital camera, a manual camera, cords, cables, batteries, blank CDs, a year’s worth of anti-malaria pills, water purifying kits, snake-proof walking boots, mosquito repellant, vitamins and numerous gifts of various kinds (books, pens, art supplies, skipping ropes, soccer balls, etc) for children of the Kyato community from several classes and schools in Canada.

It’s an exhausting journey from Vancouver to Entebbe, the site of Uganda’s international airport: a nine hour flight to London, a stopover, then another eight hour flight to Uganda. Including waiting and connecting time, it is a 24-hour journey, at least. There are three British Airways flights per week from London to Entebbe, Uganda’s national airport. At 5:30 a.m., after a 9-hour flight, I descended the steps of the plane and felt the probing heat of a slightly pre-dawn day. (One can always spot the first-time visitors by anxious glances around the dingy walls inside the arrival area of the airport, as they search for some indication of what to do next.) There are several line-ups to choose from, but directive signs are not readily apparent. (Travel tip– foreigners who arrive at the Entebbe airport should stay to the left since it is the line up for visas.)
For some reason it seems to take an interminably long time for customs officials to collect $50 US for the visitor’s visa and stamp passports, but, ultimately, what’s the rush? At least by the time I was out of the office with visa intact my luggage was lurching around erratically on the antiquated conveyer belt in a mostly deserted arrivals area, ready to be collected. Once I left the airport, the sky began to lighten (often there is a downpour), and on the drive to Kampala, the thick, red sun rose above the calm expanse of Lake Victoria. A grinning and admirably cheerful (given the time) Dr. Kate picked me up, and we loaded my bags into her little white, Suzuki jeep. There was much to be done and discussed in the next day or two ahead, but thankfully, there was also time on the drive for a few moments of quiet, sleepy reflection and vague anticipation of what was to come before I was swallowed into the busy thrum of a new day in Uganda.

On either side of the highway there are sprawling neighbourhoods where homes, often fragile structures of scrap wood and other material cobbled together, are linked by narrow red dirt paths swarming with dwellers of these communities. Down these paths children and women carry jerry cans of water, as smoke rises from cooking fires. Groups of girls and boys in school uniforms walk along the sides of the highway, and women and men dressed for work in the city hail boda-bodas and meld into the increasing traffic and exhaust of the morning rush hour to Kampala. Along the side of the highway there are shops and small workshops that build various kinds of home furnishings, such as sofas, chairs, and bed frames, as well as shops that sell small appliances and other household items. What struck me the most was the great number of shops that built and sold iron gates, as well as the many, many shops that built and sold coffins. There was something eerie
and incongruent about this...which, in fact, is the nature of things in a poor
country. The big iron gates represent wealth – they are sold only to people or
organizations with money and property worth protecting. And, given the long
stretch of shops selling these gates, there is a substantial, wealthy class in
Uganda. On the other hand, the coffins, simple rough boxes of all sizes (infant to
adult) represent the high mortality rate, highest for the poorest.

Like a tidal wave that gathers strength and momentum, the thrust of people
and vehicles into Kampala in the early morning is powerful. Once swallowed into
the city, one becomes a part of the cacophonous rush hour. Little eateries,
ramshackle shops, and sprawling markets teem with people. Women and men
dressed in business clothes dodge traffic as they run across busy roads, while
vehicles dodge the crater-like potholes that force traffic into serpentine paths that
must always be negotiated with oncoming traffic. There are also big hotels with
expansive and carefully tended grounds, the parliament building, Makerere
University, and a new shopping centre catering to the wealthy. It is in Kampala
where the overlap, the contrast, and the incongruity of wealth and poverty fuse.
CHAPTER 2: LOCATING THE RESEARCH

“We [the participants in the World Education Forum at Dakar, Senegal in 2000] affirm the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990), supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each individual’s talents and potential, and developing learners’ personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies”

(UNESCO, 2000, p. 8)

Education in Kyato Village, or in almost any context in a Southern country, cannot be fully understood without exploring its links to national and global initiatives such as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, the impact of colonialism as well as development approaches, policies and directives must be taken into account to understand the impact they have had on the ability of Southern countries to implement the educational programming they deem best for their citizens. This chapter embeds the micro-context of this study within the national context of Uganda as well as the macro-context of global policies and influence. First, I present a brief overview of Uganda and factors, particularly those relating to colonialism, that have shaped the present society. Next, I discuss key issues in international development and explore, broadly, the impacts they have had on Southern countries, particularly in relationship to education. I then locate Uganda’s education system within this larger discourse, and finally describe the research site of Kyato Village and KSS.
2.1 A Brief Overview of the Impact of Colonialism on Ugandan Society

Uganda is a land-locked country in East Africa. It has a total area of 241,040 square kilometers and a population of approximately 28 million (UNDP Uganda, 2007). Prior to the arrival of the British in 1888, Uganda had been a territory of independent kingdoms, the Buganda, Ankole and Bunyoro-Kitara, being the largest and most powerful. Britain claimed the area for the British East Africa Company, and in 1894, established it as a British protectorate. Over the following 20 years, the initial territory expanded to include additional lands and kingdoms, and in 1914, the nation now known as Uganda was established. The British ruled Uganda until it gained independence in 1962. The colonial legacy negatively impacted Uganda in multiple and complex ways that continue to affect its present political, social and economic conditions.

At the time of independence, Uganda had the potential to evolve into a strong independent nation; it was financially solvent, and had a strong resource base, a thriving subsistence agricultural sector, a strong cash cropping sector, a good transportation and communications infrastructure, a high literacy rate, and reasonable medical services (Kasozzi, 1994). However, Uganda’s potential to flourish was undermined by the unequal trade conditionalities that characterized so many such “relationships” between former colonial states and protectorates, constraining Uganda to exporting only primary goods and importing manufactured goods from “developed” countries. These conditions prevented Uganda from developing its own industrial sector and strengthening its economy. Uganda’s geographical location also contributed to its economic marginalization because, as a landlocked country, there were complications and expenses connected with the transport of goods through countries such as Kenya to reach shipping/transport centres.

In addition, the volatile social divide that had been established during the colonial era became incendiary after Independence. Inequities were related to a wide variety of
factors (e.g., region, race, religion, class, education), but perhaps the most transparent and
insidious divide was that between the immigrant White and Asian populations, the wealthy,
well-educated elite Ugandans, and the majority of the rest of the Ugandan population who
lived in dire poverty.

[Uganda] was structured around various inequitable and potentially volatile social
relationships, some of which predated the colonial era, others of which were
instilled by the colonial regime, but nearly all of which were exacerbated by the
period of foreign domination before 1962. These structural problems were manifest
at the international level in Uganda’s relations with her mother country, the rest of
the industrialized world, and her East African neighbours. (Kasazi, 1994, p. 6)

With Independence and related economic challenges, levels of poverty increased
and the social schism deepened. This eventually led to 21 years (1964-1985) of violent
conflict, and over one million political deaths (Kasazi, 1994). With this extended conflict
came the collapse of infrastructure. Destroyed roads prevented easy movement of people
and goods, there were very few vehicles to transport people and goods, and there was a
dearth of parts for those vehicles in need of repair. Furthermore, public buildings,
including schools, were demolished, power and water sources were severely compromised,
and the country was overrun with factional fighting and lawlessness. Amidst the violence,
uncertainty and extreme hardships of this era, traditional social/family cultural institutions,
such as the clan, became a means of survival, and have continued to constitute a social
infrastructure.

Uganda is currently governed by the National Resistance Movement Party, under
President Yoweri Museveni, who came to power in 1986 after these two decades of civil
war and unrest. Although there has been violent conflict in Northern Uganda since
Museveni’s presidency began, the rest of the country has been at peace. Significant
progress has been made in many areas such as education, economic growth, accountable government and civil service reform, and commitments to poverty reduction and gender equality (DFID, 1999; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Despite its gains, however, Uganda is still one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked at 145 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2006). Thirty-eight percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is $320 US. Even though the political and economic situation in Uganda has improved and stabilized enormously since 1986, the infrastructure is still weak in many areas, and the clan remains an important factor in the lives of communities, families and individuals, particularly those living under the most impoverished conditions. As such, Uganda is considered to be a “Southern” or “developing” country.

2.2 Development: What Is It?

“[E]verywhere in the world, ‘market forces’ are overriding the needs of women, the needs of children, the needs of men, the needs of communities. People are being thrown on the scrap-heap of unemployment, they are not being valued for their intrinsic capacities and worth” (Dianne Melrose, Oxfam; quoted in Reardon, 1995, p. 96)

As discussed above, Uganda, like most other Southern countries, has been subject to a history of colonialism as well as “international development”, both of which have shaped many of its institutions, laws and policies, as well as seriously impacted its economy. In order to create a broader, global context in which to locate Uganda and Kyato Village, this section will consider various perspectives on international development and the effects it has had on nations, institutions, and populations within Southern or “developing” countries. The following excerpt is from an interview with Dan, the local
librarian and translator; here he recounted one of the many incidents of corrupt, or at least morally reprehensible, “international development”, to which he had born witness.

**Shelley:** Can you…. tell me that story again about the World Bank - was it the World Bank? - putting in the highway or the road in Uganda ....

**Dan:** They were fixing the road – the road it’s a tarmac road, but it was like in a bad state. The government wanted to upgrade it ...and where they [the Ugandan contractors] were staying was the same house where [I was] staying because it was my uncle’s house. So I was staying there. I was looking after that house – I was sort of house manager there, and I was staying with these people – the contractor of that road was M. and the engineer who was working for the contractor was Y. He is now a member of parliament. I learned from that engineer ...when you get like a loan from the World Bank, you have to get the international organization consultants to inspect...what the money is going to be used for. And those consultants – they’re experts in like fixing roads so you get the engineer. You get the international company, which have the engineers who are experts.

**Shelley:** So, are there no experts in Uganda?

**Dan:** There are experts in Uganda which are contractors which are working, but you have to get experts to monitor what...

**Shelley:** The experts are doing.

**Dan:** Yes...you have to get the consultants to see exactly what they are doing is right. So, he told me – was sitting somewhere having a drink – and he told me that the abusiveness of [his] boss – he has to monitor what everyone is doing and do you know how much he is paid – he is paid more than like ten times the money I get and he does not do anything except see what I am
doing. And they asked him – where does this money come from which he is paid? He said the same loan we get as the Ugandan government to fix this road, so we shall pay this to them. So I found that if [the Ugandan engineer] is getting like 3 million Ugandan shillings a month, [the non-Ugandan engineer “consultant”] is getting 30 million Ugandan shillings a month. So that means that most of the loan is being [given back to Northern countries] because when you give [Ugandan engineers] that little money to fix the road and then you put [non-Ugandan consultants who are]...pay like higher like that.?? That means that I will do very small work compared to the money you give me, and then after that – because when you get a loan it has interest. I think that is where you got an idea that Uganda [gets] so many billions of money. Because when they are reading the budget they say Uganda we have a debt like this and like this. But actually that billions of dollars, I don’t know where they are – I didn’t see where they go. When you get money you are supposed to buy something and it stays there and then you know with that debt, I bought this – but actually there is nothing...and the money is not there. See, you wonder what the debt is for –what did they buy?

Shelley: Where was the contractor from?

Dan: The contractor was from England.

Shelley: ...so in a sense, Uganda is actually paying Britain 30 million a month on its loan that it’s getting from World Bank.

Dan: Right, though it’s not one only consultant. This consultant had so many people – so many engineers.

Shelley: For this one project.
Yes, is not one engineer. Yeah, that’s what is happening around Uganda – all the roads where you see road construction – that’s the same. And it’s not only road constructions only...like for example, the Uganda revenue service, they use also, is it a British or American woman who is there. You know to get more funding; they say we have to put there an expert who knows about funding. And you find that expert is paid like 20 times or 50 times more than the Ugandan people.

...what it says to me is that – well it says a couple of things – one is that people in developed countries are making a lot of money from people in developing countries. And on the other hand it’s saying that Western Countries don’t have faith that Ugandans can do things for themselves.

In fact, for me, I see that Ugandan people are capable of doing their own things more than the western world coming to help to do what they wanted to do. But only there are some hindrances which they face. First of all, I don’t think that even people from the western world – if they are not facilitated, I don’t think they can do anything with their bare hands…I think that like these people in the developing world if they can [be] given like facilitation to start, they are capable of doing it. And the other thing they are – some - like international laws which hinder them. For example there are so many things which are sold here [i.e., imported] which can be manufactured here. There are so many things which can be sold outside and they are not because there are some laws that restrict them.
2.3 A Brief Consideration of “Development”\textsuperscript{13} in Africa

“[T]errible mistakes were made in dealing with Africa. What makes me nearly apoplectic...is that the Bank and the Fund were fully told about their mistakes even as the mistakes were being made. It’s so enraging that they refused to listen. They were so smug, so all-knowing, so incredibly arrogant, so wrong. They simply didn’t respond to arguments which begged them to review the human consequences of their policies. The fact that poverty became increasingly entrenched, or that economies were not responding to the dogma as the dogma predicted, made no difference. It was a form of capitalist Stalinism.

The credo was everything; the people were a laboratory” (Lewis, 2005, p. 16)

It is argued that many of the extreme global inequities that currently exist result from a long and harmful legacy of Northern interference in the South through colonization, followed by the dire effects of development and globalization (Caplan, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Sachs, 2005; Stiglitz, 2002). Escobar (1995) argues that development is a Northern concept that connotes a need for the Southern world to change, evolve or modernize. Development is/has been very much driven by a Northern agenda, in which funders/lenders such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the agents that determine and orchestrate change, and the people and communities in the South are recipients of the aid and loans that are tied to the First World’s vision of how development should happen and what it should look like (Escobar, 1995; Lewis, 2005; Little, 1999; Staudt, 2002; Tucker, 1999).

Although the ostensible goals of development such as the eradication or alleviation of abject poverty, improved health care, and universal access to education are, at face

\textsuperscript{13} From this point on, I will cease to use quotations around the word development. I believe, however, that development is a loaded and contentious term and concept, and must be used with caution and understood to be problematic.
value, desirable and desired, they are also value-laden and heavily influenced by those agencies (i.e., the World Bank and the IMF) that have power over programmes and policies. Financial aid is typically tied to conditions to which the recipient state must comply, undermining its autonomy to distribute those funds in the ways in which it considers would most benefit the state. Escobar (1995) argues that this particular donor/recipient development paradigm has created a culture of dependency and passivity, or resignation, for many economically impoverished nations, and that “[d]evelopment has been the primary mechanism through which the Third World has imagined itself, thus marginalizing or precluding other ways of seeing and doing” (Escobar, 1995, p. 212).

Escobar (1995) argues that Southern countries have suffered from a “culture of dependency” by which they have come to identify/understand their global positionings and internal socioeconomic conditions as determined by exogenous (i.e., Northern, neoliberal, capitalist) forces. This imagined identity has contributed to the perpetuation of the cycle of global inequities because in many ways this hierarchical relationship between Northern and Southern countries has become normative and development has been argued to represent a “pervasive cultural discourse with profound consequences for the production of social reality in the so-called Third World” (Escobar, 2000). Thus, the principles upon which the global economy operates have remained uncontested by forces powerful enough to critically disrupt it. Parpart (1995) argues that “[d]evelopment discourse is embedded in the ethnographic and destructive colonial (and post-colonial) discourses designed to perpetuate colonial hierarchies rather than to change them” (p. 253).

In the post-colonial era of the 1960s, with the (re)establishment of independent, sovereign nations in Africa, many of the elitist trappings of colonialism remained – including the economic and educational apartheid in which a very small, privileged minority received inordinate economic and social benefits, and the majority of the
population remained in abject poverty. Many leaders of these nations continued to be supported by Northern interests, and the exploitation of the nations’ resources as well as the vast majority of people, continued unabated: “the new African ruling elites and their old oppressors in Western governments, plus the corporate world, plus the new international financial institutions…perpetuate[d] old patterns under new circumstances” (Caplan, 2006, p. 3). These relationships proved to be catastrophically egregious to the vast majority of citizens of those countries. In Africa, between 1970 and 2002, almost $300 US billion was lent and spent irresponsibly, and the citizens of those countries, some of the poorest people in the world, were left with the crippling debt (Caplan, 2006; Lewis, 2005). To compound this dire situation, interest on the debt grew to be almost as much as the initial principle, thereby serving to effectively double the debt. Thus, even though African countries repaid $260 billion, this was mostly used to pay the interest on the loans. As Lewis (2005) states, “Surely that is the definition of international economic obscenity” (p. 22)

Within this global economic paradigm, development was defined within the human capital theory, which measured development as “the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP)” (Todaro & Smith, 2003, p. 15), or alternatively, by per capita income or GNP. Although the human capital approach to development did take into account some indicators of social welfare such as shelter, schooling, literacy levels and health care, these were mostly considered in terms of “trickle down” effects of improved economic conditions, and were not specifically included in development initiatives, because they “were of secondary importance to ‘getting the growth job done’” (Todaro & Smith, 2003, p. 16). Increased GNPs, however, did not translate into improved living conditions, health or education for the general populations of many
countries; millions of people, especially women, continued to be effectively excluded from the global, capitalist economy. (Amadiume, 2000; Njoh, 1999; Umerah-Udezulu, 1999).

Capitalism was part and parcel of the colonial enterprise and served to restructure indigenous economies in ways that particularly marginalized women and undermined their economic power and participation. This new economic order promoted cash-cropping as an agricultural practice, which was generally undertaken by men, and from which they earned an income. Men also had access to cash through earning incomes as labourers (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005), and it was almost exclusively men who worked for salaries. This gendered nature of economic participation and income-earning opportunities has persisted, and exclusion from a cash-based economy remains problematic for women in many countries, particularly for women with little or no education. In Uganda, for example, agriculture constitutes 40% of the GDP, 85% of export revenue, and employs approximately 80% of the labour force. About 80% of that agricultural labour force is comprised of women who produce the vast majority of the food crops for household consumption (Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). This is, however, mostly unpaid labour as women produce food primarily to sustain their families and not to sell.

In addition, colonial land reform programmes, in which land became officially “owned” by particular individuals, further eroded women’s status and economic power. Land reform was based on the ethnocentric, European understanding of the structures of household and family, and, therefore, accorded legal rights to land to the “heads of households”, who were recognized almost exclusively as men, as “[the Europeans] kept looking for a man as father or man as the axis around which all rotated, or man as the owner and the controller of everyone and everything” (Amadiume, 1997, p. 80). Women, therefore, had no legal rights to land even if the “heads of the household” were absentee fathers/husbands/ landowners (Umerah-Udezulu, 1999). Thus, women became deprived of
yet another means by which to access the cash economy by being denied ownership and control of their land.

In fact, women still have very little access to land ownership in Uganda, with only 7% of registered land owned by women (Ellis, Manuel, & Blackden, 2006; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Customary male ownership of land persists, and if a woman becomes widowed or gets divorced, she loses access to her husband’s land and must then turn to others (i.e., male relatives) who are willing to provide her with use of their land. Lack of property not only denies women the ability to earn money by selling it, if necessary, but it also prevents them from accessing loans and financing, as they do not have the necessary collateral. In addition to tangible losses, African women also suffered a sweeping diminishment of power and status due to “the social and cultural dislocations created by silencing the complex systems of science, agriculture, environment management, language, medicine and trade already existing in spaces of the so-called ‘under-developed’” (Horn, 2000, pp. 32-33).

Thus, as is the case in many African countries, Ugandan women have been disproportionately disadvantaged by global capitalism, as their traditional work, food security and care of the household are not accorded monetary reward. Nonetheless, women head over 20% of the households in Uganda; in fact, there are probably substantially more than 20% female-headed households, given that many marriages are polygamous and women are often the main providers in the household. As heads of households, women are saddled with the burden of paying for school fees, medical expenses, clothing and other household items for all of their dependents (Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). (In the present study, almost half (six) of the 15 girls lived in households run primarily by their mothers or grandmothers.) In addition to access to and control over money and property, the capitalist economy served to stratify societies along lines of gender in terms
of education and social mobility. Under the colonial system, it was almost exclusively boys who were educated\(^\text{14}^\) in order to obtain employment, and this trend continued in the postcolonial era. Thus the socioeconomic gender divide that restricted women’s involvement in the the cash (global) economy became more entrenched. The gender differential in education and literacy increased, and women did not possess the skills and/or knowledge necessary to access financing, obtain income-earning jobs, or participate fully in political life. As a result, “[women] were bound to a large extent to the subsistence and informal sectors…while men were disproportionately located in the formal waged sector, a function of the prevailing norms of male privilege in training and access to credit (Saunders, 2002, p. 4). The gendered dimension of socioeconomic and educational privilege has had a lasting legacy in Uganda as women are still largely relegated to the informal economy and have unequal access to income (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005).

African feminists unequivocally blame development for the severe exacerbation of their already socioeconomically and politically compromised situations. As Behnholdt-Thomsen (1988) insists, “The appalling situation of the majority of Third World women is not a remnant of archaic systems of patriarchy, or a sign of backwardness and underdevelopment; on the contrary, it is a sign and product of modern development” (p. 159; in Carchidi, 1999, p. 215).

The global economic crisis of the 1980s and the hardship it caused, particularly for Southern countries, forced those governments to cut back on many centralized, social services. This time of extreme financial depression and upheaval was severely compounded by the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), in which stringent conditions of repayment of debt were forced upon developing countries, leaving

\(^{14}\) Some girls were educated, but the emphasis of their education was on “domestic” subjects (i.e., cooking, sewing, hygiene) (Musisi, 2001; Ssekamwa, 2000). They did not receive an equal education equal to that of boys, nor were they encouraged, or even often permitted, to enter the “men’s” world of work, politics, etc.
many in utterly dire social and economic circumstances. African countries are still suffering the consequences of that dismal period: “for almost twenty years, those rigid fundamentalist policies [SAPS] did extraordinary damage to African economies from which they have yet to recover” (Lewis, 2005). SAPS forced governments to cap expenditures on social services such as health care and education, charge user-fees to “clients” (the sick and children) for those services, and limit the number of professionals working in these areas (Brock-Utne, 1996; Lewis, 2005).

Forcing Africans to pay for schooling and health care meant that fewer went to school or attended health clinics, an outcome that apparently came as a shock to the experts at the IMF and World Bank. Imposing tight ceilings on health and school staff, slashing funds to schools, health clinics, and hospitals, and failing to maintain or expand health infrastructures, have inevitably led to deteriorating health and school systems across the continent. All these deliberately severe austerity programs were imposed at exactly the same moment the aids [sic] pandemic was surging out of control. (Caplan, 2006, p. 4)

Studies show that women, as the main producers of food and as primary caregivers, were the most negatively affected by SAPS. Women had to assume more care for family and community members because of diminished access to social programmes; there was an increase in the number of female-headed households as men sought income-earning jobs outside the community, and thus an increased reliance on women to provide for the household, even though they had little access to money. On top of this, the devaluation of many currencies meant that the meager amount of money women were able to access would buy very little. User fees for services such as education meant that many children, especially girls, did not go to school (Amadiume, 2000; Gobina, 2004). The devastating effects of SAPs prompted a series of studies undertaken by various development agencies.
Results from these studies, combined with new approaches to thinking about global economics (e.g., Amartya Sen, 1980, 1984) spurred the first Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 that recognized a broad spectrum of indicators of human development. It was now deemed necessary to foreground human factors such as culture, freedom, environmental conditions, health and education as central to the notion of development. This is reflected in the World Bank Development report of 1991, which states that development “encompasses as ends in themselves better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom, and a richer cultural life” (World Bank, 1991; quoted in Todaro & Smith, 2003, p. 17).

Amartya Sen, a leading development economics theorist, insists that development is a holistic concept involving one’s mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social conditions, as well as one’s economic situation. To measure development by economic indicators alone, Sen (1999) argues, is misleading and incomplete; what is important is the quality of one’s life as determined by the freedom one possesses to engage fully in one’s society with dignity, pursue one’ aspirations, and value one’s own life:

Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with – and influencing – the world in which we live. (pp. 14-15)

Sen’s theory has been pivotal in directing international development policy. The United Nations Development Programme’s 1999 Human Development Report recognizes that development must be linked to broader humanitarian commitments that include social justice, social welfare, and equity: “Economic growth, an important input for human
development, can translate into human development only if the expansion of private income is equitable and only if growth generates public provisioning that is invested in human development – in schools and health centres, not arms” (UNDP, 1999, p. 44). The dramatic shift in emphasis from development as a primarily economic, quantitative discourse to one that emphasizes nonmaterial, intangible and qualitative signifiers, has necessitated a more probing and careful analysis of how development might best be attained.

Sen’s (1999) important book, Development as Freedom, proposes that the main indicator of development is the “substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy” (p. 18). Substantive freedoms represent the “effectiveness” of the development of a society, as:

freedom is not only the basis of the evaluation of success and failure, but it is also a principal determinant of individual initiative and social effectiveness. Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development. (Sen, 1999, p. 18)

Sen’s ideas are enormously influential in the present era of development, but there is little agreement on the best way of achieving development in Southern countries.

There is no lack of literature and testimony to support the argument that not only has development failed to ameliorate conditions for the poorest, most marginalized societies in the world (and in many cases has exacerbated those conditions), but that, perversely, the North has actually profited from the increased destitution of these societies (Brock-Utne, 2000; Lewis, 2005; Mazrui, 2004). People in Southern countries have witnessed the shocking racist, or classist, inequities of development and the outrageous squandering of money ostensibly meant to ameliorate the general conditions of their
countries. Lack of autonomy and neocolonialist and punitive policies imposed by the North have had particularly paralyzing effects on many aspects of African societies, especially African women. Not surprisingly, a growing voice of dissent contends that development as it has been conceived and practiced is usurious, manipulative, unworkable and even malfeasant, and that it needs to be checked and reconfigured. Multiple and extreme ideological, structural and practical changes must be made if development is going to genuinely benefit Southern countries, and voices hitherto excluded need to be heard.

Many advocate a complete paradigm shift to a post-development discourse, such as “globalization from below” that would emerge from locally-determined needs and objectives and link grassroots organizations around the world (Auerbach, 2005; Escobar, 1995; Leach & Little, 1999; Plunck & O’Hearn, 1999; Stirrat, 1999). On the other hand, currently, African leaders have banded together under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and, as Owusu claims, have adopted the Northern neoliberal agenda:

NEPAD is a pragmatic strategy by a new breed of African leaders who hope to bring the continent’s problems to global attention. It certainly falls short of demands for structural transformation and the creation of new international economic order, but it is an important step nonetheless. Its ability to end decades of underdevelopment and marginalization of the continent is doubtful, although not unattainable. It would depend on how African leaders and the international communities respond to the initiative. One hopes that …[African] leaders would be able to convince the international community that turning a blind eye to the abject poverty and deprivation in the continent poses a threat to the global neoliberal agenda. (p. 24)
The future of development/post-development is unknown; however, as in the past, it will have a serious impact, whether negative or positive, on educational opportunities for people in Southern countries.

2.4 Education in Africa within the Development Paradigm

In the 1960s, many newly independent African states were committed to designing new educational curricula based on African culture, experience and needs. Some changes were made to include subjects such as African geography, literature and history (Parry, 2004); however, the enormous expenses associated with creating and producing textbooks and resource materials, training and re-training teachers, in addition to the intensive efforts required to reconceptualize and restructure curricula, proved to be labour- and cost-prohibitive (Ansell, 2002; Mazrui, 2004). In addition, there was resistance to innovations from those, mostly men, who had undergone a colonial education and who wanted to retain their positions of power (Ansell, 2002).

Regardless of these factors, however, the window of opportunity that did exist for many African countries to assert independent control over their education systems was short-lived. Education fell under the yoke of exogenous forces yet again, when in the 1960s, education became linked to development initiatives that came with conditions, mandates and priorities dictated by donors. Where there may have been the potential for nations to develop their own innovative, indigenous education programming to be developed and implemented to meet their specific needs, education remained frozen in the colonial imprint, further crystallized through international funding mechanisms (Alidou, 2003; Brock-Utne, 2000; Mazrui, 2004).

As discussed above, the Human Development Index (HDI), for which Sen was a consultant for the UN (Saito, 2003), emerged as an alternative to the human capital theory
of development, and included development indicators such as personal well-being, access to health and education, and full participation in society. The HDI was the catalyst for the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. At the WCEFA, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and UNICEF, along with delegates from 155 countries and from about 150 organizations endorsed a UNESCO-sponsored/monitored programme, Education For All (EFA). The overarching goal of EFA was to “universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade” (UNESCO, 1990). The World Declaration of Education for All (WDEFA) states that “everyone has a right to education” (UNESCO, 1990), with specific attention given to the education of girls and women in Article III: “Universalizing access and promoting equity” (UNESCO, 1990). It was also in the WDEFA Framework for Action (under “Goals and Targets”) that Universal Primary Education (UPE) was proposed: “Universal access to, and completion of primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as "basic") by the year 2000” (UNESCO, 1990).

Ten years later, many countries had not achieved this goal, and another world conference, prompted by the Beijing Platform for Action for gender equality (1995), was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The Dakar Framework for Action was created, and unanimously agreed upon by all delegates from 164 countries, committing the world to “meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015” (UNESCO, 2006). The EFA goals are also encompassed within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly MDG 2, which addresses universal primary education, and MDG 3, which strives to achieve gender equality in education. Although EFA is an extremely important initiative and demonstrates a profound commitment to education and gender equality by the world community, the on-the-ground implementation of EFA has been deeply problematic.
On the one hand, EFA has precipitated a groundswell of children throughout the world attending school for the first time, but on the other, many developing countries were ill-prepared for this surge in the school population, and the quality of education students receive is typically poor. In Uganda, for example, “[t]he rapid increase in enrolment has placed a huge strain on education infrastructure” (Geiger, 2002, p. 19). The schools are commonly dilapidated, unsafe, unsanitary structures (if indeed there even exists a structure); the teachers are often underpaid and unqualified, the classes overcrowded, there is high absenteeism and drop-out rates, and there is a lack of basic materials such as, textbooks, laboratories, reading/writing materials and other basic resources (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Murphy, 2005).

The stringent budgets most developing countries must work with are unable to rectify these deficiencies, as much or most of their budgets is assigned to debt repayment to the Northern lending institutions, and these developing countries have typically received very little financial support for education from the North: “in sub-Saharan Africa, the most aid-dependent region in the world, development assistance accounts for only four to five percent of total expenditure on education” (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 14). There is also criticism around the underlying ideology and “hidden curriculum” of EFA. The World Bank is hugely influential in the structure, content and delivery of education throughout the world, and it funds up to 90% of educational programming in developing countries. The World Bank, however, will fund only primary level education, i.e., UPE (Brock-Utne, 2000), where there is “a single global model for UPE, which permits little variation from country to country and which promotes a model that points profoundly to the emergence of predictable learning styles and outlook on the part of primary school graduates” (Jones, 1997, p. 374).
It is also argued that UPE-only education enables people to acquire merely the basic skills required to work at low-wage jobs in the manufacturing industry, a situation that well-serves the needs of multinational corporations (Ansell, 2002; Plunck & O’Hearn, 1999; Tikly, 2003). Critics also argue that UPE is insufficient for a country to begin to build and develop the critical mass of intellectuals necessary to effectively envision and bring about radical socioeconomic change, and that the lack of support for higher education is an effective way of preventing developing countries from being able to challenge many international policies that negatively impact them (Brock-Utne, 2000; Kwesiga, 2002; Tikly, 2003). If, however, education and gender equality are understood to be the means to development, and have become global priorities, there needs to be a re-examination of what is meant by education and what assumptions and objectives underpin it.

2.5 **Overview of the Formal Education System in Uganda**

Education in Uganda is strongly linked to international funding, as well as global initiatives such as EFA and the MDGs. It is also rooted in a colonial past and retains the basic British “O/A-Level” schooling structure. The MoES is responsible for overseeing the education system in Uganda; it trains and registers teachers, licenses schools, supplies a national curriculum and examinations, and provides administrators and inspectors. The formal education system in Uganda consists of primary, secondary and tertiary level schooling. There is pre-primary education, but this is almost exclusively privately operated and serves a very small, and privileged, percentage of the population. At all levels there is both public and private ownership of schools. Funding for education comes from the GOU as well as from international donors called the Education Funding Agencies Group. In the

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15 See Appendix D for UNESCO’s “Statistics in Brief” concerning education in Uganda.
2005/6 budget, the Education sector received 17.2% of the national budget or 3.96 of GDP.” (MoES, 2005, p. 9).

Primary school consists of seven grade levels, Primary 1 (P1) to Primary 7 (P7), culminating in a Primary Leaving Exam (PLE) that determines eligibility for entrance into secondary level schooling. Under UPE (since 1997), primary schooling is free. UPE has received the largest share of the education budget (Kasente, 2003), and the number of children attending school has almost tripled – from 2.6 million in 1996 to 7.6 million in 2003 (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005); approximately 85% of children of school age are attending primary school (MoES, 2004). There is, however, a critically high number of students who do not complete primary school: approximately only 23% of those students who enrolled in P1 in 1997 completed P7 in 2003 (Bategeka & Okurut, 2006), and because primary school is not compulsory, there are still many children who do not attend school.

The massive influx of students attending primary school under UPE has severely compromised the quality of education (African Development Bank (ADF), 2000; Bategeka, 2005; Deininger, 2001; Murphy, 2003). Problems include: a high student-teacher ratio (Batagkeka, 2005; Kakuru, 2006; MoES, 2005; Murphy, 2003), insufficient number of qualified teachers (ADF, 2000; MoES, 2005; Murphy, 2003), a weak inspection system (DCI, 2004; Kasente, 2003; MoES, 2005), high student-classroom ratio (Kakuru, 2006; Murphy, 2003), high pupil-textbook ratio (Bategeka, 2005; Kakuru, 2006; Murphy, 2003), low teacher morale (Kakuru, 2006; Kasente, 2003; Murphy, 2003), high drop-out rates (Kakuru, 2006; Kasente, 2003; Murphy, 2003), poor quality of teaching (DCI, 2004; Kakuru, 2006; Kasente, 2003), “rampant” student absenteeism (GOU, 2004; Kasente, 2003), inadequate structures/furniture (ADF, 2000; Kakuru, 2006), poor student performance (Kakuru, 2006; Kasente, 2003; Murphy, 2003), and lack of essential resources (ADF, 2000). The majority of students do not pass the PLEs, and of those who do, less than
50% advance to secondary school (Nsubuga, n.d.). The GOU produced the Uganda Education Strategic Investment Programme (ESIP) 1998-2003 to address the implications of such dramatically increased enrollment, and although many new schools were built, and many more teachers trained and textbooks distributed, serious problems persist (Kakuru, 2006; Kasente, 2003).

There are two kinds of secondary level education: an academic programme, and programmes of secondary studies offered by technical and vocational institutes that run parallel to the academic system. The academic programme is based on the British model of lower and upper academic secondary education. The O-Level (Ordinary Level, or lower secondary level) courses, Senior 1-4 (S1 – S4, or the equivalent of grades 8-11) lead to the Uganda Certificate in Education (UCE), and A-Level (Advanced Level, or senior level secondary) courses, Senior 5-6 (S5-S6, or the equivalent of grades 12-13), culminate in the Uganda Advanced Certificate in Education (UACE). Once students complete their O-Level exams (contingent upon their exam results) they can advance to either A-Level studies or enter a range of alternative educational institutes such as technical and commercial schools and colleges and primary teacher training colleges. There are also some vocational programmes students can enter directly from primary school.

Eligibility for secondary school is dependent on the student’s PLE results and the number of spaces available, although the cost of school fees is often the primary determinant (Nsubuga, n.d.). UNESCO 2004 statistics show that only 14% of girls and 16% of boys of secondary school age are enrolled in secondary level education in Uganda (UNESCO, 2006). However, the GOU now considers some secondary level education to be “basic education”, as it is necessary for the growth of the economy, the development of the nation, participation in the global economy, and increased well-being of the population; furthermore, it is needed to meet the MDGs (Nsubuga, n.d.).
There is increasing social demand for post primary education and training in Uganda. This is a direct result of the increasing numbers of young children now graduating from the UPE programme. But it is also an indication of the growing need by the people to acquire knowledge and skills to enable them to face the challenges of the 21st Century and to improve the quality of their lives.

(MoES, 2004, p. 4)

Thus, the Uganda Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET, or PPET) programme (generally referred to as USE) was introduced in January 2007, largely to facilitate the demand for secondary level education by the first cohorts of UPE (ADF, 2000). In a brief from the Commissioner for Secondary Education, it is stated that: “UPPET will be construed to mean provision of Post Primary Education and Training to all Ugandan Students who have successfully completed Primary Leaving Exams (PLE)...The pass mark (cut off point) will be determined according to the resources available in a particular school year” (Nsubuga, n.d.). This pass mark/cut off point will undoubtedly have serious implications for access to secondary schooling, as the GOU has limited financial resources to expend on USE (Ssenkaaba, 2006; UGPulse, 2007); likely many, perhaps the majority, of students who would like to attend secondary school, but cannot afford to pay school fees, will be denied access based on the pass mark/cut off point, as available spaces will be extremely limited.

There are three kinds of secondary schools: schools that are fully government-funded, schools that are partially government-funded, and private secondary schools that receive no government funding. Secondary level schooling has not received the fiscal or political attention as that of UPE; as a result, there exist bottlenecks to access post-primary education because of the insufficient numbers of schools (Kirungi, 2000; UGPulse, 2007). Kasente (2003) argues that the main reasons secondary school has been neglected is
because of the “perception by government and funding partners that the poor benefit less directly from secondary education...[and] it does not contribute directly to the realization of the PEAP [the GOU’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan] development framework” (p. 4). Thus, there has been a proliferation of private schools to meet the needs for secondary education, although there are serious concerns about the quality of education received in many of these schools, as private schools range from expensive, elitist, fully-resourced institutions to poor village schools with few resources and under-paid, under-qualified teachers. Currently there are 577 fully government-funded, 222 partially government-funded, and 1,162 non-government funded secondary schools (MoES, 2005).

Tertiary level education consists of public and private universities and colleges. The public institutions are under the purview of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and include five public universities (Makerere University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Kyambogo University, the University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and the Open University of Uganda and numerous colleges and training institutions (e.g., technical, teaching, commercial, agricultural, health, management, forestry, and fisheries). There are also nine private universities and several private tertiary level colleges and training schools that operate under the supervision of the National Council for Higher Education regulatory board.

2.6 Kyato Village

Kyato Village is typical of many rural Ugandan communities; it has no electricity, and although piped water became available for a fee in 2004, the vast majority of people could not afford it. The people are mostly subsistence-level farmers who grow crops such as maize, matooke (green bananas), cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, (“Irish”) potatoes, beans, groundnuts, pineapples, mangoes, sweet bananas, jackfruit, papaya, watermelon and
guavas for family consumption. Most families possess a small number of livestock (chickens, pigs, or goats) for consumption or to sell in case of financial exigencies (i.e., school fees, medical expenses, etc.). If they have enough land, some families grow cash crops such as coffee and vanilla beans.

(Photograph 3 “Man walking along road to trading centre”)

There are distinct gender roles: women do most of the domestic work and farming, and men have more opportunities to earn an income through labour (e.g., making bricks, digging, building houses, driving taxis and boda-bodas, and clearing land). Women and children, particularly girls, spend hours every day fetching and lugging water home in yellow jerry cans, as there is a constant demand for water (e.g., for bathing, cooking, washing dishes, cleaning and drinking). This is tedious, arduous, time-consuming work, and particularly difficult for women who are also pregnant and/or carrying infants.
Children as young as three years old are assigned the task of fetching water; sometimes I would help young girls carry jerry cans back to their homes, and I was always amazed at how they managed to transport such a heavy burden long distances.

Collecting firewood is another time-consuming and demanding task, but as with water, firewood is in constant demand as it is essential for cooking all meals and boiling water to drink. Women and children scour the fields, forests, bushes, and sambas (plantations) for any kind of wood to burn. The smoke from firewood is extremely problematic for individuals with the responsibility of cooking (mostly women and girls), as they often develop serious lung complications from inhaling the smoke. Cooking with firewood is also devastating to the environment, as the pressing need for wood leads to deforestation and destruction of the forest ecology through the stripping of the undergrowth.

(Photograph 4 “Women cooking for party”)
Women in particular spend many hours a day working in the fields – digging, planting, and harvesting. They also look after the children and take care of household needs. The execution of the daily cycle of meals, work and domestic chores depends on women’s orchestration of family members. There are many female-headed households, either because the men are polygamous (and spend time between various homes), the men work elsewhere (e.g., in Kampala), or the women are widowed or divorced (although divorce is not a common practice).

In the village there were two government-funded primary schools, as well as KSS. Every day bevies of students in their brightly coloured school uniforms, many with bare feet, clutched tattered notebooks and pencils as they flocked to the roads and paths around the schools. Sometimes I would find a student hiding around the bend, afraid to go to school because she or he would be beaten for being late, and afraid to go home, for fear of being beaten for not being at school. And, there were many days when I encountered clusters of despondent students, primary and secondary, ambling away from school, having been sent home for school-related fees\(^\text{16}\), or because they weren’t wearing their uniforms, or because they didn’t have a pencil or a notebook. These costs were a severe financial burden to most families in the area, and parents were often late with these fees, as they had to wait for crops or animals to be sold, or money to be borrowed from relatives. The administration of the schools did strive to accommodate the parents by working out payment schedules; nevertheless, frequently, the schools would do an accounting of which students’ fees were outstanding and send those students home; they were not to return until they could pay the money owed to the school.

\(^{16}\) Even though primary school was ostensibly free, there were still school-related costs, e.g., “building fees” that parents were expected to pay, in addition to uniforms and school supplies. Some parents, especially single mothers, found even primary school-related costs for their children prohibitive. With respect to secondary school, there were fees for tuition field trips, art and science supplies, exams, etc.
At the crossroad between the primary schools and secondary school were two tiny shops that sold a few basic items, such as sugar cane, small packets of salt and sugar, cigarettes, cola, biscuits and pieces of candy. For more than that, one had to venture into the trading centre that served a number of neighbouring villages, either by following the local road that intersected with the road to Ganda Town, or by walking along the path that led behind the KSS and Kyato Community Library. If you followed the road to where it intersected with the road to Ganda Town, you found a well-worn, but still rough, scraggly field where weekly community football games were played and temporary events (e.g., church revivals) were held. The schools also used this field for activities; KSS held its inaugural, YouLead-sponsored co-ed intramural football competition here in 2005 (the prize being a goat that was cooked for a victory lunch).
If you took the path behind the school, you wandered past fields of maize, cassava, potatoes, mango trees, matooke, and coffee bushes that had the most intoxicatingly sweet perfume when the tiny white flowers were in bloom. There were also a number of modest
brick homes settled within land owned by the families. A thriving, verdant vista spread open as the terrain dipped before rising up again to the trading centre. Behind the trading centre, on the north side, rose a hill that sculpted the sky.

The trading centre consisted of a strip of dirt road about half a kilometre long, alongside which were several small shops that sold numerous items such as matches, candles, toilet paper, cigarettes, basic housewares (cups, basins, utensils, etc.), dry goods (flour, sugar, salt, etc.), and some fresh produce, such as tomatoes, onions, garlic, and beans. There was a small credit union, a pub (although there were also several small dark little drinking establishments that were not obviously pubs from the outside), two health clinics, two or three small tailoring shops, a few little “hotels” (or eating establishments), a shoe repair shop, a bicycle repair shop, a carpentry shop, a car repair shop (that also sold

(Photograph 8 “The trading centre”
petrol by the litre from a plastic bottle), and various transient kiosks that sold fish, or fruit or deep-fried cassava and bread. Boda-bodas lined the street waiting for fares to Ganda Town, and the drivers raced each other to reach the potential customer first. There were also parked automobile taxis, with drivers wandering through the trading centre collecting passengers, or leaning against their cars, chatting.

It was from here that I would hire a boda-boda, climb on the back with my laptop in my backpack, and travel into Ganda Town. I loved this journey (most of the time), although, by Canadian standards, it violated numerous safety regulations. “Boda-boda men” had no special licenses, helmets were optional (and passengers never wore them), and it was not unusual to see up to four people, sometimes even chickens and goats or furniture,

(Photograph 9 “Boda-boda man delivering chairs”)

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being transported on a single boda-boda. The narrow, red, dirt roads, full of gaping potholes and loose rocks, were used by pedestrians, bicycles, boda-bodas, dilapidated cars, expensive SUVs (generally belonging to government officials, NGO personnel or muzungus), pick-up trucks over-brimming with passengers precariously packed in the back, and full-sized buses. More than once the boda-boda I was on was forced into a ditch or field by an oversized vehicle traveling at high speed careening around a bend or overtaking another vehicle. Pedestrians were incessantly being forced to scramble off the road as the vehicle always assumed precedence – and the bigger the vehicle, the more precedence it assumed.

However, despite the hazards, there was also the feeling of space, openness and being wonderfully unencumbered. Once you became accustomed to the whine of the boda-boda motor, the jarring bumps on the roads, and the occasional lurch to avoid some kind of hazard, you could settle into a relaxed, meditative kind of appreciation of the loveliness of

(Photograph 10 “View of countryside”)
the countryside. Most of the time, the sun infused the world with a warm and iridescent lustre, and past the next trading centre, up the steepest part of the road, the views from the top of the ridge (where there were a cluster of abandoned, “haunted”, houses) over the countryside to Lake Victoria were stunning. It is a beautiful place. Students were boastfully proud of their country, insisting that Uganda was “one of the most beautiful countries in Africa”; it is, of course, known as the “pearl of Africa”, as dubbed by Winston Churchill. Uganda has rainforests, papyrus swamps, lakes, mountains, waterfalls, thousands of species of birds and butterflies, amazing wildlife, and world-renowned national parks. It was here, on the ridge, that the boda-boda drivers usually cut the motor and glided the motorbikes most of the way into Ganda Town to save on petrol, past a number of massive houses with manicured gardens, expensive SUVs and barbed-wire fences, owned by wealthy Ugandans and muzungus.

Ganda Town has a population of about 70,000 people. As with all areas of Masaka District, it has suffered greatly from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and there are numerous local, national and international NGOs and groups that conduct HIV/AIDS related research, or that implement programming or service delivery, based in Ganda Town. It also bears the scars of the brutal civil wars (1979 and 1985/6) that unseated Idi Amin and Milton Obote, respectively, and of the Tanzanian invasion in 1979. Shattered hulks of buildings still occupy space in the town. There are numerous government offices, a couple of major financial institutions and regional offices for a few national corporations, in addition to a number of NGOs and microfinancing operations. There are a market, a transport depot (where one can take a range of vehicles – minivan, small bus, or large bus – to a number of destinations), a few small supermarkets, two or three bookstores, a few stationery shops,

17 Since I have left Uganda, however, there has been major restoration of these buildings happening in Ganda Town.
health clinics, two hospitals, a Rotary Club, car repair shops, hardware stores, a health club, a number of apartment blocks, a couple of internet cafes, a post office, a library, a plethora of hairdressing “saloons”, and numerous small shops, restaurants, hotels, pubs and services. There are two mosques and several churches, most of which are Catholic, but there are also Protestant churches and a growing number of Pentecostal churches. There are a variety of primary and secondary schools – government-funded, government-aided, private, Muslim and Catholic. Rising up behind Ganda Town is Tiranga, a residential area of luxurious colonial-style homes with carefully tended grounds. Wealthy Ugandans and resident muzungus (foreigners as well as ex-patriots) lived here.

Ganda Town is a rather sleepy urban centre; in many ways the real pulse of Ganda Town is a couple of kilometers down the road towards Kampala in a bustling, noisy, cramped and heavily populated peri-urban town called Musanda. Makeshift stalls and kiosks and little shops and street vendors sold everything from used clothes, to roasted meat on skewers to car batteries. Scrap metal heaps lined the sides of the dusty main road, as did pieces of living room furniture for sale. Radios blared the latest hit songs and there was the relentless honking of horns as taxis passed by in search of fares.

But, all of this was a long way away from day to day life in Kyato village. Some people commuted to Ganda Town daily, or several times a week, but most people did not. It was a long (two-hour), hot and strenuous walk, and many people could not afford the cost of a boda-boda or taxi ($0.60 US to $1 round trip) on a regular basis. For the majority of people in Kyato and the surrounding villages, most days were spent within the close proximity of home – collecting firewood and water, preparing food, washing clothes and dishes, cleaning the home and compound, attending school, working in the fields, and caring for young children, elderly relatives and the sick. The demands of simply living never ceased.
2.6.1 A Walk to the School

This was a typical morning in Kyato Village. As the night began to lift, sounds of awakening drifted in and out and mingled with semi-conscious dreams: the scratchy squawks of chickens, disgruntled lowing of cows, and the tittering, whistling, chirping and chattering of irrepressibly cheerful birds, preparing to immodestly flaunt their beauty in the daylight. The sun, except occasionally during the rainy season, seldom failed to disappoint, flooding the world with light and warmth just before 7 a.m. every day. By this time, the village was fully abuzz with the laughing and yelling of children fetching water for bathing, the crying of infants waiting to be fed, and the smoke of fires catching in the air, as mothers prepared breakfast. For breakfast, I had stovetop coffee with boiled milk fresh from one of the cows in the back, a boiled egg (from Sofia’s poultry farm), and a bowl of fruit salad (e.g., mango, pineapple, watermelon, guavas, banana – whatever was in season). I ate this outside on the veranda, in the sunshine, watching the birds alight the trees in the front garden and flit off again. It was beautiful ...

The house I stayed in was palatial by local standards; it was a solid, concrete and brick structure, with tile roofing, several large rooms, indoor plumbing, a wrap-around veranda, a large, well-kept garden and a gated entrance. However, there was no electricity, and no lack of rats and cockroaches, and no piped water18. There was “running water” in the sense that pipes ran from a rusty water tank, located at the back of the house, that collected rain and distributed somewhat compromised water, which often contained various biological curiosities, to water faucets and a toilet (in marginally working order). A looming, red, iron gate and a high, thick thorny hedge separated the house and compound from the village road; despite the outward appearance of exclusivity and

18 Until February 2005
impenetrability of the compound, however, it seemed to be always full of bustling activity and people traipsing in and out. It even sometimes served as a playground for neighbourhood children, and the girls from KSS made frequent, impromptu visits to my home to chat, or ask for my help with something. There were “boys’ quarters” behind the house in which lived three young men who tended the cows, samba (plantation) and grounds, a young mother and her three children, and Dan.

(Photograph 11 “Neighbourhood children playing in compound”)

To get to the school, I left the compound through a door at the side of the towering gate, where I stepped onto the red dirt path. Across from the looming gate was a small mud-brick home with an old, rusty corrugated iron roof where there were inevitably children outside, bathing, or washing clothes or dishes in blue plastic basins, or hulling
beans, or squatting eating sugar cane. Two black and white ducks poked around aimlessly day after day in the endless pursuit of food. I followed the path down alongside the thorny

(Photograph 12 “Neighbour’s house; woman with children shelling beans”)

hedge (sharp enough to discourage snakes and thieves) of the grounds of my house, around the corner, past the little coffee plantation on the right, the hedge, and the main primary school of the village – Kyato Primary School – on the left. At this point there was a dirt road that intersects the path. If you turned left, you passed the side of the primary school. During the daytime its grounds teemed with animated clusters of children clad in bright pink, talking or reading under the generous shade of expansive mango trees, or playing soccer with balls they had made from dozens of plastic bags, wrapped over and over and fastened with elastic bands, or climbing trees, or standing around gnawing on sugar cane. At the edges of the grounds were the teachers’ quarters. A little further up the hill was a Catholic church - a lovely hexagonally-shaped open concrete structure. On the other side of the road were several small brick homes and their gardens. At the top of the hill was a
beautiful open view of the countryside. If you turned left on this road, you would reach the other primary school, Kyato Hill Primary School, which was smaller than Kyato PS. This school also had a separate little dormitory in which several orphaned children stayed. One of the women in the adult literacy class lived and worked there, with the orphaned children. If you turned right at the intersection on the top of the hill, about a quarter of a mile down the road, on the left, you would find a little health clinic, owned and operated by a nurse, whose home was attached to the clinic.

But, back at the village intersection at the point where the path from home and the village road met, there was a ditch that continuously caused innumerable problems for cars and boda-bodas. It had been planked-over with wood, filled with dirt, and yet it persisted in its stalwart determination to harass drivers. Many a profanity had been uttered as vehicles bottomed out or got stuck at this junction. Over the ditch, across the road, the path continued. There were two tiny little shops, one on either side. The one on the right was a rough wooden structure, maybe six feet square. Inside was a little wooden bench on the left and wooden counter, with a small glass case, behind which were items of food that had been cooked by Gladys, who owned the shop. She had a large wok-like pan that she filled with vegetable oil and placed over an open fire at the side of the shop. Here, in the morning, in time for the students’ breaks, she made pancakes (small, circular fried dough patties), deep-friend cassava (like gigantic French fries), and sweet, deep-fried bread dumplings (Ugandan donuts). Usually, she also had a few fresh tomatoes, stalks of sugar cane propped up against the wall, a few eggs, and onions. Behind the counter were some rough wooden shelves built into the wall. There one could find small packets of sugar, salt, matches, cigarettes that were bought singly, a display of Coke, Fanta and Ginger Beer, and a few other small items. The shop on the other side was much the same, although this shop was directly attached to the home of Doris, the woman who ran it. At times I had gone in
to buy something and found myself instantly transported into a family-gathering taking place in the adjoining room. Past the shops were fields of maize, beans, potatoes, cassava, as well as a couple of small coffee plantations, and homes. Goats and cows were tethered to trees, chickens wandered freely, and there was a couple of pigs that lived in a wooden pen in the middle of one of the fields. After a short walk, there was a small path that veered down the hill to the right. This was the path to the school. On the left was an abandoned house on an unused piece of land; on the right was property enclosed by a high hedge, from behind which the neighbourhood women would giggle and yell greetings to me every day.

When one walked down the path to the school, the first building one encountered was a classroom on one’s right. This classroom did not exist when I first arrived in Kyato Village, but fundraising efforts in Canada through YouLead collected enough money to build this structure. If you kept on the path, straight ahead you would see the Kyato Community Library. It was a grey concrete building, and it was the only building on the

(Photograph 13 “School grounds: YouLead classroom to right, library in background”)
grounds with glass windows (with bars to prevent theft), and a concrete floor. It was also unique in that it had on the roof three solar panels, the only source of power other than gasoline-fueled generators for miles around. The library was about 20 by 30 feet, with several large wooden tables and many heavy wooden chairs. Around the perimeter of the inside were cabinets, painted blue, and lined with newspapers. Inside these was the collection of library books and other artifacts. The library began literally as a “tin box of books”, but over time it had grown into an important local institution. By the time my fieldwork had came to a close, the library had a collection of over 2,000 books. The library quickly became my second home in Kyato. Most of my days, evenings and even weekends were spent there, writing, working with the girls, reading the newspapers, facilitating clubs and/or discussion groups, talking to teachers, transcribing data, planning research activities, teaching adult literacy classes, and attending meetings and workshops of various kinds.

(Photograph 14 – “Health workshop at KCL”)

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If you stood in the doorway of the library and looked back up the slope in the
direction from whence you came, opposite the library, across the rough and scraggly field,
you would see the main school building. It was made of local bricks, and it had a
corrugated iron roof. On the far right was a tiny reception area with two wooden benches
and a table where teachers gathered for tea, or parents sat waiting to confer with the
headteacher, or students stood nervously waiting for the verdict on closed-door
headteacher/parent meetings. On the wall was the school’s motto, handwritten on a piece
of yellowed paper: “Education for self-reliance.” A door from this reception area led to
the headteacher’s office, a tiny room about eight foot square, where Mr. Masinde sat
behind a wooden desk piled high with papers, notebooks, reports, and file folders. On the
other side of the desk were two wooden chairs, most often occupied by students’ parents.

This was the administrative centre of the school. The rest of the main school structure

(Photograph 15 “Students in school ground”)

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consisted of three classrooms next to the office/reception area. These classrooms had dirt floors and rough wooden benches used for seats and slightly higher benches used as shared desks. Each classroom had a well-worn chalkboard propped on rickety wooden legs. There were no actual doors or glassed-in windows, although there were doorways and open window structures; the school itself had no electricity, so the only source of light was that which penetrated those apertures. Around the back of this main school building was a sheltered structure where food for the students was cooked, either by the women hired to make posha (a thick, starchy, glutinous porridge made from maize and water) and beans for the students’ lunches, or by the students (mostly girls) on the weekends for the boarders. Also around the back were the small living quarters that Mr. Masinde occupied. He lived at the school on a full-time basis. To the right of the main school buildings were two small buildings that served as dormitories for the S4 students. The 30 or so students

(Photograph 14 “Shakila cooking in KSS kitchen”

hired to make posha (a thick, starchy, glutinous porridge made from maize and water) and beans for the students’ lunches, or by the students (mostly girls) on the weekends for the boarders. Also around the back were the small living quarters that Mr. Masinde occupied. He lived at the school on a full-time basis. To the right of the main school buildings were two small buildings that served as dormitories for the S4 students. The 30 or so students
who boarded here lived under extremely cramped, uncomfortable, leaky conditions, but they were very disciplined and conscientious, and kept their quarters impressively clean and organized.

(Photograph 17 “Doreen sweeping dorm”)

Up behind the dormitories was a tattered, flimsy little outdoor structure with woven banana leaf fibre for walls. This was the girls’ shower/bathing area. The girls had to transport water in jerry cans, and wash using a basin, soap and a cloth. The shower room had no roof, and only a dirt floor. Up and slightly over to the left of the shower area were two toilets (pit latrines) for the girls. The boys’ toilets and bathing areas were on the other side of the school compound. Down the hill from the dormitories, a new building was being erected. This would eventually serve as a new dormitory for the boys. On the other side of this new building was a small building where the deputy headteacher and another teacher
(both male, in their twenties) lived. The school buildings and library edged the school property, leaving a space in the middle that was used for school assemblies, morning line-up, school announcements, special events (sometimes set up with tarps and furniture), and which also served as a small sports field on which netball and volleyball were played.

2.7 Kyato Secondary School (KSS)

KSS was a privately owned school with a License of Operation from the District Education Office. Although the school held meetings with parents, there was neither a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), board of directors, or overseeing committee, nor was the school officially accountable in any way to the community. Thus, although there seemed to be a generally good relationship between the school, the immediate community and the parents, when problems did arise, there was no local mediating body. KSS was a poor school with scarce resources (e.g., very few textbooks and no science equipment). KSS had 13 teachers, 11 male and two female. Ten of the teachers had been formerly trained and had teaching diplomas. Two teachers had completed only S6, and one had completed only S5; these three teachers were not formerly qualified as teachers. Six teachers (all male, including the headteacher) also taught at other schools (private as well as government-aided) to supplement their income. The teachers were poorly paid; they received approximately 70,000 to 100,000 shillings, or approximately $40-$55 US per month, and many of them had to spend a large portion of their salaries on transportation to get to the school, via taxi or boda-boda. In addition, the school was frequently late in paying their salaries, and teacher morale was often low. The financial struggles KSS experienced were directly reflective of the problems individual families faced: if parents

19 Although KSS had an education officer, who is responsible for inspecting the schools around Ganda Town, the officer did not visit/inspect the school, but simply sent employees from his office to collect the annual license fees.
were unable to pay school fees, KSS was unable to pay its teachers and other creditors. KSS was run by Mr. Masinde, and he, his two brothers and one sister also taught at the school and thus they had a long-term, personal stake in the school as a family business and source of livelihood.

Because KSS was such a poorly resourced school with many underqualified teachers, its fees were considerably less than at other, better-resourced schools in the area. Parry (2004) argues that lower school fees is one reason there were more female than male students as KSS; the girls were provided with the lesser-quality, cheaper education, while more money was invested in sending boys to better schools. The tuition fees for 2004 and 2005 (during the time this study was done) were 150,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately $80 US) a year for day students, and 450,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately $250 US) a year for boarders. Still, this was a significant financial outlay for many families in the area, as the majority of households in Uganda have a monthly income of less than $2/US a day, or less than $730 US per year, and the average rural household size is 5.3 persons (UBS, 2002). Thus, the per capita income is less than 40 cents US a day, or less than $150 US per year. In fact, I believe that many of the families of the students at KSS had incomes substantially lower than $730 US per year. Of the 12 girls who responded to a questionnaire (Appendix 4A-GOE), low school fees (11 of the 12 girls), school location (nine of the 12 girls), followed by the library facilities and the teachers/headteacher, were the primary reasons the girls and/or their parents had chosen KSS for a secondary education.

There was only one other secondary school (government-assisted) within five kilometres of KSS. Most of the other secondary schools were over 10 kilometres away. The closest government-funded school was about nine kilometres away. It was significantly better-resourced than KSS, with science labs, an in-school library (with a wide
variety of texts), some computers and better buildings. Its fees were more than double those of KSS (390,000 Ugandan shillings, or $215 US a year for day students; 750,000 Ugandan shillings, or $400 US for boarders). Other criteria for admission to this government-funded school included grades from the student’s previous school and

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Low school fees</th>
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Table 1 “Reasons for girls attending KSS”

evidence that parents would be able to pay school fees.

In addition to school fees, there were expenses such as fees for field trips, uniforms, and school supplies. Senior 4 was a particularly costly year for many students as they were expected to board at the school so they could devote as much time as possible to studying.

There were also examination fees (approximately $50 US) in S4 that were prohibitively expensive (in addition to all the other costs) for many families.\(^{20}\) Thus, student enrollment at the S3 and S4 levels tends to be significantly lower than at the S1 and S2 levels, and in cases where there are more girls than boys enrolled in schools at the S1/S2 levels, there

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\(^{20}\) In June 2005, Mr. Masinde approached me for help. Many of the S4 parents had come to him pleading for more time, until the maize harvest was done and they had earned some money to pay the fees for their children’s examination fees. Even though the exams are written in December, the fees must be paid the preceding June. I lent KSS about $500 US, and the fees were paid. Over time, the money for the fees trickled in, and I was fully reimbursed.
tends to be fewer girls than boys at the S3 and S4 levels. (Kwesiga, 2002). And, when it comes to A-Level, or S5 and S6, the number of students drops dramatically and the male:female ratio increases even more (Kwesiga, 2002).

The enrollment at KSS reflected this overall trend\(^{21}\). In 2005, there were more girls (120) than boys (102) enrolled at KSS. However, there were more girls than boys in the lower levels (Senior 1 and 2); by the upper levels (Senior 3 and 4), there were generally more boys than girls, especially in Senior 4, when the students were expected to board at the school in order to maximize their available study time to prepare for the end of year national examinations which determine whether the students will be able to advance to the final level of secondary school (Senior 5 and 6). For example, the S3 class at the beginning of the school year in January 2004 had 21 girls and 22 boys; at the beginning of the following school year (2005) for the same cohort of students, having transitioned to S4, there were only 15 girls, compared to 22 boys.

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Table 2  KSS Enrolment 2001-2005

It is not possible to make any definitive statements of gendered trends of educational attainments or drop outs from this survey as KSS is only one small village school; furthermore, there were several variables such as changing schools that accounted for school attendance. For example, three of the girls I began working with at KSS in S3

\[^{21}\text{Unfortunately, no data was available for the year 2002, or the number of students in S2 in 2001.}\]
enrolled in other schools for S4 in 2005. Also, it was common for students to leave school for a year or two, and then return when they had money for school fees. There were also some students who repeated grades. Nonetheless, this survey of KSS students does generally indicate that, overall (except for in 2003) more boys than girls completed S4. In addition, the more the school population increased over time, the greater that discrepancy between female and male completion rates became.

2.8 Conclusion

Uganda, like most African countries, has suffered from the harsh repercussions of colonialism, development and the global, neoliberal, economic agenda. Uganda has had neither the time nor the resources to develop its own formal education system, so formal schooling remains rooted in the British colonial educational institution, and has been shaped over the last several decades in accordance with global education and social initiatives such as the WDEFA, the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs, as well as with catastrophic development approaches, such as SAPS. Uganda’s education system is, like most Southern countries, extremely reliant on international financial support, so there is a need to meet external demands and objectives. Although these external directives embody important social justice components, such as gender equity and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society, rarely is there sufficient funding to implement the necessary programming effectively, and many of the policies exist as paper-only documents. Although Uganda’s implementation of UPE has been widely praised, especially as gender parity (in terms of access) has essentially been reached, UPE continues to have serious problems with respect to educational quality, infrastructure, resources,
pedagogical approaches, student retention and completion. In addition, Uganda’s primary schools (as well as secondary schools) are far from being gender equitable.\textsuperscript{22}

Nonetheless, UPE has created a new population of adolescent girls and boys, such as that at KSS, who are currently seeking secondary level education. A dearth of government and government-aided secondary schools has resulted in a “mushrooming” (Kwesiga, 2002) of private schools of vastly varying quality to meet this demand. The conditions of many of these schools, like KSS, are poor and lacking in basic resources (e.g., text books, fully qualified teachers, and science facilities and equipment), and yet, to some extent, the schools are serving a need. The GOU introduced USE in 2007 as a way to provide more secondary level education opportunities, but the GOU’s financial resources are limited, and it will take many years before secondary level education, of satisfactory quality, is available to all students who seek it. KSS seems to be typical of many privately-owned secondary schools that are serving an important niche in the Ugandan formal education system. It is important to understand the environments and experiences of girls who attend schools such as KSS, to inform national and international policies that have as their focus gender equity in education.

These international and national policies and initiatives concerning girls’ education are discussed in Chapter 3, as are various historical and ideological approaches to gender and education in the international development discourse in general, as well as in Uganda, specifically. Gathering in these various aspects that contribute to girls’ education in Uganda, I propose a theoretical framework combining Sen (1999) and Nussbaum’s (2003a) approach to capabilities, and Norton’s (2000) conception of imagined identities, to create the lens of “agency and possibility” through which I interpret this study.

\textsuperscript{22} This will be discussed at length in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3: 15 GIRLS AT THE HEART OF GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

“When 189 heads of state signed the Millennium Declaration in 2000, they recognized that educating girls is a powerful and necessary first step towards ending poverty and achieving human rights. They made gender parity in primary and secondary education the very first of all the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets they set themselves”

(Global Campaign for Education, 2005, p. 1)

The 15 girls at KSS who participated in this study neither connected their lives to the sprawling and complicated web of global initiatives and national policies focused on girls and education; nor were they aware of gender and development theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, these girls did not spend a great deal of time considering the possible relationship between girls’ education and a more equitable world. They clearly had enough to occupy their thoughts as they struggled to find school fees, pass exams, and cope with illness and the numerous other problems they faced. However, these girls and millions of other girls in similar socioeconomic and gender inequitable situations around the world are the target recipients of programmes such as EFA and the MDGs. They constitute a key population that gender and development theories are hoped to reach through meaningful change in global and national policy and programming, but most importantly through a radical ideological shift in understanding gender-based needs and rights. These 15 Ugandan adolescent girls were situated at the interface between global and national discourse and the local realities of gender inequity and education and “development”, and this chapter attempts to explore those interstices. The first part of this chapter explores the various ways in which education for girls and women has been considered, valued and approached within the gender and development paradigm. Then, it provides an overview of the official
discourse of gender in Uganda, followed by a historical view of gender and education in Uganda. The chapter concludes with a discussion of theoretical frameworks that this study draws upon.

3.1 The Importance of Education for Girls and Women

“The cycle of poverty can still be broken for teenage girls...Unfortunately, most intervention programmes by national governments and international donor agencies usually target either young girls aged six to 14 or older women” (Egbo, 2000, p. 167).

“The education of girls and women is advocated for their families, their countries, and our future, that is for everyone but the girls themselves” (Unterhalter, 2005b, p. 112).

The benefits that literate, educated women bring to their societies have validated investment in girls’ education for the past few decades. For example, health indicators associated with educated women include a decrease in child mortality, improved nutrition, healthier children, and increased immunization of children (Egbo, 2000; Fallon, 1995; Global Campaign for Education, 2005; Manlongat, 1997; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Stromquist, 1990; Shrestha, 1997), as well as increased awareness of family planning and sexual health (Shrestha, 1997; Stromquist, 1990). Educated women also tend to have fewer children (Egbo, 2000; Fallon, 1999; Feldman, 2005; Shrestha, 1997; Stromquist, 1990), and as a result, are better able to care for the children they do have. Educated women have overall healthier, better educated families; they tend to place a high value on education and try to ensure that both their daughters and sons are able to go to school (Fallon, 1999; Geiger, 2002; Kehrberg, 1996; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Stromquist, 1990). Educated
women are also able to participate more fully in economic and political activities (Kwesiga, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003; Pitamber & Chatterji).

Although it is widely assumed that girls’ education benefits society in multitudinous ways\textsuperscript{23}, girls and women in developing countries continue to have significantly lower educational access and attainment rates than boys and men (UNDP, 2005; UNESCO, 2005; World Economic Forum, 2005), and the educational opportunities that do exist rarely meet their needs or provide them with either quality education or gender equity in education (Unterhalter, 2005). There are many reasons for this, which will be discussed at length in the following chapters, but they are almost inevitably rooted in gender discrimination and the imbalance of power rooted in local as well as global socioeconomic and political environments and practices (Nussbaum, 2003; Stromquist, 1990; Subrahamanian, 2005; Unterhalter, 2005), as well as (or resulting in) restrictive assumptions of the ways in which education should benefit and empower girls and societies (Fiedrich, 2004; Robinson-Pant, 2004a/b).

Typical indicators of the value of girls and women’s education, as discussed above, have important societal implications, but as Fiedrich (2004) points out, these indicators do not reflect the “liberation” or “empowerment” of women, but rather their “domestication” (Fiedrich, 2004, p. 220). In his evaluation of the effects of REFLECT, a Freirian-based adult literacy course, on women in a Ugandan village, Fiedrich (2004) draws attention to “empowerment narratives” associated with literacy and education that often assume that “to become empowered is…synonymous with becoming community-minded, health-conscious, economically prudent and, on the whole, morally upright” (p. 220). Thus the (not so) hidden agenda behind education for girls and women is its net benefit to society –

\textsuperscript{23} Some, however, contest this assumption that girls’ and women’s education necessarily benefits them directly, or benefits their society in general (Robinson-Pant, 2004).
that is by improving conditions, to be achieved by maintaining the ideological/
sociocultural/political status quo. Under these circumstances, with these anticipated
outcomes, education is neither meant to empower girls and women to become autonomous
agents, nor is it intended to support their personal goals, desires for, and visions of the
future.

Within this paradigm, girls and women are regarded as being *instrumental to* but
not *agents of* societal change and development. Girls’ educational opportunities, therefore,
often hinge largely on whether their education is believed to produce desired outcomes (as
conceived by existing hegemonic authority) for society. This type of instrumental,
culturally-bound (and often paternalistic) valuation that determines the degree of access to,
and quality of girls’ education prevents many girls around the world from having full
access to education, even though their exclusion contravenes international agreements and
objectives, such as EFA and the MDGs, as well as basic human rights, such as those
embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28), the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325,
state that ALL individuals have a right to education.

Because the discussion around girls and women’s education has been preoccupied
with the basic issue of *access*, there has consequently been a grave lack of consideration
and dialogue about what girls’ education *should offer*: “*[o]nly recently have questions
been raised about the purpose of educating women [and girls], challenging the efficiency
arguments of the past*” (Robinson-Pant, 2004a, p. 1). However, these questions have been
catalytic to the generation of theories of, and approaches to girls’ education that reframe its
value in terms of its importance in cultivating, for example, empowerment and autonomy,
as well as providing skills and knowledge that enable girls and women to have the freedom
and support they need to realize their personal aspirations. It is argued that if girls and
women are to assume leading roles in development, they need the capabilities that will enable them to participate and transform their societies (Sen, 1999; Unterhalter, 2005). But, in an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of the purely instrumental argument for girls’ and women’s education, the complementary argument is that if girls and women are able to receive a quality education, which supports their capability development, autonomy and agency, they will be in a very strong position to contribute to their communities, if they so choose.

3.2 Gender and Education in the International Development Discourse

Embedded within the discourse and practices of international development are four main theoretical frameworks that reflect the evolution of the relationship between gender and development spanning from the 1970s to present (Unterhalter, 2005). These are: Women In Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD), Poststructuralism, and Human Development. These theories represent the underlying ideologies by which women are/have been characterized and included in the development process; they also reflect how women all over the world have begun to reimagine their roles in local as well as global contexts, and shape their identities, with sights set upon a future in which their rights will not only be recognized, but also institutionalized. What follows is a consideration of how these four main frameworks of gender and development intersect with education and the larger development discourse(s).

3.2.1 “Women in Development” (WID)

Initially, development was presented through an ideology of modernization which emphasized technological development, industrialization, agricultural science and the building of physical infrastructure to facilitate trade and economic growth that mimicked
“development” in Northern countries (Bhola, 1987; Connelly et al, 2000; Lazreg, 2002). Modernization assumed a welfare approach (Moser, 1993) with regards to women, who were seen to be passive recipients of aid. Women’s importance to the development process was solely in terms of their reproductive capacities; they were included in the development process primarily as a way in which to achieve development goals such as decreased population growth and the immunization of children (Moser, 1993; Tinker, 1997; Visvanathan et al, 1997). Ester Boserup’s (1970) seminal book, *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, took a critical look at development programmes and ideologies and concluded that “they ignored women and that many technologically sophisticated projects undermined women’s economic opportunities and autonomy” (Connelly et al, 2000, p. 56). Boserup refuted the human capital theoretical assumption that women would benefit from the trickle down effects of development.

At this time, women worldwide who were frustrated with the neglect of women’s issues and involvement in development policy and programming began lobbying for gender equity as a fundamental component of development programming criteria. As a result, the framework of Women in Development (WID) emerged in the 1970s as the first development theory to specifically identify women as key agents in development. WID stressed the necessity of the inclusion of women in development projects, and the importance of providing access to schooling for girls in order to achieve social gains in areas such as family health, lower rates of infant mortality, longer life-spans, as well as increased economic productivity and opportunities (King & Hill, 1993; Walter, 2004). Yet WID failed to address the many systemic barriers to the emancipation, equity and well-being of women in the developing world as WID worked within the human capital theory which measured development solely by economic gain (Robeyns, 2006; Todaro & Smith, 2003), where the value of education is strictly instrumental (i.e., its value is determined by
the individual’s potential to earn an income). Because men and boys had better employment opportunities, the instrumental approach to the valuation of education provided a rational, economic basis upon which to exclude girls and women from educational opportunities.

Another problem with the WID framework with respect to education is that the definition of gender is synonymous with sexual attributes (Unterhalter, 2004), and is not understood to be a social construct, inextricably linked to social context and culture. In line with the WID definition of gender, indicators of gender equity in education are entirely quantitative (i.e., based on access to schooling, gross enrolment rates (GERs), and net enrolment rates (NERs)). Quantitative assessments can neither measure nor are concerned with educational quality, content and delivery. Furthermore, they cannot assess the conditions under which girls participate in education.

WID practice is not much concerned with the content of what girls learn, how they learn, or whether gender inequalities face them after their years in school are over...the stress in WID practice is on bringing girls into school and ensuring that they learn appropriately. (Unterhalter, 2005a, p. 18)

Because the quality, educational content and school environment are not assessed within the WID/human capital framework, this framework effectively promotes preservation of the cultural, academic and institutional status quo, and education is typically delivered within a male-dominated school culture which enforces and perpetuates stereotyped gender

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24 Even these indicators are highly problematic as they do not provide information on regular attendance, retention, and drop-out rates. A further complication is the fact that in countries such as Uganda, where many births are not registered, the actual number of children is not known.
roles and gender inequalities (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Tikly, 2003).

Easier access to education is possibly the only benefit for girls under the WID framework, and, under international and government-sponsored programmes, support for access is limited to primary school. Unfortunately, schooling for girls in many, if not most, Southern countries has stalled within the WID paradigm. Nevertheless, WID strategies successfully and dramatically increased girls’ attendance at school in many Southern countries through government and international programmes and funding, as well as, in some cases, the creation and enforcement of laws and rights pertaining to access to education. In addition, WID anchored girls and women’s issues in a conspicuous and unrelenting position at the table of international development priorities.

3.2.2 “Gender and Development” (GAD)

The Gender And Development (GAD) discourse emerged as an alternative to, and/or revision of WID. GAD was shaped by feminist, Marxist, structuralist theories that recognized and articulated the inextricable interrelatedness of economic well-being, sociopolitical power, health and education, insisting that the “first step in women’s advancement is to provide conditions for men and women to surmount poverty” (Young, 1997, p. 53). GAD proponents claimed that national governments had a critical role to play in promoting and enforcing gender-equity policy and programming, as well as supporting the poor in their efforts to overcome poverty, illiteracy and serious health problems (Njiro, 1999; Young, 1997).

GAD theory sought to problematize the terms gender and development and their relationship to each other, as this was a serious deficiency in the WID framework. GAD defined gender as a socially-constructed identity with a direct relationship to power (Njiro,
Therefore, in order to have any influence in development, women needed to be included in all aspects of decision-making, and gender needed to be mainstreamed in all programming, policy-making and political and economic activities. GAD-based organizations and networks constructed the scaffolding for locally-informed, gender equitable, socioeconomically-relevant development programming and policy based on the experiences and knowledges of the women they intended to benefit.

GAD theorists considered *development* in terms of the life situations of girls and women within the multiple spheres in which they interacted (e.g., domestic, social, political) and identified and differentiated between “practical gender needs”, such as food, water and shelter, and “strategic gender interests”, or “[those which will] help women to achieve greater equality, thereby changing existing roles and challenging women’s subordinate position (Geiger, 2002, p. 6). Within this framework, action was taken to prevent physical/emotional/sexual violence against women, to reform discriminatory laws and sociopolitical practices, and to rectify the gender imbalance in government and the workplace (Kabeer, 1994; Molyneux, 1998; Moser, 1993; Unterhalter, 2005). GAD resulted in important changes, such as gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting at institutional/government levels where women have assumed some decision-making and policy-making positions. What is lacking from much of GAD theory, however, is clear articulation of the role education plays in the empowerment of girls and women. Overall, there is “[v]ery little writing on gender, education, and development engaged with these GAD debates, and it is unclear whether education can be categorised as a practical gender need or a strategic gender interest” (Unterhalter, 2005a, p. 21). Thus, GAD has had little, if any, effect on formal schooling practices.
3.2.3 Poststructuralism

Gender and development theory rooted in poststructuralism inspired an important global debate about the nature of “knowledge”, “identity” and “power” with respect to women and international development. Feminist poststructuralism challenged the “epistemology of ‘insiderness’” (Reinharz, 1992: 158; in Wolf, 1996b, p. 12) of standpoint theory (Smith, 1987; Harding, 1991) that claimed that women can understand other women’s experiences because they share the common experience of oppression in the (patriarchal) world through the lens of woman. Third World²⁵ feminists rejected common experience as a superficially essentialist notion; they argued that the experiences of women from/in the First World are not generalisable to the experiences of women in Third World countries (Lal, 1996). Many Third World feminists, however, took issue with a singular definition/understanding of “The Third World Woman”, as being equally essentialist and argued that a single definition meant to encompass all women in the Third World could not possibly accurately or meaningfully reflect the very many different circumstances and conditions under which women live throughout the world (Lal, 1996).

This charged and important debate served to unleash an impassioned, profound, global dialogue amongst women. This dialogue made critical contributions to development theory by establishing the importance of recognizing and respecting the great scope of women’s experiences in various global contexts, but at the same time, resisting the appropriation of those experiences, or “othering” individuals based on their different experiences. This dialogue acknowledged universal (if different in terms of level and manifestation) oppression of women in a (still) patriarchal world, and yet honoured the

²⁵ In this discussion I employ the terms Third World and First World women/feminists, reflecting the terminology used in poststructural/postmodern feminism.
deep degrees of complexity of each woman’s own experiences. It acknowledged that aspects of those experiences of oppression might be shared with a local community, a region, a nation, various nations and parts of the world. Poststructuralism also embodied historical (colonial as well as Indigenous) contextualization when considering contemporary issues (Spivak, 2000; Mama, 1997), and it proposed “an imagined community of postcolonial intellectuals that rise above national, racial and gendered boundaries in the articulation of politically responsible representations” (Lal, 1996, p. 200).

Poststructuralism made valuable contributions to the conceptualizations and reconfiguring of gender and development, and it has immense potential to inform the content, delivery and contextuality of education for girls and women. There has not been much work done in the area of gender, education and development using the poststructuralist framework (Unterhalter, 2005a), but the present study does use feminist poststructural ethnography as a methodological framework, which has been helpful in positioning both the participants and researcher in larger (i.e., global and historical) socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts.

3.2.4 Gender and Education Within the Human Development Framework

“[W]hat ultimately matters is not just the proclamation that we all have a right to education, or the effective protection of that right, but whatever it takes policy makers, and others who are in a position to contribute, to work towards a high-quality education for all, as part of a more comprehensive view on what we owe to each other, and especially to children, in a just society and just world” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 83).

The human development framework, which emerged alongside poststructuralism in the 1990s, is theoretically connected to the “capability approach”, developed by Amartya

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26 Feminist poststructuralism will be considered at length in Chapter 4
Sen (1980; 1984; 1992; 1999). As discussed above, the Human Development Index (HDI), for which Sen was a consultant for the UN emerged as an alternative perspective to the human capital theory to understandings of development, and included evaluative components such as personal well-being, access to health and education, and full participation in society (Saito, 2003). As argued in Chapter 2, Sen states that development must be understood as a holistic concept, involving one’s mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social conditions, as well as one’s economic situation. To measure development by economic indicators alone is misleading, incomplete and lacking in basic humanitarian considerations.

Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with – and influencing – the world in which we live. (Sen, 1999, pp. 14-15)

The capability approach is centrally concerned with “freedom to achieve in general and the capabilities to function in particular” (Sen, 1995, p. 266; in Saito, 2003, p. 18) in order to “lead the kind of life [one has] reason to value” (Sen, 1999 p. 14). From a policy standpoint, the relationship between the capability approach and the HDI has “[led] governments to direct their policy efforts toward different ends – providing health and education for all citizens, and supporting a sustainable environment and a sustainable living standard” (Pressman & Summerfield, 2000, p. 102; in Saito, 2003, p. 23). Thus, an emphasis is placed on providing education and health care to ALL citizens, with the intent of promoting equity and eliminating “educational deprivation” (Saito, 2003).

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27 Amartya Sen and his contributions to development theory are introduced in Chapter 2.
Instead of understanding the value of education for girls and women primarily in terms of its net benefit to society, the capability theory considers how education can best benefit girls and women as individuals, how it can help provide them with choices, and develop the agency, capabilities and freedoms necessary to enable their full participation in their societies (Feldman, 2005). Thus, the capability approach values education both intrinsically and instrumentally; education can be valued for itself (intrinsic), and it can be valued as a basic capability that is foundational to other capabilities and functionings, such as “agency” (instrumental).

3.3 The Official Discourse on Gender in Uganda

Gender equity is ideologically embedded in the Constitution of Uganda (1995). In fact, “Uganda is acclaimed as having one of the most gender sensitive constitutions in Africa” (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 33; see also ADF, 2000; Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2005). The Constitution states: “All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law” (Article 21). Article 33 is concerned specifically with the “Rights of Women”, and recognizes the necessity of state intervention to redress systemic and historic gender inequalities. For example, the Constitution asserts that the State will “provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential” (33 (2)), and states that “women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom” (33 (5)), and asserts that “Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status are prohibited by this Constitution” (33 (6)). The Constitution consistently states equal rights
for all people in all spheres, including education: “All persons have a right to an education” (Article 30) (GOU, 1995).

The GOU is also party to several international and regional conferences, initiatives and agreements in which the promotion of gender equity, empowerment and protection and girls and women’s education have been prioritized28. In order to fulfill its commitment to gender equity, the GOU has established various bodies to create, implement and evaluate gender-sensitive policy, as well as represent women’s interests.29 In 1997, the GOU approved the National Gender Policy (1997) which “provides the operational framework for mainstreaming gender in the national development process. The policy is an integral part of the national development policy, complements all sectoral policies and provides a framework for designing, planning, resource allocation and implementation of development programmes with a gender perspective” (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2005, p. 3). This policy calls for equal relations between women and men, and recognizes the importance of the full and equal participation in all aspects of society for the development of the nation. The policy identifies four crucial areas of emphasis: poverty, income generation and economic empowerment; legal framework and decision making; reproductive health rights; and the

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29 The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), as well as a number of other mechanisms (i.e., the National Women’s Council and the Directorate of Gender and Mass Mobilisation in the Movement Secretariat, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Uganda Law Reform Commission, Uganda Parliamentary Women’s Association and the National Association of Women’s Organisations in Uganda) that promote women’s empowerment. The MGLSD (established in 1988 under the name of the Ministry of Women in Development) represents the interests of Ugandan women at national level and is responsible for gender mainstreaming.
girl child and education. In 1999, in response to the Beijing Platform for Action resulting from the Fourth World Conference for Women (1995), the MGLSD drew up a National Action Plan for Women (NAPW). This five-year plan (1999-2004) reiterated the four areas of priority of the NGP, as well as violence against women and peace-building. It also stated objectives, priorities, indicators and implementation strategies to assist women to achieve full and equal participation in all aspects of the development process.

However, the NGP and NAPW were not given sufficient financial or human resources. There were inadequate guidelines for implementing and monitoring gender mainstreaming initiatives, the institutional framework for mainstreaming gender concerns was weak, and there were no timelines within which to measure effectiveness. For these reasons, in 2005 a revised National Gender Policy (NGP2) was drafted “to establish a clear framework for identification, implementation and coordination of interventions designed to achieve gender equity and women’s empowerment in Uganda. The policy is a guide to all stakeholders in planning, resource allocation and implementation of programmes with a gender perspective” (GOU, 2005, p. 17). Its objectives include the reduction of gender inequalities, the promotion of the awareness of human rights, building capacity and opportunities for women in public decision-making and giving serious consideration to gender issues in macro-economic policies.

The NGP2 is anchored in the Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) approaches to gender, and it clearly states how these approaches, as well as terms such as “gender”, “gender equity”, “gender gap”, “gender equity” are defined\(^\text{30}\). Importantly, the NGP2 recognizes gender as a social construct and gender inequalities as systemic, pervasive and unjust. The NGP2 has four priority action areas: livelihoods, rights, governance, and macro-economic management. Education (formal and

\(^{30}\) I have provided these definitions in Appendix E.
informal) is key to all of these areas for developing the capabilities and agency necessary to achieve the stated goals.

Gender issues have also been included as main components of national policies and strategies, such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The initial PEAP was developed in 1997, revised in 2000, and presented as Uganda’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). In 2002, a PEAP Gender Team was formed to give further attention to specific issues of gender and create guidelines around gender for the various government sectors involved. Various studies commissioned by the GOU31 between 2002 and 2004 show that some of the biggest obstacles to gender equity include women’s lack of control over resources, women’s unequal access to employment (income-earning) opportunities, women’s lack of decision-making power, the unequal distribution of labour, and gender gaps in education. The PEAP 2004 addresses these findings and “deals with gender as one of the main cross-cutting issues of development” (Canagarajah, 2005).

International support for gender mainstreaming within Uganda’s PEAP and for the work of the MGLSD includes the World Bank, the Danish International Development Association (DANIDA), the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) and the Netherlands government. There has been additional support for gender and women’s development initiatives through international organizations such as SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency), DANIDA, NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) and GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit). Within the 1997, 2000 and 2004 PEAPs, gender and

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31 Studies referred to are: i)The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process/Second Participatory Poverty Assessment (UPPAP/PPA2); ii) the Ministry of Justice’s gender analysis of the Justice, Law and Order Sector; iii) Gender Analysis of the Uganda National Household Surveys (1992-2003) – Background paper for the Revision of Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). (Lawson, 2003); iv) a research report by Stephan Klasen on the connections between gender and growth; v) a document review on linkages between gender and poverty; and vi) a Poverty and Social Impact Assessment (PSIA) of Uganda’s Strategic Export Initiative.
education were emphasized as priorities. Under the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP), the education sector strategy for education for the 1997 PEAP, the National Strategy for Girls’ Education in Uganda (NSGE) was developed. Until recently, the emphasis on girls’ education has been at the primary level, but the 2004 PEAP stressed the need to strive for gender equity in post-primary education, as well. In addition, Uganda has committed itself to achieving the MDGs, including gender equity at all levels of education by 2015.

Despite the GOU’s global and national commitments to gender equity, and its many efforts and initiatives to support those commitments, gender discrimination remains rampant and entrenched in Uganda. The African Development Fund’s 2005 Multi-Sector Gender Profile of Uganda points to gender inequalities in virtually all societal domains and relates these to poverty, land ownership, labour, access to and control over resources, access to social services, and ill-health and under-development. In a paper prepared for the United Nations’ Division of the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group meeting in 2004, Bantebya-Kyomuhendo identified obstacles to achieving gender equity goals in Uganda; these include problems with coordinating programmes and activities, lack of sufficient funding from the government, ineffectiveness of the gender representatives (Gender Focal Points) in the various government ministries, lack of training for gender officers, ‘tokenism’ with regards to women’s participation in government (i.e., affirmative action treated as a ‘maximum’ not a ‘minimum’), persistence of laws that discriminate against women, and the failure of the passing of the Domestic Relations Bill (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2005). The Uganda NGP2 document identifies persistent problems relating to gender including: more women than men living in poverty, women’s lack of control over livelihood assets (i.e., land), unequal distribution of labour (women work between 12-18 hours a day in comparison to men’s eight to 10 hour workdays), unequal access to the legal
system, gender-based violence, early marriages, early pregnancies, unequal employment and income-earning opportunities, and women’s lack of political involvement and representation (GOU, 2005).

Gender inequity in education has been identified both as a problem in and of itself, and as an underlying cause of persistent gender inequities in society: girls and women who are illiterate, or who have not had access to more than a very basic education do not possess the necessary skills and/or knowledge to fully participate in various spheres of society (Kwesiga, 2002). Thus, education is pivotal in this effort to achieve gender equity in all aspects of society. But, the kind and quality of education that is available to girls and women are of the utmost importance.

3.4 Historical Context of Gender and Education in Uganda

In Uganda, girls have largely been excluded from, or under-prioritized in terms of education. This is largely symptomatic of the entrenched gendered roles and inequities that have been an enduring aspect of Ugandan society (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002). It has been argued that precolonial education, although gendered, did not discriminate against girls – that girls and women were simply expected to perform different tasks than boys and men. The Ugandan Government’s ‘White Paper’ of 1992 states: “the precolonial education systems in Uganda did not discriminate against any sex group. Education at that time provided knowledge, skills, values and morality that were conducive to multi-skilled cultural and economic production, as well as for beneficial social living” (GOU, 1992, p. 162). This claim of non-discrimination in education in precolonial Uganda, however, is a contentious one (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002).

In traditional Ugandan society, girls in early adolescence would marry and move directly from their parents’ home to their husband’s home, and begin to have their own
children and take charge of the domestic aspects of their new households. As a result of the patriarchal and polygamous structure of Ugandan society, women were subordinate to men in almost all areas of life – especially young adolescent girls who were often second or third wives of older men. There were clearly demarcated gender roles with associated behavioural expectations; girls and women were relegated primarily to reproducing, caring for family members, growing, harvesting and preparing food, and maintaining the home. They were often considered to be the property of their husbands and expected to obey them as well as show deference to other men in the community (Kwesiga, 2002).

The advent of formal, colonial schooling in the late 19th Century resulted in widening and exacerbating existing gender disparities in education (GOU, 1992; Musisi, 2001; Pankhurst, 2002). There were some educational opportunities available to girls, but the few girls who received anything more than basic, primary-level schooling were educated to become “fitting” wives for educated Ugandan men employed by the colonial government (Ssekamwa, 2000, p. 45). For example, the Nsuube High School for Girls, founded by the Mill Hill Fathers, was established with the specific intention of providing “appropriate” wives for boys from Namilyango College” (Ssekamwa, 2000). Educated girls and women were expected, to a large degree, to mirror the “homemaking” roles of their European counterparts (Musisi, 2001), and their schooling was concerned with the acquisition of such homemaking skills (GOU, 1992), not academic content matter or critical analysis that might lead to the challenging of inequitable, normative practices and beliefs.

The Ugandan government began assuming responsibility for education from 1925 through the Directorate of Education. Although it greatly increased accessibility to public education, especially throughout the 1950s and 1960s, girls and women were still, for the
It was not until the Castle Commission of 1963, the year following Independence, that a more democratic, egalitarian educational system, one that acknowledged the importance of providing girls with educational opportunities, was proposed (GOU, 1992). However, efforts to implement many of the Castle Commission’s recommendations were thwarted by the civil unrest of the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, gender equity in education became a significant issue of national concern again only in 1992 with the GOU’s White Paper. The White Paper’s Chapter Nine, *Democratisation of Education,* considers education for women and girls at length. It acknowledges systemic gender inequities (GOU, 1992), and identifies various obstacles such as patriarchal cultural norms, inadequate facilities, unequal distribution of domestic labour, early marriages and pregnancies, poverty, lack of female teachers, counselors and administrators, lack of educational and employment opportunities, and sexual harassment/abuse in providing equal access to education for girls. The White Paper acknowledges the 1963 Commission’s findings that “[s]ocial and cultural factors, such as those relating to our patrilineal society…influence many parents to prefer sending boys rather than girls to school” (GOU, 1992, p. 163).

In the White Paper, the GOU committed itself to ensuring that “adequate physical and instructional facilities for girls and women in the existing and all new educational institutions” (GOU, 1992, p. 165) were made, that “[s]pecial incentives and concessions will be provided to stimulate further and encourage more girls’ and women’s effective participation in education at all levels and in both the formal and non-formal sectors...and therefore remove the forced inferior and backward social position of women” (GOU, 1992, p. 165).

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32 There were some educational opportunities for girls from wealthy/high status families at elite schools such as Gayaza, Mount St. Mary’s Namagunga and King’s College Budo, but the numbers of girls who had access to these institutions were very limited. Nevertheless, some of the girls who had been educated in these schools have constituted a core group of well-educated women who have assumed leadership roles in Uganda.
p. 165) amongst other measures. The GOU’s Implementation Strategy for this included such measures as quotas, recruitment of female teachers, lecturers and administrator, as well as more opportunities for girls and women to participate in the cash economy, informal educational opportunities for young mothers and pregnant girls and increased enforcement of legal measures meant to protect girls against sexual and physical harassment, abuse and assault (GOU, 1992).

On January 1, 1997, the GOU introduced UPE, upholding its commitment to EFA: “The shift from exclusive elitist education to mass and inclusive basic Education For All is one significant and successful education reform in line with the global EFA and MDG targets” (MoES, 2004, p. 2). Gender equity is a core component of UPE, and UPE has been tremendously successful in terms of providing access to education for girls in Uganda, although there are other concerns about gender inequities (discussed below). The GOU is, in fact, considered to be “exceptionally pro-active in addressing many important gender issues” (Canagarajah, 2005, ¶ 19), and several other educational initiatives with a focus on gender equity in education have been undertaken, implemented or embodied in policies and/or programming. Most of the GOU’s educational budget has been focused on outcomes in primary education, but Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) is also geared towards eliminating gender disparities and inequalities in education at the secondary level, and hopefully many of these primary school programmes, or similar ones, will be expanded to include post-primary education as well. However, despite the impressive number of programmes and policies that are meant to address gender equity in

33 These include a revised, more gender-sensitive primary curriculum, extra points accorded to women applying to university to increase female enrolment at the tertiary level, the USAID-funded Equity in the Classroom (EIC) programme, the Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE) and the Alternative Basic Education for Karamojo (ABEK) programmes, the Classroom Construction Grant (CCG), the Promotion of Girls Education (PGE) programme, participation in the Girls’ Education Movement in Africa (GEM), the UNICEF-sponsored Child Friendly School programme, the Girls and Focussing Resources for Effective School Health (FRESH) programme, the establishment of the Gender Desk at the MoES, and the National Strategy for Girls’ Education (NSGE) (Kakuru, 2003).
education, their actual implementation, monitoring and evaluation have been problematic (Kakuru, 2003; Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Lack of adequate financial and human resources, insufficient coordination and information-sharing, and a dearth of structural support at the national level have hindered their effectiveness.

Despite the fact that the implementation of UPE successfully doubled the number of girls attending primary school – from 1.4 million in 1996 to 3 million in 1999 (Seel & Gibbard, 2000), and that by 2003 the goal of gender parity had been effectively reached (Kwesiga, 2003; MoES, 2004), enrolment figures do not translate into completion figures, and many children, more girls than boys, drop out of primary school. There is a significant amount of research, reports and practical knowledge available pertaining to barriers girls face in terms of access to, and achievement in, education, but little of this was effectively integrated into the GOU’s ESIP (Seel & Gibbard, 2000). Within the ESIP, gender is specifically mentioned under the first Strategic Priority Objective, “Permanent gains in equitable access at all levels”, and some efforts, such as the School Facilities Grant, which required schools to provide separate-sex toilet facilities, did integrate gender equity policy into actual educational practice. But gender concerns seem to stall at access, in the WID framework, and concerns about gender equity did not constitute an underlying, central component of the document. Not surprisingly, therefore, “‘equitable quality’ is not strongly articulated in the expenditure programme outlines” (Seel & Gibbard, 2000, p. 6). Thus, neither measures to determine and promote gender equity in education, nor effective mechanisms were established for widespread sharing of information on projects and programmes concerning gender issues. Thus, the NSGE became a policy that paralleled the ESIP, but it was not incorporated within it (Seel & Gibbard, 2000).
3.5 Theoretical Considerations for the Meaningful Assessment of Girls’ Education

The overview of girls’ education in Uganda, provided in the first half of this chapter, outlines many key factors that prevent girls from receiving an equal and quality education, and the failure of gender and development theory and related policies and praxis to effectively address them. Girls’ education has either been measured in terms of access (i.e., GERs or NERs), such as in the WID framework, or has not been given due attention, such as in the GAD and Feminist Poststructural frameworks. GAD recognized the importance of education for girls, but it did not focus on education in terms of specific policies around achieving gender equity in education. Feminist Postructuralism was instrumental in opening up dialogue between feminists throughout the world, but it remained primarily a global intellectual movement with few on-the-ground, practical implications for girls’ education. Thus, these three frameworks have not sufficiently articulated girls’ specific educational needs, the barriers to their education, and knowledge/recognition of the ways in which gendered dimensions of society infiltrate and shape girls’ educational experiences.

What is required is a paradigmatic shift; girls’ education needs to be taken seriously as a basic human right that must be enforced. It is imperative, therefore, that what is sought are not simply vague ruminations on, if, or how education should be made available to girls, but specific articulations about how best to provide high quality, gender equitable education and educational experiences to enable girls to achieve agency, autonomy and means by which to realize their personal goals. This section will consider the three theoretical frameworks that I will use to position and inform my study, with the intention of contributing to a new paradigmatic perspective through which to view girls’ education.
3.5.1 The Capabilities Approach

“...there is no culture in which people do not ask themselves what they are able to do and what opportunities they have for functioning” (Nussbaum, 2003a, p. 39).

“If I [am] not educated, I ...you are what? You are a woman ...end up being mistreated by those educated..men” [excerpt from interview with Penina; October, 2004].

Sen (1999) considers individual well-being as determined by the value with which one regards one’s own life. Well-being and self-worth are linked to the ability one has to develop the capabilities (i.e., the ability to achieve “functionings”, outcomes, or actual achievements) in order to fully participate within one’s community and pursue one’s aspirations. Thus, freedom, measured by the scope one has within one’s society to achieve such functionings, is the measurement of development. Freedom is associated with autonomy and agency: an individual who can achieve functionings, or who can attain his or her goals in various domains, is someone who “acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives.” (Sen, 1999, p. 19). That is, an individual who achieves functionings embodies agency. Sen outlines the relationship between women’s agency and their overall well-being:

Perhaps the most immediate argument for focusing on women’s agency may be precisely the role that such an agency can play in removing the iniquities that depress the well-being of women...the relative respect and regard for women’s well-being is strongly influenced by such variables as women’s ability to earn an independent income, to have literacy and be educated participants in discussions within and outside the family. (Sen, 1999, p. 191)
Although Sen identifies girls and women’s education as central to their well-being and agency, he does not describe what that education might look like. Other scholars, however, such as Saito (2003), Unterhalter and Brighouse (2004) and Nussbaum (2003) have demonstrated there is ample evidence from Sen’s work to convincingly argue the interrelatedness, as well as interdependence, of the development of capabilities and education, as well as the relationship between capabilities, education and gender equity.

Saito (2003) argues: “on the one hand, education is an important factor in broadening human capabilities, which include human capacities. On the other hand, human capabilities play a role in influencing both intrinsic and instrumental values…education [is] concerned with both intrinsic and instrumental value” (p. 25). Building upon this, Unterhalter and Brighouse (2004) consider education from three perspectives of value: instrumental, intrinsic and positional. Education is of instrumental value in that it may be used to achieve “functionings”, such as employment or agency, but it also has intrinsic value (i.e., it is valuable in and of itself in that it enriches the life of the individual). And, the value of education is also positional in that many factors, (e.g., location, quality of teaching, resources, the individual’s learning outcomes relative to that of others, and so forth, contribute to its worth).

Subrahmanian (2005) asserts that gender equity in education must be “understood as the right to education [access and participation], as well as rights within education [gender-aware educational environments, processes and outcomes], and rights through education [meaningful education outcomes that link education equity with wider processes of gender justice]” (p. 395). Subrahmanian (2005) and Kabeer (1999) argue that gender equity within education necessitates understanding both the biological and socially constructed differences of gender, and identifying and working to redress normative gender inequalities – cultural, economic, political – that prevail both within the educational
environment as well as within the larger society as a whole. Evaluation of gender equity, therefore, would be based on processes such as “quality of experience of education”, “equity of treatment”, “equity of opportunity”, “non-discrimination”, and the development of “agency and autonomy” (Subrahmanian, 2005).

However, Marta Nussbaum (2003), one of the leading theorists in the area of capabilities, education and gender equity, argues that Sen’s capability framework, as articulated, is too vague and non-committal to effectively combat gender inequities in education. Nussbaum insists that the capabilities approach must be expanded to include clearly defined basic entitlements:

the capabilities approach will supply definite and useful guidance, and prove an ally in the pursuit of sex equity, only if we formulate a definite list of the most central capabilities, even one that is tentative and revisable, using capabilities so defined to elaborate a partial account of social justice, a set of basic entitlements without which no society can lay claim to justice. (p. 36)

Nussbaum’s (2003) version of the capabilities approach is premised on “human flourishing” (Terzi, Enslin & Pendlebury, n.d.), and she proposes an inventory of ten capabilities34 that are “central requirements of a life with dignity” and “all are part of a minimum account of social justice” (p. 40). Education is implicated in a number of these capabilities such as “bodily health”, “bodily integrity”, “senses, imagination and thought”, “emotions” “practical reason”, “affiliation”, and “control over one’s environment”. Nussbaum (2003) argues that “equal education for girls…[should be] a fundamental constitutional entitlement” (p. 47).


34 See Appendix F.
that gender equity in society at large must be understood not only in terms of articulated “rights”, but also in terms of the opportunities that all individuals have to develop capabilities.

To secure a right in these areas [such as freedom of religion, free speech, full political participation] is to put [individuals] in a position of capability to function in that area. To the extent that rights are used in defining social justice, we should not grant that the society is just unless the capabilities have been effectively achieved (p. 37).

In other words, having the “right” to vote does not ensure the ability to equally participate in the electoral process; individuals also need the capability/capabilities (i.e., literacy, education, awareness of issues, independence, freedom of movement) that enable them to do so. The lack of education, or inability to access education, therefore, is a capability deprivation, or unfreedom, or infringement of rights (Nussbaum, 2003; Saito, 2003; Sen, 1999; Terzi, 2004) because being deprived of an education could harm the individual, or put him or her at a grave disadvantage in society (Terzi, 2004). Nussbaum (2003) argues that using capabilities to determine a basic threshold of social justice is superior to a threshold based on rights, although rights constitute the foundation upon which capabilities are established:

to secure a right to citizens in these areas [political participation, the right to religious free exercise, the right of free speech] is to put them in a position of capability to function in that area. To the extent that rights are used in defining social justice, we should not grant that the society is just unless the capabilities have been effectively achieved. (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 37)

Following this, a centrally important tenet of the capabilities approach is its recognition that different people require different kinds and degrees of support to develop
the same capabilities in order to achieve the same functionings: “because individuals differ in their ability to convert resources into functionings, providing an equal command over resources does not always mean giving equal opportunities (Saito, 2003, p. 20). Thus, equity in education does not necessarily simply mean “sameness” in education. This is a critical point with respect to girls’ education as the capability approach recognizes various factors (i.e., socioeconomic, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, language competency) pertaining to the individual’s, or a particular group’s, experiences and competencies that may necessitate that she/they receive more support than another individual or group. For example, the educational environment is often highly gendered, replete with all the inequalities found in society at large, and sometimes with those inequalities even heightened, or intensified, because of the nature of the relationships and power structures within that environment (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2003; Kakuru, 2006; Mirembe & Davies, 2001). Societal norms and expectations of gendered behaviour permeate, and are often even intensified within the school environment. Therefore, although girls may be sitting in the same classrooms, and writing the same examinations as boys, their educational experiences, as well as their internalization of those experiences, are likely to be very different from those of boys.

It may be necessary, therefore, to provide extra support, or special consideration, to girls who do not participate fully and equally in all aspects of the educational environment because of long-standing gender inequalities that have resulted in low self-esteem and fear of assuming leadership roles. Or, girls may require extra support and encouragement to pursue science/technology programmes, as traditionally they have been discouraged from entering these fields (ADF, 2000; Mirembe & Davies, 2001). Or, a more flexible schedule may be necessary for girls who are required to assume onerous domestic duties and who have less time to attend school and study. In order to provide an “equal” education to girls,
therefore, a close and particular inventory must be made of the conditions, resources, materials and elements of education that are needed in order to achieve gender equity, in the most complete sense, in education.

To learn and acquire real skills, girls need reasonable class sizes, adequate hours of instruction, adequate supplies of learning materials that are gender-sensitive, and probably most important, better trained and supported teachers – including more female teachers. They need to be freed from the threat of sexual harassment and abuse, and from gender-biased assumptions of what and how children should learn. They need equitable opportunities to advance up the educational ladder, to secondary and tertiary level. Schools need to support girls to acquire knowledge and skills that society generally denies to women: whether this means maths and science, or sexual and reproductive health instruction and life skills programmes to build self-confidence and negotiating skills. (Global Campaign for Education, 2005, p. 3)

This approach to the valuation of education for girls and women thus shifts the emphasis from producing “better mothers and wives” (Robinson-Pant, 2004a, p. 1), to “changing gender relations and enhancing women’s participation choices” (Feldman, 2005, p. 7).

Stromquist (2001) states that: “the official discourse about education is still cast in apolitical terms, leaving the ideological function of schooling unquestioned” (p. 48). Within the capabilities framework, “development” is measured by the freedom individuals have within their societies to achieve functionings; therefore, “Sen argues that the space of capabilities provides the most fruitful and ethically satisfactory way of looking at equity as a political goal” (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 35). The capabilities approach, in fact, demands scrutinization and critique of the ideological assumptions, premises, structures of education that have become internalized and accepted as normative. The capabilities approach to
education works from a premise of equity, with the aim of developing capabilities, agency and autonomy to achieve functionings to enable individuals to participate fully in their society. Thus, the pedagogical approaches to, and structure and content of education for women and girls should reflect this aim and transform educational environments from places that further entrench and even exacerbate both local and global inequities into sites of resistance, personal and social development, and political action.

The capabilities approach has potential to provide a powerfully transformative evaluative framework as its indicators are concerned with educational equity, quality and personal development, providing “a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 78). In this study, I use the capabilities approach as a primary theory to consider my data in relation to the NSGE, thereby evaluating policy objectives and strategies in light of lived experiences of the group this policy is meant to benefit. Robeyns (2006) points out, however, that despite emergent approaches to its application, the capabilities approach is still in need of refinement and further development before it can be used as an independent theory for research analysis; it needs to be supported with other social theories. Thus, I also draw upon the theoretical framework of imagined communities, which provides a powerful and complementary perspective from which to consider this study.

3.5.2 Imagined Identities

“the question ‘Who am I?’ cannot be understood apart from the question ‘What am I allowed to do?’ And the question ‘What am I allowed to do?’ cannot be understood apart from material conditions that structure opportunities for the realization of desires.”

(Norton, 2000, p. 8)
“If we ask what people are actually able to do and to be, we come much closer to understanding the barriers societies have erected against full justice for women.”

(Nussbaum, 2003a: p. 33)

Norton (2000) defines identity as the way in which “a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Education plays a key role in determining one’s relationship with the world and possibilities for the future, as well as “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000) to which one would like to belong. What happens in the context of the educational setting has a profound influence on what/how individuals learn, the formation of their identities, how they come to locate themselves in the world and how they imagine their futures. What it means to be literate and/or educated is largely connected to the ability to function independently and competently in various sociocultural, economic and political settings. It is also intrinsically linked to status in the community, sense of identity and social participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Education/literacy acquisition is both a broadly social and deeply personal process. What it means to “get an education” is the internalizing of not only course/programme content and associated skills, but the culture of the educational environment, and the understanding of one’s relationship to education and the relationship education has to one’s future possibilities.

Kanno & Norton (2003) suggest that “imagined communities expand our range of possible selves” (p. 246). Anderson (1991) argues that there are few (if any) circumstances in which an individual knows all members of a “community”; yet one of the ideological draws and strengths of the community is its conception as a “deep, horizontal
comradeship” (p. 7). If we are able to envision ourselves participating in particular activities with certain groups of people, we will likely imagine a broader range of future choices that may affect decisions made in the present. For example, if an individual believes that she has the capability (i.e., both ability and opportunity) to become a doctor, and she can imagine herself in this role, this will likely have an impact on the decisions she makes around her education. Thus, imagined communities serve to open up possibilities for individual as well as collective identities. The life choices one makes often reflect the conviction that one is/will be able to join particular communities. And as communities open up to expand membership, the community’s identity both shapes and is shaped by those members. This has, in fact, very much been the case with regard to gender in the development process; as more women joined the global dialogue on women’s roles and entitlements in terms of development, the gender and development discourse was shaped and expanded by their contributions. The central involvement of women in the international development process has demanded that women’s issues be given high priority in all areas, including (and especially) education, in the development discourse.

Global movements have taken hold through this conception of an imagined international community. Many international initiatives, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the UN Charter of Human Rights, Education for All, and the Millennium Development Goals are premised, to a large degree, on the notion of “horizontal comradeship”, or global solidarity, at least as a baseline for certain rights. Stromquist (2002), claims that one of the only redeeming aspects of globalization is “the spread of a culture of human rights…[calling] for better standards of law and more transparent judicial systems [that] have been used in the struggle by disadvantaged groups, such as women…to develop a discourse that is legitimate” (pp. 23-4). Similarly, Lal (1996) proposes “an imagined community of postcolonial intellectuals that rise above national,
racial and gendered boundaries in the articulation of politically responsible representations” (p. 200). Others, such as Auerbach (2005) and Kabeer (2000) discuss the potential of “globalization from below”, essentially an imagined global community that works towards ameliorating the negative effects of globalization through social justice. These are all communities to which the girls in this study could potentially belong, if they could imagine themselves as having membership. I draw upon the theoretical framework of *imagined identities* to consider how the girls see and understand their lives, what they envision for their futures, and how/if education mediates their imagined identities.

3.6 Synthesis of Theories: Agency and Possibility

Overarching frameworks and global debates about gender, education and development are essential to establishing patterns for assessments, understandings and guidelines for action on an international scale. However, it is individual girls and women, living their daily lives in their communities, with their families and friends, struggling to cope with very real, often exceedingly adverse and onerous circumstances upon which their survival and that of their families so often depends, who need to be heard, reached and included in the international project of education and gender equity. Thus, there is a highly complex and sensitive interplay between the ways in which girls understand and internalize educational experiences, the *content and intent* of policies and practices around girls’ education, the ways in which girls’ educational experiences simply reflect or critically challenge societal norms, and the support or resistance girls can expect to receive if they openly strive to achieve gender equity in their societies.

The points at which the capabilities approach and imagined communities intersect are agency and possibility, and it is here that I anchor my research. I believe that there is a natural confluence of these theories around the assumption that evaluative considerations of
education for girls should include the attention it pays to the actual needs and aspirations of
the girls in their present and (possible) future circumstances (Butegwa, 1995). Education,
then, must serve to support the development of the capabilities necessary for girls and
women to achieve the agency and functionings they need to bring about the kinds of
changes they desire and to work towards the kinds of “imagined communities” to which
they would choose to belong. Understanding the ways in which society influences, and
even determines, freedoms, the development and execution of capabilities, and personal
and collective identities, is necessary to inform how best to achieve quality, relevant,
gender equitable education and educational experiences.
RESEARCH WARY...

Shelley: We have talked a lot about how people get a bit tired of...researchers coming into the village. What can you tell me about that or what can you tell me about, in general, what’s happened with researchers and research and why people are sick of it?

Dan: They may be sick of research because they may not know when you start asking them questions, they would like to know why, first of all, and then after those questions, what is he going to do, because like here – if you ask are you hungry? What I think is that you want to give me food. [laughs] Asking me that - are you hungry? I replied, “Yes I want to eat”; you replied, “Oh sorry”. You move out and leaves me. Why did you ask me if I’m hungry and bring no food? But otherwise they are not tired of research and they enjoy it because like here we always see in the pictures in what is Western world. But when you really get a chance of talking to these people from there you find that it’s good, it’s challenging. So people enjoy.

Shelley: So, what do you think people’s attitude was, generally speaking, when I was doing research? When I met with the women’s groups? I mean you were there with me- or talked to different people. What do you think their feelings toward the research was?
Dan: They were saying, “Ah that’s great we’ve got a muzungu that might help us - they were like all excited”.

Shelley: Do you think it was because they thought I would have money though?

Dan: Yes, it is concerned with many things, money – prestige – friendship.

One day, say, I have a friend in Canada, in America...people knowing you that you have friends in Canada, all over the world – they don’t treat you the same as someone who doesn’t know anybody.

Shelley: So why is that – why do people think that’s so important if you have a friend in Canada?

Dan: Because the more you get many people, the more you become strong, so the more you know so many things, someone is knowledgeable – they tend to respect people who are knowledgeable - the more friends you have, the more people you know, that means the more chances of getting money.

Shelley: So, a lot of it has to do with economics too.

Dan: Yes.

Shelley: It’s not just that you are a white person; it’s that you’ve got access to more money than people here [in the village] generally have.

Dan: Yes, it is connected – but it is both things.

[Excerpt from interview with Dan, August 2005]
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

“From the vantage point of the colonized...the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary.” (Smith, 1999, p. 1)

The above quote from Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) important book, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, is the most direct way into this chapter. This has been by far the most difficult chapter (perhaps even piece of writing) I have had to write because it has taken me from the safe role of “author” to the complexly fraught role of “actor”. It has demanded that I openly interrogate and explain my role as a researcher, my motivations for this research, and acknowledge ways in which my research may have impacted the participants and community. It has also required that I locate myself within the context of the incendiary debate surrounding white Northern researchers conducting studies in marginalized, Southern/Indigenous communities. This debate is charged and expansive, involving scholars from fields as diverse as Indigenous Studies, Critical White Studies, Women’s Studies, Education, Development Studies, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Critical Race Studies, Anthropology, Ethnography, Linguistics, International Relations, and Environmental Studies; its primary concern is with the negative, self-serving and very often pernicious impact of Northern research and what that represents in Indigenous communities. The debate is not whether Northern research, colonialism, etcetera, has had a negative impact on Southern communities (this is indisputable); the debate revolves around how best, if at all, to proceed with Indigenous/Southern research as a white researcher.

From whichever vantage point one enters this debate, one must enter first and foremost as a human being. One must be willing to endure the risks and discomforts that
come with intensive reflexivity about one’s situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991) of, and
positionalities in the world. One must also be willing to disclose the learning or
understandings that come with such a deep degree of reflexivity. In terms of this study,
reflexivity and disclosure have called upon me to explain who I am as a human being, with
my various assumptions, weaknesses, and biases, which is never an easy task, particularly
when it involves disclosing intimate thoughts, emotions and experiences to an unknown
audience. However, as a researcher in the contemporary moment, researching oneself is
part of one’s responsibility. In short, to enter into this dialogue, one needs to be prepared to
experience emotional, spiritual, and intellectual disruption. This is a small price to pay,
however, given the dire legacy of suffering the white enterprise of research, colonialism
and globalization has caused.

This chapter is divided into two major sections: research methodology and research
methods. Research methodology employs theoretical structures to inform the analysis of
research and guide the way in which research is done: “[research methodology] frames the
questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and
shapes the analyses. Within an indigenous framework, methodological debates are ones
concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals of indigenous research” (Smith,
1999, p. 143). In this section, I describe my general methodology in relationship to my role
as researcher, framed in the larger context of the debate concerning white Northern
researchers in Southern contexts. The second section is concerned with research methods,
and I describe the tools I used for data collection within the guiding parameters of the
methodological framework.
4.1 Methodological Framework: Critical Feminist Postmodernist Ethnography

The overarching aim of this study is to understand the relationship of secondary level education to the multiple spheres of girls’ lives in rural Uganda. Given that there are gender inequities that pervade most, if not all, of these spheres, a feminist framework that considers issues of equity, social justice and empowerment was the most effective way to conduct this research. My researcher positionality as an outsider – culturally, socioeconomically, racially, linguistically – requires that I openly problematise my role and sufficiently identify my own positioning(s) and interpretive biases in the research process, analysis and dissemination of findings. Given these considerations, I use the lens of critical feminist postmodernist ethnography. In this chapter, I have extended the scope of this study beyond the 15 girls in order to draw upon broader interactions I had with the women in the community, particularly the women who participated in the adult literacy class that I taught. Many of the issues raised in the global feminist dialogue, such as the roles women play in the community, motherhood, and relationships with men, pertained directly to experiences, circumstances and situations of these women, and their contributions to my understanding of this dialogue are important and many.

The ultimate goal of critical feminist postmodernist ethnography is the universal and unconditional emancipation and empowerment of women (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Katz, 1996; Lal, 1996; Lather, 1986; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Wolf, 1996; Zavella, 1996), and although this is appealing in its most idealistic interpretation, there is much murky ground to be negotiated. Thus, my position as a white woman from a rich Northern country researching adolescent girls in a postcolonial, patriarchal economically-impoverished Southern country posed many challenges for the research process as well as

35 Some use the term poststructuralist (e.g., Unterhalter, 2003), and many use the term postcolonialist (e.g., Lal, 1996, Wolf, 1996), but I have chosen to use the term “postmodern” as it embodies the attention to the poststructuralist attention to language, as well as the historic inequities of postcolonialism.
36 Herein referred to as feminist ethnography.
the writing up of my study. Issues of culture, power, privilege, race, opportunities and socioeconomic status have consequences—ones I do not fully understand even at this point—for both the collection and interpretation of my data. Frequently, I linger over the various possible meanings and interpretations of utterances or situations that transpired during the research process. I often ruminate with the same degree of earnestness about utterances or situations in my own culture, for example, why did X say B to Y? Or, what did V really mean when she said D, especially in front of Q? However, the difference is, of course, that I have a better aptitude to interpret new, unfamiliar, or puzzling phenomena in my own culture than I do in cultures of which I am not a member.

4.1.1 Ethnography

In order to establish some grounding in a culture other than one’s own, and explore and understand its complexities and nuances as much as possible, ethnography provides “a powerful, multistranded method…[that] offers an unparalleled set of methods for exploring and gaining insight into people’s values, beliefs and behaviours” (Gottlieb, 2006, pp. 47-8). Ethnography explores “at first hand what people do and say in particular contexts” (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). In order to compile a database that sufficiently documents utterances and actions in varying contexts with different individuals and groups, to provide extended and ongoing interactions with the participants, and to sufficiently triangulate the data, ethnography requires that the researcher spend a considerable amount of time doing fieldwork (Davies, 1999; Geertz, 1973; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Hammersley, 2006; Palys, 2003). Thus, in an attempt to explore the girls’ lives as fully as possible in multiple contexts, I spent one year (August 2004-August 2005) living in Kyato Village and working with the girls on a variety of activities in various settings. This approach to accumulating
multimodal data\textsuperscript{37} from a wide spectrum of situations concurs with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis’ (1997) notion of portraiture in which the researcher locates the “central story/stories” of the participants:

This requires careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole. (p. 12)

As I gained deeper insights into the complexities of the girls’ lives, I configured and reconfigured my research to work with the knowledge I had gained. Thus, my research became a fluid, reflective and responsive process, as described by Goetz and LeCompte (1984):

In addition to being a product, ethnography is also a process, a way of studying human life…Ethnographers seek to construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about, the phenomenon. (p. 3)

Through the extended study of contexts and people from varying perspectives, I aimed for “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 9) to capture a reasonably comprehensive understanding of the complexly layered interrelationships between people, events and their environments.

\textsuperscript{37} Increasingly, it is being acknowledged that human beings learn and communicate in a wide range of ways. Social semiotics is an approach to research that explores the signs (i.e., symbols that can represent meaning independently) used to convey meaning. Modality refers to the way in which these signs are transmitted and, as a medium of communication, modalities themselves add meaning to the symbols/signs communicated: “the concept of communication – as transport and transform of meaning – is hugely extended in a multimodal approach to semiosis. The involvement and engagement of our bodes(??) makes ideology (as systematic sets of meanings organized from a particular position) truly a lived experience” (Kress, 2000, p. 189). I explain the multimodal research methods I employed in the Research Methods section below.
4.1.2 The Role of the Researcher, Reflexivity and the Telling of Stories

Reflexivity, a central pillar of feminist ethnography, has been an important part of my approach to field research as well as data analysis and dissemination. Reflexivity openly problematises the very real, tangled web of experiences of researcher and researched, their relationships and positionalities (i.e., their socio-historical/economic/political/geographical contexts and experiences), issues of power differentials and privilege, and representation. Thus the researcher must rigorously strive not only to understand the multiple and complex positionings of the participants, but also explore and understand her own multiple and complex positionings and how those influence her knowledges and interpretations of the world. Haraway (1991) discusses this in terms of situated knowledges that “reflect our locationality (historical, national, generational) of positionality (race, gender, class nationality, sexuality), acknowledging how the dynamics of where we are always affects our viewpoint and the production of knowledge” (p. 195). These positionalities are fluid and continuously evolving, and they blur boundaries between subjectivity/objectivity and researcher/participant, displacing positivist research models in which the researcher’s relationship with participants are polarized etic/emic constructs (Denzin, 1989; Katz, 1996; Lal, 1996; Morsey, 1988; Stack, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Zavella, 1996) that assume that identities are fundamentally “frozen” (Fine, 1998) and “one-dimensional” (de Andrade, 2000). As Kelly-Byrne argues, “The myth of the neutral researcher and the much-desired objectified research account have made it both mandatory and possible to ignore the human reality of the research relationship, in all its chaos and with its many foibles” (1989, p. 206).

Given that ethnographic research strives to represent some aspect of the human condition in all of its messy complexity, the crafting of a research project and the analysis of data creates a story (Wolcott, 1994). In this case, the girls and the many students,
teachers, and others whose lives intersected with mine during my year of fieldwork, and the
time and place of Kyato Village and KSS become suspended and interwoven in a single
story, told by me. I cannot write myself out of the research process or analysis, because the
data collected and the way in which the research is presented is very much connected to
how I as the researcher interpret and understand the world (van Manen, 1991). As Barthes
(1977), says, “It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel” (p. 1). Thus,
I will write myself into the story and attempt to identify myself as individual, researcher,
and storyteller. I have introduced myself to some extent in Chapter 1, but here I will profile
myself as researcher in this study.

I bring with me my cultural lens of a white, 44-year old woman from a working
class background, undertaking a PhD. I have had a mixed relationship with the academic
world. As a child, I thrived in elementary school, and I received the “citizenship” award
upon completion. In junior high school, I did reasonably well, but as with many girls, I
could feel the distance growing between “math” and “sciences” subjects and me. Those
subjects were taught almost exclusively by men, and those men were typically the “jocks”
(the boys’ team coaches) who I found, as a girl, to be somewhat mocking, sexist and
dismissive of girls. Over time, I lost grasp of those areas of learning and knowledge, and I
lost interest. I retained interest in English and Social Studies, but once I reached senior high
school, even interest in those areas waned. School had become an immensely joyless chore.
In addition, there seemed to be an unspoken understanding that some students were
“naturally” predisposed to advance to higher education, and the rest of us were not. The
students who were likely to go to college or university were generally those who had
parents with post-secondary education. I remember feeling already disenfranchised from
the academic world in high school, not because of my lack of ability, but because I felt that
I did not belong to the academic “culture”; that was for students with educated families. I belonged to the blue collar, working class culture.

I did not attend post-secondary school directly after graduating from high school; however, after a year of work and a year of travel, I started undergraduate studies, although I always straddled the academic and the working world, often taking one course while working full-time, or taking three courses while working part-time. Thus, it took me 10 years to get my BA in English and History. I took another year of full-time studies to get my Bachelor of Education, and then for eight years I taught secondary school English, primary school English, adult English as a Second Language, adult English literature/writing, family literacy, adult literacy, and children who had English as an additional language in Canada, Japan and London, England.

Learning in and from the world, through working with students/participants from all ages and multiple backgrounds, as well as developing long-term, strong friendships and collegial relationships with people who are culturally, socioeconomically, racially and occupationally diverse, and living in a wide spectrum of countries has been my “life project” – both personally and professionally. My global experiences have become a core aspect of who I am and how I understand the world, and they have fostered a strong desire to work in an alliance-building capacity with individuals and groups in an attempt to join the general movement of globalization from below (Auerbach, 2005; Kabeer, 2000). I am indeed fortunate to have had the freedom and ability to have many rich experiences in life. That has, however, come with a price – the price of economic instability and lack of groundedness in a single community. Although I am privileged in many ways and have everything I need for survival, as a PhD student, I still live within the low-income socioeconomic category of Canadian culture, and financial pressures are relentless, and sometimes overwhelming. Except as a child, I have never known what it feels like to be
financially “secure”. All of this affects who I am, and how I perceive things, as a researcher and a human being.

During my year of fieldwork, I lived in Kyato Village and spent most of my time there, but I lived a very different life from most people in the village. For the first two or three months, I was possibly viewed as an “honorary” male (Mandel, 2003) since my status, power, work, freedom of mobility, lack of spouse and children, sharply contrasted with many of the cultural norms of “woman” in rural Uganda. In addition, I sometimes wore jeans (women in this part of Uganda never wore trousers), and I rode on the back of a boda-boda like a man (straddling the seat), instead of sitting side-saddle as do Ugandan woman, as I found this to be too precarious. I also spent a great deal of time with Dan and Mr. Masinde to learn as much as I could about the research context, and as they both were fluent in English, it was easier for me to communicate with them than with most other people in the village, who spoke little, if any, English. However, I quickly learned some Luganda, the local language, and this helped me develop friendly relations with neighbours in the village. As weeks passed into months, and I interacted regularly with people in the village, taught an adult literacy class to local women, and visited women’s groups and the girls’ homes, I think the initial image/perception of me that people may have had changed, especially with respect to the girls. Nonetheless, I always remained culturally, racially, socioeconomically, unequivocally distinct and mzungu in Kyato Village.

I am still unsure of the implications my mzungu identity had on my research and my interpretation of the data collected. Prior to, during, and subsequent to my fieldwork, I thought deeply and extensively about my representation and embodiment of global economic, racial, power inequities in the research context, and my awareness of how these may have been perceived by people in Kyato Village unsettled me profoundly. The complexities of the research process have made the study itself an object of study, which I
continuously analyse and attempt to understand in terms of the relationships and contexts
with which it is concerned. In an attempt to understand how I, and my research, may have
been perceived in Kyato Village, in the broader Ugandan society, as well as by Southern as
well as Northern feminists, the following section considers tensions between feminists in
the South and North, particularly around the direct involvement of Northern women in
Southern contexts.

4.1.3 Feminist Ethnography: Whose “Woman”? Whose “Feminism”?  

Acknowledging and Disrupting Boundaries

“A recurrent criticism of white feminism from its inception is that white women feminists
have considered their experience of womanhood in their culture as the prototypic female
experience and have used it to define feminism” (Oyewumi, 2001.)

Feminist standpoint theory (Smith, 1987; Harding, 1991) asserts that all women
share the common experience of knowing the (patriarchal) world through the lens of
*woman*, and therefore, regardless of class, culture, or any other societal constructs, all
women possess an understanding of what it is to be *woman* in any other part of the world.
Although standpoint theory is valuable in terms of its premise of commonality which has
the potential to forge global alliances, at the same time it fails to fully recognize the wide
variance of individual experiences, particularly of the subaltern, and does not adequately
recognize salient differentials, such as power, privilege, race, and socioeconomic status.
Thus, Third World feminists largely reject the essentialist nature of standpoint theory,
insisting that the experiences of women from/in the First World are only marginally, if at
all, generalisable to the experiences of women in developing or Third World countries (Lal,

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38 Throughout this discussion I will use the terminology of the global, postmodern feminist dialogue, e.g.,
Third World/First World Women, Western Women.
1996): “what it means to be an African woman differs radically from the increasingly anti-
naturist conception of woman in industrialized Western countries” (Mickell, 1997, p. 8). However, it is also argued that “the identity of ‘African woman’ is itself a new and hybrid creation, constituted through varied interactions with colonial powers, western academia, Pan-African philosophies, and the meeting of women of various ethnic and national origins in locations outside of Africa” (Horn, 2000, p. 36).

Often associated with boundaries between Third World and First World, women/feminism is racial difference (especially white/non-white difference), how that difference underlies privileges that come with “whiteness”, and how those privileges shape and/or construct interactions between Third World and First World women. Critical White Studies argues that white people must acknowledge how whiteness contributes to their identities: “naming whiteness as an abstract concept that exists in society is not the same as naming whiteness within ourselves, nor the same as making changes to counteract its effects” (Marx, 2003, p. 2). White people also need to acknowledge the ways in which their privilege is gained at the expense of those who are not white. Some Critical Race Theorists argue that “whiteness” itself is a form of racism.

even if whites do not consciously engage in racist acts, they are racist in that they benefit from the privilege of being white. Seen on a group level, white racism is ‘the system of rules, procedures, and tacit beliefs that result in whites collectively maintaining control over the wealth and power of the nation and the world’ (Sleeter, 1994, p. 6; in Bergerson, 2003, pp. 8-9)

In many ways, it is the canonization of the white, or First World account of the world that constitutes the metanarrative premises upon which understanding and interpretations of the world are based. These metanarratives prescribe the positionalities, locationalities, global interfaces, intersections and power relationships between people and institutions: “‘Truth’
is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which it induces and which extends it…This regime [of truth] is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism (Foucault, 1984, p. 74). It is argued that the First World account of the world has often constructed identities, such as that of the “African woman”, that are in extreme contradiction to the ways in which those who are referenced by these identities understand and identify themselves. There has been vehement backlash from African feminists who have expressed resentment with the way African women have been negatively depicted, subjected to the First World feminists’ agenda, often via development programmes, and have had their values and voices excluded, ignored, or subjugated when others have determined what is “best” for African women (Horn, 2000).

For example, African feminists often highlight salient qualities of African women, such as their strength (physical, mental, emotional), their centrality to family and community, their wisdom and indigenous knowledge, their critical roles as providers and caretakers, their importance in economic activities, and their leadership, innovation, resilience, self-sufficiency and self-reliance (Amadiume, 1997, 2000; Mikell, 1997b/c; Umerah-Udezulu, 1999). The First World depiction of African women, however, is typically that of powerless, oppressed, weak, meek, daughters, wives and mothers who are “destitute and in need of charity from the West” (Amadiume, 2000, p. 21), and who are therefore dependent on the North for leadership or guidance in virtually all spheres of existence. This perceived “need for charity”, leadership and guidance from women from the North has often provided a way in for other agendas, as the money required to support African women’s work for equity is almost inevitably tied to donor/funder objectives. Thus, “[t]he figure of the poor woman in the South is well suited to a victimology narrative that rationalizes the planned management and liberation of women in the South by
Westernized professionals in the development apparatus” (Saunders, 2002, p. 14). It is argued by African feminists that the global project of gender equity is itself inequitable because it has been defined and dominated by white women (Mikell, 1997b/c; Oyewumi, 2001).

Lazreg (2002) argues that the very construct of “development” creates an us/them polarization between women in the “North” and women in the “South” and, that “[i]n the end, it is ‘our’ notion of ‘development’…that gives Third World women’s lives meaning” (p. 129). “Development”-related, First World feminist agendas have often been inappropriate, insensitive, untenable, and, ironically, detrimental to African women because they have failed to recognize and/or respect the complexity of gender relationships in African contexts (Amadiume, 1997; Elabor-Idemudia, 2002; Horn, 2000; Mikell, 1997b/c; Njiro, 1999). They have also constituted a source of conflicting loyalties and uneasy decisions, as African women’s loyalties to family, friends, communities and even nations, as well as their personal identities as members of these groups, are often threatened by the First World feminist definitions and demands of “equity/equality” (Mikell, 1997b/c; Oyewumi, 2001). Many women have suffered violent repercussions because of their involvement in “emancipatory” projects or activities guided by First World feminist approaches (Heise, 1995; Mikell, 1997b/c). Thus, the First World feminist project of empowerment, some argue, has resulted paradoxically in heightened oppression:

Much of the current lack of women’s empowerment in Africa…may be traced to the way those in positions of power conceptualize equity between women and men. In my view the way these concepts were introduced is to blame. Without much cultural orientation, loaded key terms such as women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), and gender and development (GAD), among a host of others that challenged the supremacy of men in the African countries, were
introduced. This could probably explain why many male-dominated African
governments and NGOs have been reluctant to implement programs for women,
even when these are essential for development. African women’s empowerment
struggles have brought negative repercussions in rural areas, where in some
households men continue to forbid women from participating in women’s group
activities. The contempt was caused by the abrupt and aggressive lobbying from

As a result, Northern feminist efforts in Southern contexts have often been resented as
unwanted interferences (Mikell, 1997b/c).

However, there is a point at which the questions must be asked: Who exactly is
“the” white/Northern/First World woman?; and Who, exactly, possesses “the authentic”
Black/Southern/Third World woman’s voice? Lal (1996) claims that epistemological
privileging is essentialist, whether referring to First World or Third World women:
the construction of subjugation, nativity, and insiderness, as privileged epistemic
standpoints from which to counter the universalism of Western theory, are all
premised on maintaining the same borderlines between Us and Them, Self and
Other, and Subject and Object that they wish to question in the first place. (p. 198)

Stromquist (2002) takes a different position and argues that the avoidance of
generalizations prevents larger geographic and demographic patterns such as systemic,
socioeconomic inequalities or social injustices from being identified and addressed, thereby
risking the continuation or deepening of inequities experienced by already marginalized
and/or disempowered populations: “postmodernity contributes to neoliberal ideas that seek
to eradicate discussion of power asymmetries” (p. 19). Stromquist makes an important
point, and one that is often put forward as a criticism of postmodernism - that it lacks
political engagement (Gardner & Lewis, 1996). However, there are approaches to
postmodernism that do not exclude the recognition of wider patterns of oppression or disadvantage. In fact, Lal (1996) explains that although she believes that it is important to disrupt boundaries of epistemological privileging that divides “self” and “other” through postmodernist probings such as reflexivity, deconstruction, recognition of the importance of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, and explorations of power, relationships and identity, the feminist ethnographer must also heed Lather’s (1997) caution of “the potential paralysis of analysis that ensues from the reflexive mode of analysis and concentrated attentiveness to the authorial strategies and powers of representations, especially when situated within the context of the current postmodernist theoretical moment” (p. 207). Lal posits:

“all of us live in contradictory locations [and]…As a politics it is a feminist and anticolonial intellectual location that we choose to position ourselves into, rather than being assigned into it on the basis of our gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, or any other identity-based ontological categories” (p. 199).

There are many voices to be heard, and the project of a global feminism should be to open up dialogue and debate that includes and heeds these voices to best support women in different contexts around the world. It seems that what has been lacking in the struggle for the empowerment of women in African societies is the full support of African women’s own efforts to achieve empowerment in their own way: “African women are redefining development and the terms of their empowerment through a ‘defense of place’ (Dirlik, 1998), reaffirming the importance of their particular cultural and historical locations” (Horn, 2000).  

39 African women’s groups, bureaus and societies that are established to promote women’s issues, and likely know best how to promote African women’s issues,

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39 I believe this is likely true of all societies; that local efforts to achieve equity must be supported because local knowledge and understanding of the context are essential to positive transformation.
are often overlooked by Northern groups, feminists, NGOs, and rarely receive the funding they need to make a positive impact (Horn, 2000; Staudt, 2002; Stromquist, 1998).

Northern/First World/white women have had socioeconomic and rights-based advantages relative to those of many other women in the Southern/Third World, and with these advantages has come the freedom to develop feminist ideologies and practices pertinent and applicable to their situation(s)\textsuperscript{40} that other women, particularly living in economically-impoverished situations in the South, have not had the opportunity to develop. In addition, Northern feminists have often overlooked the important work that is being done in Southern countries by Southern feminists, and have not been fully cognizant of the entrenched and systemic resistances (i.e., cultural, political, and socioeconomic) that Southern feminists face. There are many simultaneous struggles happening in Africa, as in many areas of the South, and women’s demands for equity are often perceived as diverting, undermining, or splintering efforts being made to establish strong nation states that can build national economies and increase general well-being for the people: “contemporary African women are perceived by politicians and political leaders as embodying interests that are antithetical to the interests of the state” (Mikell, 1997b, p. 338). Thus, if Northern feminists are sincere about their desire to support women in Africa, they need to respect the knowledge and tactics of African women as they negotiate their rights and entitlements in African contexts.

\subsection*{4.1.4 Working With, Across, and Beyond Boundaries}

The feminist ethnographer cannot overcome, erase, or ignore boundaries of difference, but she must acknowledge and strive to disrupt them. Thus, despite the close relationships that were established over time between the research participants and me, the

\textsuperscript{40} But again, the essentialist notion of a singular “First World Woman” is untenable.
racial difference, (i.e., my whiteness and their non-whiteness), and all that that represented
(i.e., privilege, wealth, opportunities, and power), constituted a dynamic that mediated all
interactions of my research to varying degrees. One of the first words I learned upon
arriving in Uganda was *muzungu*, meaning white person, or non-African; the sub-text of
*muzungu* was “money”, “power” and “opportunities”. Muzungus are generally perceived to
be “rich” and “privileged” and connected to international aid/development projects or
missionary work, or, simply greed and exploitation. Wealthy countries have reaped
enormous benefits from colonialism, global capitalism, and even “development” at the
expense of poor countries, and as someone from a wealthy country, I must acknowledge
that I have personally benefited from the same forces that have marginalized women and
girls in Uganda and other countries.

I could never reconcile myself to the differentials in power, privilege and wealth
that I experienced during my year in Uganda. I neither ever found a way to be comfortable
with that difference nor do I believe there is any way of being comfortable with it, and still
care about the people around you. The way in which I understand the term *muzungu*, as
applied to me in this research context, related to socioeconomic advantage (the average,
even below-average, income and living standards of a Canadian are very different from
those of an average Ugandan), and life opportunities/privileges (travel, funding, and higher
education) associated with citizenship of a “rich” country (Canada). It is also likely that the
willingness with which my research activities were accepted by the participants and the
community was connected to my *muzungu* identity, possibly with the expectation or hope
of some kind of monetary reward. I could not extricate myself from my “whiteness” and all
that it represented, especially in the research context. Associated with (relative) “wealth”
and privilege is status, and with status comes power:
All of us who are white receive white privileges. They are bestowed on us impersonally and systemically, but they affect us personally. We can’t not get them, and we can’t give them back… One of the primary privileges is having greater influence, power, and resources. (Kendall, 2006, p. 62)

My “whiteness” was also associated with English, the language of the colonizer, as well as the official language of Uganda, and my proficiency in English afforded me privileges, opportunities and access to information in Uganda that Ugandans who were not fluent in English did not possess. There was such an incongruous absurdity to the situation; I who was living in borderline poverty in Canada was being perceived as rich and powerful. And the further degree of absurdity was that, in Kyato Village, I was indeed rich and powerful because of my “whiteness”, and the fact that I had more money than anyone else. I tried to lessen my internal unease (i.e., guilt) by contributing where I could, buying medicine for those who were suffering from malaria, taking children and students to clinics when they were in need of medical attention, buying food for some people who were particularly in need, or helping the girls pay school fees. But, my wallet was limited, and there was never enough money. I could neither “fix” anything nor was it my role to do so.

I did not want to be seen as a benevolent, bestowing, charitable white “do-gooder”. I did not want to alter the dynamics of the community, and yet, was the moral decision not to help anyone, or to help some? Obviously, I would not be able to help everyone. If it were the better moral decision to help some, who should those some be? Was it moral to see a child on the verge of death and not offer assistance? Was it moral to take one’s malaria pills every day and watch others suffer the debilitating and often fatal effects of malaria without offering to buy medicine that treats it? I cannot begin to describe the internal upheaval and disquiet I faced on a daily basis. I do not know that I made the right
decisions, but I do know that any inkling I may have previously had of a “rational” way at looking at the human condition dissipated. Do nothing, or do something became a mantra.

4.1.5 Reflections on Reflexivity and Remaining in an Unsettled State…

I have considered a large body of work by African, Southern/Third World/Indigenous and Black women/feminists, as well as white and non-white Critical Race feminist theorists, and many of their statements, claims and accusations of racism, domination and neocolonialism focusing on white, middle-class Northern/Western/First World women have jarred me. Some of this literature attacked white women, some mocked them, and some simply expressed mistrust of white women, but cautiously extended an invitation to enter into dialogue. At first, I felt angry and was convinced that their broad brushstrokes of indictment depicted other, less enlightened, white, middle-class women than me – that it was unfair and essentialist to make sweeping generalizations about “white people”, or “white women” more specifically. But, like worrying a toothache, I could not leave the writing alone. I needed to explore the pain behind the anger – the anger of the writers as well as the anger I felt about being labeled as racist, exploitative and neocolonialist simply because I am white.

Eventually, I decided that instead of resisting inclusion in the reviled population of white middle-class women who live with the illusion that they are liberal, non-racist and enlightened, I would read myself into it to determine if, where, and how I fit into this group. This was (and still is) an intense interrogation of the mind, heart and soul. Over time, my ire subsided, and the more I read, and found to read, the more I was able to listen to the voices of these Black/Southern women and realize that the degree of suffering that they have endured from grave injustices of colonialism and development, as well as inequities in their own societies, is a suffering I will never know. Their experiences have
been discounted or trivialized and, to add insult to injury, their knowledges, ideas and preferences with respect to programming and policies meant to “empower” them have been largely ignored. I gained a new understanding of not only racist “moments” or “events”, but also the societal and global condition of racism. I also developed a greater empathy for these women, and began to appreciate how their exasperation and fury at the way in which they have been treated have reached the boiling point.

With respect to my location within the harsh and unflattering portrait of white, arrogant, interfering, women, much of the time I felt that I did not belong to this group; however, some of the time, more than I care to admit, I felt that I did. I belonged because I had not thought extensively or deeply enough about the privileges of “whiteness” and how they shape how I have come to know and engage in the world; I had not deeply understood or explored the subtle as well as not-so-subtle systemized forms of racism and the shockingly destructive expanse of white domination over time and geographical space, and how cultural, economic and political imperialism today is as insidious (some argue even more) as it has always been. I had not understood how it is not enough to simply notice and react to racism, but that it is also necessary to actively seek out racism in order to work towards its eradication, and simply, I had not fully comprehended, and likely resisted, the complicity of “whiteness”.

I remember one conversation I had with Dan after I had been in Kyato Village for about eight months. By this time, he and I had become good friends. I do not recall the details of the conversation, but I clearly remember that at one point Dan looked at me from across the table and said, “Sure, we are friends, but we will never be “equal”. You are still a muzungu. You will never know what it is to be a poor African like me.” It was not an accusation, just a statement. Although this was something that I thought about endlessly, it was heart-rending to hear those words. I had hoped that somehow this difference between
us was not real, that everything would sort itself out because we had become close friends, and material concerns such as money and passports would not wedge a divide between us. But, I had (relatively speaking) money, I had a passport that enabled me to travel almost anywhere in the world, I was a citizen of a rich country, I had educational opportunities, and I had choices in so many divergent areas. Although I do not necessarily see my life from this perspective when I am in Canada, I could certainly appreciate Dan’s perspective. And this situation, this absurd reality, in which I had privileges at my fingertips (for no good reason), and he (and millions of others) had very few, if any, due to the sheer arbitrariness of being born in a certain place of global economic advantage at a particular moment, was and will always remain incomprehensible to me.41

It was intensely disturbing to know that people in Kyato Village, as people in villages throughout Uganda, who loved their families and communities, appreciated the beauty of the land, and were deeply connected to their local culture and history, were often prevented from finding happiness, fulfillment and well-being in their lives because of their harsh economic circumstances. Often individuals would approach me and confide that they wanted to leave Uganda and move to Canada or another “Western” country. My belief is not that they wanted to leave Uganda, but that they wanted to escape poverty. Extreme poverty, and a sense of collective disillusionment (e.g., with “development”, failed projects and policies, inequitable and exploitative global economic practices, etc.) can breed despondency and prevent people from living “with dignity”.

41 As for the argument that it is not necessarily a wonderful happenstance to be born into a Northern society, I wholeheartedly agree. My point is simply that given a number of equal measures (e.g., family love and support, positive interactions with others, a strong community, a society that cares for its environment, etc.), it is immensely easier to live in a county that has the wealth to provide education, health care, and other amenities than in a society that doesn’t. In many ways, it is the lack of a strong infrastructure in countries such as Uganda that maintains the strength of communities; community members look to and support each other for what the state does not provide. However, it seems the communities do not have enough to provide for what is needed.
From the dignified living perspective, human fulfillment and existence is interpreted not just in terms of material existence, but in relation to self, neighbour, nature and creator. It expresses the pursuit of human life as both individual and collective effort to improve and sustain the quality of life in the society…The condition of dignified living is realized when individuals, families, communities and nations are free from exploitation and obtain an endogenously generated condition of self-reliance, interdependence and control over their living situation…development should be seen and executed as an instrument and overall strategy for recovering and sustaining the original wholesomeness of human life, the failure of which has created poverty” (Oyaya & Kaseje, 2001, pp. 54-55)

4.1.6 Ethical interactions and “muddles”

There are many potential moral and ethical dangers inherent in these positional imbalances and privileges, and great care must be taken by the researcher to act sensitively, cautiously and responsibly in order not to further oppress or exploit those already suffering the repercussions of a colonial legacy (Stacey, 1991; Wolf, 1996). Thus, the researcher must be ever-conscious that she has entered the participant’s world in order to get something, whereas a similar motivation does not (or may not) exist vis-à-vis the participant. Although, on the other hand, if the participant perceives that she will gain something (money, status, privileges), this is equally fraught with complications as the participant may respond in ways to please the researcher in order to increase this gain. In this study, the girls did receive access to new experiences, material goods, and financial support with school fees through their participation in the research. However, when Mr. Masinde approached the girls about participating in this study, several months before my fieldwork began, there was no mention of any material or monetary gain and all the girls
agreed to participate. Undoubtedly, the privileges the girls received from participating in this research had an effect on the way the girls initially responded to and interacted with me, and admittedly, no matter how relaxed our interactions became, the socioeconomic power differential between us probably always played a part to varying degrees in our relationship. Over time, however, with daily interactions, regular research meetings, and school-related activities, the newness and novelty of the situation faded, and a more comfortable relationship ensued.

4.1.6a Material Goods, New Experiences

In terms of experiences, the girls had the opportunity to use cameras (film and digital), a computer, a videocamera, art supplies, and they participated in a number of outings with me. In terms of material gain, they received notebooks, pens, occasional lunches and sodas, YouLead t-shirts and photographs.

4.1.6b Money

Preparing for fieldwork from my situation in Canada, I did not anticipate any material or financial benefits that the girls might receive other than notebooks, pens, printed photographs, access to cameras, and other gains directly associated with the research. I was not, however, fully aware of the very thin economic edge upon which the entire futures of these girls was balancing. I arrived in Kyato Village believing that my role was to conduct research, provide the materials and resources necessary for the execution of that research, and remain detached from the personal needs of the research participants because I was not in a position to “solve” problems or mitigate their socioeconomic challenges. Had I spent two weeks in the village, this may have been possible. But, after
two, three, four months of interacting with the girls on an almost daily basis, to me, it was entirely unethical not to help where I could.

My financial assistance to the girls began with talking to Gloria one day. She was walking away from the school, and I asked where she was going. Gloria told me that she was going home because she did not have a notebook or money to buy one. I asked if her mother would be able to give her the money she needed once she reached home, and she shook her head. So – was the ethical decision to let Gloria continue on her way, possibly never to return to school, or was the better choice to give her money for a notebook that cost all of about 50 cents? I knew that giving money or material objects to research participants held the treacherous potential of becoming a very slippery slope, but from this initial interaction with Gloria, I felt that I could not turn away from these girls and their immediate needs, *if it were within my capacity* to do something to provide for those needs. Over time, girls, individually, would approach me for money – maybe $5 to cover their debt for school fees, $3 for medicine for their grandmother, $2 for notebooks. Generally speaking, I did not give the girls money, but I would give money directly to the school for school fees, or buy stacks of notebooks and pens and give them away when needed, or walk with the girls to the medical clinic to buy the medicine. I knew their needs were much greater than those they approached me about, and so I appreciated their discernment of asking for money for only the most urgent situations.

In November 2004, the young man who had been tending to various household duties (and whom I had been asked to hire by the owners of the house in order that his school fees could be paid) had to leave due to a family emergency. I could have taken care of the household duties myself, but I thought that this might be an opportunity to put that monthly expenditure of $75 U.S. or so into school fees for the most needy of girls. I talked to Dan at length about this, and he thought it was a sound way in which to support some of
the girls. Mr. Masinde, too, approved this plan. I asked Mr. Masinde to have the KSS administration provide me with the names of the four most needy girls amongst those who were participating in my research to whom this job of working for a few hours on Saturdays – washing clothes, cleaning the house, etcetera - should be offered. I explained to the girls that this “job” was a kind of bursary, based on needs assessment, which had been determined by the school administration. Mr. Masinde provided me with the names of Gloria, Caroline, Gelly and Louise. I then approached these four girls and asked if they would be willing to work for me in exchange for school fees. They all agreed.

Teetering on the verge of this slippery slope, I was fully aware that the selection of four girls out of the group could cause enormous problems. However, I also provided opportunities for the other girls to earn money towards their school fees by selling me hand-woven mats and baskets that they or their mother or grandmothers had made. I paid them what I thought would be a reasonable selling price in North America (although, granted, significantly less than what they were worth in terms of labour and artistic value) – about $40 U.S. for mats and $20-30 U.S. for baskets. Admittedly, this a paltry sum for artifacts that have been woven and designed by women and girls who create original pieces of traditional, “practical art”, and who have spent many, many hours of time creating them, but the amount I paid was at least 10 times what they would have received locally. As well, I did have a limited budget. I gave these beautiful crafts away as presents and, once back in Canada, used some of them to fundraise for the girls.

I left Kyato Village for three weeks from mid-December to early January to spend time with friends in Europe. During that time I had a chance to debrief (or decompress), and I knew that I had to make some serious decisions about how I would rejoin Kyato Village and my relationship with the girls. I discussed my experiences and feelings associated with the moral and ethical implications of my research, my presence in the
community and my involvement – including financially – in the girls’ lives. In many ways, this debriefing was cathartic; however, it did not offer any epiphanies as to how I should come to terms with the harsh reality of living and conducting research in such a desperately impoverished context. Many of my friends have traveled and worked in economically-impoverished countries, but like me, they are unsure of the best way in which to make a positive contribution. Attempting to head off immediate crises in the girls’ daily lives was daunting; attempting to do more than that was paralyzing. It was an ethical “muddle” (Eisenhart, 2001)

The easiest route would have been to conclude my research and leave Kyato Village and the girls in January 2005. By that time I had collected sufficient data from which to produce a defensible dissertation. I could return to Canada and begin writing, and sever connections with the girls and the community. I still had the option of “ducking out” before the research forged ahead into even swampier and more unfamiliar territory, where personal and professional collapse. For me, however, that was not an option; it would have been irresponsible research. I had just begun to know the girls, KSS, Kyato Village, and I chose to navigate the swamp. In terms of the complex ethical issues concerning money and the research participants, wrapping up my research in January 2005 would have been the obvious and least complicated choice; additionally, in terms of my own financial situation, that would have been the easiest decision. But, with respect to the girls and my interest in their educational opportunities, and in terms of the research I was most interested in conducting, extricating myself from the research context because it had become complexly human would have been defeatist.

Upon returning to Kyato Village in January 2005, I met with the girls and told them that, although I was not able to support each of them with school and boarding fees, I would do what I could to help them in times of crises so that they would be able to
continue their education. And, to the immense credit of the girls, they approached me only in times of crises, and I was able to help each of them through particular situations. In fact, most of the time I had to intervene myself; I would notice that I had not seen one of the girls around school for a few days, and I would ask the other girls about where she was/had been, and would find out that she was lying in bed sick with malaria, or that she had had to return home because one of her parents/guardians was sick, or for other such reasons. I did not find any generalized way in which to respond to the girls’ needs as their needs were so varied. I did, however, make it clear to the girls that I would help them as much as I could to complete their year of S4 studies. (None of the girls who began S4 dropped out of S4.)

When I left Kyato Village in August 2005, the girls were about to begin their final term of S4. I left a “kitty” of a few hundred dollars with Mr. Masinde so that he could draw upon that when any of the girls was falling behind in school fees.

I told the girls that I would try to continue to help them with school fees to complete upper secondary (S5 and S6, or A-Level), or vocational school, whichever they chose, but that I could not promise that this would happen, as I could not afford to support all of them myself. I would have to try and fundraise in Canada. I had been reluctant to even tell them that I would try to help them because I know how much emotional investment could be placed in the slightest hint of a possibility; on the other hand, I did not want them to despair during their final term of S4 that this might be the end of their education. To raise money for all 15 of these girls to complete secondary education was a serious and heavy commitment that I made to myself. At the upper secondary level, it costs about $700 U.S per student for school, boarding fees, and some supplies. $700 for 15 girls for two years was over $20,000. However, as I write this, two years later, in July 2007, I am extremely pleased to say that well over $20,000 has been raised for these girls, and all the girls that chose to pursue upper secondary or vocational school have been able to do so.
In fact, most of the girls will be graduating in December, 2007! I will never be adequately able to convey my deep gratitude to the many individuals who have helped me support the girls. And, none of this would have been possible without Dan’s efforts – enrolling girls in programmes, receiving money and paying fees directly to the schools, meeting with the girls on a regular basis and ensuring that all is well with them, dealing with any problems they have, communicating with their parents, and keeping me abreast of all that is happening with the girls.

4.1.6c What the Girls Valued

In the final interviews I conducted with the girls, I asked what, if anything, they had learned or gained from the research. I was curious to know whether their answers would focus more on material gain or on experiences. Several girls mentioned material gain, such as that I had helped them with school fees, but they also included various experiences as being of significance. For example, 12 of the 15 girls mentioned various aspects of communication, including English, as being of value to them in terms of interacting with people from different cultures: “I improved my English because I use it to talk with you” (Shakila); “The most fun for me was the first time when I saw you the first time. I did not know that I could converse with you in English, but what is very funny that now we can talk together” (Caroline); “Speaking with different people like you and increasing our English capacity…and living with different people [e.g. living with me in the community]” (Penina); “Now…we can talk with the whites…I learnt that…people from Canada – they are not difficult to talk with (Henrietta).” I was also interested in their impressions of what I had learned from my research, and what I had gained from working with them. Almost all of the girls said that I had learned about the financial difficulties of their families, people’s, especially the girls’, “behaviours/characters” (Sofia, Doreen, Shakila, Tracy, Penina,
Caroline, Gloria, and Henrietta), “the culture of the girls” (Gloria), girls’ problems (all the girls), and the culture, lifestyles and livelihoods of people in the community (Sofia, Doreen, Yudaya, Tracy, Juliet, Penina, Ireen, Caroline, and Henrietta). Many of the girls said that I had learned about the girls’ families, and that I now understood the discrimination against girls: “You have learned that from our families we have the problem of discrimination against girls” (Gelly). Four girls (Jenenie, Doreen, Juliet and Henrietta) mentioned that I had learned some Luganda (the local language). Some other interesting responses include: “You learnt the ideas of people” (Ireen); “You learn about our backgrounds and culture beliefs…and different types of traditions” (Penina); “You learn how we girls live, the problems we find and the solutions” (Jenenie); “You have learned how our mom and dad do their work at home” (Shakila); “You have seen many things in our country”.

4.1.6d Girls’ Perceptions of the Research

Interestingly, in their final interview, two of the girls mentioned the fact that I had gained directly from my research with them. When asked what she thought I had gained from working with the girls, Yudaya said, “We have helped you with your research”. And, during my interview with Ireen, she queried me directly on some issues regarding my research.

Ireen: What do you gain from our research with you?

Shelley: …personally I will get my PhD from writing my research about you girls, but I am also hoping that I can help you girls and other girls in Uganda to get more education. Does that make sense to you?

Ireen: Yeah.

Shelley: Anything else?
Ireen: Shelley, we have taken many photos and we didn’t give you something, for example – money - and you give us photos – where did you get that money – I think it takes a lot of money.

Shelley: Well, part of it is that when I came to Uganda to do research I did get money from the government to do research and so part of that is spending it on photographs and [other research items].

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August 2005]

Ireen’s curiosity about the research and the directness of her queries indicate that she felt secure enough in our relationship to probe beneath the surface to find answers to her questions. In fact, on a regular basis, the girls questioned me about various topics, personal as well as research-related, but most of those were casual, in passing, and not recorded as transcribed data. What I am hoping to indicate here is that despite multiple differentials and differences between the girls and me, we did establish a meaningful dialogic relationship through which we learned about each other.

4.1.7 Listening and Learning

Despite the familiarity and openness of dialogue that developed between the girls and other members of the community and me, I attempted always to remain aware that my ethnocentric assumptions around issues related to, for example, gender equity, even “gender” itself, were rooted in a very different sociocultural and autobiographical history from that of the girls and women with whom I was working.42 In order to try to understand

42 Many Southern/Indigenous women assert that pre-colonial, traditional gender roles in their societies were based on a notion of complementarity, or symmetry, in which females and males assumed distinct roles and responsibilities that served to “maintain harmony and stability” (Smith, 1999, p. 152), but that also afforded women “full participation in many aspects of political decision making” (Smith, 1999, pp. 151-2). Colonization imposed a Northern, white conception of gender onto indigenous societies that assigned men the position of “head of the household” and property owner, and women essentially became the property of men. (Amadiume, 2001; Mikell, 1997; Smith, 1999
how issues of gender were understood in this context, I spent quite a lot of time at the beginning of my fieldwork listening to people (female and male students, female and male teachers, neighbours, and colleagues) talk about relationships, gender roles, and expectations, and observing the behaviours of various groups and individuals. I also talked in private about my understanding of gender with a couple of close acquaintances who belong to the culture to verify (or not) my conclusions. From there, I entered into discussions mainly through questions. I tried to refrain from putting forth my own opinions unless I was asked for them. And, over time, many people, especially girls and women, did ask me numerous questions about gender relations in Canada, and an exchange of ideas, opinions and experiences ensued. During the initial stage, when I was more of a passive observer/listener than an active participant in these conversations, I was not always comparing the Buganda culture to my own culture; rather, I focused on what I heard. But, later, when people began to ask me about my culture, I became acutely aware of the extent to which my culture has shaped my life experiences, that what I had often considered to be personal choice was actually influenced largely by social, cultural and material factors.

4.1.8 Definitions and Conceptions of Gender Equity

Because policy documents and programming materials are replete with terms such as gender equity, it is useful to know how the girls in this study conceptualized this term. Following are three representative responses to the question:

43 From questionnaires administered by Dan in December, 2006.
themselves”; “Gender balance/gender equity means sharing opportunities and giving equal
duties to both boys and girls”.

From conversations I had with many Ugandan women – ranging from those in
senior positions in the government to affluent women in business to women working in
little shops in Ganda Town to Ugandan graduate students in Vancouver, and to the women
living in Kyato Village - what constituted “gender equity” differed greatly, depending on
location (i.e., rural or urban), socioeconomic status, education level, social networks,
marital status, age, and life experiences. For example, well-educated, women living in
urban contexts with high-status jobs tended to publicly espouse a conception of gender
equity in which women were equal to men in all spheres, and shared responsibilities
equally. However, many of these women Kwesiga’s (2002) assertion that relations between
wives and husbands remained highly gendered and/or unequal at home:

husband and wife may both be high-level public servants. When they arrive home,
the man may relax and have his dinner served or go out ‘to meet the boys’. His wife
is likely to attend to children’s meals, participate in supper preparations or engage
in some income-generating activity; she is not likely to find time even to read
newspapers. Even if their official work may be similar, the wife still has the
additional responsibility of domestic duties. (p. 110).

Women in smaller, rural communities, such as Kyato, with little education and no
formal income found the educated, urban Ugandan women’s idea of gender equity simply
ludicrous. They could not conceive of their husbands assuming an “equal share” of
domestic responsibilities, especially as many of their husbands were polygamous and not
full-time residents of the household. The girls in this study were conflicted about the idea
of gender equity. They wanted full equality, although some expressed the fact that they
wanted to share “quantity” of work, but not necessarily the same kinds of work. They
recognized the gender inequities in their society and wanted those to change, and yet, many of the girls were doubtful that equity could be achieved.

I believe that shared explorations of the conceptual underpinnings of terms such as *gender equity*, *empowerment*, and even *feminism* could serve as a springboard for rich and poignant dialogue between women of the South and North. In turn, reciprocity between women worldwide can be fostered through such dialogue and exchange of life experiences, worldviews and hopes for the future. For example, in the adult literacy class that Dan and I taught, of which all the participants were women, we often discussed the differences between women’s lives in Uganda and women’s lives in Canada. One day, the women asked me why I didn’t have any children. I told them that I had not found myself in a relationship in which I wanted to have children. I had not felt the need to have children, and I didn’t know if I wanted to bring children into a world that was already overpopulated and suffering horrible environmental degradation as a result of human irresponsibility. They laughed heartily at my careful answers. For them, women were simply not women if they did not have children. I, on the other hand, said that often parents and children or other family members did not get along very well in my culture, so families were not necessarily the ideal, harmonious groupings they might be. I then asked the women if they ever had problems with their families, ever fought with their children, ever wished they had more time for themselves, and again, they laughed, this time nodding in agreement.

Our discussions around the value placed on motherhood and caring for matters relating to the home were many. I told the women about how my female, and even male, friends who have “stayed home” to look after their children (i.e., beyond maternity/paternity leave) were reluctant to go to social gatherings in which they would meet new people because of the inevitable question, “What do you do?”, and the predictable, awkward silence that followed the response, “I look after my home and children”, as if this
were an unworthy occupation. I also talked about the “superwoman” disease, in which a woman is expected, or expects herself, to be a caring and nurturing mother, and a loving but independent wife with a brilliant career (and a brilliant salary), who throws spontaneous gourmet dinner parties with Martha Stewart decorative touches, does crafts with her children, belongs to various clubs and organizations, and who still finds time for yoga, personal growth, artistic endeavours, and annual marathons.

It was one of those classes where minds were wandering, eyes roamed from window to window, and every pedagogical utterance seemed hopelessly inconsequential. I stood there, at the front of the classroom, beside a blackboard, with a piece of chalk in my right hand. I looked at the receivers of my infinite wisdom, seven women, slumped over the bench-desks, politely resisting the urge to leave. And, yes, I was getting bored with this, too. It was a hot, sluggish afternoon. I abhor standing at the front of a classroom writing verb conjugations on the board or trying to “do” conversation. My last chance to save this lesson was to discuss an article I had read in the paper earlier today – an article on menopause. So, I slowly read the article aloud, and Dan translated where the women asked for clarification. What transpired in the ensuing 45 or so minutes changed my relationship with these women forever. The commonalities of body, the curiosity around sex and relationships, beliefs about motherhood, the various perspectives about gender relations…there was no stopping this conversation! It was during this “class”, this moment in my relationship with these women, that I knew we had “broken ground” together. A large part of this was because they challenged me as a woman as they had never challenged me as a “teacher”; the questions they asked me made me feel vulnerable and uncertain…and aspects of their unshakeable conviction of who they were as women made my own grasp of “womanhood” seem at times shaky and fragile. The strength they internalized as a part of their identity as “woman” enabled them to
form groups, to tackle social problems, to contribute to their communities...and I felt my own contributions to the world and my “community”, in comparison, sadly anemic. This hour or so of exchange, and often ribald laughter, about sex, about relationships, throughout all of which Dan translated, where necessary, was one of the most poignant moments of my research. These wonderful women and I had entered into a heartfelt exchange and become engrossed in our dialogue and our interest in each other as human beings...as women.

[Excerpt from journal, April 7 2005]

(Photograph 15 “Women in adult literacy class”)

These women impressed me in numerous ways. They had an extremely strong and efficient communication network where, within minutes, despite the lack of phones or other technology, messages could be dispatched all over the village and beyond. They also performed a variety of important roles in the community, not the least of which was
attending to funeral preparations. And, as there were many deaths in the village, funeral activities demanded much of their time on a regular basis. Attending to funerals and their preparations, as well as suffering from malaria or tending to very ill family members, were the main reasons women occasionally missed classes. They also belonged to local women’s groups that extended help to the sick, infirm, elderly and orphans. In addition, they canvassed the villagers for contributions for projects such as a roof for the local church.

I don’t think I fully comprehended the importance that women played in the well-being and development of communities until I saw this for myself, over the course of a year, in Kyato and surrounding villages. Many women were involved in “women’s groups” of varying descriptions; these ranged from agro-groups (i.e., groups that came together to learn about agricultural products and techniques), to informal collectives that raised money or provided food and other basic requirements to the neediest (e.g., elderly people living alone unable to survive on what they were able to produce, orphans, and families living with HIV/AIDS). It seemed that virtually every community had at least one women’s group, and most of the girls’ mothers were involved, at minimum, in one group. I met with three women’s groups in various villages, and was impressed by the verve and generosity of spirit that these women, who themselves had very little, assumed responsibility to do what they could to help those in the most dire of situations. When I met with the Kyato women’s group, I asked if there was an equivalent men’s group. The women looked at each other and burst into laughter. One of the women explained that at one point some men had decided that they were going to begin a “men’s group”, but at their first meeting they couldn’t decide what to do and never met again. I was also struck by the women’s avidity for learning. When there was a workshop on health and nutrition, women (no men) attended. The adult literacy class, which was offered to all adults in the community, was attended exclusively by women.
Whenever a school/parent meeting was called at KSS, the vast majority of parent attendees would be mothers.

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, May 2005]

(Photograph 18 “Kyato Women’s Group”)

I observed much more of an emphasis on cooperative/collaborative efforts and a genuine concern and commitment to the well-being of a social grouping that extends far beyond the nuclear family in African communities than in the Northern communities with which I am familiar. Mikell (1997c) argues that because African women play such a particularly important role in community cohesion and well-being, the Western feminist emphasis on independence and autonomy promotes individualism at the grave expense of communitarianism. Although I agree with Mikell that African women tend to be more community-oriented than women in the North, I do not believe that this need pose a barrier
towards a collaborative project of global gender equity that respects valuable local practices. Parpart (2002) discusses ways in which Northern feminists have worked together with women in the South: “feminist efforts to empower women in the South often involve the synthesis of Western discourses on development and rights with various local understandings and goals” (Parpart, 2002, p. 52). In addition, I think that there is much for women in the North to learn about a more community-focused way of living as it is often lamented that associated with life in rich countries is a large degree of isolation and withdrawal from the traditional community.

4.1.8 (Dis)Positionality as a Place to Work  From

My intent is not to frame African women as voiceless, but rather to point out developers’ deafness to the innovative and appropriate strategies of empowerment that African women have and continue to articulate and enact (Horn, 2000, p. 33)

All phases of this study have caused me to research myself as much, or more, than I “researched” the girls. At times I experience an inner reeling when I think about my role(s) as a researcher, human being, and muzungu, in Kyato Village. Countless questions arise: How did my presence affect others? What did I observe and what did I miss? What did I learn – about the girls, about life in a rural Ugandan village, about myself? What did I resist learning and experiencing? The longer I work with the data and the more time I spend writing up my study, the more the questions come and the deeper I delve within myself to try and make sense of not only my research, but the nature of humanity, and the very bizarre way we, as human beings, complacently accept gross inequities in the world and get on with our own lives. At times I feel “stuck” in a vortex of competing and conflicting epistemologies, positionings, and locationalities, and I do not know how accurately I can
represent myself, let alone others. I have come face to face with literature that accuses me
and my research (by virtue of belonging to that population of white, First World, middle-
class women) as being exploitative, neocolonialist and racist.

There are many times that I have been deeply tempted to walk away from writing
this dissertation. But, ultimately, I have come back to it. I have asked myself three
questions: i) Has this research benefited these particular 15 girls?; ii) Does this research
have the potential to benefit other girls in similar contexts?; and iii) Does this research/
research process contribute to forging South/North alliances amongst women particularly,
but people in general? I have answered “yes” to all three questions. I have also asked
myself if this research may have harmed the 15 girls, the community, and the women in the
adult literacy class and/or others with whom I interacted. I don’t think so, although I
cannot be sure. It would be too much of a diversion here, but I will explain the reason for my
answer in the Epilogue.

I realize that the general nature of the difficulties I have experienced representing
my research, the participants, and myself are shared by many feminist ethnographers, and
that there are always choices and decisions to be made, and those must be made from a
place of compassionate and determined heartfulness and mindfulness: Do I do something,
in an attempt to contribute to a more equitable world (which is personally risky), or do I do
nothing (which is of immense risk in other ways). Lal (1996) warns:

be wary of the potential paralysis of analysis that ensues from the reflexive mode of
analysis and concentrated attentiveness to the authorial strategies and powers of
representations, especially when situated within the context of the current
postmodernist theoretical moment, which is characterized by ‘the contemporary
crisis of representation, the profound uncertainty about what constitutes an
adequate depiction of social ‘reality’.’ (Lather, 1991, p. 21) (p. 207)
So, I work to unpick the knotted web of theories, claims, arguments, accusations, self-doubts, and uncertainties, and then look back upon a heap of strands that plug into the world and show that there are, in fact, alliances forming and that have been formed amongst women from all races, cultures, backgrounds and locations who are working towards common goals, such as gender equity in education. I look to my own research team and expanded research network that consists of Black, Indigenous, Colored and white women and men from the South and North. I look to my friends and family who are Black, Coloured, Indigenous and white from both the South and North, and I look to my community that is Black, Coloured, Indigenous and white with a multiplicity of first, second and additional languages. This is not to say that these alliances, relationships and communities are without problems, or that there is not much work yet to be done to open up the dialogue as well as explore and confront uncomfortable realities, or that this overlap and integration of peoples and geography is the norm, but as bell hooks (2003) adroitly commented: “that what we cannot imagine we cannot bring into being” (p. 195).

Lal (1996) argues that although it is necessary for the researcher to explore the depth and breadth of complications with which her research is fraught, those inevitable complications, discomforts and internal questionings should not prevent meaningful, well-considered, rigorous and heartfelt research from being conducted. Lal quotes Jennifer Robinson, a white ethnographer who conducted research amongst the Indian community in South Africa, as stating, “It is within the postcolonial idiom that I find some of the most useful pathways through – through not solutions to – this relationship [between researcher and researched]” (Robinson, 1994: 218-219; in Lal, 1996, pp. 199-200). Despite the ethical tensions involved in such research, “The value of Third World research should be clear for all to see in an interdependent world in which rich and poor, rural and urban,
formal and informal are the opposite sides of the same coin…there is vast potential for enlightened outside research” (Potter, 1993, p. 294; in Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000, p. 126).

I have attempted to be candid about the specific dilemmas of my research, as well as their connection to larger, global feminist postcolonial discourse. My study is not without shortcomings, and will not be without critics, but I have striven to acknowledge those shortcomings, and my approaches to addressing them as clearly and forthrightly as possible. I accept that there are limitations to what I can deeply know and understand about these girls and women’s lives. However, I do not believe that any kind of positive, meaningful interaction or alliance with African girls and women can be ruled out for me because I am not African; I do not believe that my “whiteness” or my “non-Africanness” prevents me from understanding anything at all about the nature of the challenges and situations with which Ugandan girls and women must contend.

4.2 Research methods

Ethnographic data collection is typically expansive in breadth and varied in kind; however, “[t]he primary tools of the ethnographer are eyes and ears and other sensory abilities, augmented by mechanical aids” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 160; see also Davies, 1999). As Davies (1999) asserts, “the quantity of data produced, even by a single fieldworker, is usually immense” (p. 195) and “generates a vast amount of text” (p. 195). Certainly, this is true of my research. I propose that the validity of my research findings is anchored in the vast quantity of data I collected, the length of time I spent conducting fieldwork, the triangulation of data, the follow-up research I conducted on aspects of the research I found perplexing or abstruse, the consultation of other studies, my continuous checking of my assumptions with either/both participants, members of the community, or

44 Please see Appendix A for details on data collection.
Ugandan colleagues, “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), reflexivity and my attempt at
candour (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Writing up this study, I am surrounded by numerous
large binders full of interview transcriptions, fieldnotes, research activity schedules, writing
samples from the girls, letters, documentation from the school, dozens of videotapes,
hundreds (perhaps thousands) of photographs, artwork, and questionnaires responses.

My relationship with the girls involved interactions in a wide variety of contexts
and roles. I engaged in participant observation at the beginning of my fieldwork as a way of
“getting started” in ethnographic research (Spindler and Hammond, 2000) by volunteering
as a classroom teacher of English. I co-facilitated the Straight Talk Club, a student club at
KSS that met weekly and discussed issues of sexual health and adolescent relationships.
The girls and I had regular weekly research meetings during which we engaged in a broad
spectrum of conversation and activities in which the girls often assumed researcher or co-
researcher roles. In addition, the girls would often drop by my house for a chat, or we
would talk in the library or in one of the empty classrooms, and I visited the girls’ homes
and families. We also made outings to the trading centre and Ganda Town together. Here I
will describe the rationale and approach to various tools I used for data collection, and then
I will discuss its analysis.

4.2.1 The Role of the Translator

It is difficult to ascribe a single title the multiple roles Daniel Ahimbisibwe played
in this research, but together we chose “translator”, as it suggests translation not only of
linguistic but also of cultural meaning. Although the majority of my interactions with the
girls were independent of Dan, he often assumed the role of facilitator and/or mediator in
various circumstances. For example, all of the interviews with the individual girls were
conducted without Dan, but if there were a word or phrase the girls did not understand, we
would call upon him to translate that. In situations where it was necessary for the girls to understand their rights and options with respect to participation in this research, I ensured that Dan would be present to explain these to the girls and ensure that they completely understood the implications of their participation. Dan was often present when the students completed questionnaires for me to ensure they understood the instructions, their option to not complete it, and to be present if they had any questions about the content or use of the questionnaires. Dan was also present for many of the focus group discussions. Dan accompanied me to some of girls’ homes, especially the girls whose English language abilities were not strong, in order to facilitate easier communication between the girls’ families and me. And, Dan was always present at the adult literacy class in order to translate when/if necessary. Dan was also a source of cultural reference, and he often arranged for me to speak to women in the community about certain issues of interest and concern to me.

An issue of concern from the outset was the appropriateness of having a male translator when a significant part of my research was concerned with issues of gender inequities experienced by girls and women. Although I was aware that a male translator could very well jeopardize the research, I was quite certain that Dan, with whom I had spent some time prior to commencing this research, would not. In fact, in many ways Dan was the ideal translator. Dan had lived in the village and worked as a librarian for three years prior to my arrival. His family roots were in Mbarara District, about one hundred miles west, and so he was not an intimate part of the local community in terms of clan or family relationships. He was married, but his wife and two young daughters were still living in Mbarara, as he could not afford to support them in Kyato Village. He was gentle, soft-spoken, and unfailingly earnest, and most of his non-working time was spent alone studying to pass his “A-Level” exams so he could pursue his education at college or
university. During the three years he had lived in Kyato Village, he had gained the respect and trust of many individuals in the community.

Dan had an exceptionally unusual and strong relationship with girls and women in the community for a number of reasons. First, people knew that he was secure in his marital status; they had seen and/or met his wife and daughters when they had occasionally come to visit. Second, because Dan came from a different part of Uganda, he was not involved in local affairs (relationships, gossip, or family ties) as those who had lived in the area all of their lives. Also, Dan spent most of his non-working hours alone, studying; he did not sit around in pubs, or “walk up and down saying that..that” (i.e., he did not “hang out” gossiping). Third, he was easily approachable, sensitive to people’s problems and situations, and fair and consistent in the way he dealt with everyone from school students to adults in the community.

For example, an adult literacy class had been started in the community three or four years before I arrived, but the instructor had alienated the participants, mostly women, with his impatient and patronizing treatment of them, and eventually they ceased going to class. However, because of their keen desire to learn, after Dan had been at the library for a few months, the women approached Dan and asked if he would teach the literacy class. He agreed to this, and the class was held regularly, every week, with close to full attendance. The women were clearly comfortable with Dan as an instructor. In addition, Dan privately, voluntarily tutored two young women from the community at the library, two or three times a week. One of these women had never had any formal schooling and could not read or write at all, but over two years she had learned how to read and write and was boastfully proud of her achievement. She had had a particularly traumatic past; her husband had mentally and physically abused her and had humiliated her because of her lack of education, and he had taken another wife and thrown her out, forcing her to leave her
young son of two years behind. She had come to the village to live with her sister’s family. She could not talk about this without tears filling her eyes; her forced separation from her son was something from which she would never recover. As a result of her past experiences, she was extremely wary of men, and had been initially suspicious that Dan might “want something” from her for the hours he spent teaching her. Dan was sensitive to this, and brought her pictures of his wife and daughters and expressed his devotion to his family, and over time, she learned that he did not expect anything in return. She came to trust him implicitly, and shared with him all the harsh experiences she had undergone in her life. Similarly, I regularly saw girls from KSS come into the library and talk to him quietly about problems they were having – at home, with other students, or with the teachers. He always listened carefully, and then suggested a course of action or assumed the role of mediator on their behalf.

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary instances testifying to the trust and sense of ease that girls and women had around Dan was during one of the adult literacy classes. This class, which I have described above, diverged into discussions of issues related to sex and sexual health (e.g., menopause, contraceptives, HIV/AIDS, female/male relationships, etc.) in which there was much laughter, joking, and woman-to-woman nudging and eye-rolling. Throughout this session, Dan, the only male, seriously undertook his role as translator and facilitator. He maintained a kind of neutrality, but efficacy, that enabled a natural flow – overcoming language barriers - between the women and me. The women told me that they had never really discussed these issues, even amongst themselves, and so it was insightful and liberating for them to engage in this dialogue. The women were completely nonplussed that Dan was male. In fact, after the class, one of the women approached Dan privately and asked him if he thought that menopause might be the reason she did not have the same
degree of sexual desire as she had had before. I think, however, it would have been very different if any other man had been present.

Dan was aware of his strong relationship with women and girls in the community and consciously cultivated a relationship of trust with them.

*Shelley:* ...people are going to say – oh you were interviewing all these women about certain problems – you’re interviewing the girls and your translator was a man. A lot of people...are going to say that the girls or the women didn’t tell me what they would have told me if I had had a women translator/assistant. What do you think about that?

*Dan:* In fact, that one is not true because most women here, they trust people or anyone, not women, they tend to trust people, not the sex of male or female. Because like the time I’ve spent there [at the library], how I have been handling them – that makes people trust you to talk to you rather than you female or male. So they trust an individual.

[Excerpt from interview with Dan, August 2005]

Although the vast majority of research I conducted with the girls did not include Dan, he was always available for clarification on perplexing situations or issues, and/or translation of concepts that were beyond the ability of the girls and me to communicate directly with each other. Although it is impossible for me to know what might have been different had I had a female translator (and having a male translator may be one of the shortcomings of this study), nonetheless I believe that Dan was an exceptional translator. In fact, from my perspective, Dan was indispensable to this study.
4.2.2 Fieldnotes/Journals

Fine (1998) believes that the researcher’s written observations constitute the ‘starting point’ of ethnographic research. It is here that ‘points of connection’ between researcher and participants, as well as sameness and difference and partial degrees of both, are explored. Journal entries and fieldnotes are important to self-reflexive investigation, in which the researcher begins to compose a description, or a portrait, of “self” and “other” in relationship to the research context; they constitute “the first resolution of the two tensions of ethnography, the beginning of analytic description and ultimately public discourse” (Fine, 1998, p. 197). Over the course of my fieldwork (even before my fieldwork began and after it ended), I took extensive notes and kept a daily journal. These observations have been important in my reconstruction of the context and events as I have written my thesis. They have not only served to remind me of things forgotten, or vivify my recollections, but they have enabled me to see how my understanding of the context changed and grew over the course of the year: how strangers became neighbours, acquaintances, students, and colleagues; how the village’s roads, paths, fields, and houses became intimately familiar; how the undercurrents of the community – its politics, its alliances and its factions, scandals and celebrations – became known to me, at least to some degree. I wrote about teaching experiences, conversations with people, day-to-day life at home, village happenings, research work with the girls, and trips to Ganda Town, Kampala and some other destinations. All of this helped to provide me with deeper insight into the lives of the girls and the communities they knew and of which they were a part. This writing also helped me “turn over” what I had learned, and re-focus or refine my inquiry.
4.2.3 Participant Observation

During the first four months of my fieldwork, I engaged in participant observation, or what is “better known among anthropologists as advanced hanging out” (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 49). Participant observation eases the researcher into the context and enables the researcher to become a familiar presence and begin to build relationships: “to be involved directly in the activities of people still seems to be the best method we have for learning about the meaning of things to the people we hope to understand” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 23); see also Kakuru, 2006; Spindler & Hammond, 2000). I became a familiar presence at the school through teaching the Senior 3 (the equivalent to Grade 11) English class for one term (September to December, 2004). This class consisted of the 20 girl participants, as well as 22 boys. I also co-facilitated a weekly lunch-hour sexual health club, the Straight Talk Club, based on a nationally distributed sexual health newsletter, Straight Talk, designed for adolescents. I worked at the library almost every night and most weekends, and I participated in numerous community events, such as “games night” on Saturdays at the library (for which I made popcorn and tea), and local workshops (e.g., on health and nutrition). Over time, the novelty of my presence in the village wore off as people grew accustomed to seeing me several times a day trudging back and forth between home, the library, the school and the trading centre, laden with camera, video camera, laptop computer and bulging backpack. Most people lost their initial shyness or reserve around me and began to approach me freely. And, through my teaching work, I got to know the girls who were participating in the research in a classroom context, and I also became familiar with school culture from the inside. Over the course of the year, I also visited women’s and other community groups, taught an adult literacy class at the community library, and visited the local primary schools, health clinics and other local institutions.
4.2.4 Interviews

Interviews are an integral aspect of ethnographic research (Carspecken, 1996; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Davies, 1999; Perecman & Curran, 2006) and interviews proved to be a rich source of data for this study. I conducted interviews with each of the girls, many of the teachers and staff at KSS, and several women from the adult literacy class. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the girls, teachers and staff at KSS, and women in the adult literacy class. These interviews provided an opportunity to build a broader picture of where the greatest similarities and differences existed within cohorts. It also enabled me to gain deeper insight into the girls’ individual lives and experiences and learn how gender equity and/or education were understood or experienced by them personally. I prepared a few “lead-off questions” with the intention of “open[ing] up a topic domain that one wishe

4.2.5 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions (FGDs) served as an important research tool in this study by opening up various kinds of dialogue between groups of research participants and bringing to light issues that may not have been uncovered through individual interviews, participant observation or questionnaires. I led focus group discussions with girls-only groups, boys-only groups, mixed girl/boy groups, and women’s groups. Most of these were videotaped, but some were documented in my fieldnotes. As Palys (2003) notes, “the focus group setting places opinions ‘on the table’ where differences between perspectives can be highlighted and negotiated. This process allows participants to embellish on positions, discuss related dynamics, and articulate the rationale(s) underlying their
perspective” (p. 162). FGDs also provided a setting in which I could gather more information about certain issues of interest and importance that I had come across: “The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (Morgan, 1997, p. 2).

Focus group interactions often had the effect of: i) either encouraging the participants to speak more openly about certain issues, building on each other’s statements, such as sexual health concerns, or ii) intensifying debate on contentious topics, such as polygamy and appropriate norms of behaviour for girls/women and boys/men. Albrecht, Johnson and Walther (1993) caution about these consensus-building or polarizing tendencies of the FGDs, so I have considered the data from these FGDs in light of all the other kinds of data collected.

4.2.6 Participatory Research Activities

Feminist ethnography not only seeks to explore and/or expose/express the ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ experiences of women, but strives to contribute to the empowerment of women through the research process itself (Lather & Smithies, 1997; Norton, 2000; Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000). This is aptly described by Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson (1992) as empowerment research, research that is concerned “with” the subjects, as well as “on” and “for” the subjects:

One of the things we take that additional ‘with’ to imply is the use of interactive or dialogic research methods…It is the centrality of interaction ‘with’ the researched that enables research to be empowering in our sense; though we understand this as a necessary rather than a sufficient condition. (Cameron et al, 1992, p. 22)
I engaged the girls in many participatory research activities in which they explored gender roles, investigated community members’ attitudes to girls’ education, and researched various employment opportunities and their educational requirements. I also engaged the girls as co-researchers for several activities, including sessions in which photographs, artwork, music and drama, were produced by the girls, providing richly creative representations of their lives and thoughts. We had pre-research discussions as well as de-briefing sessions around most of these activities in which we discussed critically, and at length, the findings. These discussions often led to the girls’ contemplation of many issues around their own gendered positionality in their culture for the first time. I strongly believe that participatory research practices have the potential to engage and involve participants in a way in which they may be able to use the act of researching – themselves, their society, as well as the researcher and the culture she brings with her – to gain a new or different perspective and perhaps (re)evaluate societal norms, assumptions, and expectations with considerable depth and breadth.

4.2.7 Questionnaires

During my year of fieldwork, I administered several questionnaires (see Appendix A5) that contained both closed and open-ended questions. Questionnaires provide a means by which “people can tell us their thoughts (instead of our guessing about them) and in which they can explain themselves (instead of our speculating about what their motives might be)” (Palys, 2003, p. 150). I found questionnaires to be a particularly useful means by which to come to understand “general” attitudes on particular topics such as, for example, polygamy, as well as to determine “typical” conditions or activities, such as the kinds of domestic chores girls and boys performed. In addition, questionnaires were extremely valuable for triangulating data.
4.3  Sifting Through, Shifting, Staring At, and Making Sense of the Data

Data analysis depends upon theorizing...The formal tasks of theorizing are perceiving; comparing, contrasting, aggregating, and ordering; establishing linkages and relationships; and speculating. Each of these tasks is subsumed in the next.

(Goetz & LaCompte, 1984, p. 166)

It is approaching two years since I returned from my fieldwork in Uganda, and day after day I sit, writing my dissertation, surrounded by binders of notes, questionnaire responses, interview transcriptions, boxes of videotapes, documents, photographs, artwork, notebooks and a computer on the breaking point, overstuffed with data of various formats. “Facing the data” has been an exciting and inspiring experience on the one hand, and a daunting and overwhelming one on the other. From conversations with others, I know that I am not alone in this. As one collects data, one is aware that it will need to be processed – categorized, analysed, revisited, reconsidered, questioned - and yet, until one reaches that stage, there is no true knowledge of the enormity of the task. As I am approaching the end of the first draft of my thesis, I am continuously reaching for those binders, those documents, those notebooks, as I have come to know them intimately.

[Post-research notes, April 4, 2007]

Ethnography is an inductive approach to research, in which the researcher “generat[es] meaning from the data collected in the field” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). Ethnographic data collection is eclectic and messy as the researcher amasses enormous and multitudinous kinds of data in situ. Ethnographic research brims with nuance and unpredictability, very much reflecting the human condition under consideration. As a result, during the initial stages, “ethnographers are often at pains to observe broadly and
eclectically and not to focus on specific theoretical concerns too quickly in their fieldwork [and] their databases will necessarily reflect this” (Davies, 1999, p. 196). Time is required to let the context unfold for the researcher: “[a]s you ‘collect data,’ your understanding of the local situation *should* keep changing” (Gottlieb, 2006, p. 59). It is “mucking around in the data”, as one of my supervisors, Maureen Kendrick, puts it that begins the process of theorizing and understanding what the research has to offer.

During the fieldwork stage, the data begins to assume shapes and forms which are then investigated as “chunks” of information/understanding: “the first step in analysis…is to develop a set of categories for labeling chunks of data…These categories are basically low-level theoretical concepts for classifying and thinking about the data” (Davies, 1999, p. 196). These categories have shifting and overlapping boundaries, and relentlessly trespass amongst themselves, but ultimately, the data and categories result from initial concepts and questions that have guided the research. In preparation for this study, I conducted extensive literature reviews, and wrote my research proposal as well as comprehensive examinations on the topics of “Literacy and Development”, “Girls’ Education in Uganda” and “Critical Feminist Postmodernist Ethnographic Methodology”. As important as these papers were at the outset of this research to provide me with an intellectual backdrop and working themes, they constituted but gauzy curtains and make-shift scenery for the very earthy reality of “being there”.

From the outset, as an inductive process, my research generated questions and theories. The research context, the Ugandan culture, and the research participants, as well as my situation as an inhabitant in a rural African village were all new to me. Thus, it was essential that I come to know the research participants and the environments in which I was involved *in order to* begin to theorize: “Exploratory research provides a heuristic benefit:
by familiarizing the researcher with the phenomenon, such research helps identify important variables and questions of interest” (Palys, 2003, p. 73).

During the first two or three months of my fieldwork, questions and preliminary understandings emerged from which I explored with greater attention and specificity aspects of the girls’ lives, their educational experiences, and the local contexts in which they lived and interacted. Thus, this study is very much based on grounded theory, or “theory that emerges from research” (Palys, 2003, p. 74). Over time, I sorted and categorized data, and probed areas of contradiction, perplexity or surprise. After combing through, recategorizing, revisiting, combining additional data, and continuously refining the database, both large patterns and specific themes emerged:

- the relatively formal analysis of ethnographic data nearly always begins with the consideration and development of concepts to establish and explain categories within those data and then proceeds to explore relationships between these concepts...[this provides] knowledge through theoretical inference and generalization of a social reality that is neither accessible directly through native understandings nor simply a reflection of the individual anthropologist’s psyche (Davies, 1999, p. 199)

I became aware that: the girls lived in a chronic state of stress, anxiety and unpredictability around everything – their education, their freedom, their status of being unmarried/married, pregnant/not-pregnant, HIV/AIDS-positive or negative, the health of family members; the girls had indefatigable personal strength, confidence and verve – they worked hard, both at home and at school, walked long distances often in shoes that were not meant for this use or shoes that did not fit properly, and yet the girls had ready smiles and rarely complained; the girls believed they were every bit as deserving as boys; the girls did not seem to be intimidated by boys their own age; boy cohorts seemed to respect their
female classmates; there was much laughter and camaraderie between the girls and boys within the school environment; the girls suffered terribly from preventable diseases, such as malaria, or ailments, such as menstrual cramps, that could be relieved with medication as basic as aspirin; most girls possessed a deep and enduring respect for their parents, especially their mothers; the girls expressed long-term commitment to their families and communities; the girls were proud of their culture, their heritage, their families and communities, their land and country, and indigenous knowledge; and the girls considered education to be one of the most, if not the most important, component of their lives. The education they were receiving, however, did not meet their needs.

4.4 Conclusion

“In an era of rampant reflexivity, just getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make.” (Lather, 1991, p. 20)

Unbelievably, as I write the conclusion to this chapter, Dan is staying at my home in Vancouver. This is his first international trip. His wife and other friends in the community, as well as his mother and brothers who came from his home village several hundreds of miles away, accompanied him to the airport. He is only in Vancouver for a week; all of his expenses have been paid so he can attend a conference and present the research he conducted in Uganda (August-September 2006) on a project that involved the same girls who participated in my study, “Digital literacy, gender and access to health information for adolescent girls in Uganda”, led by Dr. Bonny Norton and me. But he is in demand for numerous other events, including visits with groups that have donated to school fees for the final years of education for the girls in this study, talks with schools and other organizations that have contributed to grassroots, community-
led projects in Kyato Village, including that of the NGO recently formed by the women from the adult literacy class, and discussions with students who are embarking upon volunteer work in East Africa. In between working on our conference presentation and traveling between various events, we talk and talk and talk late into the nights. He has told me about all the girls, what they are doing, and what their plans are. He has told me about the village happenings...we are talking discussing possible future projects...

[Post-research notes, April 30, 2007]

There is a history and a current reality of inequity, abuse and exploitation for which the First World, the “white world”, must assume responsibility. By virtue of my whiteness, I, too, must assume responsibility or at least acknowledge my responsibility to actively work toward social justice, as I have reaped the benefits of living in a rich, Northern society at the expense of those living in impoverished, colonized, and marginalized societies in the South. I am also well aware of the criticism of white people, white feminists, white middle-class Northern women in general, and white, middle-class, feminist researchers who conduct studies in the South, in particular. However, these points of tension and uncomfortable realities can be used to deepen the dialogue around a middle ground that offers possibilities of reconciliation, humility and alliance-building (Harding & Norberg, 2005). I believe this is a critical moment with the potential to construct what Alexander and Mohanty (1997) refer to as a feminist democracy that involves “acknowledging the objectifying, dehumanizing effects of colonization…and building actively anticolonialist relationships and cultures” (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997, p. xxvii). Similarly, Spivak (2000) argues for a transnational feminist consciousness to counter the transnational capitalist inequities that are rapidly recolonizing the world and subjugating peoples in poor countries, especially women, and Lal (1996) proposes “an
imagined community of postcolonial intellectuals that rise above national, racial and gendered boundaries in the articulation of politically responsible representations” (p. 200).

It is time to work towards a global feminism that acknowledges a common (if varied in degree and kind) oppression of women in a (still) patriarchal world, and yet honours the deep degrees of complexity of each woman’s own experiences, as well as aspects of those experiences that may be shared with a local community, a nation, various parts of the (geographical, cultural, political or social) world. It is important to give consideration to positioning, to the factors (e.g., socioeconomic, cultural, historical, political, and educational) that contribute to that positioning, and how one’s positioning determines/impacts/plays out in relationships with others. On the other hand, there is a point at which the individual, as a person who is more than the sum of those positionalities and situated knowledges must interact with other individuals, who, too, are whole persons with all their own complexities. Who each of us has become, because of and despite our individual experiences, is who we are now, and who we are now is where we must work from to attempt to understand the world and forge meaningful relationships with others:

Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community. (hooks, 2003, p. 197)
June 9, 2005

This morning, as I was working at home, I heard someone call my name. I went to the door and found Gelly and Gloria on the veranda. Gelly was suffering from one of her terrible headaches, and Gloria was suffering from an earache she had had for a few days. Yesterday in Ganda Town, I met a Canadian woman, Barbara, a retired nurse from Toronto, who is doing volunteer work at Ganda Referral Hospital. Barbara gave me her phone number and told me to call her anytime I had a medical concern, and she would try and provide me with the information I needed. So, I called her and asked if she knew a good doctor I could take Gelly to see, and Barbara told me to take Gelly to the hospital tomorrow morning as Barbara would be there and would try to help. Barbara instructed me to get some painkillers/anti-inflammatories for Gelly in the meantime. So, I told the girls I would try to take them to the hospital tomorrow, and I gave Gloria some money to go to the trading centre to get Gelly some Panadol. Poor Gelly! She has suffered so much, and has never received the medical attention she needs. She’s one of the brightest S4 girls, but has missed probably six weeks of school because of these headaches and accompanying dizziness, face swelling, weakness, chest constrictions...
June 10, 2005

I had planned to spend the day interviewing women from the adult literacy class for the Swazi panel paper...but, alas, when I arrived at the library, I discovered that Gelly was still in excruciating pain from her headache, and that she also had chest constrictions. Gloria’s earache was still bad, and Ireen was suffering terribly from a toothache. Since I didn’t have access to Mr. Masinde’s car today, I thought that if Gelly were feeling better, I would wait until tomorrow or Monday to take her to the hospital. But I couldn’t bear to see Gelly lying in the dark in the dorm in so much pain, or Ireen in her bed with a toothache. So, I decided to forfeit my research day, and get the three girls to the Ganda hospital. I went to the trading centre and organized a taxi. When we arrived at the hospital, there were at least one hundred people waiting to see one or two doctors. I found Barbara and talked to her briefly. When I first spotted her, she was in an animated conversation with a group of nurses and Dr. K. It sounded like quite a heated argument– but I couldn’t make out what they were saying. When I talked to Barbara a little later, she explained that a child had died this morning, and not one doctor could be found in the hospital. Barbara met the girls, and sat and talked to Gelly, while I took Ireen to the dental clinic down the road. Then I made a number of trips back and forth between the outpatient and dental clinics. Ireen finally got in to see the dentist. She lay back in the dental chair, and the dentist showed me all of the problems with her teeth. She had extremely bad tooth decay. The dentist said that he should cement three of them and extract another one. She also needs a root canal. He said that if she doesn’t get her teeth worked on, she would have none left by the time she is 25. She has already had a few pulled.
Then I went back to the outpatient clinic. Gloria was in a section meant specifically for those with ear problems. Gelly was still sitting in the general line...having shuffled over only a few seats. Barbara came over again, and she told me that after talking to Gelly for some time, she thought that Gelly was under a lot of stress – school, money, all the teenage angst (including the threat of AIDS, etc). Barbara said that symptoms of this kind of stress are those that Gelly is exhibiting - headaches and chest pain. I told Barbara that I have been wondering if Gelly could have a brain tumour since she has also experienced severe face-swelling, dizziness and hallucinations. Barbara said that usually tumors manifest themselves differently, for example, as seizures, and that if Gelly had had a tumor for over a year (as that is how long she has been suffering these bad headaches), that she would be in a lot worse shape. I then asked Barbara if she knew if there were any counselors at the hospital that Gelly might be able to see. If she is suffering from extremely high levels of stress, then she needs to talk to someone about it. Barbara asked around a bit and found out that there is one social worker, Joseph something, who works at the hospital. Barbara and I walked to the administration building to get more information. Joseph was not there and has no phone by which he can be contacted. The receptionist said that he would be back Monday, maybe...

I returned to the dental clinic to find Ireen being worked on by the dentist. I waited for an hour or so, and then she emerged smiling, and her teeth looked great! So – I hope that this will prevent her from having to have her teeth pulled (which seems to be the way they deal with most dental problems here...the cheapest way, of course). The bill for services today was 24,000 Ush. But, I’m
willing to pay that, of course, as there is no way of replacing teeth once they are gone. And I can imagine that false teeth cost a fortune. However, I found out today that dental check-ups are free at the hospital – I don’t think most people know this. Ireen and I walked back to the out-patient clinic. Gloria had finally got in to see the doctor about her ear. I asked her what the doctor had said. She said the doctor had told her to put cotton in it and come back next Friday. No medicine? I asked. No – she said. Hmmm...I thought this was strange, but I also knew the futility of getting her back in to see the doctor again with the line-up like it was...I wished that I had been able to go in with her.

Poor Gelly was still waiting. I suggested that Ireen and Gloria go for a walk and I’d wait with Gelly. Dozens of people sitting on the benches in the waiting area seemed to be waiting for an empty room. There was no doctor there. We waited for at least another hour and a half, which brought our total wait time up to over six hours. Finally I went and stood by the door of the room that seemed to have a doctor in it. I stood there while a group of nurses and assistants huddled together down the hall, reluctant to approach me. Finally, a nurse came over and asked if I was with someone. I said, “Yes, we’ve been waiting about six hours for what appears to be an empty room, and this girl is in a lot of pain”. The nurse immediately called Gelly over and ushered us in to see the doctor. He asked her a number of questions, and I reminded her to tell him about the eye pain she got from reading, the dizziness, the face swelling (and 15 injections she had got in her face), weakness, chest pains, missed school, etcetera. He took copious notes, and then checked her blood pressure. At this point Barbara came in. The doctor said that he had got two different readings on her blood pressure – which seemed
high – and could Bridget take her blood pressure again. She did, and found it
lower than his reading (but she made a joke about a handsome doctor raising
one’s blood pressure). The doctor then prescribed some blood pressure pills to try
and lower Gelly’s blood pressure a bit. Barbara told me to monitor Gelly closely,
and if she experiences ANY problems to call her and she will take her blood
pressure again. The doctor also told Gelly to get her eyes checked at the eye
clinic. Meanwhile, the other doctor (a woman, Bernice) in the same room, asked
me about the other student I had brought in for her ear problem. I told her that
Gloria had told me that the doctor (Bernice) had just told her to put cotton in her
ears. She exploded, ”What!!! I gave her a prescription and told her to use a
matchstick and clean out her ear four times a day! She should be in the line-up
NOW getting her prescription filled – there’s a long wait.” I asked: “You gave her a
prescription?” She retorted, “Yes, of course I did!” I said, “Maybe she told me
that you didn’t because she doesn’t have any money.” Bernice replied, “It’s free –
it’s a government hospital.” So I called Gloria into the room and she met with the
(maternal) wrath of the doctor, who gave her a good lecture on taking care of
herself, etcetera.

Ireen and Gloria then went to wait for Gloria’s prescription to be filled.
(Gloria had, in fact, thought she had to pay for the prescription). Barbara offered to
take Gelly to the eye clinic, so I took Gelly’s prescription to be filled. I found Gloria
and Ireen sitting on benches in front of a boarded up counter. The pharmacists
were “out for lunch” (at 4:30 pm). Aarrgghhh. Barbara brought Gelly back,
“Nothing wrong with her eyes”. By this point I was totally fed up with sitting
around, waiting. Plus, I had neither eaten or had anything to drink since morning
and nor had the girls. So, I gave them money to get something to eat in Ganda Town and to get transport home. I walked into Ganda Town with Barbara, got something to eat, walked back to the hospital, picked up the girls’ prescriptions and then headed home.
CHAPTER 5: SNAPSHOTS OF THE GIRLS

A few days before returning to Canada, I realized that I did not have a single photo of the girls and me together. It was a Sunday afternoon, near the end of term, and the girls were scattered all over the school ground. It wasn’t easy, but Dan and I rounded up 13 of the 15 girls for a photo. The photo was taken on the grassy area that sloped down just behind the library. In the background is a fallow field beside the school property, and in the distance, brick walls and a corrugated iron roof of a house are visible. Several of the girls are in their KSS school uniforms – white shirts and navy skirts. And some girls are wearing the ubiquitous green or blue v-neck sweater that students all over Uganda seem to wear.

Below, I provide portraits – sketches, rather – of the girls, as I knew them. Some of the accounts are longer than others as at times the nature of my interactions with the girls, especially with respect to visiting their homes, led to extensive internal reflection on my part. I cannot claim to do justice to any of these girls by describing them in a few paragraphs, but I hope that these are at least fair, if inadequate, portraiture.

5.1 The Group Photo (Photograph 19)
Standing at the back at the far left is Penina, who has her arm around Gloria. Next to Gloria, in the One World/One Game rainbow-colored football t-shirt is Sofia. Next to Sofia is me, and to the right of me is Yudaya. In the lavender t-shirt, next to Yudaya, is Juliet. And, with her arm slung around Juliet’s neck, is mischievous Caroline. To the right of Caroline is Doreen. On the extreme left in the back row is Jenenie. Of the playful and gregarious group clustered in the front, at the far left is Joanne. Next to Joanne, slightly to the back, is Louise. To the right of Louise, slightly to the back, is Ireen. And crouched on the far right is Tracy. Finally, in the very front is ever-cheerful Shakila.

Missing from the group photo are Gelly and Henrietta.

Gelly and Henrietta are not in the group photo. Henrietta’s grandmother was very ill, and Henrietta was at home caring for her. Gelly was sick with malaria so, although she was at the school, she was too weak to rise from her bed to pose for the picture.
5.2 The Girls

The “snapshots” of the girls below are compiled from my “shadowing” reports, interviews and conversations with girls, as well as the girls’ writing and photographs. I use the term “shadowing” for the visits I made with the girls to their homes. The girls also wrote about their families and home lives, both for the research project and in the English class that I taught. From these various data, activities and artifacts, I was hoping to find answers to the following questions:

1. What were the girls’ homes like?
   - What were their homes like?
   - What were their homes constructed of?
   - Did the girls have a place to study?
   - How large were their homes?
   - What kind of land were their homes situated on?
   - Did they have electricity and/or running water?
   - What kind of furniture and other household items were in their homes?
   - What kinds of evidence, if any, of literacy was in their homes?
   - Where were their homes located?
   - How far were their homes from the school?

2. What was family life like for the girls?
   - Who lived in the household?
   - What kind of relationship did each of the girls seem to have with her parents/guardians, siblings and perhaps extended family members?
• Did the girls seem to receive emotional support from their families?
• What seemed to be the socioeconomic status of each of the girls’ families?
• What were the domestic responsibilities of the girls?

3. Who were the girls’ parents/guardians?
• Were the girls living with both parents, one parent, guardians, etcetera?
• Were the girls’ fathers monogamous or polygamous?
• What kind of education did the girls’ parents have?
• What occupations did the girls’ parents have?
• What kinds of community involvement did the girls’ parents have?
• How old were the girls’ parents?

4. Who were the girls?
• What kinds of personalities did the girls have?
• How did they interact in the school environment?
• What was their general academic ability?
• What kinds of extra curricular activities did they enjoy?
• What were their hopes for the future?
• What particular challenges did each of them face?
• What kinds of roles did they assume within the school community and the research group?

Although it was not possible to gather all of this information for every girl, a sufficient amount of data was gathered to identify some general patterns and some exceptional circumstances.
5.2.1 Penina

Penina was a strong, confident girl who was the female student representative for her peers in S3. She participated in the Straight Talk Club, and was not afraid to speak her mind, even about controversial matters. Penina showed an unusually passionate interest in, and concern for, the environment and animals. She described favourite places (lakes, forests, hilltops) with rapt enthusiasm and expressed distress about matters of pollution and deforestation; she also expressed a keen interest in learning about global affairs, and expressed her desire to travel internationally. Furthermore, Penina was one of the girls who most vocally expressed her dissatisfaction with gender inequities in society and at school. She was refreshingly forthright and authoritative; she often took an organizing and facilitating role in class and was not intimidated by boys. She was secure in who she was as an individual and possessed a great deal of self-esteem. Walking down the road with Penina and Shakila one day, the girls began talking about skin colour, the differences between Bazungu\(^{45}\) and Baganda\(^{46}\), and Penina said: “Black is beautiful! We Baganda girls are beautiful.” Shakila laughed and agreed.

Penina did well in school and she was determined to become a doctor. Her father, in fact, had been a doctor at one of the hospitals in Ganda Town, but he had been murdered three years earlier, stabbed to death with a panga (machete) one night on the road leading up to their home. No one was ever tried for the crime, and the motive was uncertain. This event was, of course, immensely traumatic for her family; not only had her mother lost her husband, and the children their father, but also the family no longer had an income. Penina’s older brother had had to leave school after S4, although he was desperately trying

\(^{45}\) Bazungu is the plural of muzungu (white person or foreigner) in Luganda.

\(^{46}\) Muganda (singular) and Baganda (plural) are the names for the people of the Buganda culture in this area of Uganda.
to earn money to both support the family and finish upper secondary school through his small pineapple plantation. Penina’s mother was able to pay for Penina’s school fees by selling trees from a eucalyptus forest she had inherited, but Penina worried that she would have to end her studies at S4, like her older brother, as she had two younger brothers who would also need fees for secondary school.

One day I walked the two hour trek with Penina from the school to her home. Hers was a relatively new, bright, house with a large, open, inviting, area at the front. When we entered Penina’s home, Penina’s mother and two younger brothers were in the room off the living room, listening to the radio and preparing some food. It was a bit unusual (in my experience of visiting homes) and pleasant to have the sitting room open on to another room. It made the interior seem more spacious and bright. And the other room opened on to the back area of the house – with the kitchen and various pens for animals around a little courtyard. The back door, as well as the front, was open, which contributed enormously to the feeling of brightness and spaciousness. Penina’s mother was very effusive, warm and self-assured. She spoke some English, and understood more, so we were able to communicate directly on some topics (e.g., life in Canada, Penina’s academic standing, problems in Uganda). There were a few pictures over the doorway – one of Penina’s parents’ wedding, and a couple of family pictures of when the children were quite young.

We ate mangoes and pineapple (fresh from Penina’s older brother’s plantation – even still warm from the sun; they were delicious!), and then Penina’s mother brought in several plates of food – matooke, rice, ground nut sauce, cassava, sweet potatoes – and Penina and I ate, while her mother sat on the floor in the doorway, and Penina’s older brother sat in the chair opposite me (on the sofa). There were two other chairs, a coffee table, and a sewing machine in the sitting room. After lunch, Penina, her mother, her brothers, and I took a tour of the compound (they have 15 chickens, two pigs, and four
goats in addition to the pineapple plantation). Next we moved up a path to a house where two older women lived with several children. One of them is Penina’s grandmother, and the other is her grandmother’s sister. I’m not sure who all the children were. We took pictures and then wandered back to Penina’s house. I said good-bye to two of her brothers (the older one having given me two pineapples, freshly picked), and the youngest brother and Penina’s mother accompanied us to the end of the road. Penina’s mother pointed out the place where her husband had been murdered (the exact same spot Penina had shown me on the way to the house). What a waste of a life! It seems that were he still alive, he could have provided educations for Penina and her brothers – possibly even university education. Now, they lived in a chronic state of financial uncertainty. Nonetheless, despite the financial difficulties, and the loss of the father/husband, I got the impression that there was much laughter and love in Penina’s home-life. I think that Penina’s father was a strong, positive influence in the children’s lives, and that Penina’s mother, too, was confident, self-assured and committed to her children, which perhaps explains Penina’s high level of self-esteem, ambition, and bright, undaunted, hopes for her future.

5.2.2 Gloria

Gloria was a very shy girl, but from the beginning, I noticed a stubborn persistence about her that intrigued me. She was not academically strong and struggled in most, if not all, of her classes; yet she sincerely wanted an education. She told me that her father had five wives and about 40 children, and school fees were always a problem as they fell exclusively on her mother to provide, and she had no regular source of income. One day, Gloria surprised me by inviting me to come visit her home (I had approached other girls myself to make arrangements to visit their homes). Together with Tracy, who lived very close to Gloria, we walked up a steep, rocky road through a scrubby forest area, with a
view of the surrounding valley and hills, past a couple of ramshackle homes and then up the hill at the end of the road to Gloria’s place. There were a few chickens running around and two younger children – one was Gloria’s younger brother, and the other was her “mother’s sister”. Gloria’s mother greeted us with laughter, a big smile, and a “Hello, how are you?”, which she had obviously been rehearsing. Despite her harsh circumstances, Gloria’s mother had an ebullience about her that was infectious.

Gloria, Tracy and I entered the house; it was small and dark with no furniture whatsoever. The walls were bare, except for a couple of nails with strips of weaving hanging from them. In the corner was a pile of things, including a yellow jerry can, a box, and an old rag. Gloria pulled down hand-woven mats from the roof beam and put them on top of the other, plain papyrus mat on the floor; she motioned for me to sit down. Gloria then left the house momentarily and returned with tea. We chatted. I asked her if this was the room she studied in (since there only seemed to be one other room separated by the ubiquitous tattered curtain over the doorway). She told me that there was rarely money for paraffin so usually she could not study. I asked about her father; she told me he lived somewhere not-too-distant (the common gesture of the hand, meaning “over there somewhere”), but visited sometimes. Her mother grew bananas, cassava, sweet potatoes, potatoes, and there were some fruit trees, but she didn’t sell anything in the market as there wasn’t enough to sell. Gloria was the youngest of her mother’s 12 children. The little boy who lived with them was a cousin, I think.

After tea, Gloria delivered plate after covered plate of food, and lined them all in a row in front of me. Then she brought in a single plate of food each for Tracy and herself. The feast lined up was for me alone! Heaping amounts of food – fish in groundnut sauce, cassava, matooke, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, cabbage, greens, rice…Gloria’s mother had prepared all of this for my visit. I was overwhelmed! Gloria was obviously pleased to
be able to serve this to me, and I expressed my sincere appreciation for it. And, it was very good. I ate what I considered to be an enormous amount although it didn’t really make much of a dent in what had been served to me. Gloria laughed and said that I had eaten “nothing”. After we had eaten and Gloria had cleared away the dishes, her mother joined us. We sat and chatted a little, but the language barrier made it difficult. However, Gloria’s mother was exceptionally gregarious and full of life so, undaunted, she chattered on to Gloria about something amusing, and Gloria translated…something about a madwoman and a baby…but I couldn’t really understand what it was all about. I realized at this time that I had forgotten my camera, which annoyed me to no end. I was ALWAYS with my camera, but I had taken it out of my pack the night before as I was going to Ganda Town and didn’t want to be carrying it around. I apologized profusely for this. Gloria, however, was determined to get a picture of us at her home (even though I insisted that I would be back again with my camera) so she ran off to find the neighbourhood “camera man” and brought him back. He took a picture of Gloria, her mother and me, and then Gloria insisted that he take a picture of just Gloria and me. I asked how much the pictures were so I could pay for them, but Gloria said no, she’d pay. I insisted, and they insisted until I finally just gave the cameraman the money. I was extremely touched by this, that they thought the visit was important enough to sacrifice a couple of thousand shillings that they could ill-afford to document it.

After the brief photo session, Gloria’s mother accompanied Tracy, Gloria and I down the road a bit. Gloria’s mother, despite speaking no English, was one of those people with the wonderful ability to communicate through laughter and mischievous expressions. This was heartening, for me, after having experienced the world-weariness of Henrietta and Grace’s grandmothers the day before (even though Gloria’s mother seemed to be about the same age as those grandmothers). After a few minutes, Gloria’s mother said good-bye to us
and walked home. (The next day, I was walking down the path to the library, a route I had never taken before, and I met Gloria’s mother and a young woman. Gloria’s mother grinned broadly when she saw me, as did I when I recognized her, and she said “Hello, sister.” That was a powerful moment.)

5.2.3 Sofia

Sofia was a gentle, earnest girl who tended to prefer roles in which she would support others, as opposed to those that drew attention to her. She had a very generous spirit and seemed to be at ease with herself and her environment. Sofia’s father was one of the few female students’ fathers who took an active interest in his daughter’s education. He came to the parent meetings and he paid Sofia’s school fees to the school (usually the mothers assumed those responsibilities). Sofia did not often vociferously express her opinions in group settings, but one-on-one, she discussed issues of gender discrimination and the mistreatment of girls. She seemed to quietly process what transpired around her and spent time contemplating various experiences she had had. For example, in our final interview, when I asked her what she had learned, in addition to saying that she had learned a lot of English, she said that she had learned how to interact with, or “behave” towards different people such as those working in certain businesses or institutions in Ganda Town where we had visited for a research activity. She also said that the most interesting aspect of participating in the research was “getting different ideas”. This surprised me somewhat as Sofia had rarely voiced her thoughts during our many group discussions. In addition, during this final interview, Sofia asked me several questions: “Shelley, have you find any difficulty in your research with us?”; “Would you like to come back again?”; “What is it like in Canada?”; and “Do girls have in Canada like us find it a problem of stomach pain
with their periods?” After this interview, I felt that I had somehow not come to know Sofia sufficiently, and I wished that I had had more time in which to do so.

5.2.4 Yudaya

Yudaya was the youngest of five children. Her hope was to become a nurse. Yudaya’s family lived perhaps 15 kilometres from Kyato Village, so during the school terms Yudaya stayed with relatives who lived closer to the school. I made the journey with Yudaya to visit her parents and home village; Doreen also accompanied us as her family home was in the same general area as Yudaya’s, and I had planned to visit both homes. It was a long, jarring, uncomfortable ride on the back of a boda-boda, but it was also breathtakingly beautiful. The farther one travels from Ganda Town, the more the land and people seem to turn in on themselves...there wasn’t the same feeling of being a “satellite of Ganda Town” or measuring one’s location in terms of a big centre, or of the constant frenetic activity of the taxis and boda-bodas transporting people to and from Ganda Town as in Kyato. The communities here seemed calmer, more settled, self-reliant, and interdependent. When we arrived at Yudaya’s house, her mother and father were both outside to welcome me. They ushered me inside and gestured that I sit in the only chair in the living room.

Yudaya’s mother sat on the floor across the room, her father sat on a bench beside her mother, and Yudaya and Doreen sat on the floor beside my chair. Yudaya’s brother came in and sat beside Yudaya’s mother. I was given a Coke, the two girls were each given a Fanta. This was obviously a very special treat. The house was quite new and spacious; the sitting room was bright, the floor covered in exquisite handwoven mats that Yudaya’s mother had made. We conversed about school, about the community work that Yudaya’s parents were involved with, agriculture, food and farming, and a little about my life in
Canada and what I was doing in Uganda. It was a very pleasant and relaxed visit, and I felt that Yudaya had a very stable, supportive, and caring family and that both her parents were concerned with her education and future.

Yudaya’s mother and father were older parents – her mother perhaps in her mid-50s, her father in his mid-60s. They were farmers; they grew coffee (as a cash crop) as well as the other vegetables (maize, matooke, cassava, potatoes, sweet potatoes) and fruit (pineapples, mangoes, avocados) typical of the area. Yudaya’s parents had a monogamous relationship, and Yudaya’s, like Sofia’s, was one of the few fathers that I ever saw making regular trips to the school for parent/teacher meetings, or to bring money for school fees. Yudaya’s parents were both active in the community. Her mother belonged to a women’s “agro-group” that met regularly to discuss techniques, products, or approaches to improving agricultural methods; she also belonged to a women’s self-help group that worked to raise money through selling crafts, etc., to help support orphans and other poor and dependent individuals in the community. Yudaya’s father belonged to the Kabaka (King) Scholarship Fund Committee that decided on Kabaka scholarships to be distributed to deserving students. (Part of Yudaya’s school fees, in fact, was paid by one of these scholarships). Yudaya’s mother also taught basic literacy skills (in both English and Luganda) to other women in the community even though she had only completed a primary level education (P7) herself. Yudaya’s father had fewer years of formal education than Yudaya’s mother – he had only completed P5 but he could read and write Arabic.

5.2.5 Juliet

Juliet was quiet and serious. She achieved good grades in school and was well respected by the other girls. One day I accompanied Juliet home to meet her family. It was a long, hot walk through paths I never knew existed, where I was exposed to life deep in
the very rural villages. Along the way, Juliet pointed out the houses of several students at KSS. We walked through forest and plantations, past a stream and little hamlets, up steep hills, down hills, winding, and wending, until we finally arrived at Juliet’s house about an hour and a quarter later. Juliet came from perhaps the most well off of all the families of the girls. Her family’s home was new and spacious although not completely finished. It had a large sitting room with several armchairs and a sofa, a cabinet on which was perched a little portable stereo system playing music, and an area off the sitting room used mainly as a passageway from the outdoor kitchen and bedrooms in the house. There was a large outdoor cooking area and courtyard in the back, with guest quarters, and well-constructed outdoor latrines built around it. The family also owned several pigs and some chickens, and had two plantations. When we settled into the sitting room, I was presented with not one, but two, bottles of Fanta. I had neglected, once again, to bring water with me and so I thankfully drank both bottles. Juliet’s mother came into the sitting room and greeted me warmly, taking hold of my hand with both of hers, smiling broadly. Juliet had told me that her mother had been suffering badly from malaria, so I imagined that this was quite an effort for her to have me come and visit. I also met two of Juliet’s younger sisters and her grandmother (her father’s mother) who lived with them.

One by one, dishes of food began appearing on the coffee table in front of me: groundnuts cooked with fish (delicious), curried cabbage (also delicious), rice, potatoes, matooke, greens, and beans. It was a fabulous meal! Juliet’s poor mother, suffering from malaria, had put an enormous amount of work into this. Juliet ate with me, but no one else ate, or was present in the room while we ate. After Juliet and I had finished, her grandmother and sisters came back in the room. Her grandmother was lively and full of fun. She laughed and joked with me, and screamed with delight when I spoke some Luganda. She said that things in Uganda were worse now than they were when she was
young; there was more poverty and “too much work”. After our conversation, we took a tour around the house. It was new, still under construction, but quite impressive in its size and scope. There were guest quarters and guest toilet (latrine) facilities, as well as a couple of extra rooms that they planned to use to entertain. The kitchen area was quite spacious, and there was a sizeable kind of courtyard around which all of this had been built. They had a reasonably sized plantation, close to the house, in which they grew bananas, maize, beans and cassava. In addition, they had another large plantation, but it was a distance from the house – I didn’t see this one. They also had chickens and a few pigs; in all it seemed like quite a “middle class” kind of home compared to most of the homes I had seen in the area. Perhaps this was because Juliet’s father earned a steady income in Kampala as a policeman.

5.2.6 Caroline

Caroline was a radiant, bright, beautiful girl who seemed competent and wise beyond her years. Her family was one of the poorest of all the girls, and her struggle to remain in school was, therefore, a source of heavy, unrelenting stress. Yet she managed to maintain a cheerful disposition most of the time, and was particularly fond of little jokes, tricks and subterfuge. Sometimes when the girls were at my house, helping me with the cleaning, or washing clothes (for which I contributed to their school fees), I would find them huddled together in the bathroom putting on my make-up or body lotion, or in my room trying on my clothes, or playing with some little object of mine they’d found. Caroline was often at the centre of this, and greeted me with an expansive, guileless smile when I encountered them amidst such activities.

Near the end of first term, when I was teaching English to the S3 class, I asked for everyone to turn in their notebooks so I could read and mark all of their assignments. For
one of the assignments, Caroline had copied, verbatim (except for the names), a story that Penina had written. When I confronted Caroline, she stubbornly denied this, and so I had to track down Penina’s notebook, find the story, and present it to Caroline. In the end, she sheepishly admitted that, yes, she had copied Penina’s story. Most of the other girls would have conceded immediately that they had copied someone else’s work, but I think Caroline saw this as a threat to her education (even though I assured her it would result in minor consequences, e.g., a deduction of a few marks), and her determination to stay in school was powerful. In the end, she re-did the assignment; I took off some marks, and that was that. Although Caroline wasn’t as vociferous or as openly demonstrative or assertive as girls such as Penina, Tracy or Gelly, she had a quiet leadership aspect to her character which she used to help bring people and projects together. She also had a great generosity of spirit and reached out to those who were quieter or less sure of themselves. She was much-loved by all the girls.

5.2.7 Doreen

Doreen had a warm, easy and generous disposition conducive to calm, easy and playful interactions. Doreen seemed to be friends with everyone, and moved effortlessly from group to group. During the school term, she lived with her grandmother in the trading centre near the school as her family home was far away, close to Yudaya’s. The same day I visited Yudaya’s home, I also visited with Doreen’s family. Her family home was about a 40-minute boda-boda ride from the school, through hilly terrain, forests, swamps, and one small village after the next. Some of the roads were horrendous – rocky, pitted, steep, narrow, but there were spectacular views over the verdant countryside. Doreen had three brothers and four sisters. Her family/home life seemed to be one of the most stable of all the girls. Her mother and father were both involved in an organization that provided
training of the dissemination of health information for local people to take back to their communities; they led workshops in their community around these issues. Both of Doreen’s parents showed a genuine interest in her education. Her father had completed secondary school and her mother had completed primary school. Doreen wanted to become a Catholic “sister” and a nurse. Doreen’s older brother was studying at a seminary to become a priest. We arrived late at Doreen’s family home, and many people in the village had, we were told, been waiting for a long time to see us as this was the first time a muzungu had ever been to the village. We were greeted by quite a number of people lolling around outside. There were several children – relatives and neighbours – as well as Doreen’s older brother, her mother, an older male relative standing outside the house, in addition to several curious onlookers hanging about on the road. Doreen’s mother greeted me warmly, with the same effusive smile as Doreen’s, and ushered me inside. Inside the house were more children, as well as another “mother” (aunt) and her infant child. The house was a typical brick structure with mud floors and a corrugated tin roof, but there were colourful mats on the floor, a small sofa (I was motioned to sit on this), and a cushioned chair (on which Doreen’s brother sat), a framed picture of Doreen’s father on the wall, and a few lacy curtains. Everyone else sat on the floor, except for the older man, who sat on a bench in the corner; it was a convivial and light-hearted atmosphere. There was a coffee table upon which lay a photo album, and Doreen’s brother showed me the various family photos. I was served tea with milk and a sweet bun which was lovely and filling. But, as soon as I had finished that, the cup and plate were whisked away, and the feast of rice, potatoes, matooke, beans, groundnut sauce, cassava, and a Coke was ushered in. Doreen, Yudaya and I were the only ones who ate, and I was admonished for not eating enough. During my visit, there was a hive of activity—people coming in and out of the house, lots of movement, conversation, and laughter.
It is not the most comfortable of situations, eating a feast alone and simultaneously attempting to engage in conversation, whilst being scrutinized by a large group of people one has just met. Nonetheless, it was a wonderfully delicious and convivial meal. Afterwards, we wandered outside to see the garden, as well as the pig that Doreen’s younger brother was raising. As we were about to leave on the boda-boda to return to school, Doreen’s father returned home and we had a short visit. Doreen’s mother gave me a beautiful mat she had woven, as well as three pineapples from their garden. Doreen’s home seemed to be one of animated warmth and fun. She talked and wrote a lot about her mother: “She likes me very well. She sometimes gets up very early [and after she reads] the Bible she prepare for me my breakfast, she sometimes prepare for me bananas, cassava breads and sweets, plus tea (milk)! She usually give me an advice that when I grow up I will have to help the poor people to read the Bible, to teach my children and behave well as she does. Every time I want to be where she is.”

5.2.8 Jenenie

Jenenie came to KSS in January 2005, at the beginning of S4. She had been attending a Catholic school in Ganda Town, but the school fees were more than those of KSS and that had become problematic for her parents. She didn’t believe that she would be able to continue her education to S5 because money was a problem. Her father was a “boda-boda man”. Jenenie had four younger brothers at home, and her father was not a permanent part of her family household as he had another wife. She had considered taking the teacher training programme after she completed S4 although her more ambitious dream was to attend university and become a headmistress of a school. When I asked Jenenie what she would like to tell the government in Uganda about education for girls, she said, “I would like to say all girls get an education and they share equal rights with the boys”.
Jenenie believed that boys were immensely privileged over girls and that teachers and others in positions of authority treated boys better and more seriously. Jenenie was one of the more reserved, introspective girls, but she showed a deep commitment to education, as well as a genuine interest in exploring possibilities beyond what she was familiar with. Because Jenenie had not been at the school for the previous three years, it took her some time to develop the kind of close relationship that the other girls shared, but her generous spirit and thoughtful disposition ensured that she became a part of the social life of cohort of girls.

5.2.9  Joanne

Joanne had a radiantly infectious smile, an easy-going nature, and she mixed well with all the other girls. Although she did not usually assume leadership roles, she was an important, supportive member of teams and groups. She had four sisters and two brothers and lived with her mother when she was not boarding at school. Her father had two wives and spent part of his time with each family. Joanne’s family home was about 10 miles away, and she was one of the girls whose homes I did not have an opportunity to visit. Her mother had a P7 education, and her father was educated up to S2. Joanne said that it was her mother who paid her school fees by selling oranges and bananas at the market. Joanne told me that she would like to go to university and become a doctor because “I like to learn about life”. However, she did not have strong academic abilities. In fact, she was the only girl of the S4 group to fail her mock exams in the second term. I remember that day clearly as almost all of the girls’ mothers, and Sofía and Yudaya’s fathers, had come to the school to meet with the headteacher and discuss the girls’ mock exam results and general progress. Joanne was the only girl who did not have a parent present. I had been busy talking to the girls’ parents when I saw Joanne leaning against the school building, tears streaming down
her face. I asked her what was wrong, but she looked at the ground. I asked if she were upset about her mock exam results, and she said yes. I inquired if she were also upset that her mother and/or father were not there, and again, she said yes. When I asked if she knew why they had not come, she shook her head. This was one of the very few times I ever saw one of the girls cry.

5.2.10 Louise

Louise was an enigma. Somehow, she seemed to live in a world apart. She was a talented writer; her stories were compelling, quirky, poignant and profound. I often thought that if she lived in North American culture, she might be a part of the Goth scene. Her father was the local witchdoctor, and I often saw him perched upon the back of someone’s bicycle, wearing large owl-eye glasses, cracked like a Ugandan windshield, and tattered trousers tucked into gumboots, or roaming around the trading centre. His earnings were meager, and Louise’s future rested mostly on what he could/would provide for her. In fact, at one point Louise’s father approached Mr. Masinde with the request that I adopt Louise and take her back to Canada with me.

Louise lived with her father, stepmother, and infant half-brother in the trading centre. Their home consisted of two tiny rented rooms in a compound with run-down buildings. On my first visit to Louise’s home, a crowd of children and adults (Louise’s neighbours) gathered, and I took a photo of everyone. In the picture, Louise was holding a boy who was about a year old. When I entered Louise’s home, I was overcome with despair. It was like walking into a dark, dingy, abandoned yet overstuffed closet where one looks for relief at the doorway that leads to outside although the view outside was equally unappealing, featuring a ramshackle sprawl of similar “homes” and shared, outdoor latrines. But Louise set to work, making tea over a little kerosene stove in a room off this
one, which was dark and dingy and overflowing with a collection of random (or so it
seemed) objects. Louise served me tea and a bun. She apologized for her father not being
there and asked me to return again in a week to meet him then.

A week later, as arranged, I returned for a second visit. This time the neighbours
were not nearly so interested in me as they seemed to be preparing for some kind of an
event. Once I found Louise, she explained that the young child she had been holding in the
picture the week before had been “sick” and died. There were no other details. All the
neighbours were preparing to attend the child’s funeral. Neither the birth nor the death of
this child had been recorded so, officially, he had never existed. It seemed not at all
uncommon for children’s births (and deaths) not to be registered, thus casting doubt on the
efficacy of census data. But, at a fundamentally humanitarian level, I could not reconcile
myself to the fact that a child’s life had been eradicated by an illness that was most likely
EASILY preventable or curable.

5.2.11 Ireen

Ireen was a vivacious, lively girl, full of joy and laughter. She did well in school
and wanted to be a teacher or a secretary. She was not afraid of stating her opinions around
the other girls or boys, and did not back down if she became involved in an argument with
boys. One day I accompanied Ireen to her home. When we walked down the path to Ireen's
house, her mother was sitting outside on a little stool. She greeted us with a big smile
before we went inside. It was very dark, and the walls in the sitting rooms were covered in
old newsprint. I read about the beginning of the invasion of Iraq as I sat there. The floor
was covered in old, torn scraps of linoleum, and a few old banana fibre mats. There was a
yellow jerry can in the corner, and a few pieces of long strips of metal that looked as if they
would be used to erect a building or roof (although neither Ireen nor her mother had any
idea what they were for – even though they were almost the only thing in the living room other than two or three small, low wooden chairs, and a little table in the corner with two plastic jugs, covered with handmade doilies). The roof was made of corrugated metal sheets although I noticed a few substantial holes in it. There was a pole across the corner high up where some clothes hung, and nails where a roll of matting strip hung. The house was very small, and it seemed that there was just a single room off the sitting room where everyone must sleep (although I’m not sure). Ireen brought in some milk tea and buns on a tray, and we drank and ate while her mother sat across the room on the floor. Ireen’s mother was an attractive, strong 38 year old woman although she looked younger. As usual, I had been given the seat of honour – a tiny chair very low to the ground, on which lay a small, embroidered cloth. Ireen’s mother spoke no English (she had only attended school to P4), so we conversed a little in Luganda, and Ireen translated a few things, but mostly her mother just sat with us and smiled.

After tea, Ireen brought in lunch – cassava and beans; it was very good, but as usual, far too much. Ireen and I ate and talked while her mother did some work outside. Ireen told me that she got up at 6 a.m. and left for school by 7. When she got home, she cooked, washed clothes and fetched water. She said it was a long way from a water source, so it was quite tiring. As all of her brothers and sisters were younger (quite substantially younger) so I think most of the work burden fell on her. I asked Ireen if her mother sold any of the crops at the village market, and she said a very little bit – that and selling some mats was how her mother managed to pay for her school fees (although she said that she was not sure that she would be able to complete S4, as money was such a problem).

After we had finished lunch, Ireen took me for a little tour of the farm which consisted mostly of bananas, beans, cassava, and a couple of pigs and a cow. They also had another plot of land located about half a kilometre away. (One morning, a few months
later, I spent a few hours “digging” with Ireen and her mother. What exhausting work!
And this was the nature of the work that Ireen’s mother, and so many other mothers, did
every day, for many hours a day.)

When we walked back to the house, Ireen’s mother was outside ironing – preparing
for Sunday’s baptism (and ensuing party) of Ireen's younger sister. On the ground lay a
couple of sacks, covered with a blanket, on top of which was some cloth upon which she
was pressing clothes with an old charcoal iron. What an involved process – and I thought
about how in Canada I dread the thought of having to drag out the ironing board and plug
in an iron. Down the side of the house where her mother sat, ironing, Ireen’s siblings were
hanging around on a path which led to a very old, and very small, house. I saw an old
woman sitting on a mat in front of it. At one point Ireen said something to her little
brother, and he walked down the path and returned with a handwoven basket - for me!.
Ireen said that this was a gift from her grandmother (the old woman sitting at the end of the
path) for “all the work” that I had done. I told Ireen that I would like to meet her
grandmother, so we walked to her house. She was a gracious, tiny, old woman, still with
beautiful skin after 94 years! I thanked her for the basket and she seemed very pleased. I
took a couple of pictures of her, as well as one with her and Ireen. She enjoyed having her
picture taken and was astonished that she could see it on the screen of the digital camera.
We talked a bit and then said good-bye. Back at Ireen’s house, I took pictures of her
family (her father wasn’t there – he spent most of his time living with his other wife and
children). When I said I would like a picture of Ireen, her mother and her grandmother,
they called for her grandmother to come. She hobbled over with her stick, while Ireen’s
brother yelled - “Run! Quickly!”- and laughed hysterically. She ignored him, scowling
slightly. After several photos and many thanks for the lunch, the tea and the beautiful
handwoven basket, Ireen and I began to walk back to Kyato. A couple of minutes into our
journey, we saw a black snake on the road – shiny, plump, and about a foot long. Ireen pummeled it to death with a stick, and then told me that she had been bitten by snakes numerous times.

5.2.12 Tracy

Tracy was the top academic student in her class, and she was highly regarded by both the girls and boys. Tracy was also talented in dancing, singing, and sports. In the school’s first co-ed intramural football league, she was an intrepid and strategic player, and won the prize for best goalie. She was also a regular member of the Straight Talk Club and the Newspaper Reading Club. She was reliable, diligent and efficient, and was a natural leader. Like several of the other girls, she wanted to be a doctor; however, she was the only girl enrolled in a science-streamed programme. Tracy’s father had three wives (one of whom died during the year I was there) and many children. He did not have a job and was unable to support his wives or children. Tracy could only remain in school due to scholarships or outside support. She was confident and assertive, and spoke out firmly against polygamy, having suffered from it firsthand.

A scholarship enabled her to continue with her secondary level education; it paid for her tuition as well as boarding fees. During the holidays Tracy lived at home with her mother and four younger siblings (ranging in age from about 2 to 14 years old). On the day that I visited Gloria’s home, I also visited Tracy’s, as they lived very near to each other. Tracy’s home was about a 45-minute walk, much of it along the same road that many students walked to and from KSS. It was situated in a sunny, little glen, and was invitingly bright, airy and colourful, with dahlias, cosmos, canna lilies, marigolds and other flowers growing in cheerful clusters. Although the house was a typical small, mud-brick and corrugated iron structure, it was somewhat newer than those of many of the girls, and there
was a more ebullient atmosphere that permeated the home than that of many others I had visited. Numerous little children were standing outside, staring at me as we approached the house.

We entered the sitting room; there was a small sofa, two chairs, a coffee table, a little end table pushed up against the far wall (which led into what looked like a bedroom) and a sofa frame (without cushions). There were a number of political posters on the wall, as well as a large sheet of poster paper upon which someone had handwritten all the numbers to 100, as well as the alphabet. There were also posters advertising local discos and a current calendar (surprisingly – as most calendars I’d seen in homes were from years, even decades, prior, used primarily for decorative purposes, I imagine). Tracy’s mother made a brief entry; she was a young, energetic, attractive woman who did not look nearly old enough to be Tracy’s mother. She greeted me with, “Hello, sister” – which immediately made me feel comfortable. She wore a t-shirt and skirt, and had her head wrapped in a scarf. She rushed busily in and out of the bedroom, without really stopping to visit. Tracy brought in passion fruit juice, and then a couple of dishes (green peppers and rice). Although I had just eaten an enormous meal at Gloria’s, I valiantly managed to eat more. Tracy had five siblings – all younger than she – who lived at home. Tracy’s mother prompted all the children who were old enough to talk to come in and say, “Hello, how are you?” and to introduce themselves to me.

We had a nice visit, and then Tracy’s mother called Tracy into the bedroom. Tracy came out, followed by her mother, smiling, with a gift for me – a pretty coffee mug, with a painting of a gerbera, and a little plate with a painting of green peppers around its rim. I felt overwhelmed. They had actually gone out and bought these for me, or at least had them and were willing to part with them. I knew how much these small items were treasured, and I felt extremely honoured. I asked why they were giving me a gift, and
Tracy said that it was because I had let the girls use cameras and had given them opportunities they had not had before, and they were so happy about that. This was the way in which Tracy’s mother wanted to thank me. I thanked Tracy’s mother, and grasped her hands. For some reason, we both had tears in our eyes. I don’t know why, exactly…it was simply one of those powerful moments.

5.2.13 Shakila

Shakila had an infectious smile, easy laugh and a cheerful demeanour. However, Shakila was also very earnest, and she had a slight formality about her; she called me “Madam Shelley” up until the very end of my stay in Kyato (and even in her subsequent letters to me) even though all the girls had been calling me just “Shelley” for some time. Shakila could be somewhat quiet and shy in unfamiliar situations, but she also had a strong voice and was eager and able to express her ideas, even if controversial, when she felt comfortable and was encouraged to do so. Shakila’s older sister had completed S4 the year before, but there was no money for her to continue her secondary education and so she stayed home, helping her mother with the banana plantation. Shakila had a younger brother at KSS, a younger sister in primary school, and her mother had taken in a younger cousin orphaned from AIDS. Shakila hoped to become a nurse, and she hoped that in the future she would be able to help to support her mother and younger siblings.

One day in November (2004), Shakila and Penina came to collect me and we began the long march to Shakila’s house. Shakila and Penina were best friends and usually walked together as Shakila’s house was about halfway between Penina’s and the school. We walked down the road to the football pitch, crossed the road, and then began walking up a path I had never really noticed before; it was a narrow path, grass, bush, and trees on either side, wending uphill. I realized as we were walking that, although I had thought that
the village area was familiar to me, I really only knew the well-worn path from the house to
the school and library, and the road into the trading centre. I now felt that I had stepped
into a different world – quiet paths leading through bush, meadows, rocky hills,
plantations, past well-kept little houses, an occasional cluster of homes…little hamlets,
perhaps – a world that seemed very remote and truly rural in comparison to Kyato and the
comparatively bustling trading center nearby.

We chatted the whole (long, hot, sweaty) way. Penina and Shakila were obviously
very proud of where they lived. “We are rich in forests and mountains,” Penina said. They
pointed out areas where the forests had been clearcut and told me how that had eroded the
soil. They drew my attention to swamps and streams, and all kinds of crops and fruit trees
and flowers. One particular blue flower was used in witchcraft to bring good luck, Shakila
informed me; if you picked it and dried it in the sun and then crumbled it into some kind of
concoction, it would bring you good fortune. After an extended slog up a hill, we got to the
crest and a spectacular view opened up. Across the valley on the hill opposite, the KSS
roof glinted silver in the sunlight. Farther to the left a big, low swampy area spread out to
the edges of Lake Victoria. It was magnificent! Stunning even. And the beauty was not
lost on the girls. We passed a cowherd, a crazy man, Shakila and Penina told me. He
apparently drank alcohol all day and “bothers every person”, according to Shakila. And, he
did look the part – barefoot, ragged, grizzly, disheveled, totally unkempt, making what I
took to be lewd comments as Shakila picked up stones and tossed them at his cows to get
them out of the way so we could pass.

As we approached the road that led to her home, Shakila’s father was riding
towards us on his bicycle. Shakila had told me before that he was “a lame”; the right side of
his body seemed to be paralysed. However, he was somehow able to ride a bicycle, which
was quite impressive. We stopped and chatted with him for a few minutes. He was en
route to get lunch in the village, and as he seemed eager to be on his way, we just exchanged greetings. Shakila told me that her father had two wives, Shakila’s mother and another wife, and a total of 14 children with both women. However, because of his disability, Shakila’s father no longer worked or brought in an income of any sort. Now, according to Shakila, he did “nothing” other than spend most of the day in the town with his other wife, and then return home to “sit and eat and sleep” at Shakila’s home. There seemed to be a great deal of tension between Shakila’s parents, much arguing, and her father would sometimes beat her mother. In addition, there was a great deal of antagonism between the two wives, each accusing the other of witchcraft and causing intentional harm to the other’s homes and families. Shakila, understandably, was one of the most outspoken of the girls against polygamy and in support of gender equity.

It seemed like a sweltering day although I think it was mostly just the physical exertion of walking a long way uphill on a very warm afternoon. I had no idea just how far many (most) students had to walk to get to school. All the well-worn adages, “When I was a kid, I had to walk 20 miles to school in the snow” came back to me. The walk took at least an hour and a half. When we finally arrived, I was totally parched, desperate for something to drink. We met Shakila’s mother, a beautiful woman, dressed in formal clothes for the visit. She was very welcoming, beaming, seeming pleased to have one of Shakila’s teachers come to the house. She gestured for us to enter the house, and then guided me to a chair, while Shakila and Penina sat down on a little sofa. Their house was small; it had a sitting room about 8’ by 14’ in which there was a small sofa, a chair and a coffee table. I didn’t notice any books, newspaper, or other printed matter around. Off the sitting room was another small room, which I think served mainly as a passageway from the back door – as the kitchen, typically, was located outside – a separate building, as the smoke from the wood fires for cooking would smoke out the house. There was a room off
the sitting room, which was the father’s, a room off the back corridor-room for her mother, and one or two rooms (I’m not sure) for all the children. Shakila said the children all studied in the sitting room by lantern light at night.

I was almost gasping from thirst. Shakila’s mother then brought in three dishes of food that she and Shakila’s older sister had prepared – cassava and white beans. It looked delicious, but I was wondering how I could possibly eat cassava with such a dry throat.

Then, she brought in a bottle of Coke for me! I could have kissed her! I was also incredibly touched that she had gone to such effort, and expense, for me. The family was obviously very poor, and everyone relied on Shakila’s mother’s labour for survival. Shakila’s mother told me how she had to sell a goat to pay for Shakila’s school fees this term, and didn’t have much else to sell. Shakila, Penina and I all ate lunch together - a delicious meal, simple, but tasty - while Shakila’s mother and older sister sat on the floor and chatted with us. Shakila’s mother thanked me for teaching Shakila and especially thanked me for coming to visit. I, of course, thanked her profusely for the lovely lunch and the Coke and for the opportunity to meet her. Shakila’s mother spoke a little English, but understood more – so we were able to communicate (via the girls as translators, as well) without too much difficulty.

After lunch, we all took a tour around the property. Behind the house, Shakila’s mother had a banana plantation. She and Shakila’s older sister worked in this for about six hours a day. Shakila’s mother sold the bananas in the local village. When we were walking through the plantation, Shakila pointed to a small, muddy hole half-full of water. She told me that this was their source of irrigation. I asked how the water got from the hole to the banana trees, and she said by jerry cans. They had to dip the jerry cans into the water and walk to each tree to provide it with water; this, of course, took hours. They also had a few chickens, a pig, some goats and two cows. Despite the harsh financial circumstances,
and the problems between Shakila’s parents, it appeared that Shakila had a very strong relationship with her mother and siblings, and that she admired her mother enormously. They shared much laughter and interacted easily, and it was a very pleasant home-life (although perhaps not so when her father was there.)

5.2.14 Gelly

Gelly had an ebullient, yet earnest nature. She was lively and full of joy on the one hand, and responsible and thoughtful on the other. And yet her life and the life of her family was hard. She came from, perhaps, the poorest of all the homes. Hers was the only home I visited that had a thatched roof (instead of a corrugated iron roof, as all the others had). Her parents were quite a bit older than the other girls’ parents – her father was 68 and her mother was 58. There had been 12 children in Gelly’s family, but eight of her siblings had died (from accidents, malaria and other unknown causes). Yet, there was a warm, cheerful energy about her home and family. Her father and mother had been together for over 50 years, and her father had had only one wife throughout. Gelly lived the farthest away from KSS; it was a distance of at least 10 miles, taking over two hours to walk. She usually boarded at the school, but when she did not, she had to get up at 4:00 am to get her chores done before leaving for school at 6:00 am. Gelly wanted to go to university and become a nurse. She also wanted to travel to different countries. When I asked her about school fees, she told me that “a man…decided to help me because I was at home.” Gelly was one of the few girls who seemed to have given the matter of gender relations considerable thought before I began exploring the topic with the girls. She possessed a worldly, philosophical and analytical nature that enabled her to see things from a variety of perspectives. She believed that women were very much discriminated against, that men prevented women from achieving their full potential and limited their freedom. She also
had seen much domestic violence in her community—“too much”, as she said—and thought men generally did not treat women well. But Gelly also believed that women were strong, agentive, and possessed their own power, and were able to outsmart men and often able to secretly achieve their goals. Gelly, unfortunately, suffered from extremely debilitating headaches that affected her ability to study and to attend classes; this was a great a source of despair for her as she was determined to get as much education as she could. I took her to the hospital a couple of times, but the doctors did not know what the problem was.

5.2.15 Henrietta

Henrietta was a beautiful girl, with a quiet maturity about her. She was the head girl at school. She had a quiet authority about her that was respected by all students – girls and boys alike. She did well in school, studied hard, and was part of the core group of girls that was able to mobilize the others. Henrietta always struck me as wise beyond her years, and somewhat melancholy in her outlook on life. She expressed her gratitude for everything that was given to her, or any effort that was undertaken on her behalf. She seemed to be more aware than most of the other girls of the significance and meaning behind gestures of support. One day in December, I walked home with Henrietta to meet her family. Henrietta lived quite close to the school – perhaps a forty-five minute walk away. She lived with her grandmother and four or five younger children (extended family members) in an old, dark, small house on a small piece of land. Inside the house was a small sitting room with two chairs in the sitting room. Henrietta’s grandmother was a nice woman, and welcomed me graciously, but she was quite elderly and seemed worn with time and a very hard life. Her husband had died a year earlier, and so Henrietta was responsible for doing most of the work, including growing all the food they needed at home. The only adornment
to the wall was Henrietta’s class timetable. Henrietta used to live in Jinja, in Eastern Uganda, until her mother died three years earlier from malaria. Henrietta took me for a little tour around their land. They have bananas, cassava, sweet potatoes, beans, and mangos, all of which Henrietta tended. Her life was not easy; she had to look after her grandmother and all the children, as well as work hard in school. I think Henrietta had an auntie in Kampala who paid her school fees.

5.3 My Observations

From the data I collected about the girls’ lives, I made some preliminary predictions, or formulated some initial hypotheses related to the girls and their future educational opportunities. I suspected that both the girls’ abilities to pursue their educational goals would be dependent on the following factors: family structure, parental support, academic standing and socioeconomic status.

5.3.1 Family Structure

I assumed that those who lived in nuclear families - mother, father, siblings in a single household – would have greater opportunities to pursue their educational goals because: i) there would be two sources of support (financial and other material); ii) there would be greater security and well-being in nuclear family households. (Later, upon reflection, I realized how ethnocentric and limited this perspective was.)

5.3.2 Parental Support

I believed that the girls who had the most support from their parents – both parents – would be the most able to continue with their studies.
5.3.3 Academic Standing

In order to advance to upper secondary level schooling, students needed to pass the national examinations at the end of S4, so I believed that the girls most likely to continue with further secondary education would be those with the highest academic standing. (Initially, my focus on further secondary education was on the academic, A-Level programme, so I had not given much consideration to vocational school programmes.)

5.3.4 Socioeconomic Status

The factor that I considered the most significant indicator of educational opportunity was access to financial support for school/boarding/examination fees, as well as books and supplies. The girls who came from the families that seemed to have a somewhat higher socioeconomic situation (e.g., families in which the father earned regular income) would be most likely to continue with their studies.

5.4 Two Years Later: Reflecting Back on My Observations

I have had the immense privilege and remarkable opportunity to follow the life paths of these girls over the past two years. This type of longitudinal involvement has provided me with insight and understanding about the girls’ lives in relation to their educational chances and pursuits that would have not existed otherwise. I will discuss the girls – two years later – in the Epilogue.
CHAPTER 6 (Preface)

“WE AS GIRLS, WE SAY THAT GIRLS SHOULD GET ENOUGH EDUCATION”

Following is the transcript of a focus group discussion\(^{47}\) between a group of three girls (Ireen, Shakila and Yudaya) and three boys (George, Jason and Paul) from S4. The girls were acting as co-researchers, attempting to discover boys’ views on girls’ education. Another girl, Gloria, videotaped the exchange. I was not present at the FGD, but transcribed the footage later. I do remember, however, seeing the group shuffle off from the library on a hot Sunday afternoon, after having collected my video camera. They shambled down the sloping field to an empty building, the new boys’ dormitory, under construction, at the edge of the school ground. Shortly thereafter, the uproar of the FGD ensued: shouting, shrieks of outrage, and peals of laughter. Interestingly, although this was by and large a jovial, convivial, debate, all the points raised related to serious issues that have been identified by numerous sources, including the NSGE, as attitudes, beliefs, and practices that serve as barriers to girls’ education.

Shakila:  Boys – how are you?

Boys:    We are fine. How are you?

Shakila:  We have our question – as we as girls – we can discover your minds. It is about education. We say that why parents pay school fees for boys and discriminate [against] girls?

\(^{47}\) Appendix A3: A3-GL/FGD/B-3, August 2005.
George: The reason being that in most cases girls especially when... parents do pay their money and the girls disrupt that money by fornicating, committing adultery and -

Jason: That is to say that they are spoiled. And again - boys tend to be with high thinking capacities than girls. Where they are in class, you see that boys are a bit more active than girls so that -

Ireen: No.

Jason: Yes.

Ireen: That is not true.

Jason: It is true.

Shakila: Even if you see in our class, the best person is a girl.

Ireen: A girl.

Jason: But - but -

Shakila: You see that how girls have higher thinking capacity -

Boys: But why do you think so parents pay money for boys but not girls?

Shakila: I think that they – ok, they [think?] that girls destroy their money, that’s why they discriminate girls.

George: But many girls do productive things in the world.

Jason: But culture - the culture, we see here in Buganda that girls are not supposed to be equal with boys.

Other boys: Mmhhm. [agree]

Jason: They aren’t equal with men - so we can’t all attend the same education.

The parents are pay first for the boys and then for the girls, if possible.
But if the money is not enough, you will find that it is the boys that are given the first priority - their school fees must be paid first.

George: Addition. Girls are lacking the ability of expressing themselves.

Ireen: They’re not.

George: That’s why a woman is fearing to become a president.

Ireen: Eh! [laughs]

George: A woman is fearing to become a member of the parliament. So parents do see that is a wastage of money

Other boys: Yes.

Shakila: Excuse me, excuse me, we have our vice-president -

Jason: No – the vice-president -

Paul: The parents don’t want to pay the school fees for girls but it’s because these girls when they get married, they just devote their clan where they married...

Shakila: But for me I think that’s not the point -

Paul: It’s the point -

Shakila: If I’ve got enough education, I can produce and help my mum

Ireen: Help my mum -

Shakila: My sisters -

Ireen: Yeah.

Shakila: And producing for - to my husband.

Paul: But before -

Ireen: Let me give you an example.

Paul: But -
Ireen:  *Wait! I have my sister. She got enough education and she got a marriage. But now she the one who help my mother.*

Paul:  *And you know - you can find two person -*

Ireen:  *So -*

Shakila:  *Let me tell you that – on the side of boys - if a boy get enough education, he can go and get a productive job.*

Boys:  *Mmhhmm -*

Shakila:  *And he left his mother -*

Boys:  *No! No.*

Ireen:  *Yes!*

Shakila:  *Yes -*

Jason:  *Again, these girls they are always denied their chance of getting education because – ah – for them they have got low chances, very few chances of getting -*

Ireen:  *Jobs.*

Jason:  *Yes – jobs. So, how can you invest in something where you’re not going to get any -*

Girls:  *But – it’s very clear that boys do expand the clan.*

Paul:  *Yeah.*

George:  *So some parents do it intentionally – educate boys – for the hope of bringing [educated? Powerful - people in the clan.*

Jason:  *Yes.*
Shakila: Just a minute! Let me ask you – If you get enough education, ok – let me say, let me say that you want to get married to someone, can you get married to me when I’m not educated enough?

Ireen: Yeah?

George: Of course.

Jason: Yes.

Ireen: How -?

Jason: Because you will be happy -

[lots of discussion, arguing, laughter about how the girls will be satisfied]

Ireen: That is your point -

George: It’s just that girls are going to be married, so they are out of the family.

That’s what is going to happen.

Jason: By the way -

George: So they educate boys, bringing more profits into the clan.

Jason: Do you know that even some of our parents, do not pay for the girls because it is a [procedure?] they know that girls are not prosperous in the country.

Ireen: Hss. Ayy -

Jason: Yes. We are [stronger?] than you

Ireen: [Shakes head] No.

George: Paying school fees for a girl. For what importance? They will not drive a road, they will not drive a trailer, she will not be president - so... anything she will not be more productive...
Shakila:  Excuse me. Let me ask you - if you produce a child, she’s a girl, you can’t pay school fees for her?

Ireen:  - for her -

George:  For me, I can pay school fees for her. But then – what I’m thinking is...the information is for people, not for me. I myself I can educate people equally.

Paul:  Of course -

George:  Giving girls money even first than the boy.

Jason:  But that is not the same - with - according to what I see nowadays, girls are getting spoiled at a very early capacity -

George:  Yes, that’s true.

Jason:  So I can’t spend my money -

Paul:  - and wasting your money -

Jason:  ...If I’m to educate a girl much it will be primary 7.

George:  That’s true. But then - girls should not be paid school fees, then they will end up losing their -

Ireen:  You mean that we are not supposed to study?

George:  You’re supposed to study. But if -

Paul and Jason:  A little -

Jason:  These girls what they don’t know is that a girl at school get spoiled fast than the one who is remaining [at home] do you know that?

Ireen:  How come? How come?

Jason:  When you come there you find a lot of different characters - then you copy.
Other boys agree.

Jason: Then you practice - you practice in what -

Shakila: According to -

Jason: You find that you are spoiled - and next you are walking naked.

Ireen: According to what I know - you boys that’s the way you believe but it’s not true.

Jason: Girls should get less education than boys.

Shakila: We should get enough education that -

Jason: Boys should get enough education than girls.

Ireen: You mean that our parents, yeah, they can stop to pay for us school fees?

Jason: Why?

George: The reason is - the truth is - both should get more education but girls should be serious! More than serious.

Ireen: They can continue -

Shakila: Serious?!

George: Yes, you should be serious.

Shakila: You boys are not serious at all.

George: You should get education, but you should be serious.

Shakila: Let me tell you - let me tell you that if your brother or your sister invested in you money for your school fees, you can say – ha! I’m tired of schooling, take me away, let me get on a boda-boda and go. And you leave school. But we as girls, we can’t do that.

Boys: No, no -
Paul: And also those parents have invested in you a lot of money, but gain nothing.

Jason: Yes. You are the one who is practicing fornication -

George: That is why what I said – they should pay school fees, but you should be serious.

Jason: Yes.

Ireen: Some of us, we are serious.

Jason: If a parent is there, you are two – a boy and a girl at home, the parent has school fees for only one person - who do you think should get that money? Should use that money for school fees?

Girls: Girls. For girls.

Jason: No, the boys have got lots of possibilities than girls. You are just married, just help -

George: Even boys are more [gestures with closed fists pumping arms to show strength].

Jason: Yes, yes, yes, yes - energy.

George: Girls are just lazy -

Jason: So – I think education first with boys.

Shakila: Ok, boys first -

Jason: What we are saying, boys should be the first priority to get an education.

Shakila: We as girls, we say that girls should get enough education.
CHAPTER 6: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY-RELATED BARRIERS TO GIRLS EDUCATION

[We think, here in Uganda...that girls should not be educated as much as boys. Girls are meant to be in the kitchen, girls are meant to be wives at home...[but] if such culture can be changed, I think girls - for they have the skills – they can be very good leaders...

[Excerpt from interview with female librarian, Doris, August 2005]

In order for gender equity in education to be achieved, and the objectives of global initiatives and commitments such as EFA and the MDGs to be realized, normative sociocultural practices, beliefs, and attitudes that are premised on the inferior status and subordinate roles of girls and women in the home, family, and community must be identified and addressed. This chapter explores my research question: To what extent, if at all, do family and community-related practices constrain girls’ full participation in education? I compare my findings to related “barriers” identified in the NSGE, and discuss the degree to which NSGE accurately reflects the kind, degree, and nature of the family and community-related challenges faced by the girls in this study.

6.1 The Interface of Clan with Family and Community

6.1.1 Definition of the Clan

The clan is an important social institution in Uganda. “A clan consists of a group of people who claim the same ancestor by blood or kinship” (Kasizi, 1994, p. 17). Ugandan clans are all patrilineal, although they range in representation (e.g., some are associated with totems, some with personal names, etc.) and size. Some are very large, and are thus organized into sub-clans that may be even further sub-divided into extended family, or “house”, units. Other clans are small, and operate effectively as an extended family. Willis
(1997) claims that, although clans may have originally been defined as delineated kinship groupings, clans now constitute “just part of a range of overlapping and contested constructs” (p. 584). The research and literature around clans in Uganda points to the complexity of the definition of the clan as well as to its ambiguous historical and contemporary role in society, and yet “the clan” was clearly a meaningful component as an economic, political, social, and cultural support network/construct in the lives of those who participated in my study.

6.1.2 The Clan As Social Infrastructure

When there is a crisis, when a mother needs money for medical attention for her child, when children are in need of school fees, or when there is a death in the family, people must look for assistance from sources other than the state. In Uganda, the clan often provides this support. The clan serves as a cultural, economic, and political enclave within the larger Ugandan society, and as such, is a powerful institution. Questionnaires (Nov. 2004) completed by female and male students in the S3 class revealed that the clan served as an extended family by supporting its members financially and helping to resolve problems. Representative responses included:

• “[The clan] helped me to pay for me school fees and help orphans” (girl)
• “Yes because the clan sometimes helped to solve in some problems, eg. Controlling conflicts” (girl)
• “Clan is so important in the family because it is the one supply discipline to you” (girl)
• “It helps if your parents are died they can helps you by paying school fees” (girl)
• “It help to pay school fees. If the number of family is big everyone can bring what he/she have” (boy)
• “It plays a big role on the security” (boy)

• “To educate their members” (boy)

The “nation”, on the other hand, was perceived by the students as a somewhat distant, abstract, and ideological construct that issued directives and provided a loose sense of connectedness with other “Ugandans”. However, because of the lack of adequately financed social programmes and social safety nets, and its remoteness in terms of its contribution to the well-being of people’s lives, especially in extremely poor, rural communities, the nation of Uganda had markedly less value and influence than did the clan. The nation remained a remote “imagined community” where “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). It was the village, the parish, the local trading centre, the sub-county, that constituted the communities people knew and interacted with, and the clan was a central pillar of those communities.

The following is an excerpt from a focus group discussion with a group of boys and girls at which Bonny Norton was present.

Bonny: How many of you think it is more important to think of yourself first as Ugandan? And how many of you think of yourself first as a member of a clan?

Denis: Being a member of a clan is better than being a member of Uganda. Because, being a member of Uganda, you [won’t] even look after your clan... let me say that [someone considers himself other ones, the relatives.

Shelley: ...people in the clan help each other?

Denis: [and others]: Yeah.

Shelley: More than other people in Uganda?

Denis: [and others]: Yeah.
Shakila: Being a member of a clan is better than being a member of Uganda, because if we have many relatives, if you are schooling and you don’t have money, you can’t go the clan member and ask for school fees.

Peter: Being a member of a clan is better than being a member of Uganda. For example, if I die, this time, my clan is the one who has the responsibility to bury me. But not the government, not Uganda.

[Excerpt from A3ST-FGD9(BG),October, 2004]

6.1.3 Sociocultural Practices and Beliefs of the Clan

Responses to the questionnaire (Nov. 2004) also indicate that the students believed that the clan was important as an intersection between lineage and culture, and this intersectionality was considered crucial for one’s sense of identity and community.

- “[The clan] helps us to know the home backgrounds and to know our relatives” (girl)
- “They play a role of giving names to the family children” (girl)
- “It separates our family from other people/families…it helps us to know our relatives” (girl)
- “The clan play a great role in my family is to know my relatives and way that I can not make love affairs with” (boy)
- “The clan is important; it’s our culture” (boy)
- “It help in stablising children behaviours and conducting our culture not to be destroyed” (boy)
- “It help the family to know where they were originated from” (boy)
- “To take care for the ancestry of the clan and to know the origin of their race” (boy)
• “It help my family during the death of any head in my family like to succeed another one to lead the family” (boy)

6.1.4 Gender Roles and Inequities in the Clan Structure

Both the girls and the boys who participated in this study agreed that clan membership was very important. Clan membership, however, requires adherence to normative, gendered, practices and expected behaviours which affect girls’ opportunities and freedoms in almost every area of life.

6.1.4a Girls’ education perceived as an “opportunity cost”.

Many of those gendered behaviours and practices constitute what the NSGE (barrier #1) recognizes as “[c]onstraints related to Uganda’s patriarchal cultures which oblige parents to uphold the needs and interests of the male above those of the female child and to view girls’ education as an opportunity cost” (GOU, p. 5)

it’s a long tradition here in our communities - that boys are given first priority than the girls. This tradition feel that the girl – her ambitions in life are limited by the parent so that most of the resources are given to the boys.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Terrance, August, 2005]

Boys retain clan membership throughout their lives, and the boys’ future children will become members of the boys’ family clans. Thus it is assumed/expected that boys will, in the future, contribute resources to their clans, as well as assume leadership roles and participate in political issues of the community and beyond, preserving and promoting the interests of the clan. When a girl marries, however, she leaves her parents’ clan and joins that of her husband, and her children then become members of her husband’s clan. Boys, therefore, are seen to contribute to, and “expand” the clan, while the girls are seen to
contribute very little, if anything, to their families’ clans; thus, investment in boys is essentially an investment in the clan, whereas investment in a girl is often seen to be the equivalent of “watering another man’s garden” (FAWE, 2001, p. 7)

This has a direct bearing on educational opportunities, especially where significant financial expenditures are concerned:

George:  *Girls are going to be married, so they are out of the family. That’s what is going to happen* - So [parents] educate boys, bringing more profits into the clan.

Peter: *…the parents don’t want to pay the school fees for girls but it’s because these girls when they get married, they just devote their clan where they married* -

[Excerpt from GL/FGD/B-1, August 2005]

The phrase “waste of money” often arose around the topic of educating girls:

Gelly: *in* our families, we have the problem of discrimination. If there are two students, like - if you are a girl and have a brother, your parents are going to say – look I have to [give] too much to the boy and the girl is a waste of money.

[Excerpt from interview with Gelly, August 2005]

6.1.4b Onerous domestic roles and responsibilities for girls.48

Girls are expected to learn how to become wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law, and are duly apprenticed from an early age. They quickly learn the multiple and heavy responsibilities of being a woman:

48 NSGE barrier# #3: Traditional division of labour in the home and school which exerts greater social demands on the girls than the boys and often compels the girl to drop out of school to assume domestic duties.
Women are responsible not only for the household care, economy, cooking, collecting firewood, water, caring for children and the sick, etc. but also for food security. They provide all labour for food production as well as labour for cash crop production but do not enjoy the benefits of control over income. They work much longer hours per day than men and this gender division of labour places women under a heavy work burden and is the cause of their time poverty which in turn hampers their ability to access benefits of development initiatives. (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 40)

Girls are the primary helpers at home; they farm and perform a wide range of domestic duties such as digging, fetching water, collecting firewood, caring for younger siblings and other family members, preparing and cooking food, cleaning the home and compound, and washing clothes and dishes. Girls are generally required to spend much more time engaged in domestic work than are their male siblings.

*Gelly:* *Even if you are there [at home] with your brother, your mum say that you go and prepare fire, you wash clothes, you prepare food – when the brother is there [the mother tells him] you are not going to do anything because your sister is there.*

[Excerpt from interview with Gelly, August, 2005]

Thus, the time spent by girls at school reduces their contribution to domestic labour and generally increases the burden of the mother, which may result in less food being produced, younger children not being cared for adequately, or various other domestic hardships. This constitutes another kind of opportunity cost for the families:

‘Opportunity costs’ are...a real deterrent for poor households; children’s labour, paid or unpaid, is often an important part of household survival, and sending girls to school may mean less food on the table at the end of every day.
In addition, the domestic burdens with which girls are saddled reduces the time they are able to study after school hours and greatly compromises their academic pursuits. The NSGE acknowledges this in barrier #3: “Traditional division of labour in the home and school which exerts greater social demands on the girls than the boy and often compels the girls to drop out of school to assume domestic duties” (GOU, p. 5). In an interview, one female teacher, Mary, talked about this in more depth.

*Mary:* The girls of course have everything; they have the capacity to do each and everything. But according to me, because I have been here with all the problems that they have - have been talking with them - when they are at home, they are busy doing work, they are cooking, preparing food, sweeping. So the girls cannot leave their time to read their books - so the only time they have to read their books is when they are in the school -

*Shelley:* And so boys get more time at home than girls to study?

*Mary:* Yeah, they have time, lot of time.

*Shelley:* The mother and father will say boys you study and girls you make food?

*Mary:* Yeah, that’s what they say – but again the girls are bright -

[excerpt from interview with teacher Mary, August, 2005]

Often girls must quit school to help their mothers maintain the home, and grow and harvest food; typically, they do not return to school.

*Doreen:* my older sister, she’s there - at our village.

*Shelley:* She’s not going to school now?

*Doreen:* Yes [agreement] She’s just dig there -

*Shelley:* Just digging? But how old is she?

*Doreen:* She’s about 18 years.
Shelley: When did she stop going to school? How old was she? Or what level?

Doreen: She stopped in P7.

Shelley: But did she want to go to S1 or S2 - or did she want to stop, finish then?

Was she happy to finish school?

Doreen: She wanted to come to school.

Shelley: But, what was the problem?

Doreen: Money.

Shelley: Ah, so she stays at home, then. She works with your mom and your dad?

Doreen: Yes.

Shelley: [Does] she sometimes - feel sad or angry that you can go to school and she can’t go to school?

Doreen: [nods] Yes. Sometime she - she cry.

[Excerpt from interview with Doreen, November 2004]

* * *

Shelley: Your sisters...are going to school?

Shakila: My sister - in 2000 [was in] the S4 here [points] at [KSS] - [but now she’s] at home, sitting, because don’t have money to take her school fees.

[Excerpt from interview with Shakila, October 2004]

6.2 Gender Inequities in Spousal Relationships

Although there was a robust insistence from the girls that they were equal to the boys in the school environment, when they considered the larger society and the future that likely lay ahead for them, they became cautiously circumspect. The girls in the study related their own observations of the dynamics of their parents’ relationships.

Shelley: Do you think that - men and women are equal in society?
Doreen: [shakes head] No. Man and woman aren’t - aren’t - can’t be equal.

Shelley: Why?

Doreen: According to - in my family - my mother can’t sit on - the chair, when my father is around. My father the one who sit on the chair. We, us children, and our mother sit on the mats.

Shelley: Why is that?

Doreen: [laughs] Respect him.

Shelley: ...so what do you think would happen if your father was there and she [your mother] sat on the chair?

Doreen: [laughs] Ayyyy - it is impossible.

[Excerpt from interview with Doreen, November 2004]

Out of 30 teachers (both at the primary and secondary levels) in the village who completed questionnaires, 26 believed that men have more power in marriage. Below are some representative responses.

- “Some men don’t respect their wives because they [wives] are poor and uneducated” (female teacher)
- “Their [women’s] duties are always [in] response of men’s orders” (male teacher)
- “Because in Uganda the man is always superior” (male teacher)
- “Because women are undermined by men” (male teacher)
- “Because of tradition” (male teacher)
- “Because the husband is the superior” (male teacher)
- “Culturally, men are considered as heads of families and women should respect their husbands. Therefore, men are more superior than women” (male teacher)
Men were thought to have considerable power even over women’s reproductive choices\textsuperscript{49}; 16 out of 30 teachers stated that men have more power than women when it comes to decisions around family planning. Reasons include:

- “In most cases it’s the men [who] decide” (female teacher)
- “Men take women as inferiors” (male teacher)
- “The intention of most men is to produce many children unlike women” (male teacher)
- “The husband is the head of the family” (male teacher)
- “Because men are the ones who make decisions for their wives” (male teacher)

This, in fact, concurs with reports that women lack control over reproduction, and therefore, they are subject to mistimed/early and unwanted pregnancies (Ochieng, 2003; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005).

6.2.1 Polygamy\textsuperscript{50}

Polygamy is highly undesirable for girls and women, not only (or even primarily) because of the disturbance it brings to the personal and intimate nature of the marital relationship, but because of the economic hardship it brings. A financially-dependent woman married to a man with very limited income and few economic prospects will have to share scarce resources if her husband has additional wives and children.

Polygamy is a per se violation of the Ugandan Constitution and international human rights law, by depriving women of their rights to equality within marriage and the family, dignity, health and development as well as to be free from cruel or

\textsuperscript{49} This likely has to do with the fact that in the Baganda’s patrilineal society children belong to the father, even if they are born outside marriage.

\textsuperscript{50} NSGE barrier #4: Family instability which deprives all children of the love and security of one or both parents and often exposes the girls child to rejection or abuse – including sexual abuse by a step-parent.
degrading treatment. It causes emotional, physical and economic harm, especially to women and children, whose right to paternal presence and support are also violated. Polygamy undermines the family itself, by breeding jealousy and disharmony. It is also the second leading cause of domestic violence in Uganda. (von Struensee, 2005)

The girls were very aware of the complications and suffering associated with polygamy, especially as it directly affected many of their lives. NSGE barrier #4 is concerned with “[f]amily instability which deprives all children of the love and security of one or both parents” (GOU, p. 5), and I would argue that polygamy falls under this category. The girls were critical of polygamy on two fronts: i) the hardships (particularly economic) many of them had endured because of polygamous fathers; and ii) their own unwillingness to have polygamous husbands/partners.

Within the (initial) group of 20 girls in the research study, 11 had polygamous fathers who were unable to pay school fees for these girls or most or all of their siblings and half-siblings. Gloria’s father had five wives and approximately 40 children; she was one of the weakest students, with little self-esteem, and came from one of the most impoverished homes, where she lived with her mother and several orphaned nieces and nephews. Elizabeth’s father had had seven wives; he and all of his wives (including Elizabeth’s mother) had died of AIDS, and also had left behind several HIV-positive young children. Elizabeth and her siblings were forced to move in with various relatives. (Elizabeth was forced to leave school after S3 because her guardians refused to pay school fees for her). Louise talked about one of her father’s wives who had threatened to kill Louise and her father, causing them to leave the village. Another girl, Grace, lived with her extremely poor grandmother and nine other grandchildren. Grace’s mother died when Grace was three years old; Grace’s father had other wives and children, but Grace rarely
saw him and he did not support her. Shakila’s father had two wives and 14 children and no income:

*Shelley:* Does your father live with you or with your stepmother [the other wife] or both?

*Shakila:* He comes home just to sleep. but he spend[s] the whole day in the town of that other stepmother.

*Shelley:* Does your mum like that arrangement?

*Shakila:* [shakes her head] No - there is misunderstanding between my mum and that [woman]

*Shelley:* Do they fight, sometimes?

*Shakila:* [nods] Yes. Plus my dad wants to flog my mother.

[Excerpt from interview with Shakila, October 2004]

Tracy was extremely bright, confident and ambitious; she wanted to be a doctor and become financially independent. However, given her family-life experiences, she was doubtful that the future would bring about more equality in relationships between men and women. Tracy’s father had three wives and fifteen children; he could not support any of them because he had no income. Yet he still retained the distinction of “head of the family”. Tracy was vociferously opposed to polygamy.

*Shelley:* How do you think changes could happen in the family and at home for women to make them more equal?

*Tracy:* It will not be. I don’t think that they will change - people are following traditional ways that man is supposed to be the head of the family.

[Excerpt from interview with Tracy, November 2004]

During the year I spent in Uganda, there were many reported cases of women seriously injuring and even killing their husbands’ other wives. I personally knew of one
case where a young woman had assaulted her husband’s other wife, causing the co-wife horrendous, debilitating, lifelong injury. Because of the nature of the assault and injury, this young woman had to flee her home with her infant son, and take refuge with an ill, aging uncle and several orphaned children in Kyato Village. Her situation there was dismal and tenuous; she had no way of earning an income and was utterly dependent upon, and indebted to, her uncle who himself was extremely poor and weakened by HIV/AIDS. The following is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Dan.

Dan: *No one wants to share husband or no one wants to share a wife. But [for] women – it’s next to impossible to control the husband. You want to like scare away every woman from your husband. So when he goes there and gets a woman, you want - to get rid of this woman – so you do anything possible to...but some women they just ignore and look after their kids and face all the hardships. Because you see - what makes it worse is some women get a divorce, some women they tend to stay home because you are looking at the husband as the bread winner and you know that once the husband has gone to see another woman and the bread has only got one slice – you know you are not going to share that one slice with the other woman, so you are going to face it hard with your kid...You know that she is going to make your life difficult. So some women think of like killing the other -

Shelley: *Do you think the problem is mostly economic – like do you think if the women had opportunities to make their own money, they would just get divorced and move on?*

Dan: *Sure, that’s like what they want, but since they know that they are going to have a difficult life alone because they don’t have enough income, they don’t*
do anything – they depend on the man and his salary. Even not a good 
salary, but something. So when they see that someone trying to tap that 
something out of them, so they are desperate – they [harm the other 
wives/girlfriends] out of desperate.

Shelley: It seems that a lot of it is economic - 

Dan: Yeah, like if they had money, I think they would be more than happy to be 
single mothers.

[Excerpt from interview with Dan, August 2005]

In a focus group discussion with girls and boys around sexual behaviour and 
relationships, a vehement argument transpired around the topic of polygamy. The 
conversation explored differential behavioural expectations around relationships and sexual 
activity for girls and boys, such as if it were acceptable for a boy to have many girlfriends, 
but not acceptable for a girl to have many boyfriends. This was, in fact, the case, and 
seemed to be directly related to the fact that it is acceptable for a man to have many wives, 
but it is not acceptable for a woman to have more than one husband. The girls then took up 
the problematic aspects of polygamy and challenged the boys.

Tracy: When you have more than one wife, can you manage to support them 
equally?

[arguing between girls and boys here]

Shelley: Do some of you sometimes have a problem with school fees?

All: Yes.

Shelley: I guess this is what [Tracy] is asking – if a man has many wives, right, many 
children with different wives - do you think there’s a responsibility to look 
after all of the children and make sure they go to school?

Boys [some]: No!
Girls and boys [some]: Yes..

Samson: That depends to the husband, because the husband may be poor, some may be rich, so it depends-

Jason: If somebody’s poor, they can’t have more than one wife.

Peter: You cannot decide to marry three womens when you are poor.

Jason: You marry five womens when you are rich.

Edward: - and even having more wives that is sign of rich [“rich” – other boys echo]

Adam: And respect.

Tracy: But when a man has more than - more than one wife, and he has many children, when he’s poor, he can’t support, or he can’t pay school fees to his children -

Jason: We’ve told you that we can’t marry many wives when you are -

Tracy: A man, with two wives, when he has no job -

Joshua: God say that we have to produce until we’re tired.

[Excerpt from A3ST- FGD(BG), October 2004]

This exchange reveals tension between traditional cultural, clan-based practices, and the realities of a cash economy and globalized world in which all children have the right to education; education is necessary for participation in the global community, and education comes at a cost. Many of the boys, too, had experienced the same problem as the girls with regard to school fees, but the traditional practices, beliefs, and expectations may have prevented them from speaking out against polygamy for reasons that related to expectations of the clan, and instead uphold the traditional beliefs: “God say that we have to produce until we’re tired” (stated above by Joshua). Although there has been substantial outcry against the practice of polygamy, and movements to have polygamy outlawed, these have met with entrenched resistance. In December 2003, the GOU tabled the Domestic
Relations Bill (DRB) that would reduce the number of wives a man could have to four, provided he could demonstrate financial support for all his wives, and that the co-wife/wives agreed to any new marriages; this proposal was met with staunch and powerful resistance (von Struense, n.d.). The DRB also proposed laws to curtail violence against women and discriminatory practices such as wife inheritance and unequal property rights, but DRB has yet to be passed in parliament because of the enormous opposition it faces. Thus, despite national rhetoric around gender equality, girls witness the triumph of the patriarchy in resisting measures that would work to support equality in their society.

6.2.2 Early/forced marriages

Early marriages are still commonplace and culturally and religiously (particularly for Muslims under Sharia Law) acceptable to many families and communities. Girls are often married during their adolescence, especially in cases of extreme poverty, in order to earn a bride price for the family (Kasente, 2003; Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Questionnaires (June 2005) completed by 11 secondary school teachers (two female, nine male) and 15 primary school teachers reveal that 17 teachers (11 secondary, six primary; six female, five male) believed that early marriages constituted a constraint on girls’ education. In this study, boys, as well as girls, identified early/forced marriages as problematic for girls. The NSGE, too, recognizes early/forced marriages as serious barriers to girls’ education.

Early/forced marriages violate the wishes and freedom of girls. During focus group discussions, the girls often mentioned early/forced marriages as undesirable and a source of worry for them.

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51 The NSGE identifies this in Barrier #2, as “Harmful traditional practices and attitudes which inflict physical and psychological damage e.g. initiation rituals, early marriage, and bride wealth payment” (GOU, p. 5).
**Shelley:** What is something that we’ve talked about in Straight Talk [meetings] that has not been gender-balanced, or good for women?

**Penina:** Forced marriage.

**Shelley:** Why do people force you to marry when you don’t want to?

**Penina:** When they [parents] don’t have school fees.

**Shelley:** If you marry, does that mean that the parents just don’t have to give you money anymore?

**Penina:** Yes.

[Excerpt from A3ST-FGD(G3), January 2005]

These girls were very aware that early marriage would interfere with their education, as once they were married and living with their husbands’ clans, they would be expected to manage households, bear children, and forfeit educational ambitions.

At primary school level it is gendered division of labour within the household that affects the girls while at the secondary school level it is marriage norms at community and household levels that adds to the gap already created by differentials due to market-related factors. (Kasente, 2003, p. 8)

In addition to violating the rights of girls and curtailing her educational and future opportunities, early/forced marriages pose other serious problems. Early/forced marriages often involve the betrothal of young girls to older men; these girls then are placed at a higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, as older men are more likely to be HIV-positive than boys who are the girls’ own age (Leach et al, 2003; Luke, 2003). Another negative aspect of early/forced marriages is that they are often unions with polygamous men; young girls become the second, third or fourth wife of a man. Again, this puts them at a higher risk of HIV-infection (due to the husband’s multiple partners), and it also is likely to result in the girl having very little status, autonomy or power within that marriage.
Although it is illegal for anyone to have sex with girls (or boys) under the age of 18 years old, early/forced marriages of adolescent girls below the age of 18 continue, largely unabated. In an effort to discourage early marriages and older men preying on girls, the GOU has included in the DRB (Section 3, #14) the condition: “A person shall not have the capacity to marry unless he or she has attained eighteen years of age”. But, as discussed above, the DRB has met with great resistance and has not been passed since its creation in 2003.

6.3 Expected Life Paths for Girls

Even though girls may hope for futures in which they have a career and earn an independent income, the likelihood that they will realize those futures diminishes as they grow older; school-related expenses become more onerous, and the possibility of finishing upper secondary school or vocational training more remote. And, because the typical, traditional life-path for girls is to marry, produce children and tend to domestic chores, many girls begin to accept this as their future and lose motivation and aspirations. Kasente (2003) argues:

The social construction that relates femininity closely with marriage also lowers girls’ aspiration for secondary and higher education as most of them do not see the need to excel in education as a value related with marriagability. (p. 8)

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52 NSGE barrier #7: Differential motivational scope for the male and female child reinforced by parental/societal/school expectations of each sex, role models available in the home, school and society and negative gender stereotyping in instructional materials and media. NSGE barrier #2: Harmful traditional practices and attitudes which inflict physical and psychological damage e.g. initiation rituals, early marriage and bride wealth payment.
In this study, the girls’ future identities were to a large extent framed by marriage, and this affected choices they made or behaviours they exhibited – or at least how they explained those behaviours in terms of other girls.

*Shelley:* Many teachers think that girls are not [ambitious] like boys are – what do you think?

*Henrietta:* Yes, because some girls think that she is going to get married and the husband, the husband will get everything for her. But the boys, he can – boys can work hard because no one is going to help him.

*Shelley:* Ok, so some girls think that if they get married, the boy, the husband, will give them everything. But the boys think that they have to earn their own money.

*Henrietta:* Yes

*Shelley:* Ok, but are you ambitious – do you want to become a doctor?

*Henrietta:* Yes

[Excerpt from interview with Henrietta, August 2005]

The girls presented clearly demarcated gender roles in terms of financial responsibility: it was the husband’s role to earn an income and support the wife. Women were, therefore, dependent upon men, and (as the girls point out) this could serve to lessen girls’ educational aspirations. This situation is further complicated by the fact that early/forced marriages are still common, as discussed above.

### 6.4 Negative Gender Stereotypes

To some extent, the girls seemed to have internalized messages around the inferiority of women and their lesser status and limited future expectations, and they struggled with conflicting possibilities and realities. Many of the girls believed that they
were strong, capable, young women who had the potential to have careers as doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, etcetera, but they also referred to themselves as being “weak”. This notion of “weakness” affected both the girls’ own perceptions of what they were capable of as well as the teachers’ and boys’ perceptions of girls’ capabilities.

* * * * *

Shelley: *Do you think that women have the same rights and amount of power as men?*

Louise: *No. Womens are weak.*

Shelley: *Why, do you think?*

Louise: *Womens are weak.*

[Excerpt from interview with Louise, November 2004]

* * * * *

Shelley: *Do you think boys feel they are superior- higher- than girls?*

Doreeen: *Yes.*

Shelley: *Is that the way that they treat you?*

Doreen: *Yes.*

Shelley: *That they are higher -*

Doreen: *Yes.*

Shelley: *Why do they think that they are higher?*

Doreen: *Because they are more stronger than girls.*

Shelley: *You mean physically stronger?*

Doreen: *Yes.*

Shelley: *Why does that make them better – why do they think they are better because they are stronger? Is that the only reason?*

Doreen: *Yes.*
Shelley: So girls can be smarter, but boys still think that they are superior because they are stronger.

Doreen: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Doreen, August 2005]

* * * * *

Jenenie: Girls fear the people and the boys do not fear them, and the boys are much stronger than the girls.

Shelley: You mean physically stronger?

Jenenie: Yes.

Shelley: So they can fight if they have to?

Jenenie: Yes, if a problem occurs.

Shelley: Why do girls fear people?

Jenenie: It is natural [that girls] fear people.

Shelley: What do they fear?

Jenenie: They fear [people] cause they know, they know that the boys are the only people to, only ones to lead the people.

Shelley: So, do they fear that people will hurt them?

Jenenie: They do not hurt them, but they knew in the ancient days that only boys could lead people.

[Excerpt from interview with Jenenie, August 2005]

When I queried Mr. Masinde, the headteacher at KSS, about this he said:

Masinde: Maybe it’s the cultural inbirth that our girls have their cultural position.

They know that they are always the weaker sex.

Shelley: Weaker sex meaning what?
Masinde:  *Meaning that – well that boys are stronger than them.*

Shelley: *Physically -*

Masinde:  *Physically, but even our physical strength affects their psychological and everything, but they say oh, by the way we are weak.*

[Excerpt from interview with Headteacher Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

In an interview, the female librarian, Doris, echoed Masinde’s comments:

Doris:  *I know, I think they are, some of them, they were brought up to think that they are weak, and so they take it for granted that girls are there to be weak – we can’t do such jobs, we can’t do such jobs.*

[Excerpt from interview with Doris, August 2005]

The girls were, in fact, anything but weak – physically or otherwise. I think the girls had likely internalized the message that others believed that they were weak. “Weakness” was perhaps also indicative of a sense of “powerlessness” the girls felt with regards to positions and opportunities for girls and women within their society. One research investigation the girls undertook was to explore gender roles in their society. The girls split into four smaller groups: one group researched the village, another explored the trading centre, another looked at the activities of students, teachers and staff around the school, and another group went into Ganda Town to research who held positions of power in various organizations, businesses, and institutions. Each group took my digital camera and took photographs of people engaged in various daily activities in a variety of settings. We re-grouped to look at the various photos each group had taken, and discussed the content – location, context, and people in the photographs. We noted that all of the high-level positions (e.g., management, supervisory) were occupied by men. When we speculated on why this might be the case, Louise stated: “Because we are weak.”
Implicit in this notion of “weakness” or “powerlessness” seemed to be a belief that certain opportunities are out of reach for girls. Often, an undercurrent of frustrated resignation resonated in the way the girls talked about the relationships between women and men, and what they could expect for their futures.

**Shelley:** Do you think boys think that they are higher than girls?

**Ireen:** Yeah, they do.

**Shelley:** Why do they think that?

**Ireen:** Because they are knowing that we are the girls – we have to follow them.

**Shelley:** Do you have to follow them in school?

**Ireen:** Yes.

**Shelley:** Do you [follow them]?

**Ireen:** No.

**Shelley:** Does your mom have to follow your father?

**Ireen:** Yes, she have to do when he tell her “you do this” – she have to do.

**Shelley:** So do you mean after school when you get married and have a family, that’s when you have to follow boys? Or women have to follow men?

**Ireen:** Yes.

**Shelley:** Do you think that girls think that they are lower than boys?

**Ireen:** No.

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August, 2005]

### 6.5 General Attitudes Towards the Education of Girls

According to the NSGE (barrier #14), “The general public are largely unsensitised to the importance of girls’ education and are ignorant of their responsibility for providing a secure environment for female students” (GOU, p. 5). This barrier, as it is articulated,
problematic because of the vagueness around the term “unsensitised”. In my research, I found that “sensitise” was one of several buzz-words used in connection to “development” and programmes connected to current trends in national and international policies, NGOs, aid organizations, and a word frequently found in funding applications, project reports, and workshop descriptions. There are several ways the word “unsensitised” could be interpreted in this context. For example, it could mean: (i) that people do not understand the importance of girls’ education for the society; (ii) that people do not understand the importance of girls’ education for girls’ own lives; (iii) that people are “not sensitive to” or are “resistant to” the education of girls; or (iv) that people are simply “unaware”. For the purposes of this discussion, I interpret “unsensitised” to mean “resistant to” as I think that, if people are unaware or do not understand the benefits of girls’ education, they are likely to be resistant to it, especially if it clashes with traditional, normative gender roles, and may induce increased financial pressures/ opportunity costs for families. On the other hand, if people do understand the benefits of girls’ education and continue to resist it, they cannot be considered “sensitised” to (i.e., supportive of) it.

Findings from this study indicate that there was a great deal of ambivalence by boys and men around girls’ education. Although many boys and men were ostensibly in favour of girls’ education, they often expressed objection to girls receiving “too much” education. For example, in a focus group discussion S4 boys stated, unequivocally, that their future wives must have some education, because “the people who are not educated are not...”  

53 “Sensitise” was also a word many teachers used in interviews and questionnaires with reference to achieving gender equality. For example, in a questionnaire (November, 2004) completed by 11 teachers/staff at KSS (two female, nine male), one question asked: If there were any changes that could be made in your community to promote equal rights between men and women/boys and girls, what would these be? Four responses (all male) used some form of the word “sensitise”: “sensitisation of both groups and provide the necessities”; “actively let girls occupy very good and sensitive posts in politics, offices in different ministries etc.”; “Sensitisation, women involvement in decision making with men”; “The government should intervene and sensitise both the elders/adults, parents and the entire community about the advantages and disadvantages of equal rights”. My intention is to suggest that overuse of words such as this renders them almost meaningless unless they are clearly defined, particularly in policy documents such as the NSGE.  

sanitation – they are somehow dirty, dirty - they cannot clean their house”\textsuperscript{55}. However, the boys were adamant that they did not want their future wives to have “too much” education.

*Shelley:* What kind of education would you want your wife to have?

*Jason:* S4. S4. [other boys agree]

*Other boys:* Not above S4

*Shelley:* Why shouldn’t it exceed S4?

*Jason:* Those that exceed S4 at times they -

*James:* ...that they know more than me -

*Jason:* Yes.

*Shelley:* So – is it important that you know more than your wives?

*Boys [all]:* Yes.

*Boys [all]:* Yes.

*Jason:* That’s very important.

*Peter:* According to my understanding of what I want I need a girl in S4 because, as a boy, I need to get a high education. But a girl – because when you marry a girl who has a high education more than you that girl will know more than [her] husband so that’s not good.

*Shelley:* Why?

*Peter:* Because she will abuse me as if I am not a husband.

*Shelley:* Really? You think so? All women who get a university education think that men are lower?

*Stephen:* They think they are above -

*Shelley:* They think they are above men?

*Boys:* Yes.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
The boys agreed that, ideally, their future wives would have completed S4, but no higher. They claimed that a girl/woman who had “too much” education or a higher level of education than her boyfriend/husband was not desirable, as she would “stand there all day abusing [him]”\(^\text{56}\). This reveals a great deal of insecurity and resistance from boys around the education of girls; it also reflects the sentiments of many adult males. In a questionnaire given to 15 primary school teachers (June 2005), the following question was posed: *Some men and boys have expressed that they would not like to have a girlfriend or wife who has a higher level of education than he does. Do you think this is a general feeling amongst boys and men in your community?* Twelve out of 15 teachers responded in the affirmative. When asked to elaborate, male teachers gave these answers:

- “Because a girlfriend/wife with higher education than he does despises him which would lead to divorce”
- “Wives who are more educated than their husbands pretend to be more equal them hence disresepecting them”
- “They feel superior and women who has a higher education than men tend to disrespect their spouses”
- “Because educated women tend to be paramount in decision making which make them to underlook their husbands”
- “Educated women tend to show off over men with low education”

The female teachers were apparently well acquainted with this male attitude toward girls’ education as their responses echo those of the men:

- “Men and boys feel this way because such girlfriend and wives don’t respect them”

\(^{56}\) From A3STFGD(B1), November 2004.
• “They have a mentality that a wife or girlfriend of higher education tends to minimize them”
• “They feel that way because in most cases highly educated women don’t respect their husbands”
• “There will not be respect in the family since the woman has more money than the husband and high education to woman than man”
• “Because women with higher levels than men sometimes do not give their husbands their due respect”
• “This is because if they do so they will be minimized by those of higher level of education”

These answers seem to conflate the notion of “respect” with that of “obey” and confuse the notion of “despising” or “minimizing” the husband with challenging or disagreeing with him.

Education is thus perceived as a power-leverage, threatening entrenched and long-standing male privilege. This can lead to resistance from the men (and boys) who perceive the potential for their power to be eroded.

A girl has to get married and when she gets married, she is under her husband - she can no longer decide for herself to do this or that. So, like if someone was a teacher and she gets married, the husband may say you are not going to go out to teach if you’re my [wife]. And because of that cultural instinct [the woman thinks] “much as I am married – I have to be under my husband”. And if the husband is now saying no more going out to work, they have to abide by that…[But] later on the wife recognizes that she has more education and therefore that she is more enlightened than her husband and therefore should be taking an upper hand in making decisions - and then the husband senses now that what is going to happen
here is that I am losing my position in the family and eventually we find that some of the families are falling apart simply because of that.

[Excerpt from interview with headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

The girls in this study were aware of the problems that could arise if women possessed the education and training for professional employment but their husbands did not want them to work.

Those mens [who think about] equality with womens - that’s the problem. They think – “Ha! How did it comes to be equal? To be equal at home?” They say that if – if - if a man, he’s a teacher, he dislike woman to be also a teacher. He say that: “You stay home and ....you keep at home and do such a works - this is really the [woman’s role] -

[Excerpt from interview with Gelly, October 2004]

Education can thus be a social liability for girls, as they may actually have diminished desirability as wives for young men who are intimidated by their relatively high, or superior, educational attainment.

Being seen as too ‘clever’ or too serious about studying or talking about having a career might jeopardise a girl’s chances of marriage as she may be seen as too independent to make a good housewife. Those who are determined to succeed in their studies and to pursue a career may have to overcome considerable prejudice and resistance. (Leach, 2003, p. 390)

As increasing numbers of girls begin to attend post-primary school, and postpone marriage to a later age, their personal and social identities change. This seems to have also caused boys to question or reassess their own identities, roles, and beliefs. For example, it became apparent that there were often significant discrepancies between what the boys publicly stated in FGDs, and what their private thoughts were on the subject of girls’
education. The topic of imagined future relationships and communities was further explored in a questionnaire (November, 2004)\textsuperscript{57} completed by the S4 students. The boys’ responses indicated that what they would value in terms of future spousal relationships was considerably different from that which they expressed in the FGD\textsuperscript{58}. In this questionnaire, two different scenarios relating to marriage and community were presented.

Scenario A described a married couple, with both partners having a good education. The wife, Loi, however, had a higher level of education than her husband, James; Loi had a PhD and James had a teaching degree. Loi and James made all major decisions together, including the number of children they would have, and they vowed to be monogamous. Scenario B described a married couple in which the husband, Ken, had a university degree and his wife, Gertrude, had only finished P7. Gertrude would remain in the village, look after the garden and take care of the children, while Ken would work for the government and spend a large part of his time living in an urban centre. Ken planned to have three or four wives. Ken would make all the major decisions alone and expect Gertrude to obey him.

In relation to the above scenarios the question was posed, \textit{Which married couple do you think will contribute more to the development of Uganda?}, of the 34 students who responded to this question (one girl did not respond) on the questionnaire, 32 (19 girls and 13 boys) indicated that they believed that Loi and James contributed the most to the development of Uganda. (Only two boys chose Ken and Gertrude as their answer.) Below is a chart that represents the girls’ and boys’ responses thematically. Each theme listed in

\textsuperscript{57} Appendix A4: A4-S3GB
\textsuperscript{58} Appendix A3: A3FGD(B2)
each response is included, so the numbers do not indicate the number of students, but rather the prevalence of the themes that arose.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{Themes from responses to questionnaires ranked in order of importance in terms of the development of Uganda}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to support children/family planning</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for Loi and James</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs/money</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal respect between wife and husband/joint decision-making</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to plan for future</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to develop Uganda, the local community, etc</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect from others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No polygamy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Table 3}

For the girls, the ability to have control over family planning and adequately provide for their children was of paramount importance; this may have indicated their anticipation of their future roles as mothers, and/or possibly reflected their understanding of what it means to be a child of parents who do not have the resources to provide, for example, school fees. The ability to provide for their children/family planning was closely followed in importance by the attainment of tertiary level education by both Loi and James. Almost all students who participated in this study used the phrase “education is key” when considering their own futures and the development of Uganda. The girls’ prioritizing of these two themes indicated that they hope to be able to provide a good education for their

\textsuperscript{59} Two responses were not included, as I was not sure that I could interpret their meaning correctly. These responses are: “…because they have different habits” and “James has a reaching different level of education”.

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children, and so they wanted to have control over the number of children they would have, and some control of the conditions under which they would be living when those children came into their lives. These two themes stand out far ahead of the other themes. Of third level of importance was jobs/money; fourthly, the same number of mentions was given to equal respect between wife and husband/joint decision-making, and the ability to plan for the future.

The boys’ responses did not reflect the same dramatic variance of emphasis on themes as did the girls’; there was a much closer cluster of issues the boys indicated to be of a similar level of importance. The boys, too, indicated that the educational attainments of Loi and James were of importance for the development of Uganda, although only marginally over the third priority, which was jobs and money. The issue that ranked fourth for boys was related to directly contributing to “development” (of the community, or of Uganda). Remarkably, however, “equal respect between wife and husband/joint decision-making” emerged as the theme of leading priority for the boys, whereas it was only a distant fourth for the girls. The boy’s emphasis on the importance of respect and shared decision-making between spouses is interesting from a number of perspectives, particularly as much of the spoken discourse consisted of bravado and flippancy around issues of gender equality, such as “girls are not supposed to be equal with boys”\(^{60}\). This questionnaire seems to reveal that, in fact, boys would indeed value girls and women as partners, and would choose to have a marital relationship in which there was equality, respect and open dialogue. It seems that the boys would welcome wives with a high level of education if they did not have to fear that their wives would “stand there all day abusing me”. It is also interesting that equality, respect, and joint decision-making were understood by the boys as important for the development of the country:

\(^{60}\) Jason, from GL/FGD/ B-1 (Appendix A3)
• “Because Loi and James can develop Uganda and provide more education and better living after Loi improving the constructed building and of hers”
• “In fact, number A [the example of Loi and James] is good whereby if a man and woman have equal respect, they will plan together in order to develop that family and their community”
• “Because Loi and James have enough education and James can teach children and people of Uganda and Loi has PhD in engineering so she can repair or build better housing in order to develop Uganda”
• “Because Loi works and get salaries and James works and get salaries to support the family and community even our poor country will benefit from them by paying the government’s revenue”
• “Because they will develop our country. They will encourage their children to go to school. They will promote their village or town through making decisions”

Both the girls and the boys indicated that that there was an integral connection between education and shared decision-making, which is substantiated by responses to the following question in a follow-up questionnaire (May 2005): Some of you stated that you think that educated people are more likely to have discussions and decide on things together with their husbands or wives if they are educated. (a) Do you think this is true? 18 boys and 10 girls responded in the affirmative (one girl and one boy responded in the negative, and one girl and one boy did not respond at all). When asked, If yes, why do you think this?, overwhelmingly, both girls and boys emphasized the importance of equality between partners, conversation, the exchange of ideas, working together to create a good family environment, understanding what is happening in the world, contributing to their

61 Appendix A4: A4-S4GB.
societies, and planning for the future. Two responses in particular poignantly summarize many of the ideas and sentiments expressed. One girl wrote: “Because you can walk together as educated person[s]”; and one boy stated: “There is a combining of different ideas that each of these partners have and they are always interested in knowing each other because of education levels everyone has and at the end of the day they end up having discussions to develop their family”.

It is quite possible that adolescent boys who attend secondary school, who are becoming accustomed to interacting with adolescent girls as fellow students and who are aware of girls’ capabilities, ambitions, and goals, are developing a new cultural understanding of women and potential marital relationships. What the boys stated publicly - that girls should not receive more education than boys - closely reflected the attitudes of an older generation (e.g., the teachers who responded in the same vein to the question of whether a wife having higher education than her husband caused problems). However, as shown above, in written, anonymous responses, the boys indicated that they would value a high level of education for the future wives, for a wide variety of reasons.

6.6 Conclusion

It seems that many inequities with respect to girls’ educational opportunities in Uganda exist and persist because the state infrastructure is not strong enough to enable people, especially women, to be able to live independent of patriarchal social constructs, such as the clan, which do provide some degree of social infrastructure and support. The more one must rely on the clan, the more one is obliged to abide by the clan’s practices. And for girls and women, this often means abiding by gendered, oppressive, and inequitable norms, such as early/forced marriages, polygamy, and onerous domestic duties. In turn, oppression and inequities are intensified and aggravated by poverty. For example,
if the family cannot afford school fees for all children, it must choose the child/children who will receive school fees, and this will be based on a number of criteria: Which child will benefit most from an education? Which child will be able to use that education to help the family? Which child will be most likely to find employment? Which child will have the longest-term commitment to the family/community? In most families, traditionally, the answer has been the boy.

I do not believe that the public was “unsensitised” to girls’ education; most people supported girls’ education, and there were very few parents who did not want their daughters to receive an education. I also met some fathers who were actively involved in doing what they could to support their daughters’ educational pursuits. Economic circumstances, with the resultant reliance on the clan, played an enormous role in girls’ educational opportunities and was, I believe, more of an obstacle to girls’ education than was resistance from parents. There are, however, attitudes around the nature of girls’ education that need to be explored.

Although findings from this study indicate that there is general support for girls’ education, this support was not unconditional: education for girls was accepted, even encouraged, by most men and boys provided that girls did not receive “too much” education and threaten male privilege. Girls’ education was largely valued in terms of what it would enable girls to contribute to society and much less because of its intrinsic importance to the individual girls’ lives. Thus, I argue that the general public remains largely “unsensitised” to what girls are fully, unequivocally entitled to as far as education is concerned. However, men and boys revealed various layers of nuance, ambivalence, and trepidation with respect to girls’ education. The boys’ attitudes about girls’ education were complex and often contradictory. Publicly, the boys stated that their future wives should be beautiful virgins with an adequate enough education to look after the home properly, but
should not have “too much” education as this would lead them to challenge the husband’s incontestable position as the head of the household. However, in private, responding anonymously in writing to questions in a questionnaire, the boys generally indicated that they would like to attain a high level of education and also marry a woman with a high level of education so that they could discuss and make joint-decisions about issues of importance, adequately provide for their children, and contribute most effectively to the development of their society.

In many ways, Uganda has been extraordinarily successful in bringing girls into the education system at the primary level through UPE. This is not to claim that there is gender equity in the schools, or that the education system does not still have serious problems and shortcomings, but the goal of gender parity has effectively been reached. This indicates that if the necessary financial outlay for schooling by parents is minimized, there is a far greater likelihood that girls will attend school. With the advent of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007, some of these costs will be defrayed by the GOU, and there will likely be a significant increase in secondary school enrollment. Undoubtedly, there will still be certain costs parents will have to bear, but it will be much more affordable for most than it has been hitherto. Nonetheless, it will take several years until there is truly universal secondary education, as the infrastructure needs to be established and there will be demands on the national budget that the GOU will not be able to meet immediately.

It is likely as growing numbers of girls attend secondary school and journey through adolescence with boys as classmates and colleagues and become aware of girls’ intellectual abilities, creativity, competence, personal strength, aspirations, and many other qualities, boys will increasingly question traditional assumptions around gender roles and male privilege and reconceptualise desirable qualities of marital relationships and family lives. I believe that it is important to work with the formative and wavering imagined future
communities of both adolescent boys and girls in secondary school to bring about gender equity in education and all other aspects of society.

This chapter has explored the family and community-related practices that constrain girls’ access to education and ability to succeed in school if they do have access.

Chapter 7 will consider the disadvantages girls face within the school environment itself.
LETTHER FROM FLORENCE

Following is a letter I received from Florence; she participated for one term in this study. After S3, Florence left KSS and went to a different school. I did not know why she left, and I did not see her again. However, I re-established contact with her via Dan, the translator, when she came to visit him at the library in the fall of 2006. I asked (through Dan) if she would let me know why she had left KSS.

Dec. 2006

Dear Shelley Jones

After S3 I left Kyato Secondary School to Hilltop Secondary School because of many reasons. The reputation KSS is very poor while HSS is good. I thought to improve on my performance at S4. [And] My parents wanted a school on the foundation of my faith a Moslem school. There were no serious teachers in terms teaching [at KSS] for example the Teacher for English was missing a lot we nearly finished the whole term with very few lessons. I think that why our English writing and speaking is bad. KSS don’t have the National Examination Centre and the other school have. There were no single apparatus for experiments for [science] practical so we only studied theory and it not enough while there is some at the other school.

At KCSS there were male teachers who harassed me after I refused to have sex with them so I had to change the school. The situation was also bad for me because at lunchtime we had to take poll edge [porridge] which was not enough
for me and yet we paid the same School fees as HSS. We had to fetch water by then from the well for our poll edge from the well 1km a way and that was during the time we were supposed to be in class and many punishments like flogging and abusing us plus digging the compound. School fees was expensive and yet like dormitory was small, leaking terribly no beds and it was compulsory for S4 to stay there so some of the things at KSS were unrealistic but there were other things which were good like games, singing and dancing and other co-curricular activities.

Florence
CHAPTER 7: SCHOOL-RELATED BARRIERS TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION

Given the prevailing cultural dominance of males over females, the education system potentially has an important role in addressing the profound gender inequalities that exist in Uganda. (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 29)

Educational institutions are often assumed to be intrinsically empowering and gender-neutral environments promoting democratic and just ideologies and practices. However, despite curricula that may expound such ideals, the lived experiences within the school environment are often in conflict with these. The school reflects and embodies the inequalities and prejudices of the larger society, and it is argued that schools “are powerful ideological institutions that transmit dominant values, and function as mechanisms of social control…and [contribute] to the maintenance of the social norms that suppress women throughout sub-Saharan Africa” (Geiger, 2002, p. 6). In fact, many gendered behaviours are learned and/or reinforced in the educational setting (Dunne et al, 2003; Kakuru, 2006; Leach, 2003; Mirembe & Davies, 2001).

Gender inequalities in the school context are manifest in a wide range of situations, relationships and circumstances, such as the interactions between girls and male teachers as well as male students, gendered opportunities, etc. (Ansell, 2002; Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Puchner, 2003; Stromquist, 2001; Unterhalter, 2003). Unterhalter (2003) insists, “The whole area that looks at the ethos of the school, its gender regime and the forms of relationships that are permitted and stigmatized is considerably under-researched” (p. 18). In this chapter I consider these allegations and explore my second question: What are the challenges associated with the school environment that prevent girls’ full and equal participation in education? In relation to these challenges, I
consider three of the five “school-related factors” identified in the NSGE as barriers to girls’ education: inadequate school facilities (barrier #8), negative gender stereotyping in the curriculum, instructional materials, teaching-learning methodology and assessment systems (barrier #10), and factors related to school and college personnel (barrier #11).

7.1 **School Infrastructure Deficiencies**

Although it would seem that the location and the physical structure and amenities of a school would affect all students equally, there are gendered dimensions to these factors that critically impact the ability of girls to attend school regularly. There are different domestic demands and constraints, different rules of travel, and different needs in terms of facilities for girls and boys, and therefore the location and amenities of school significantly affect girls’ ability to fully participate in all school-related activities.

7.1.1 **Location of School**

There are far fewer secondary than primary schools in Uganda, and as a result, particularly in rural areas, students often have to travel several miles to school. This is problematic for girls of this school community for several reasons: “In most societies [in Sub-Saharan Africa] distance is inversely related to the prospects of girls going to school, especially after puberty” (Watkins, 2000: 193; in Geiger, 2002, p. 12). The Buganda culture, to which the girls in this study belong, prohibits girls from riding bicycles (Parry, 2004; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). The girls at KSS walked up to eight miles to and from school, which could take up to five hours a day. This often resulted in exhaustion, especially as students rarely received sufficient nutritional value from or adequate portions

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62 NSGE barrier #8: “Inadequate school facilities, especially: a) sanitation facilities for female students in co-educational institutions; b) shortage of secure accommodation for girls in day institutions and the long distances they have to travel, exposing them to constant abuse on the way to school.
of school lunches to properly sustain them for their hours at school or to walk home. In addition, the travel time to and from school intensified the pressures, particularly for girls, of domestic responsibilities before and after school.

During my year of fieldwork, I heard of cases of girls being found sitting or lying on the ground, at the side of the road, overcome with pain from menstrual cramps, or fatigue from illness, such as malaria; they had no option other than to walk the long distance home. One of the girl in the study, Gelly, frequently suffered from extremely debilitating headaches, and told me about the tortuous two and a half to three hour walks home that she often had to make when she had these headaches. Even for someone in good health, with a sound, nutritional diet, access to sufficient amounts of potable water and good walking shoes, these are long walks that demand a good deal of physical exertion, especially in the heat of the day.

Another consideration related to distance is the hours of daylight. Given the fact that there is no electricity, and therefore no streetlights, the girls cannot walk home in the dark. Thus, if they have a one to three hour walk to and from school, they must leave home after sunrise (about 7 a.m.), and leave school so they reach home before sunset (about 7 p.m.)\(^{63}\), and their activities must be scheduled accordingly. Even though girls travel in the daytime, the long distances they must cover mean they are still at risk of abuse and harassment by men.

Shelley: What is the biggest problem or difficulty that you have in your life right now?

Juliet: The biggest problem – is these men who disturb us – begging for sex.

Shelley: When you are walking to school?

Juliet: Yes. Even when we are in our villages, they disturb us.

\(^{63}\) The times of sunrise and sunset remains the same throughout the year as Uganda is located on the Equator.
Shelley: Do you think that there is anything that can help to change that situation for girls so men don’t bother them so much?

Juliet: The only solution that should be done for the girls not to be disturbed is to tell the government to punish those men who beg sex from girls.

Shelley: Are these men, men with families, married men?

Juliet: Yes, men with families – those who drive taxis – they are the most disturbers.

[Excerpt from interview with Juliet, August 2005]

Out of 11 teachers and staff (two female, nine male) at KSS who completed questionnaires,64 10 teachers (one female, nine male) identified long distances to school as problematic for girls, and seven teachers (one female, six male) believed that “vulnerability to harassment” was also a serious impediment to girls’ equal access to education.

Long distances to and from school are also problematic in that there are severe repercussions for arriving late to school. The following is an account of one of the girls’ experiences of this.

One day...I came late at school [and] my teacher told me to cultivate [dig in the field]. [When] I refused my teacher told me to bring a stick [so he could] beat me. That teacher was good in mistreating. He [gave] me 20 strokes [and then] he told me to cultivate from sunrise to sunset without eating anything.

[Excerpt from Henrietta’s notebook]

Given the pressure to arrive at school on time, as well as the hardship of the daily journey to and from school, girls often succumb to the temptation of faster, easier modes of travel and become involved in transactional sexual relationships with boda-boda men (motorcycle taxi drivers), taxi drivers or other men with cars/vehicles in order to make the

64 Appendix A4: A4-KSST2.
commute less arduous (Nyanzi et al, 2001). This has the potential to lead to many problems such as early pregnancy and infection with HIV/AIDS or other STDs, particularly as boda-boda drivers have a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection and tend to have many sexual partners (Nyanzi, Nyanzi & Kalina, 2005), and this may be true for other taxi drivers, as well.

7.1.2 School Facilities

In addition to the location of the school, the school facilities, such as toilets and water supply, also have gendered dimensions. The GOU has mandated that it is necessary for schools to provide separate sanitation facilities for girls (Seel & Gibbard, 2000), and this seems to have been met with general compliance in the country. At KSS, although the toilets were simply pit latrines with walls and doors, and the bathing area for KSS girl boarders was merely a flimsy, ramshackle structure with a dirt floor and walls woven from palm leaves, the girls’ facilities were at least separate from the boys’. However, schools such as KSS, with no running water, or easy access to water, are particularly problematic for adolescent girls who have begun their menses.65 The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has generated reports and recommendations that insist that issues such as menstruation must become central issues of consideration if gender equality in education is to be achieved.

It is known that there are some areas where girls miss school when they have their monthly periods, either because they do not have adequate sanitary pads or because they cannot change sanitary pads while in school due to lack of water and closed door toilet facilities…Schools must take this factor into consideration because one week of school missed in a month translates to 25% of school missed in a year and

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65 KSS did acquire piped water in the spring of 2005.
could contribute to poor performance in examinations. (FAWE, 2001, p. 9; see also Kasente, 2003)

A questionnaire completed by 13 of the girls in the study indicated that 12 considered menstruation to be a problem. All 13 of the girls had missed school due to menstruation, some up to five days a month. Some girls had missed school due to pain/cramping, but most had missed school because of the problems associated with menstrual bleeding and lack of access to sanitary napkins.

*During the second Straight Talk Club meeting with the girls, I asked them if they had any questions they would like to ask me. One girl asked me what they could do about the problem of blood running down their legs and spoiling their clothes, during menses. They had tried leaves, pieces of cloth, etc., but in the end, these were ineffectual. The humiliation of blood-spattered legs or blood-soaked clothing, and the lack of discreet washing areas, was enough to keep many girls away from school during their periods, especially as there was no running water, and in order to get water to wash, they had to walk about a kilometre. In addition, many suffered from severe menstrual cramps, and were unable to afford any aspirin or other medication to alleviate the pain. I, of course, had no answers.*

[Excerpt from my fieldnotes, October 2004]

Menstrual bleeding and lack of sanitary materials, or menstrual cramps or other physical symptoms and lack of access to medical treatment/pain relief (e.g., even aspirin), affect girls’ abilities to fully participate in school activities as well as their academic achievement. This, in turn, can have an effect on teachers’ attitudes towards the seriousness with which girls take education as well as girls’ capabilities.

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66 Appendix A4: A4-GOSH1, May 2005.
Shelley: Most teachers [who completed questionnaires] thought girls cannot lead like boys.

Sofia: They can, but the problem is – girls have so many problems - like missing some days without studying...[because of] their periods.

Shelley: Have you missed school because of your period?

Sofia: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Sofia, August 2005]

7.2 Gender Inequities Related to Pedagogy

7.2.1 Student/Teacher Interactions in the Classroom

This week I scheduled time to observe classroom behaviour and student-teacher interactions. I talked to the teachers ahead of time and asked their permission to do so. They were all willing, some more so than others. I brought my videocamera with me to school and negotiated times with a few of the teachers. I had casually observed classes being taught all year, as there are no windows or doors on any of the classrooms, so what goes on is there for any passerby to observe. The first class I officially observed was an S4 English class. The textbooks were handed out and the teacher instructed one student after another to read a long passage from the textbook. That was it – no discussion, no review of vocabulary, and no questions about context or content. A few times the teacher would interrupt the student who was reading if the student had difficulty with pronunciation. The teacher would then say the word and have the whole class repeat it several times; then, the student continued reading out loud.

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67 NSGE barrier #10: “Negative gender stereotyping in the curriculum, instructional materials, teaching-learning methodology and assessment systems
The second class I observed was a business class. It was a hot afternoon, right after lunch. The classroom was dark and the teacher spoke quietly. He stood at the front of the class and wrote notes on the board, and then read the notes to the students as they copied them down. There was not a single student-teacher interaction. I fought tenaciously against the lure of sleep. I could see the students struggling to stay awake, but they did (by sheer willpower, I’m sure) just so they could copy down all the notes. The third class I observed was an S3 biology class with a female teacher. Although the class consisted primarily of note-taking and teacher-centred lecturing, she did ask students questions. The boys were usually the first to put their hands up to answer, but she did encourage the girls, as well.

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, July 2005]

Kakuru (2006) states that Uganda has “a pedagogical culture that makes pupils passive recipients of knowledge provided by the teacher” (Kakuru, 2006, p. 105; see also UNICEF, 2003). My experience affirms this observation. Typically, what I noticed was the teacher standing at the front of the classroom dictating, or writing something on the blackboard, and the students dutifully copying it down, or the teacher reciting something which the students then repeated (sometimes dozens of times).

“A pronoun is the word which stands in the place of a noun. Repeat!” This was an English lesson for those poor S1 students. As I worked in the library, I heard this class bellow out this sentence for all of a 35 to 40 minute class. Sometimes the teacher would choose one row, then the next, to repeat this, and then the whole class. “A pronoun is the word which stands in the place of a noun. Repeat!” It was painful to listen to, and tragic to think that this is what “English” was all about! – memorization, meaningless recitation.

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, Sept. 15, 2004]
Generally, there was very little teacher-student interaction other than closed questions, which the boys generally were the first to answer.

To be fair to the teachers, however, the teaching conditions at KSS, and at many rural schools like it, were dismal. The teachers were poorly and irregularly paid, there were no textbooks for most of the classes, and the teachers had to find their own resources in order to teach the curricular content. I was told that many of the teachers borrowed notebooks from students who went to “good” schools and then copied those student’s notes into their own notebooks; these notes were then transferred onto blackboards for their students at KSS to copy into *their* notebooks! The science teachers taught “lab” classes in theory, as there was no laboratory, even though the students had to do a “practical” science examination in order to pass their S4 exams. For the actual S4 national examinations, the students had to board for several days at a school that was a designated “National Examination Centre” so they could take the lab component of their science exam.

*Masinde (the headteacher of KSS) told me of one boy he knew who dropped an expensive piece of equipment while taking the practical part of his science exam.*

*The boy had never been in a laboratory before. He was responsible for paying for that piece of equipment, which cost over 100,000 Ugandan shillings (about $60 U.S.). This prevented him from continuing with his studies.*

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, May, 2005]

Similarly, the technology teacher taught computer skills “in theory” as there were no computers for the students to use.

In addition, the teachers and students must abide by a rigid, exam-based curriculum that “lacks clearly articulated quality learning outcomes, competencies, and assessment criteria” (UNICEF, 2003, p. 1). In this regard, education in Uganda shares many of the same problems as those of other African states:
Assessment of school performance is often based on exam results only…Very little reference is ever made to other aspects of school life; i.e., self-sufficiency through production, practical activities, sports and involvement in community development programmes and other extra-curricula activities (Kingdom of Lesotho, 1989/90, p. 27; quoted in Ansell, 2002; p. 94)

In fact, schools are publicly ranked in the national newspapers according to the students’ exam results. Thus, the only outcomes considered to be of value are exam marks, as those determine the success of the student in terms of advancement; so, teachers teach for the exams, and students study in order to pass them. This input-output/banking pedagogical model is deemed to be the most efficient way of managing to meet curricular requirements.

However, this kind of pedagogy has inherent gendered implications. It situates the teacher at the centre of the classroom environment in a position of control and authority (Ansell, 2002; Kakuru, 2006; Mirembe & Davies, 2001) and demands obedient and submissive behaviour, particularly from girls, who are punished (often corporally) more severely than boys for behavioural transgressions (Mirembe & Davies, 2001). This reinforces the gendered, societal power imbalance in which girls and women tend to shy away from participation in a wide range of public activities. Certainly, I found that when I first began teaching the S3 class; most (though not all) of the girls were submissive and reticent to interact with me. When I would ask a question, most of the girls, who were almost all squashed onto three benches on the left side of the room, would look fixedly at their notebooks or at the ground whereas the boys would put up their hands or call out answers. This type of classroom dynamic reinforces the visibility of boys and further entrenches their positions as leaders (Kakuru, 2006).
7.2.2 Gendered Subject Streaming\textsuperscript{68}

The school culture reaffirms larger societal gender roles and inequities in many other ways, such as the areas of study that girls and boys pursue. For example, the lack of female students in science, technology and mathematics has been acknowledged as a serious problem in Uganda (as in many other countries). A study by Sperandio (2000) of 500 girls and 120 teachers (male and female) in nine secondary schools, in three different areas of Uganda revealed that the girls “had been forced into doing arts subjects because the male teachers were prejudiced about girls’ capacity to do mathematics or sciences” (p. 63). This is corroborated by Mirembe and Davies’ (2001) ethnographic case study of an elite, co-educational secondary boarding school, close to Kampala, with corroborating data from an additional 21 schools located throughout Uganda, which shows that girls are generally expected to take courses that pertain to “homemaking” and are prevented from taking courses that are more technological, or scientific, in nature, as these courses are considered to be for boys.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there are very few female science teachers. The lack of female teachers, particularly in rural areas, in science and technology and in higher-level positions has been identified as one of the critical problems with regard to promoting a full range of educational opportunities for girls (GOU, 1992; Kakande, 1999; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; ODI, 2000; Sperandio, 2000). Girls tend to, or are encouraged to, focus on areas that will facilitate their adaptation of traditional gender roles and responsibilities.

The male power structure in schools is used to reproduce the culture and values which force women to take up subordinate positions in the labour force.\

\textsuperscript{68} NSGE barrier #11: “Factors related to school and college personnel: a) a dearth of attractive, high profile female role models among the teaching and administrative cadres at all levels of the education system; b) negative/biased teacher attitudes which discourage the girls from participating freely and improving performance in school; c) the absence of trained guidance and counselling personnel catering for girls’ needs; d) a scarcity of personnel trained in gender-screening mechanisms.”

seen to be used as a justification for the unequal distribution of knowledge between male and female students…schools start matching students with what is perceived to be their traditional adult roles. The process of choice of examination subjects at secondary school level is often based on unnecessary and unjustifiable sex distinctions. (Kakande, 1999, p. 56)

To some extent, the present study supports this statement. Of the girls who participated in this study, all but one took the arts/humanities programme once they were in Senior 5 (the first year of the A-Level programme). Only one girl, Tracy, who was the top student in her S4 class, took the A-Level science programme. My impression, however, was not that the girls were overtly discouraged from pursuing studies in sciences as much as they were not overtly encouraged. I do think that there existed gendered assumption that sciences and math were more for boys (perhaps because they would be more likely to go to college or university or vocational school than were girls), but I do not believe that the teachers deliberately discouraged the girls from taking science/math subjects. In fact, as mentioned above, the biology teacher was a young woman, and she supported the girls in their science pursuits. As well, one of the male math teachers, Stephen, said that he believed that girls were perfectly capable of doing well in math.

Stephen:  For some of the teachers they are having their views...but they [girls] have managed to pass my subject in mathematics which is a bit tricky but not difficult, I think, if they have tried to follow the principles of it and the principles of physics.

[Excerpt from interview with teacher Stephen, August 2005]

Another important factor that contributed to the preponderance of students pursuing arts-oriented programmes was the complete lack of access to science equipment and
laboratories for students at KSS and similar poorly-resourced schools. In fact, many boys attending poor, rural, secondary schools also take arts-based programmes for this reason.

Many studies and reports (Kakuru, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; ODI, 2000; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005), as well as the NSGE, point to the lack of female teachers and school administrators, particularly at the post-primary level, as detrimental for girls in terms of positive role models. Muhwezi (2003) reports that in 2001 out of 30,425 secondary school teachers in Uganda, 24,585 (or 80.8%) were male. Although it is likely that in Uganda, as a whole, the ratio of female to male teachers at the secondary level has increased, KSS was a heavily male-dominated school. At KSS, only two of the 11 teachers/staff were female. One taught religious studies and the other biology, although she neither had a teaching diploma nor had she fully completed secondary school. In addition, there was one female and one male librarian. In general, teachers and staff at KSS did not feel that female teachers were discriminated against, but this could be because most of the respondents were male. Out of the 15 teachers/staff who completed the questionnaires, 12 (two females and 10 males) believed that the school culture was not discriminatory towards women teachers; of the three (one female, two male) who believed that it was discriminatory towards female teachers, the two (both male) who provided explanations gave the following reasons: “women are hardly given bigger/[responsible] posts in schools; they are less paid as compared to male teachers”; and “they’re [women teachers] not having a chance of getting jobs around schools”.

Ten teachers (one female, nine male) out of 15 at KSS indicated in a questionnaire (November, 2004) that “males generally dominate all formal positions of power within the school environment”. Following are some representative responses:

- “Men are always assertive and affirmative in everything they do (male teacher)
• “Women lack skills and in most cases they are inferior” (male teacher)
• “Because men have more courage to be in power” (male teacher)
• “Because women think that they will not manage because of what they have been told” (male teacher)
• “Because naturally men are more powerful (dominant power) than women” (male teacher)

At KSS, the presence of the female teachers/staff was peripheral and intermittent; they came to teach classes, but the male teachers led all the extra-curricular activities and school events. The school environment was indisputably male-dominated. In fact, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and another male teacher lived at the school and supervised the student boarders (boys and girls). It must be noted, however, that KSS was started by Mr. Masinde and his wife in 1999, and his wife was deeply involved in the running of the school; she was also one of the school’s key teachers. However, her sudden death in 2001 left an administrative and pedagogical void that was then filled by Mr. Masinde’s brothers. In fact, I believe Mr. Masinde was extremely pro-active with respect to working to establish gender equity at KSS, and the girls always expressed a deep level of respect for him; they were grateful for his great sensitivity to their personal struggles on a wide variety of issues from school fees, to abuse, to medical problems. Unfortunately, few, if any, of the other male teachers were comparably caring and committed to gender equity. In addition, Mr. Masinde was heavily overburdened with the responsibilities and demands of running a school, and was required to teach two days a week at another school in order to earn wages to pay himself; thus, he was unable to deeply cultivate and enforce rigorous policies and practices with respect to gender equity within the school’s teaching community.
7.3 Teachers’ Attitudes Towards, and Beliefs About Female Students

7.3.1 Teachers’ Perceptions of Girls’ Capabilities and Motivation

Teacher’s negative attitudes and assumptions about girls’ capabilities and motivation can have detrimental effects on girls’ participation and achievement in education (ADF, 2000; Geiger, 2002; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Sperandio, 2000). Those attitudes and assumptions often influence the pedagogical practices of teachers, and the ways in which the girls and teachers interact. A study by Sperandio (2000) found that teachers believed that:

> girls in secondary schools were…less intelligent [than boys], found it more difficult to learn, were less ambitious, were shyer in class, spent less time studying, were less likely to ask questions, showed fewer leadership skills, and co-operated less with the teacher. (p. 63)

A similar study by Mirembe and Davies (2001) found that girls were treated as inferior and subordinate to boys, all power positions in the school were held by men, girls were discouraged from assuming leadership positions, and ultimately, the school environment was “fertile ground for exploitation, as it increases the power imbalances between boys and girls” (Mirembe & Davies, 2001, p. 406). Using Mirembe and Davies and Sperandio’s findings as a basis on which to develop an overall understanding of teachers’ attitudes towards female students, I distributed two questionnaires to the KSS teachers69 and one questionnaire to teachers in two primary schools in the village70. I also followed up with questions during interviews with KSS teachers in August 2005. When asked if they believed that teachers usually treated boys and girls as being equal, overwhelmingly, they indicated that this was the case: 26 responded affirmatively (the

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69 Appendix A4: A4-KSST1 (November 2004) and A4-KSST2 (June 2005)

70 Appendix A4: A4:KVPT (July 2005)
remaining four, one female and three males, believed that boys were treated as superior). However, a more in-depth consideration of their responses to various other questions around issues of equality and perceptions of girls’ ability, potential and commitment to education revealed that many of the same prejudices and biases held by other adults were shared, to some extent, by teachers. Questionnaire results show that 23 of 30 teachers (all the 15 primary school teachers and eight of the secondary school teachers) believed that teachers treated boys and girls as intellectual equals. The remaining seven teachers (all secondary school teachers) believed that boys were treated as intellectually superior. This is significant, as these seven teachers comprised almost half of the secondary school teachers (seven out of 15) who completed the questionnaire. Their responses were as follows:

- “Because [boys] have enough time to solve their problems compared to girls” [female teacher]
- “Boys are considered to be with a high reasoning capacity” [male teacher]
- “Because boys show more capacity to do different activities than girls” [male teacher]
- “Girls lack the stamina to stick to their goals” [male teacher]
- “Girls less value education” [male teacher]

From their answers, it seems that some teachers believed that other teachers treated boys as intellectually superior, while some teachers themselves believed that boys were, in fact, intellectually superior.

In the questionnaire completed by 15 primary school teachers (eight female, seven male)\(^71\), all 15 teachers indicated that they believed that teachers treated girls and boy as intellectual equals. However, in the same questionnaire, two teachers (one female, one male) stated that they believed girls were less intelligent than boys. Of the 11 teachers (two

\(^{71}\) Appendix A4: A4-KVPT (July 2005)
female, nine male) at KSS\textsuperscript{72} who completed a similar questionnaire, two teachers (both male) stated that they thought girls were less intelligent than boys. In another questionnaire completed by 15 teachers and staff (three female, 12 male) at KSS\textsuperscript{73}, only eight teachers (two female, six male) believed that teachers treated girls and boys as intellectual equals.

Many girls felt that teachers did not treat girls as if they were as intelligent as boys.

\textit{Shelley: Why do you think that teachers think that girls are not as ambitious as boys?}

\textit{Penina: They think that girls are not ambitious because girls are not strong - yet we are strong enough.}

\textit{Shelley: What do you mean ‘strong’?}

\textit{Penina: Energetic.}

\textit{Shelley: Ok, so they think that girls can’t go to university; they don’t have the energy, the willpower to go to university?}

\textit{Penina: Yes, and the thinking capacity.}

\textit{Shelley: Really, they think that girls aren’t as smart as boys?}

\textit{Penina: Yes, but we have the same thinking capacity.}

[Excerpt from interview with Penina, August 2005]

In an interview with another girl, Caroline, she expressed her feeling that teachers did not believe that girls were as capable as boys, and even though there may not have been obvious discrimination, there was a half-heartedness with which the teachers worked with the girls:

\textsuperscript{72} Appendix A4: A4-KSST2 (June 2005)
\textsuperscript{73} Appendix A4: A4-KSST1 (November 2004)
Caroline: It’s always that they think boys have higher thinking capacities than girls. Whereby, they [think that] educate girls [but then] they end up with the man and they become pregnant.

Shelley: So they spend more time helping the boys become educated.

Caroline: …they also spend the time helping girls, but they help them while having that thinking in their minds.

[Excerpt from interview with Caroline, August 2005]

7.3.2 Teachers’ Perceptions of Girls’ Leadership Abilities

Leadership reflects the extent to which individuals actively, assertively and confidently engage in various contexts. As such, leadership roles are extremely important indicators of the degree to which students participate and have their voices heard in the school environment. In Uganda, studies have shown that boys are considered to be the natural leaders, and girls are, therefore, discouraged and excluded from many leadership positions (Mirembe & Davies, 2001). Mirembe and Davies’ (2001) study shows a dearth of girl leaders within the secondary school environment; their findings indicate that girls lack confidence and are reticent to accept leadership positions, that girls and women who are in leadership positions are “continuously undermined” (p. 405), and that “[l]eadership was defined in male terms and stereotyped both for staff and pupils” (pp. 405-6).

In an attempt to determine the extent to which Mirembe and Davies’ (2001) findings might have been true in Kyato Village, questionnaires were given to both secondary and primary school teachers asking if they believed that teachers treated girls and boys as equals in leadership. Of the 30 teachers (11 female, 19 male) who responded to

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74 Appendix A4: A4-KSST2 and A4-KVPT
this questionnaire, only 17 replied in the affirmative; the remaining 13 all indicated that boys were treated as superior in terms of leadership for reasons including the following:

- “Boys...have qualities of a good leader” [female teacher]
- “Girls do not show how courageous they are [and] boys have high capacities in leadership skills” [male teacher]
- “Girls always shy away [from] leadership roles” [male teacher]

There was a general tendency to accept “lack of leadership ability” as a cultural condition or natural disposition rather than explore underlying causes and seek to develop those capacities in girls, as well as cultivate acceptance and encouragement of girls’ leadership abilities in the school as well as in the community at large.

*Shelley:* Most teachers here think that girls show fewer leadership skills than boys.

*Jason:* That is true....And in most cases we find these girls are inferior as far as leadership is concerned - they feel they can’t lead the boys. So at the end, you find that the boys take most of the posts.

*Shelley:* Ok, so the girls actually feel that they can’t lead the boys.

*Jason:* Yeah, they can’t lead them, yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Jason, August 2005]

Even if girls occupy leadership positions, they are often undermined by boys and are not able to execute their responsibilities effectively, largely because leadership has been traditionally defined as a male role. Some measures had been taken at KSS to develop girls’ leadership skills, such as having head girls as well as head boys of the classes, and girl and well as boy prefects, but this was a recent development and had met with limited success.
I think there’s need to kind of reassure [girls] of the potentials they have to manage society, to develop society, to plan and organize developmental things in society because maybe they have a problem that…they think they are the weaker sex, and because of that, they think that they can’t be leaders or initiators of many of the projects or things that will develop society, which is not true…We have been trying to elect prefects – just this week, but none of the girls will give an application for being the head girls… they shy away from responsibilities- well we have to help them realize that they have the potential to be leaders, and so we – actually we give the responsibilities, so we help them to make sure that they fulfill these responsibilities.

[Excerpt from interview with Headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

Out of 15 teachers and staff (three female, 12 male) at KSS who completed the questionnaire (November 2004)\textsuperscript{75}, four (all male) believed that leadership was a male quality, and five (one female, four male) believed that girls were not encouraged or supported in leadership roles. Girls may have ostensibly occupied leadership positions, but they were not given the same degree of respect or power as boys in such positions.

Terrance: You find that there are some roles which these girls have to play but these roles are taken up by the boys. The girls are not given that opportunity to lead.

Shelley: So even if they are called the head girl, they aren’t given as much power as the head boy.

Terrance: Yes. [nodding]

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Terrance, August 2005]

\textsuperscript{75} Appendix A4: A4-KSST1
When confronted with the opinions of the teachers (i.e., that teachers did not believe girls had the same leadership abilities as boys), the girls saw the teachers’ attitudes as a large part of the problem.

*Shelley:* Many teachers think that girls don’t have the same leadership abilities as boys.

*Tracy:* Yeah, they don’t want us to be equal to boys.

*Shelley:* Why?

*Tracy:* Some teachers have a saying that we girls are created from men’s ribs; therefore we shouldn’t be equal to them.

*Shelley:* Women or men teachers?

*Tracy:* Men teachers...They don’t want us to be equal to boys.

[Excerpt from interview with Tracy, August 2005]

Others, like Juliet, Penina and Shakila believed that teachers simply did not acknowledge girls’ abilities and did not give them credit for what they did.

*Shelley:* I gave the teachers a questionnaire and many teachers think that girls don’t have the same leadership abilities as boys - Do you think this is true?

*Juliet:* No, it is not.

*Shelley:* So why do you think teachers think this?

*Juliet:* Because some teachers have a thinking that girls, girls can’t do anything.

[Excerpt from interview with Juliet, August 2005]

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*Shelley:* Why do you think the teachers think the girls don’t have the same leadership abilities?

*Penina:* They think that boys are more energetic.
Shelley:  Ok, so that boys can do more than girls?

Penina: Yes

Shelley: Do you believe that?

Penina: No.

[Excerpt from interview with Penina, August 2005]

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Shelley: Many teachers think that girls cannot be leaders like boys. Do you think that is true?

Shakila: It’s not true.

Shelley: So why do teachers think this?

Shakila: They think that girls have the less capacities. But we as girls we can manage to govern the same if we get the [position]

[Excerpt from interview with Shakila, August 2005]

One of the girls, Ireen, elaborated more, exposing underlying systemic sociocultural/economic (male) concerns around women and leadership to which many teachers, too, seemed to succumb.

Shelley: Many teachers think that girls can’t be leaders like boys...Do you think this is true?

Ireen: Not true.

Shelley: Ok, so you think girls can be leaders just like boys?

Ireen: Yes.

Shelley: So why do you think that teachers think that this is true?

Ireen: Because they know that - [it] can bring misunderstanding in the community when [a] girl be a leader.
Shelley: ...but why is it a misunderstanding [a problem] when a woman is a leader – why do they quarrel, why do they fight? What is the problem?

Ireen: The problem – money, [be]cause a woman can have more money than men, so it can lead to misunderstanding in the community or your family and our schools – some women, they [want] a divorce.

Shelley: So the men don’t like women being able to make money?

Ireen: Yeah, the men, they want to be higher than girls.

Shelley: And by making money, that’s one way they can be higher?

Ireen: Yeah.

Shelley: So if women become leaders and they start making money, then that’s a problem for men – because they don’t like that?

Ireen: Yeah.

Shelley: Because it takes away their power?

Ireen: Yeah.

Shelley: And gives women power - ?

Ireen: Yeah.

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August 2005]

It appeared that Ireen (and some of the other girls) believed that the teachers upheld the societal norm of the inferior status of girls and women, and had no interest in working towards gender equality in the school environment.

One measure, however, that seemed to be promising, as far as creating a greater and more enduring success with respect to cultivating and supporting leadership qualities in female students at KSS, was the library scholarship programme\. When this programme

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76 The library scholarship programme provided one girl and one boy enrolled at KSS the opportunity to have school and boarding fees covered for one school year, continuing until their completion of S4 at KSS, in exchange for apprenticing as librarians and assuming librarianship duties. The school fees are paid by an
was initiated, Mr. Masimbe, one of the founders of the library, insisted that gender balance be an important criterion in selecting scholars, and that in cases where a girl and a boy were equally well qualified, the girl should be given preference. Students who receive a library scholarship have their school and boarding fees paid for in exchange for librarianship duties. Several girls have received these scholarships, and have assumed associated leadership roles within the library/school community.

### 7.3.3 Teachers’ Perceptions of Girls’ Ambition

This study found that many teachers did not believe girls to be as ambitious, or as “serious”, about education and future careers as boys. Of the 15 (three female and 12 male) teachers and staff at KSS who completed the questionnaire, eight teachers (one female and seven males), just over half, believed that girls were less ambitious than boys. Their reasons included:

- “Girls are shyer, less intelligent, and fear problems” (female teacher)
- “Most girls are shy/fearful, hence less determined to achieve their goal” (male teacher)
- “Because the environment in which girls live does not allow them to be ambitious” (male teacher)
- “Their ambitions are always chang[ing] and interfered with especially by problems” (male teacher)
- “Because they have little courage in participating in ongoing activities” (male teacher)

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external donor, and KSS provides free boarding for the scholars. The scholarship programme began in 2004, with two library scholars, and now, in July 2007, there are seven. The students are selected by a committee which has a thorough list of criteria (e.g., need, academic standing, civic contributions, school attendance, etc.) that guides the decision-making process.

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77 Appendix A4: A4-KSST1 (November 2004)
• “Girls are easily driven by cheap things ending up losing their ambition” (male teacher)

• “Because of the beliefs they have about themselves that they are less able than boys” (male teacher)

When the girls were presented with the findings of the questionnaire that indicated that many teachers believed girls to be less ambitious than boys, again the girls did not seem at all surprised. They offered explanations as to why teachers held these beliefs. Ireen believed that teachers thought that girls should be subordinate to boys and so were not as deserving of an education as boys.

Shelley: Many teachers think that girls are not as ambitious as girls – do you think this is true?

Ireen: No.

Shelley: So you think girls are ambitious just like boys?

Ireen: Yes.

Shelley: Ok, so why do you think teachers think this – why do teachers think that girls are not as ambitious as boys?

Ireen: Because they are knowing that we as girls – we are supposed to be under boys.

Shelley: So then teachers think that boys are the ones who need to get the education.

Ireen: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August 2005]

This notion that cultural practices and beliefs informed many teachers’ beliefs about the depth of girls’ ambition was echoed by the female librarian, Doris.
Shelley: Most teachers and others who have completed the questionnaires – they think that girls are less ambitious than boys – do you think that’s true?

Doris: Me, I don’t think it is true.

Shelley: Why do you think the teachers think that?

Doris: Some of the teachers think – take it like that just because of the traditional ways.

[Excerpt from interview with Librarian Doris, August 2005]

Some teachers believed that girls were simply not as motivated as boys and were not, therefore, as serious about their education.

Terrance: Seeing it [as] we have, from the behaviour of the girls, they lack interest, they don’t take up where they’re supposed to take up, they neglect some of the issues...This is why most of the teachers perceive that these girls are less ambitious. From the interaction and behaviour, they see that boys are more capable. When you give them [the girls] some kind of tests, you feel - you give them work to go and discuss, the girls really feel relaxed.

Shelley: Ok, so you don’t think they work as hard as boys.

Terrance: Yes [agreement]

Shelley: Ok, so you think the boys are more serious about pursuing their goals?

Terrance: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Terrance, August 2005]

Others, including Mr. Masinde, believed that girls were, in general, equally as ambitious as boys, but that cultural practices and beliefs inhibited girls from outwardly displaying their ambition, leading people to believe that they were not ambitious:

In their [girls’] thinking again, they always think that after all we are under men, so...they won’t always show their ambition. They always be shy to say – this is
what I want - I should lead the way here. So this keeps them below – it is the kind of thing that is inborn, maybe it is cultural, because they are seeing even their mothers, they are always shying away. So, also in the cultural training, the girls are trained always to – not to come up very much.

[Excerpt from interview with KSS Headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

However, several girls and even a few teachers who believed that girls often worked harder than boys were, in fact, highly ambitious. For example, in an interview, Juliet said: “Girls are more serious than boys”. One of the teachers, Stephen, thought girls were generally underestimated in terms of their abilities.

Shelley: Why do you think [teachers believe that girls are less ambitious than boys]?

Stephen: Because of the culture – parents indoctrinate to these people saying that girls should not go to school. [They] must be married and it is only the boy who should go to school. So girls develop that tendency in going to school, not liking studying, studying. And in the end they become less ambitious, I think.

Shelley: Because interestingly, the girls I have been working with, the S4 girls - they have all told me that they want to go to at least S6 and then go to college or university. They would like to become doctors, lawyers, teachers. To me, that’s being ambitious. [But] the teachers in the questionnaires said they don’t think the girls are ambitious.

Stephen: For some of the teachers they are having their views – but they [girls] have managed to pass my subject in mathematics which is a bit tricky but not difficult, I think, if they have tried to follow the principles of it and the principles of physics
Shelley:  Ok, so you think they are ambitious and they work hard.

Stephen:  I do.

Shelley:  Do you think they work as hard as boys do?

Stephen:  Ok, they can even work harder than the boys. Because if a girl decides to work, she can work.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Stephen, August 2005]

On the other hand, some of the girls believed that many of the male teachers belittled their academic efforts and ambitions.

Shelley:  Many teachers don’t think that girls are serious about getting a job like becoming a doctor or a head teacher, they think that girls aren’t serious about that, girls are not ambitious – what do you think?

Jenenie:  I don’t think that they are not serious. They are serious but the men minimize them.

Shelley:  Do the teachers minimize the girl students?

Jenenie:  Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Jenenie, August 2005]

Doreen believed that the teachers considered girls to be less academically capable than boys, and therefore did not believe girls to be as ambitious as boys. Doreen herself, however, believed girls to be more ambitious than boys.

Shelley:  Do you think boys and girls are the same with [regards to ambition] or do you think boys are more ambitious than girls or girls are more ambitious than boys?

Doreen:  Girls are more ambitious.

Shelley:  Really?

Doreen:  Yes.
Shelley: Ok, but teachers don’t think so – why do teachers not think so?

Doreen: Some teachers think that the girls can’t do well in class.

Shelley: So they think they’re not smart like boys?

Doreen: Yes.

Shelley: So you think girls are more ambitious than boys – why do you think that?

Doreen: For us, we are working harder than boys.

Shelley: At your schoolwork?

Doreen: Yes.

Shelley: Your studies -

Doreen: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Doreen, August 2005]

Inevitably, real life circumstances and dominant cultural practices also have a large influence on girls’ ambitions. Most girls in poor, rural communities such as this will probably remain financially dependent on husbands or other family members. As few families can afford to support girls through secondary level education, as well as vocational or post-secondary training, or tertiary level education, girls’ employment opportunities can be extremely limited. Attempts to reconcile probable future scenarios of marriage, financial dependency, or subordination to husbands with educational and career aspirations seemed to be a source of internal conflict for the girls. This internal conflict had an affect on some girls’ degree of ambition, as discussed below by Gelly.

Shelley: A lot of teachers think that girls are not as ambitious as boys. Do you think this is true?

Gelly: Yes.

Shelley: You do?
Gelly: Because ...some girls think that even if I am going to get an education, I will get married. But the men say that if they do not get enough education, they will end up suffering because they are not the same as women. Women can get married, but men will be lacking jobs...

Shelley: Are you ambitious?
Gelly: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Gelly, August 2005]

Girls also acknowledged that early/mistimed pregnancies and sexual behaviour impacted teachers’ beliefs about their levels of ambition. In an interview (August, 2005), Tracy said: “Some girls study to senior; after senior they get pregnant, that is why they say we are not as ambitious, like boys.” Juliet, too, stated that teachers had these negative perceptions about girls’ level of ambition based on their sexual behaviour, but then she pointed out that teachers themselves had sexual relations with their girl students.

Shelley: Why do you think that teachers think that you are not as ambitious as boys?
Juliet: They might think that because many girls are now engaging in other activities like playing sex, like prostitute, instead of enjoying school, that’s why they say that.

Shelley: So then the teachers look at some girls that are not serious and they say that all girls are not serious.
Juliet: Even teachers they beg love from the girls and when they are with them— they say that girls are not serious.

Shelley: So that is a problem then, teachers having sex with girls.
Juliet: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Juliet, August 2005]
7.4 Physical and Sexual Abuse in the School Setting

At one point during the class, I was sure that I could hear a student being hit by a teacher in the next class – a loud thwack, then some crying, another thwack, more crying...some laughing by the other students in the class, some knowing smirks from students in my class...I heard the teacher in the next class say something like “I don’t want to punish you too hard, but...”

[Journal reflections, Sept. 14, 2004]

The fact that abuse, both physical and sexual, is not explicitly prioritized, or even specifically identified in the NSGE, is surprising. Abuse and exploitation are very serious and prevalent problems for all students, but particularly for girls. Sadly and ironically, the one environment in which adolescent girls should be receiving support and encouragement to develop autonomy, self-confidence, self-assertiveness and strength in negotiating equality is one of the environments in which they are, arguably, most in danger of having their autonomy undermined and their rights violated.

7.4.1 Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment was a common, everyday practice in both the secondary and primary schools in Kyato Village. The teacher who did not physically punish his or her students was the exception. Sometimes, when I was at home and I could hear that a child was being beaten particularly violently, and his/her wails or screams penetrated the air for several minutes, I would run over to the primary school and plead that the child be left alone. Teachers, and even the students, rolled their eyes and laughed at me. I must have appeared ridiculous to them, and I did often feel absurd. But, I could see the look of profound relief on the face of the child, or
group of children, cowering against the wall away from the teacher and his stick. (I mostly saw male teachers beat students, but occasionally I also saw a female teacher hit a student with a stick.)

[Excerpt from “Reflection” journal, September, 2005]

I am old enough to remember when it was perfectly acceptable in Canadian schools for the principal of the school to “strap” a child, or for a teacher to “rap knuckles” with a ruler, or give a few slaps to the head, and when it was common practice for parents to strap, hit, “paddle”, slap or smack their children as a disciplinary measure. So, corporal punishment was not exactly new or shocking or surprising to me, especially as I was aware before I went to Uganda that it was common: “[c]orporal punishment, although illegal, is widely used” (UNICEF, 2003, p. 1 ). Nonetheless, I found myself reacting very strongly against the practice of inflicting pain as a disciplinary measure for many reasons. I think it is an ineffectual form of punishment, and worse, for often not very sound reasons, it can be a traumatic and damaging assault on, in this case, children. There is the potential, and actualized, use of excessive force that causes psychological harm and physical injury, and I believe that violence begets violence; children learn that violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict or demanding acquiescence. In the school environment, corporal punishment often serves to create an irreconcilable rift between students and teachers, and because I observed that the perpetrators of corporal punishment were most often male in the context of Kyato Village and other schools I visited in the Masaka District, I think power, violence, and gender were closely associated.

On the other hand, almost every person, except the young, female biology teacher, with whom I discussed the topic of corporal punishment, believed that it was an acceptable disciplinary measure, and that it reflected a wider cultural practice. This came across in an interview with Mr. Masinde.
Shelley: Beating children is not acceptable in terms of UNICEF, in terms of the Government of Uganda, in terms of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and yet it happens everywhere. I see it every day – the beating of children. And I see it almost every day...

Masinde: I think every day in schools. What do you think about from the cultural background in families, a parent always used a rod to train. This also went on even when we go to formal education in the schools. If you don’t use the stick sometimes, you don’t get anything good out of these children. This punishment was traditional, and now it...is still recommended by the parents. Much as Uganda Child rights is against it – the parents are for it. For example, when were in the [parent-teacher] meeting the last time – then one parent said “Why don’t you use a stick – don’t you have sticks – why do you tell us that they did this and that.” You do not get good points from the parents if you don’t use a stick...In training, there is that punishment, that corporal punishment and all of us have received it, and therefore, it should always be there. And again, of course it is not very effective anyway – that whether you use corporal punishment or whether you use a stick you get what you want...because after some time, even the children get used to it, and it doesn’t change anything.

[Excerpt from interview with Headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

Corporal punishment was used as a means to discipline students for unacceptable (i.e., insubordinate or non-submitive) social/classroom behaviour:

Shelley: So you agree then about caning students – you think that’s a good practice?

Stephen: It’s good.
Shelley: Why?

Stephen: Because they [students] are big headed – that’s my thinking – big headed.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Stephen, August 2005]

Sometimes teachers said that they used corporal punishment in order to “help” their students perform better.

Shelley: Do you agree with the practice of hitting or caning students?

Jason: To a certain extent, I do because...when you look at the environment and conditions in Uganda or in Africa, you find that they are used to that. If you don’t cane, the student can’t improve. But when you threaten her or him with a cane – she will understand after getting that pain.

[Excerpt from interview with teacher Jason, August 2005]

Corporal punishment was also used to berate students for poor exam results or unfinished homework. When I discussed my concern about corporal punishment with Dan, he laughed and told me about one of his teachers who flogged everyone who did not pass or live up to expectations on exams. Dan said that he and many of his classmates were beaten, and in the end, they did well in their exams and were grateful to the teacher; Dan claimed this was the best teacher he had ever had. Others, even some of the students, echoed this argument and sentiment; many people reflected fondly on teachers who had beaten them because they said it had made them “more serious” about their studies.

During an interview, James, one of the teachers at KSS, made some interesting comments about his perception of the connection between corporal punishment, democracy, and the awareness of one’s rights.

Shelley: The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child – Uganda signed that in 1990- claims that beating children is a violation of their rights, and that beating children of anyone is illegal...[the Government of] Uganda is
even saying that children should not be beaten. But it is sort of common practice in schools in Uganda. Do you agree with the practice of hitting or caning students?

James: To a certain extent I do because there are some students you find that they have done something, and when you look at the environment and conditions in Uganda or in Africa, you find that they are used to that. If you don’t cane then the student can’t improve, but when you threaten her or him with a cane – you can have two sticks or one – then I guess she will understand after getting that pain...Caning to a certain extent can work.

Shelley: Do you think there is any other way though, instead of caning, that problems could be dealt with?

James: There are two methods, one is counseling to tell him or her what to do. Then again when that method fails, then it is better to use some other method, which is caning.

Shelley: In Canada, when I was going to primary school, even maybe secondary school, the head teacher was allowed to strap the children. But now for about the last 10 or 15 years, teachers cannot touch children in school. They will lose their job and be fired if they hit kids. So it has been interesting because there has been quite a change - because it started out that teachers were allowed to hit students, but now they are not, and teachers do face discipline problems for sure in the Canadian schools. It’s not like there are none – there are lots of discipline problems, but they have to try and deal with it through a counseling perspective which isn’t always successful, but which mostly works. Do you think if there were programmes set up in
Uganda that were more like sensitizing parent and teachers and students to counseling that it might be more successful?

James: Before I go to that, what I first try to explain. When you look at that – those certain countries, African countries, when you compare that, you find that the democracy for the American countries - they know what democracy is and when it comes to African countries, we are just still in the process of democracy, whereby some of them - if that student, they know they are not supposed to be caned - if you are not supposed to be caned, that’s your democracy, your freedom. Again, you are not allowed to do what to behave - so that is why I am saying that. That democracy - in African countries - it is not the same. We are just adopting - we think that abusing somebody is our right, and yet when you define that down to democracy, you need to restrict yourself, and sometimes you can and you give, you let somebody be with his or her democracy.

[Excerpt from interview with teacher James, August 2005]

On the one hand, I understood the arguments for corporal punishment, but on the other hand, I abhor the notion of anyone inflicting pain on anyone else, particularly adults inflicting pain on children. There was, however, a wide spectrum of belief in the frequency, severity, and reasons for its use, and I saw, or heard, corporal punishment ranging everywhere from a few light slaps with a twig, and teacher and students all laughing in the process, to teachers thwacking children so brutally I could hear the impact from quite far away. Some teachers expressed a great deal of ambivalence about corporal punishment.

Shelley: Do you agree that beating students is a good way of disciplining them?

Harold: When you beat a student at school, or even at home, first of all, you minimize that boy or girl. Secondly, you don’t give that girl or boy our
freedom. And even the girl or the boy can start hating education. If teacher are beating and even at home, and the parents are also beating you – so that one is wrong, I don’t support it. On my side, I hate it.

Shelley: You don’t hit, you don’t beat students?

Harold: Of course, let me give you my point...I hate it and I don’t like it to cane a student. As I said that you only cane a student, he has to start hating education. And he has to lose that education and says I can go home. Because I have seen us lose many students who decide to go, leave the education, who drop out of education because at school they are beating her. She don’t want to go to school; she say I will go do other activities, because at school teacher are beating us. Even - can see those kids in Kampala. Those street kids are there because there was also parents...caning them at home. But here also another problem we have here in Uganda. First of all, we started the system of caning students. It was here, we found it here with our elders - that if somebody misbehave, you have to cane that student.

Shelley: Probably most parents and teachers did hit [children and] students in Canada and the United States. It is only recently, maybe the last 15 years, that it has become illegal, so it is not that different. So my question is really do you think that you can discipline students in other ways, other better ways, rather than caning them?

Harold: Yeah, yeah, yeah– that system, even the government and the teachers, they are also working to get the methods, how can treat the student without caning them. First of all, the government is nowadays trying to start advising the students, counseling them [to have] morals that can help them
understand each and everything...it can work here in Uganda. In previous years, teachers and the government were serious about caning students; now they have decided to stop that habit, caning the students. They are thinking that oh, we can also sympathizing the student and he can understand your views, other than caning the student. So - can start that point of sympathizing only, and if you misbehave, you are going to lose your education; if you do that, you are going to work. So, I think it can be easier – we are going to start it.

Shelley: So do you think it is a good thing?

Harold: I think it is a good method – Because for we teachers – we cane students, become habit...you can cane a student and sometimes [they] are crying; you don’t like it, but you have to do it because it is the way - most high educators...they are liking to start sympathizing the students - getting to advise her...try to sympathize her, try to counseling her, encourage her. I think it will work. It’s better than caning students.

Shelley: So, do you think that teachers need support to learn how to talk to children, to learn how to counsel. Do you think teachers need that kind of support?

Harold: Yeah, the teachers need that kind of support. I don’t think that a teacher who canes a student and becomes happy -

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Harold, August 2005]

Despite the prevalence of corporal punishment and its general acceptance by most people in the community, not all children, however, were physically punished by their parents.

[Teachers] punish me at school. My parents doesn’t use that habit of punishing me at all but at the school there are many punishments [like] fetching, digging, [some
that] are very dangerous to me, and also hitting me [and] slapping. I can’t agree with [those] who [hit] with sticks...

[Excerpt from Yudaya’s notebook, October 2004]

Punishment (corporal and otherwise) often had a negative effect on the students’ academic pursuits, and could cause them deep anxiety. Gelly wrote about being deprived of attending classes for an entire week for having annoyed the teacher one day in class.

*When I was in S3, Mr. X told us [to] keep quiet but...I decided to continue shouting in the class....he decided to punish me...I [spent] the whole week by not attending classes but just digging, and [I became] worry and I keep quiet...*  

[Excerpt from Gelly’s notebook, October 2004]

All students, girls and boys, were susceptible to corporal punishment, but physical punishment for older girls (i.e., adolescent girls in secondary school) by male teachers who were often not much older than the girls themselves, arguably signified a more sinister and complex message than just a teacher punishing a student. It was often representative of the power dynamics between male authority and expectations of female submissiveness. There was also a strong, sexist dimension to this.

an environment which tolerates one illegal type of violence, e.g. corporal punishment, is also likely to be permissive of other forms of violence, e.g. sexual abuse...Indeed the two are linked—a girl who grants sexual favours to a teacher will expect to avoid being beaten, whereas a girl who has turned a teacher down might risk being singled out for beating or other forms of victimisation. Where bullying, corporal punishment and sexual abuse are all more or less tolerated by school authorities, this means that their practice is implicitly sanctioned, even approved of. It is against this background of violence that young people are learning about and adopting what they see as conventional male and female behaviour. (Leach, 2003,
In interviews, I asked several teachers if they thought that beating adolescent girls in school conditioned the girls, to some degree, to learn to accept physical abuse, such as domestic violence involving future husbands. None of those interviewed believed there was any link between the two.

*Shelley:* *Ok, I guess one of the things is if you look at students that are over 16*\text{\textsuperscript{78}} *years old, legally these are adults right, they become an adult at 16, so in a sense, when girls are like 17 years old and they are still being caned...they are no longer children – you are actually caning a woman, a young woman. That’s a bit different – I mean don’t you think this actually leads to problems when they get married and that they might expect to be hit by their husbands.*

*Stephen:* *No, you see we are created with our good brains – if you cane at school doesn’t mean you cane at home...If you have been caned at school, you know the reason as to why you have been caned. You can’t [say] you caned your wife because you were caned when you were still schooling...*  

*Shelley:* *So you don’t think that people get used to being caned – they get used to being punished for something.*

*Stephen:* *No.*

[Excerpt from interview with teacher Stephen, August 2005]

However, evidence from data collected from the girls indicates that there is a definite connection between physical punishment and gendered relationships. This will be discussed at length below.

\textsuperscript{78} The legal age of adulthood in Uganda is 18, not 16. This was my error.
7.4.2 Sexual Exploitation/Abuse in the School Environment

Sexual harassment, abuse, and assault have been identified as a serious problem by numerous sources (Edinburgh Global Partnerships, n.d.; Lacey, 2003; Luke, 2003; Ndyanabangi, B. & Kipp, W., 2001; Nyanzi et al, 2001; Okee-Obong, 2000; Scheier, 2006; Twa-Twa, 1997), including the GOU (GOU, 1992). Nevertheless, it is not sufficiently seriously dealt with in the school environment. Mirembe and Davies (2001) report that cases of sexual abuse directed at girls by the boy students were dismissed by the headteacher and governing board as “pupils having fun”, “playing” and “boys and girls getting used to each other” (Mirembe & Davies, 2001, p. 409). Other research and reports corroborate the assertion that sexual harassment of girls by both male students and teachers is commonplace and “unchallenged by staff” (Mirembe, 2004, p. 2). Sperandio (2000) reports similar findings and adds: “[t]he issue of sexual harassment of girl students by male teachers is constantly in the newspapers in Uganda” (Sperandio, 2000, p. 63). A study conducted by Nyanzi et al (2001) provides some disturbing findings:

In the questionnaire, 54% of the students mentioned teachers among the three most common types of sugar daddy… the adolescents claimed that teachers seduced, intimidated and sometimes forced students to have sex with them. They said that teachers used ploys ranging form sweet words of praise, the promise of marriage and a secure future and undeserved high marks to threats of manual labour and corporal punishment. (p. 90).

This study affirms that sexual abuse, harassment, violence, and exploitation in the school environment are indeed a serious problem. Sexual abuse has a powerful impact on girls’ ability to succeed in education. The girls in this study discussed the problem of teachers forcing (or coercing) girls to have sex with them.
Penina: We young girls, we are forced to have sex with other mens – like the teachers, like the…other mens in the villages -

Shelley: So – do you know girls that have had to have sex with teachers?

All girls: Yes.

Shakila: Even in our school…

[Excerpt from A3ST-FGD(G1), January, 2005]

In a questionnaire completed by 13 girls\(^{79}\), all 13 of the girls stated that they knew of girls who had had sex with their teachers. Out of the 12 girls who completed a follow-up questionnaire\(^{80}\), three said that they had had sex with secondary school teachers, two for “money” and “clothes” and one “out of fear”. Three girls, two of whom had sex with teachers, stated that they were “afraid to refuse a request for sex” from teachers because they feared violent repercussions as a result of their refusal. In questionnaires administered to teachers at both the secondary school\(^{81}\) and two primary schools\(^{82}\) in Kyato village, of the 30 teachers who responded, 17 indicated that they knew of teachers who had had sexual relationships with their students, and 20 out of 30 teachers believed this to be a general problem in Uganda.

In some cases, however, the situational circumstances of female student/male teacher interactions are extremely nuanced and complex. Often the male teachers are not much older than the girls; the teachers are posted (by the central education administrative body) to rural areas far away from their home environments where they lack social networks and activities. Sometimes male teachers live in very close proximity to girls who board at the school. In addition, because teachers earn salaries, they are in possession of money, which is often desperately needed for school fees or supplies by the girls.

\(^{79}\) Appendix A4: A4-GOSH1 (May 2005)
\(^{80}\) Appendix A4: A4-GOSH2 (September 2006)
\(^{81}\) Appendix A4: A4-KSST1 (November 2004)
\(^{82}\) Appendix A4: A4-KVPT (July 2005)
Consensual sexual and romantic relationships do result from these circumstances. For example, in the questionnaire (completed by 12 girls)\textsuperscript{83} in September 2006, two girls stated that they had had sex with a teacher for money and clothes. Other respondents stated that girls had had sex with teachers in order to get better exam marks, help with their studies, and for gifts, money, and even love.

Despite the “consensual” nature of these relationships, they are inevitably premised on the power differential that exists between girls and men, students and teachers, and often have tragic results (i.e., pregnancy, HIV/AIDS) for the girls. One particularly disturbing article in the Ugandan women’s journal, \textit{Arise}, relates how 20 girls in one school had been impregnated by their male teachers (Nagadya, 1999). Some male teachers even feel that they are “entitled” to have sex with their female students. During an information interview conducted by Bonny Norton, Harriet Mutonyi and me\textsuperscript{84}, a director of a national adolescent sexual health programme stated that her organization had received many letters from male teachers who stated that they believed they had a right to have sexual relations with their female students because their salaries were so low, or because they had been posted to a rural area in which they did not want to live; in effect, these teachers viewed sex with their female students as a “perk” of their jobs.

In addition to sexual abuse/misconduct by teachers, girls suffer sexual abuse and harassment from boys their own age. Half of the girls (six out of 12) who completed the September 2006 questionnaire\textsuperscript{85} stated that they had been “afraid to refuse a request for sex” from a boy their own age. This points to serious gender imbalances and abuses between adolescent boys and girls. Although the question did not specify whether they had been afraid to refuse a request for sex from a boy their own age in the school environment,

\textsuperscript{83} Appendix A4: A4-GOSH2
\textsuperscript{84} Appendix A1: A1-IDS (October, 2004)
\textsuperscript{85} Appendix A4: A4-GOSH2
it must be noted that all but one of the girls were living in a mixed-sex boarding school environment where they spent almost all of their time, except for holidays. It seems that these inequalities are exacerbated within the confined space of the school, particularly at boarding schools where boys and girls are living in very close quarters and cannot be supervised effectively at all times. Many girls in this study stated that they would prefer attending a girls-only school as they felt that mixed-sex schools (especially mixed-sex boarding schools at the post-primary level) were problematic. The girls often felt harassed by the boys and pressured for sex, and consequently ran the risk of becoming pregnant; this could lead to the end of their schooling or contracting HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases which could have life-long consequences, or even result in death.

*Shelley:* If there was something you could tell the government about girls’ education, what would you tell them?

*Sofia:* I can tell them, they should set up many schools for girls only.

*Shelley:* Why?

*Sofia:* Because when the schools are mixed, girls are mistreated.

*Shelley:* Who mistreats the girls?

*Sofia:* Boys.

*Shelley:* Ok, what do they do – what do you mean?

*Sofia:* Like loving them… and they end up making them pregnant.

*Shelley:* Is that a problem at school?

*Sofia:* Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Sofia, August 2005]

The girls seemed to feel that attending a girls-only school would reduce their problems and help them get a better education.
Shelley: What would you like to tell [the government] about the situation, or the problems about girls and education? How could it help?

Shakila: For me I could tell them to build many schools for girls, in order for them to get an education.

Shelley: Do you mean for girls only?

Shakila: If we construct for girls only, it will be better.

Shelley: Would you like to go to a girls’ only school?

Shakila: Yes.

Shelley: Why?

Shakila: Because, if I have a problem, and I live with girls, they can help me solve that problem, but if I live with boys, they will not solve problems for girls, that is why.

Shelley: Do you think boys cause problems for girls?

Shakila: Yes.

Shelley: So you think that there would be not so many problems if it was a girls-only school.

Shakila: Yes

[Excerpt from interview with Shakila, August 2005]

Many of the points that the girls raised are closely connected to those made by adolescent girls in Doggett’s study (2005) of an all girls’ school in India. For example, a Year 12 girl in the Loreta Day School in India stated: “Girls have their own problems and their own views of life so it is better and easier to share these when in an all girls’ school.” In fact, Doggett’s study addresses many of the concerns about mixed secondary schooling voiced by the girls in this study. Doggett acknowledges that girls’-only schooling is a “safer” place, in terms of girls not being subject to the same kinds of sexual harassment and
abuse that they are in mixed-sex schools, and that a girls’-only educational environment is a space that is often much more conducive, supportive, and encouraging for girls to reflect on, question and critique various socioeconomic, cultural, and political norms and practices that are gender discriminatory. On the other hand, Doggett raises the point that some female students do not feel ready to enter the larger, male-dominated world once they leave the school; one girl in Year 11 expressed her concern that educational with only girls “‘sometimes leads to fear and hesitation for some of the girls to communicate with the masculine world in their coming days’” (Doggett, 2005, p. 240).

On the whole, however, Doggett (2005) concludes that girls’ only schools provide an empowering and supportive educational environment that addresses the particular needs of girls:

The LDS education is designed to provide its female students with the opportunities and abilities to challenge gendered identities that limit and constrain the ways in which girls can respond to their education – an education that Sr. Cyril describes as a true education: liberating girls from the fear which prevents them achieving their full potential spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally (Sr. Cyril in Green 1996). Loreta Sealdah provides, therefore, an example of a valuable approach to education which offers girls from all backgrounds in urban India the opportunity to achieve greater equality as women. (p. 243)

Doggett’s findings may very well be of importance to girls’ education in Uganda (and many other similar contexts).

7.5 **Absence of Counselors**

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Harold, one of the KSS teachers, on the topic of school counselors.
You need to teach to put in more effort, counseling and sensitizing the girls and the boys about education. What is education, why do you need to go to school? What is very important – we are a school – we need to put in more effort, to sensitize them. Tell them why really you need to be at school. So you need to put much effort as possible into those points. For example you can find here a girl or a boy who is in Senior 4, who is in Senior 1, who is in Senior 2 and ask her, that now you are at school, you are studying – now what do you like to be? He says I don’t know, god only knows, I don’t know. What do you really, what are you trying, let me say, what you want to become in the future? Then the girl or the boy say I don’t know, I don’t know if I will be a doctor, I don’t know if I want to become a lawyer, I don’t know what - because god only knows for me, I don’t understand it. So if you find that kind of that student, that one...he is like here at school, but he don’t understand really, what you want to become.

[Excerpt from interview with Teacher Harold, August 2005]

Although these girls were approaching the final stage of their O-Level education, they seemed to neither possess very little knowledge of the range of educational options available to them nor did many of them seem to have a clear understanding of what educational paths or processes were necessary/appropriate for different kinds of jobs. For example, Sofia said that she wanted to attend university to train to be a secretary.

  Shelley: What kind of education do you hope to have? What level education do you want?

  Sofia: I want to be university.

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86 As outlined in Chapter 2, The Ugandan school system is based on the A-Level/O-Level system that was used in Britain during the colonial period and was instituted in Uganda. In Uganda, once a student successfully completes her/his O-Level education (Senior 4), she/he can either advance to A-Level studies (Senior 5 and 6), provided she/he achieved adequate exam results, or pursue various kinds of technical/vocational training, including secretarial school, tailoring courses, even teacher training.
Shelley: And, what would you study if you went to university? What kind of job would you like?

Sofia: I want to be a secretary.

[Excerpt from interview with Sofia, October 2004]

In many ways, the girls at KSS had extremely limited imaginings of their own futures. There was a critical lack of career and personal guidance/counseling, and the girls seemed to have an either/or, somewhat polar, view of their futures as either poor farmers, mothers/wives saddled with onerous domestic chores (as were most of their own mothers), or in somewhat romanticized roles as well-dressed professionals with important careers, earning a substantial income.

Shelley: Ok – and why do you want to be a nurse?

Yudaya: Because I want to get some money.

Shelley: And so you think it would be a good job. It would pay you some good money?

Yudaya: Yes.

Shelley: [Is there] any other thing you would like about being a nurse?

Yudaya: Yes.

Shelley: What’s that?

Yudaya: A nurse should wear - should be smart [i.e., dress smartly] every time -

Shelley: Ah, so wear good clothes and look smart?

Yudaya: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Yudaya, October 2005]

The stated aspirations of the girls were often not grounded in any real understanding of what was necessary (i.e., academic prerequisites) to pursue those careers. And, when asked what kind of work they would like in the future, many of the girls stated that they
would like jobs that they were familiar with through extended family or community members, but not necessarily jobs they had chosen because of their own interest or aptitude. In addition, many girls seemed to follow a gendered path in terms of their aspirations, based on female role models.

Shelley:  *Why do you want to be a nurse?*

Shakila:  *Because - the sister[s] of my mother - all of them are - some are sisters and is a nurse, and my uncle is a doctor.*

Shakila seemed not to have even considered transgressing those gendered career paths, but when I presented her with an alternative vision, she did express interest in that.

Shelley:  *So you wouldn’t want to be a doctor?*

Shakila:  *Yes.*

Shelley:  *Would you rather be a nurse or a doctor?*

Shakila:  *I prefer to be a doctor.*

[Excerpt from interview with Shakila, October 2004]

My suggestion may have influenced Shakila’s answer, but nonetheless, I do not think she had previously thought of breaking the “mold” in terms of gendered career paths.

Some girls had given thought to careers to which they were personally interested and felt suited for, but they did not possess adequate information on the process of acquiring the necessary qualifications for those careers.

Shelley:  *What kind of [work] would you like to do in the future?*

Ireen:  *I want to be a teacher because a teacher is a job of knowledge; a teacher is a one who teach doctors, and presidents -*

Shelley:  *So to become a teacher, what do you have to do for school?  Do you have to go to - finish S4? And then do you go to college?*
Ireen: I don’t know. I think you have to complete A-level – but that’s it. I’m not sure [shakes head]

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, October 2004]

Most of the girls, during the opening interviews in October-November 2004, stated that they aspired to be nurses (seven girls), doctors (three girls), secretaries (two girls), teachers (two girls), or lawyers (one girl). However, as most of the girls perpetually struggled to pay school fees from term to term, it was extremely unlikely that any of them would have the financial means to complete tertiary level education, especially in the fields of medicine or law. Most of the girls lived with the threat of having to leave school due to financial constraints, and thus forfeit their dreams and aspirations on a moment’s notice. In addition, it is unlikely that the quality of education they were receiving would enable them to meet the requirements of these highly competitive university programmes. But it seemed that many of the girls only envisioned rather polarized future options; they hoped to pursue extensive academic programmes and secure prestigious, well-paid employment (doctors, lawyers, and nurses), but failing that, saw themselves ending up as poor subsistence-level farmers, like most of their mothers, with no employment opportunities.

There was little awareness of jobs, professions, income-earning possibilities that might exist somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum as they had had little exposure to these.

Shelley: When I ask [the girls] what they want to be in terms of their careers, they are fairly unimaginative – it is either doctor, lawyer, nurse, teacher – it seems to me that there is a real need for some career counseling because there [are] all kinds of jobs out there. Do you think that there is a need for some career counseling?

Masinde: A great need.
In an interview, Mary, one of the female teachers at KSS, explained that she tried to provide guidance and support for the girls in various ways, but it was very much a personal initiative on her part, and not part of a wider educational strategy.

Mary: *On the side of the girls, schools [should] try and organize - at least one day a week for meeting - with the girls and start talking...eventually[have] a counselor giving them advice, how they can read the books, how they can overcome some of their problems.[At present] I try to tell the girl – giving them advices how they can read, how they can deal with problems with sex education and then read their books. So I hope some girls picking the information.*

Shelley: *So you have a big influence. It would be a great idea to meet with the girls regularly and try and discuss ways that they can solve those problems at home.*

Mary: *Discuss with them, sit down and talk...help the girls, some of them are really - are not knowing what they are doing.*

This teacher, however, had little (if any) access to guidance-related resources, and had not even completed secondary level schooling herself. Mary was able to offer the girls guidance from her own personal experience, but not much beyond that.

Many of the girls did not seem to be aware of the existence of counselors.

Shelley: *How do you think that girls and women could get more training and be leaders in schools? What could schools do to help more girls to become leaders?*

Ireen: *It’s difficult.*
Shelley: Ok, do you think for example – having counselors at the school would be a good thing for girls?

Ireen: Counselors?

Shelley: Counselors - women who come in to talk to you about problems, talk to you about how you could solve your problems. Do you think that would be a good thing for girls to have?

Ireen: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August 2005]

The few girls that were aware of counselors, did not have access to any.

Shelley: What about counselors in school for women and girls. Do you know what a school counselor is?

Gelly: Yes, we don’t have them.

Shelley: But do you think that it is a good idea to have school counselors for girls?

Gelly: It is, because some girls can be helped.

Shelley: So they can talk over their problems -

Gelly: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Gelly, August 2005]

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the many school-related barriers to girls’ education, ranging from the location of the school, to negative attitudes that teachers hold about girls’ abilities and motivation, to lack of counseling, that the NSGE has accurately identified. What the NSGE does not explicitly address, however, is the very serious problem of physical, sexual, emotional, and mental abuse of girls within the school environment. Girls cannot be expected to flourish as confident, autonomous, agents of change when they are
surrounded by male domination, exploitation and abuse; there is little freedom for them to
develop their full potential within an environment of fear and belittlement. The girls,
although committed to their personal aspirations, expressed a floundering tenacity when
they considered their education and futures in light of teachers’ lack of conviction in their
abilities and motivation, and when they discussed the various and taxing problems they had
to deal with, whether related to physiological (e.g., menstruation), gendered
(abuse/exploitation/ harassment by men and boys), or knowledge-deficit (e.g., lack of
counseling about education options and careers) reasons (ADF, 2000).

The following chapter will move beyond the family, community and school
contexts and focus on larger societal issues that hinder girls’ educational opportunities.
Hello Shelley,

Let me take this chance to greet you. How are you and how is your life?

Send my warm greetings to all your friends in Canada. I will tell you my story about school this year. When my result of Senior 4 came, I started to look for school fees for “A” Level. I asked my auntie to give me money to start working. The job I did was a shopkeeper. I had different things in my shop for example, books, pens, biscuits, cake, matchboxes, sweets, maize, flour, rice and other things. I also began to cook things like chapattis, pancakes, popcorn and other edibles. Two weeks after I began my shop, I was frying pancakes, but the fire was getting low. I left cooking oil in pan on the fire and I went to get more firewood. My niece came to help me, but she is only about three years old, and when she put batter in the pan to cook the pancakes the cooking oil turned into fire and my sister was burned badly. She went to the hospital and she spent one month there with my auntie.

I continued selling my things, but after two months, I became very ill with malaria and it took me a very long time to recover. My auntie had to look after me.
My auntie used the money which I was saving for school fees for my sister\(^87\) and me. When I recovered, my auntie forbid me to return to that same job and she told me to look for another job. I decided to sell used clothes. I sold clothes in the market for two weeks. One day I was trying to get my clothes to the market, there was a man and he told me that he would help me. I give my clothes to the man but the man was a thief. He took all my clothes and I remained with nothing. So after that, I decide to leave my studies because I could not get the money for fees. When I told my auntie, she told me that she would try very hard to help me with school fees. But, when there was only two weeks remaining before the next school year began, my auntie became very sick. After she paid for her medicine and other treatment, my auntie was poor and told me that “I don’t have money. You cannot go to school.’

When I was sitting at home, Mr. Dan sent somebody to tell me to come to see him. When I reached Mr. Dan he told me that people in Canada were helping our friend Shelley find for us girls school fees. I was so happy! There were many things I had to buy like notebooks, pens, uniform, but my auntie could help me a little and Mr. Dan could give me money for the rest. When I got to the new school, I found there many students because the school is comprised of both “O” Level and “A” Level. The school is in good condition but it has the problem of water. The water is very difficult to get and it has scum. But the school is trying to solve that problem. And the school is not so bad. In our school there are 26 teachers. They are very good at teaching students. If they don’t change, I will study and achieve what I want. Every class has two class teachers which helps to guide students and

\(^{87}\) Often family terms such as sister and niece are used interchangeably, as in this case.
teach students discipline. These teachers are understanding. If you get a problem and tell it to the teacher he or she can give you advice.

I like to send my thanks to Shelley and all the people that are helping me in school fees. If they continue to help me I will study until I get a certificate because the school fees is very difficult to get and during this term I did well without any problem of school fees. They did not send me home for school fees and other requirements of the school because Shelley and the people in Canada helped me and the other girls. So I am so happy when our friends help me and I will study very hard.

God bless you.

Yours,

Henrietta
CHAPTER 8: LARGER SOCIETAL FACTORS THAT CONSTRAIN GIRLS’ EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Secondary level education for girls in Uganda conflicts with many traditional and cultural understandings of girls and women’s (inferior and subordinate) roles in societies. But this site of contention is also one of possibility: “if culture erects barriers for women, it can also be harnessed to provide opportunities for change” (Reardon, 1995, p. 16). Underlying causes of tension around, and resistances to, girls’ education must be unearthed, acknowledged, and addressed at all levels of society so that efforts to achieve gender equality in education are rooted in deeper ground than mere policy. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways in which embedded and salient social conditions affect girls’ educational opportunities and addresses my research question: What are the larger societal issues (e.g., religion, socioeconomic conditions, and general attitudes towards girls and women) that negatively impact girls’ educational opportunities? I will consider larger societal issues that the NSGE has identified, as well as highlight those it has not identified or has not sufficiently emphasized, particularly poverty and sexual exploitation and abuse.

8.1 Poverty

Extreme poverty is one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, many girls do not receive the same educational opportunities as boys (as well as the reason many boys do not receive secondary and/or tertiary level education). For families living under such harsh socioeconomic conditions, secondary school is prohibitively expensive with financial outlay required for exams, field trips, course materials, uniforms and supplies, as well as

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88 Barrier #18 of the NSGE acknowledges poverty as an impediment to girls’ education: “Poverty constrains the choices available to parents even if they were amenable to supporting girls’ education” (GOU, p. 6)
for school and boarding fees. Large families with meager incomes simply cannot afford to
send all of their children to secondary school. This is often where choices must be made as
to who will receive educational priority, and more often than not, boys are given
precedence over girls. As discussed in Chapter 4, decisions that privilege boys over girls in
terms of education are often based on assessments of potential financial gain and the
opportunity costs associated with education:

Sometimes…resistance to girls’ education comes from sheer economic necessity.
Thus, many parents who have no objection to educating girls and boys on a basis of
equality may be able to afford to educate only one of their children…In many
cultural circumstances, existing employment opportunities dictate that the one
educated must be a boy because his overall employment opportunities are greater
and education is a necessary passport to these. So the neglect of female education
may be a matter of survival for parents in many parts of the world. (Nussbaum,

Boys are also in a better situation than girls in terms of receiving an education in
that they have opportunities to earn money to help pay for their school fees by making
bricks, digging land, building houses, clearing brush, fetching water, tending animals,
transporting goods by foot or by bicycle, collecting firewood, and other odd jobs
(fieldnotes; see also Nyzani et al, 2001). Generally, these same opportunities do not exist
for girls because of socioculturally-normative gender roles and because parents do not
allow their daughters to take up jobs (Nyanzi et al, 2001; Freedman & Poku, 2005). Thus,
girls have no access to money unless their parents, or perhaps relatives, have some extra to
give them, which is rarely the case in extremely poor, rural areas. An additional inequity is
that if girls do not complete secondary level education, they are generally not able to find
income earning opportunities, but this is not the case for boys.
Yudaya:  but my brother, [he’s] not at school -

Shelley:  Why?

Yudaya:  The problem is for money.

Shelley:  So he stays at home?

Yudaya:  [shakes head] Uh-uh - he has work there, at town.

[Excerpt from interview with Yudaya, November 2004]

Girls, however, have extremely limited opportunities to earn money to pay for their school fees.

*The girls - they lack some money, they have a lot to do. They must invest in someone to help the girls because the boys have a chance - the boy can leave the school and gain work, earn the money for school dues. But a girl cannot do that because they are living with the parents -*

[Excerpt from interview with teacher Mary, August 2005]

Financial pressures of secondary level education force girls into a double bind. On the one hand, girls have few opportunities to earn money for their school fees, and yet, if they do not get a secondary level education, they have almost no future income-earning possibilities, except perhaps working as a housegirl or a server/dishwasher in a little restaurant for exceedingly low wages

But what if the girl does not go to school, what does she do? Most of these [jobs] like being a mechanic, or like being a brick-layer or being a what are boys’ jobs. Which means again, that the girls, their job opportunities and careers, they are limited.

[Excerpt from interview with headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]

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89 Girls and women who do these jobs often get paid less than $1 a day for a 10-12 hour day
Secondary schooling for girls can provide girls with the capabilities necessary to access employment opportunities that can lead to a qualitatively different and significantly more prosperous future than lower levels of educational attainment. If girls complete S4, or vocational school, or a college programme, they have the potential to earn salaries working as, for example, nurses, clerks, bank tellers, secretaries, policewomen, and teachers. They also will have easier access to training programmes, support networks, micro-credit financing, and other sources of funding. Secondary level education, therefore, can be a critical determinant of their futures, and understandably, many girls seek to find money wherever they can.

8.2 Religious Beliefs and Practices

The position of the girl-child is very much more insecure and tenuous than that of the boy-child in many ways. The NSGE indicates this pattern results because of “[s]ome religious beliefs which reinforce negative cultural practices” (Barrier #5, p. 5). With respect to the context of Kyato Village, religious beliefs that hindered girls’ educational opportunities were related to the inferior status accorded to girls and women, and various social institutions such as marriage. Kyato Village, typical of many Ugandan communities, has a mixed Christian/Muslim population. Religion constitutes an important part of people’s lives, especially with respect to rituals (births, marriages, burials), festivals (Eid, Christmas, Ramadan, Easter) and observances (Sunday services for Christians, daily prayers for Muslims). I witnessed no strife at all between Christians and Muslims, and in many ways one’s religion signified one’s identification with a community and clan. In my experience, religion did not typically enter into everyday conversation except in phrases

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90 NSGE barrier #5: “Some religious beliefs which reinforce negative cultural practices
such as “Inshallah” or “God be with you” if one was making a journey or hoping for good news. Inevitably, however, during discussions or debates around gender equality, religious doctrine would be tabled as evidence to support the fact of male superiority and entitlement.

Jean Paul: Boys are higher than girls – and it is true. Because when you see the Bible, also God created man first and then the woman was got from the limbs of the man, so that boys should be higher than girls.

[Excerpt from A3-GL/FGD/B-1, August 2005]

Many boys and men tenaciously clung to the myth of Eve being created from Adam’s rib as the ultimate trump for their argument that boys are superior to girls, and therefore, deserve more than girls. Girls found themselves caught between religious doctrine that supported the patriarchy (i.e., the inferior positions of women) on the one hand, and national rhetoric around gender equality that challenged the patriarchy, on the other.

Shelley: Do you think that boys think they are higher than girls?

Henrietta: Yes.

Shelley: Why?

Henrietta: They think that God first made man and he created a woman in the limbs of the man, so that’s why they think they are higher than girls.

Shelley: Do you think that girls feel that they are lower than boys?

Henrietta: No. The girls think that they are equal to boys.

Shelley: So the girls think they are equal to boys – but the boys think they are higher than girls. Is that a problem?

Henrietta: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Henrietta, August 2005]
In addition, the practice of polygamy further undermines women’s power and status in marriage. Official statistics indicate that about thirty per cent of Ugandan families are polygamous (UNICEF, 2003), although the actual number is likely much higher. Most of the girls in this study had fathers that were in polygamous relationships. Polygamy is an acceptable practice within the general Ugandan Muslim population, and is supported by religious doctrine. However, polygamy is also common in the Christian community, although it is officially deemed to be problematic. In an interview with a reporter from the National Catholic Reporter, Msgr. Joseph Obunga, the Secretary General of the Uganda Episcopal Conference made the following observations on polygamy amongst Christians:

[reporter]: I’ve heard that polygamy is still a problem.

[Obunga]: Yes, it is still a problem. But you know it’s not always really polygamy. Polygamy is when a man is known and his two, three, four wives are known. That’s the polygamous life. But people had decided that a man can go around with unknown women, let them be six or ten. They are not described as his wives, but his mistresses or sex partners. So, somebody would have about six sexual partners, not permanent ones, but on an ad-hoc basis. This lady would also have four or five men. This has gone down a bit. (Allen, 2004)

8.3 Sexuality and Sexual Vulnerability

Sexuality, sexual pressures and problems, risks, and dangers associated with sexual activity are aspects of adolescent girls’ lives around the world, but in Uganda and in many other African countries, sex-related issues can have a devastating impact on girls’ secondary school experiences. Laws, policies and programming concerning these issues have proven to be largely deficient because they do not take into full account the large
sweep of contexts, varying types of relationships, socioeconomic circumstances, and shifting sexual culture that contribute to, influence, and in some cases, determine girls’ sexual experiences. The girls in this study were faced with competing and starkly contradictory understandings and representations of sexuality including romantic love, abuse and assault, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, economic necessity, pregnancy (planned and unplanned), sexual pleasure and freedom, and moral double standards.

8.3.1 Sexuality and Identity

Adolescent girls in Uganda, like girls all over the world, are required to respond to many mixed messages about sexuality.

Mr. Masinde and Dan insisted on taking me to see a “mime” show. I had heard about mime; the girls often talked about it, and some even told me they aspired to be mime artists. I knew nothing about mime other than it involved people singing on stage. Masinde drove us out past Musanda, to an open-air pub/eatery on the side of a busy road. It was lit up with strings of tacky, coloured lights on wires hanging precariously low to the tables. It was about 10 pm on a Sunday night and the venue was packed. We scavenged for empty chairs and pulled them to a table, joining a large group of people. I supposed that this was the kind of place where the middle-class, or upper middle-class population of this area spent time. Very few people from Kyato village would be able to afford to come here. (There were, however, different kinds of mime places everywhere, and everyone I talked to in Kyato village had seen mime performances somewhere.) Soon enough, I became acquainted with this cultural phenomenon. Hit songs were played over a (crackling) PA system and the individual, or individuals, on stage pretended to sing the song. Essentially, it was lip-synching. Some of the performers were engagingly
theatrical, and their acts were very entertaining. But, I also found some of the acts disturbing: for example, performances in which men simulated physically, sexually and otherwise abusing women. And, I also found the overt, bump and grind, graphic sexuality of some of the acts somewhat surprising. It sent the message that explicit sexual expression and promiscuity were glamorous and acceptable, when, in reality, there were all kinds of prescriptive restrictions around sexuality, especially for girls and women, as well as dangers associated with casual sex.

[Excerpt from journal, October 2004]

This was, of course, a performance. The paradox of the glamorization of the ideal of sexual freedom for girls and women, and the reality of constrictive parameters of acceptable female sexual behaviour can be compared to Bakhtin’s (1984) notion of the subversive in the “the carnival” where the performance represents a “temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers… and of the prohibitions of usual life” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 15). Nevertheless, elements of the stage were reflected in everyday life with tensions between expressions of sexuality and socially acceptable behaviour. Nyanzi et al.’s (2001) study of adolescents in Masaka District states: “There is a clear tension between the traditional ideal of female chastity and submissiveness and the modern image of sexual freedom” (p. 96). This is hardly unique to Uganda; it is, and has been, a cultural tension in many societies the world over. A writer for The Guardian newspaper summarized this point with respect to the “beauty queen” phenomenon: “the women involved [in beauty pageants] should look sexually available at all times, but never actually be sexually active” (Cochrane, 2007). In Northern countries I would argue that the double-standards that exist between girls/women and boys/men who have multiple sexual partners (i.e., that it is far more acceptable for males than females to have multiple sexual partners) are not fundamentally different from the general attitudes around girls/women and
boys/men’s sexual behaviour in Uganda. However, because most young women in Northern countries are not subject to the crushing pressures and disadvantages that result from extreme poverty, they are not faced with the same life and death risks around sexuality with which young Ugandan women must contend.

During a Straight Talk Club FGD with girls and boys (October, 2004) we explored understandings of propriety around intimate/romantic/sexual relationships of girls and boys: specifically, was it acceptable for both girls and boys to have several such relationships prior to marriage?

Shelley: Is it the same for girls and boys, or is it different?

Girls and boys: It’s different.

Shelley: Why?

Jason: Actually, when the boy is the one with many girls, that does not show a bad image like when the girl is having a lot of boys.

Joanne: Because if a girl is having many boys, she can’t be respected. Girls are not like boys, whereby the girls should behave well than the boys.

Shelley: Why? Why should the girls have to behave well and the boys not?

Joanne: That is the - the culture.

[Excerpt from mixed A3-ST/FGD (BG), October 2005]

In a boys-only Straight Talk FGD, expectations around notions of appropriateness for girls’ sexual behaviour were discussed:

Shelley: Ok – what’s another letter [in the Straight Talk newspaper] you thought was important or interesting?

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91 Appendix A3: A3-ST/FGD (BG).
Peter: …you can want to marry a girl and if you find that…she’s virginity you can give her respect and her parents.

Shelley: Ok. And is that true for boys as well, or only girls?

Peter: Only girls.

[Excerpt from A3-ST/FGD (B2), November 2004]

Yet, another essential criterion for a future wife that the boys agreed upon was “beautifulness”. Thus they (publicly, at least) harboured notions of an ideal wife: a beautiful young woman, with an adequate, but not too high, level of education who remained a virgin until marriage.

The girls in this study struggled with the tension inherent in the intersections between socially-defined ideas of beauty, the physiological/mental and emotional implications of personal sexuality, desires, hopes, and imaginings of intimate sexual relationships, social codes of morality, and the harshly unromantic consequences of sex “gone wrong”. They talked about beauty and their desire to be attractive; many asked me if I thought they were beautiful, and some despaired that (in their minds) they were not. They liked to get dressed up whenever there was occasion for it, and they shared clothes with each other, as they had so few from which to choose. Sometimes they would use any extra money they might have for pieces of clothing, or shoes, or “jelly” (a kind of body oil that gives one’s skin a lustrous appearance). Often, I found the girls who did housekeeping for me in exchange for school fees, giggling in my bathroom or bedroom, trying on my clothes, or using my makeup or body lotion, and admiring their new look in the mirrors. At school, there were the same high school romances and flirtations that transpire the world over. The girls seemed to be dealing with the very same issues and inner turmoil about identity that I have observed adolescent girls face in many different contexts, in both Northern and Southern countries.
The girls were well aware of their sexuality, but they also extolled the virtues of remaining virgins until marriage (see also Guttmacher Institute, 2006). For example, in FDGs, Straight Talk club meetings and questionnaires, the girls stated that sexual initiation should only occur after marriage. These are two representative comments taken from the questionnaire administered in September 2006, in response to the question, *Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about some of the problems and situations that adolescent girls/young women face in Uganda?*: “My comment is to girls please young girls abstain from sex until you grow up”; “The comment I would like to share is with those who are not engaged in sex is to abstain until they get married. If that [not] possible to always use condom”. However, questionnaires and other FDGs also revealed that many girls were already sexually active. In a questionnaire completed by 12 girls in the study, 10 of the 12 girls who completed the questionnaires admitted to being sexually active. When asked at what age they had first had sex, these were their responses: 12 years old (one girl); 15 years old (two girls); 16 years old (two girls); 17 years old (three girls); and 18 years old (two girls). Eight out of 10 girls were sexually active before the “legal” age of 18 years. It seems, however, that these girls entered into sexual activity at a slightly older age than the national average, which is about 15 to 16 years (Agyei, Mukiza-Gapere, & Epema, 1994; Nalugwa, 2004; Ndyanabangi & Kipp, 2001; Neema & Bataringaya, 2000; Twa-Twa, 1997). Of the girls who responded to the question, *At what age do you think most adolescent girls in Uganda become sexually active?*, the majority of the girls (eight out of 11) indicated they believed most girls were sexually active by the time they were 14 years old.

This discrepancy between the stated ideal of sexual initiation (i.e., through marriage) and the real, lived, sexual experience of these young women concurs with similar

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93 Appendix A4: A4-GOSH, September 2006.
studies which have found that, although many adolescents claim not to approve of premarital sex, those same adolescents are sexually active (Agyei et al, 1994). Reluctance to admit to having engaged in sexual activities, when the cultural expectation (although rarely attained, it seems) is to abstain until marriage, is likely a disposition shared with girls in many other contexts around the world. However, what is particularly problematic with the lack of transparency around sexual behaviour and activity for Ugandan girls is that sex can have harsh, even fatal consequences. The actual sexual behaviour of these girls needs to be known so that they are provided with all that will help them – education, contraceptives, free access to health services – to avoid such consequences.

8.3.2 The Nature of Adolescent Girls’ Sexual Experiences

In addition to understanding the general sexual behaviour of adolescent girls, it is equally important to understand how and why many unmarried adolescent girls become involved in sexual activities, and the nature of their sexual experiences, in order to be cognizant of the degree of freedom or unfreedom (Sen, 1999) they have to make choices about sex-related issues. Very often, girls’ sexual experiences do not transpire within the context of an intimate, loving relationship. My findings indicate that the majority of girls in this study were forced into sex, whether physically, through coercion and/or threats, or out of financial need. In the September 2006 questionnaire94, when asked what motivated them to have sex, five girls stated it was pressure from a boy/man; four stated it was money; two stated peer pressure; one stated fear of rejection; and one stated “gifts and rape95”. Two girls said that they had had sex out of personal desire. The following subsections will

94 Appendix A4: A4-GOSH2, September 2006.
95 I would interpret this as meaning that her sexual initiation was through sexual assault.
discuss findings related to sexual behaviours and experiences of the girls who participated in this study.

8.3.2a Transactional Sexual Relationships With Older Men

My study found that girls were in need of money for almost everything: education-related expenses, medical and dental care, sanitary napkins, nutritious food, transportation, adequate clothing, and even soap.

Louise approached me in the library this afternoon and asked if she could talk to me. We walked outside, away from the other students. She looked at the ground, dejectedly, and told me that she was going to have to go home, that she could not stay at the school. I asked her why; I knew her school fees had been taken care of, as I had paid them in exchange for her helping me with housekeeping at home. She told me she did not have any soap, and her father did not have 500 shillings (about 30 cents Canadian) to give her to buy some. We walked to my house, and I gave her two bars of soap and told her to tell me when she had finished those. She was beaming and obviously very grateful. I felt utterly depressed. How is it possible that in this world people cannot have enough money for a bar of soap? How mortifying it must be to be a young woman who is worried that she is unclean…that others might perceive her to be unclean...

[Excerpt from journal, March 2005]

As Sen (1999) acknowledges, there is a domino effect of deprivation: “economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme poverty, can make a person prey in the violation of other kinds of unfreedom” (p. 8). Girls learn at a young age that their bodies can be used as commodities as they are very often driven into commercial sex, or “transactional” sexual relationships with older men for money and “gifts” (e.g., clothes, soap, food, or rides to
school): “Indeed sex has been referred to as the currency by which women and girls are frequently “expected to pay for life’s opportunities, from a passing grade in school to a trading license or permission to cross a border” (Baylies, 2000, p.7; see also Hulton, Cullen & Khalokho, 2000; Freedman & Poku, 2005; Lacey, 2003; Luke, 2003; Ndyanabangi & Kipp, 2001; Neema & Bataringaya, 2000; Nyanzi et al, 2001; Okee-Obong, 2000; Twa-Twa, 1997).

It was not until a FGD with five girls from the Straight Talk Club one afternoon in January 2005 that I became aware of just how prevalent transactional sex was amongst schoolgirls. The subject arose when we were discussing sexual abuse and harassment of girls by older men, and other situations where girls entered unwillingly into sexual activity. One girl said, “Our mother can force us to - to go and practice fornication. If you say at home, ‘Mum, I want books, pencils; I don’t have a uniform - ’ she can tell you that ‘I don’t have money. What can you do? You can go and practice fornication in order to get money’”. The other girls concurred. I had met this girl’s mother, and my impression was that her mother would certainly not have willingly or flippantly advise her daughter to “practice fornication” if there was any other possible way of acquiring money. But, I also knew the importance that the girls’ mothers placed on their daughters’ education and futures, as well as the dire financial situations at home, so, given the fact that there was likely NO other way to bring in money, I could understand why mothers might make such a recommendation.

After this FGD, I talked to many people about the issue of transactional sex. It was, apparently, commonplace but not generally discussed openly. To follow up, I administered a questionnaire to the girls; 13 girls completed it. One question asked: Many girls have

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97 Appendix A4: A4-GOSH1, May 2005.
talked about the problem of girls having sex for money – to pay for school fees, supplies, etc. Do you think this a general problem in Uganda? Twelve girls responded in the affirmative, one in the negative. The next question asked: Do you know of any parents who have encouraged girls to have sex in order to pay for school fees? Again, 12 responded in the affirmative, one in the negative. A further question asked: Do you know of any girls who have had sex to pay for school fees/books/supplies? Once again, 12 responded in the affirmative, one in the negative. Four out of the nine sexually active girls stated that they themselves had had sex in order to raise money for their school fees/supplies/books.

Because older men will likely have more financial resources than boys their own age, it is common for adolescent girls to have transactional sexual relationships with older men (Leach et al, 2003). Some girls have relationships with “sugar daddies”, men who engage in sustained sexual relationships with girls or women and who have the means to provide the girls with money and/or material goods:

What is referred to as the ‘sugar daddy’ phenomenon involved sexual encounters not just across age but also income differentials, with young women suffering hardship, sometimes struggling to stay in school, agreeing to sexual relations in exchange for gifts, money or support (UNAIDS, 1998b), sometimes with the tacit acquiescence of their parents. (Baylies, 2000, p. 11)

And some girls have one-time, or infrequent, sexual relations with older men strictly in exchange for money or gifts. The degree to which girls “need” to have sex (i.e., the financial pressure they are under) often determines the degree of risk to which they are exposed (Kuate-Defo, 2004). When asked how much money a transactional sexual encounter might bring, the girls generally indicated a range from 5,000 – 15,000 Ugandan shillings (about $3 - $9 U.S.). Economic need erodes the girl’s power within that relationship, and therefore, she is less able to insist on, for example, condom use to protect
herself against pregnancy and the contraction of HIV/AIDS and other STDs (Jones & Norton, 2007). In addition, unprotected sex can lead to pregnancy, which very often has serious, and even fatal, consequences for girls (Ndyanabangi, Kipp, Odit, Mwijuka, Mirembe & Ntozi, 2003). Sex with older men is seen, therefore, as one of the leading factors for life and opportunity loss for adolescent girls: “adolescent girls’ precocious sexual debut, unintended pregnancies, induced abortions and deteriorating sexual and reproductive health are often associated with the fact that young girls are objects of older men’s choices” (Kuate-Defo, 2004).

Some studies depict girls as autonomous agents with free choice with respect to their sexual relationships with older men (Kuate-Defo, 2004). Silberschmidt and Rasch’s study (2001) of 51 young women in Tanzania who had just had illegal abortions concludes that “these girls are not only victims but also willing prey and active social agents engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour” (p. 1815). Other studies have even portrayed young women as ruthlessly exploiting men for their money, when the young women were not in dire financial need but were rather seeking status and expensive luxury items (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004). On a lesser economic scale, Nyanzi el al’s study (2001) in Masaka District, Uganda found that a practice called “detoothing” or “kukuula binyo”, where a girl leads a boy or man to believe that she will have sex with him in order to receive money and gifts, but then breaks off the relationship without engaging in sexual activity, was common. The girls in my study were aware of this practice. A question on the September 2006 questionnaire98 (completed by 12 girls) asked: Have you ever heard of something called kukuula binyo (or – “detoothing” – in English)? All 12 girls responded in the affirmative. Following are some of their own definitions of detoothing:

98 Appendix A4: A4-GOSH2, September 2006.
• “Detoothing meaning taking man’s money without engaging with him in sex”
• “It is a process where a man gives a girl money with an aim of playing sex with her but a girl refuses to play sex”
• “Is the way when a girl get money from a boy or man without sex”

From their findings, Nyanzi et al (2001) sketch some parameters and/or conditions within which sexual relationships operate. They claim that “adolescents in the study judged a relationship to be sexual or non-sexual depending on whether the boy had begun putting money into it” (Nyanzi et al, 2001, p. 87). In addition, girls are expected to want money or gifts in exchange for sex.

For girls, material reward (receiving gifts) is an important aspect of relationships and they have to be explicit enough to get as good a deal as possible; but if they are too interested in money they may be stigmatized as ‘loose’. On the other hand, if they are not interest in money at all they may be suspected of being infected and wanting to spread HIV. (Nyanzi et al, 2001, p. 96; see also Amuyunzu-Nyamongo et al 1999)

In my study, one-third of the girls (four out of 12) indicated that they had been motivated to have sex for financial reasons, and all 12 girls responded in the affirmative to the question: Do unmarried girls usually expect money and/or gifts in exchange for sex? The vast majority of the girls responses demonstrate that poverty-related factors are reasons for engaging in sex for money or gifts: “It is true that girls usually expect money or gifts in exchange for sex because some parents failed to pay school fees for girls and then she decide to exchange sex in order to get money”; “The unmarried girls wants different things which do not ask to the parents for example the decoration things, and they want money to

\[99\] Results from the questionnaire administered in September 2006, A4-GOSH2.
eat at school which their parents do not provide to them”; “Some girls play sex with an aim of getting money due to some problems they face”.

Nevertheless, there is often an evaluative component of self-worth that also enters into sexual negotiations: “A girl would be humiliated if she had sex and received nothing in return” (Nyanzi et al, 2001, p. 88). Two girls in my study expressed similar feelings: “Unmarried girls, if not working, she expects gifts from boys in exchange for sex. Today nothing is costless”; “Because many unmarried girls expect sex to be exchange of thing without these they don’t take it as a real sex”. Thus, although girls are vulnerable and enter into these exploitative kinds of relationships out of need, the girls do choose these transactional relationships in order to fulfill those needs.

Transactional sex has been a means of economic survival for many girls and women although it has also led to tragic and fatal consequences for great numbers of them. And, although transactional sex appears to be commonplace, there can also be associated emotional repercussions. When the four girls in my study who had had sex with older men responded (May 2005 questionnaire) to the question, *How do you feel about that experience [i.e., having sex to raise money for educational needs?]*, three girls expressed unease and some remorse, for example, “It’s bad because of many problems in it. But I do it because I want to buy books and to pay some school fees.” One girl, on the other hand, said: “I feel very happy because of that money”. This girl’s answer suggests that the fact that there was any way *at all* for her to earn money (i.e., transactional sex) at least provided her with an option and some hope to further her educational aspirations and perhaps bring about a more promising future.

These transactional sexual experiences are complex and nuanced, and this has been an extremely challenging aspect of the girls’ lives for me to write about. From one perspective, girls are exploited and abused by older men in these relationships. However,
the fact that girls seem to expect money/gifts in exchange for sex, no matter how small the
monetary value, and no matter what the age of the boy/man, further complicates this issue.
Thus, from another perspective, girls “choose” to enter into these relationships as this is
perhaps the only way they are able to earn the money they need for educational and other
needs. But, being forced to choose between sex for money and being forced to quit school
and forfeit future possibilities because there is no money for school fees is not much of a
choice.

In terms of my findings, I reject Nyanzi et al’s (2001) conclusion that “In practice
however, boys usually do not have much money to give and girls do not need much money
(their demand is mainly for extras rather than essentials)” (p. 96; my italics).
The claim that “girls do not need much money” is unfathomable to me, especially when the
girls who participated in my study often didn’t have enough money for soap, or aspirin or a
pen. I also find the statement “their demand is mainly for extras rather than essentials”
highly problematic and patronizing in that there is an inherent judgment about what is
deemed to be either an “extra” or an “essential”, with an underlying message that money
earned from sex is spent frivolously by the girls. Is food an “extra”? Are sanitary pads
“extras”? Are condoms “extras”? Is a single piece of jewellery, or deodorant, or a little
body lotion or a good pair of shoes “extras”? The ways girls chose to spend money were
based on their sense of need and identity. A girl’s choice to spend a couple of dollars on
face cream may seem frivolous, from the vantage point of individuals who have all of their
needs, “extras”, and even “luxuries” met, but it might have a great deal of significance for
the girl. I do not believe that anyone has the right to determine what is an “essential” and
what is an “extra” for these girls who have so very little, especially given Nussbaum’s
(2003) notion that individuals are entitled to the basic requirements that provide them with
the ability to fully engage in their societies with dignity. If girls have tattered school
uniforms, or no soap with which to wash, or no underwear, they may very well feel that they cannot participate with dignity in their school society and may even drop out of school (Kakuru, 2006).

I have struggled with the representation of the girls around the topic of transactional sex because, although the girls are very obviously victims of poverty and exploitation, I do not want to portray them merely as “powerless victims”. The girls possessed an inner agency, wisdom, and fortitude that were intensely admirable although it is tragically inexcusable that girls anywhere should have to risk their lives to go to school or participate in their societies with dignity. A study by Burns (2002) concerning approaches to sexual education in Uganda that focus on girls’ empowerment through assertiveness training, highlights the paradox and futility of attempting to cultivate assertion in girls when the larger sociocultural beliefs and practices expect female submissiveness. As discussed above, approaches to behaviour change must focus on the larger societal patterns, and not on the particular behaviours of individuals. Clearly, transactional sex is a problem, for many different reasons, but the problem needs to be addressed at a societal, even global level, and not focus on judging girls’ individual behaviour.

8.3.2b Abuses of Power and Authority

Men in positions of authority and/or trust, particularly teachers, are often guilty of both subtle as well as outright, sometimes criminal, violation of girls’ rights. These men have sex with girls in exchange for money, school fees, school supplies, examination marks, extra help with school subjects or avoidance of punishment. (These relationships with teachers are discussed more fully in Chapter 5). This kind of abuse of power and position is rampant in Uganda (Edinburgh Global Partnerships, n.d.; Lacey, 2003; Luke, 2003; Ndyanabangi & Kipp, 2001; Nyanzi et al, 2001; Okee-Obong, 2000; Scheier, 2006;
Twa-Twa, 1997); however, it is not unique to Uganda. A study by Dunne et al (2003) reports on the alarming prevalence of intimidation, violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse within the school environment in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world. They describe the wide spectrum of exploitation and abuse to which girls (and some boys) are subject.

Given the structured asymmetrical power relations of schooling, the excessive use of disciplinary sanctions can lead to abuse by those in positions of authority (teachers and head teachers, also school prefects and monitors) and by those who are able to exercise control through other means, for example physical strength or economic advantage … In many cases, the gender violence engaged in within schools is sexual abuse. Aggressive and intimidating behaviour, unsolicited physical contact such as touching and groping, assault, coercive sex and rape all constitute abuse, as does any sexual relationship formed by a teacher with a pupil. …Such teachers…are exploiting their position of authority and failing in their duty of care. (Dunne, Humphries & Leach, 2003, p. 4)

In the questionnaire completed by 12 girls in September 2006, when asked what they thought girls would expect to receive in exchange for having sex with a teacher, the following are their responses:

- “Nothing just fear”
- “Giving her guideline in studying and begging her sex”
- “High marks in the teachers’ subject”
- “Love and money”
- “Money”
- “She may get more help if she is a student she can get good results”
- “Money and clothes”
• “Can providing me with high marks in class”
• “Gifts and money”
• “Making you pass in the class”

The NSGE does acknowledge that the school is a problematic site for girls, but it
merely states in Barrier #6 that: “The insecure environment in and outside school, coupled
with the girl’s physical, social and psychological conditioning to a docile outlook with very
low self esteem. All this makes her easy prey to sexual harassment and abuse and leads to
pregnancy and ejection from school” (GOU, 1999, p. 5; my italics). Thus, the NSGE is
entirely deficient in addressing the very serious issues of intimidation, exploitation and
abuse of girls by teachers and male students.

8.3.2c Sexual Abuse and Harassment in General

The ubiquitous nature of sexual harassment, abuse, and assault serves to intimidate
and imbue girls with fear in society at large as well as within the school itself. The girls in
this study appeared to have a sense of resignation about the inevitability and pervasiveness
of sexual assault and abuse, and recounted incidences of such matter-of-factly.

Shelley: If you had President Museveni sitting right here – what would you tell him –
how could he help girls get an education?

Ireen: I can ask that [there are] laws to follow – for example, men, some mens –
they have some habits – for example, raping younger girls.

Shelley: Do you know of this happening? Do you know girls that have been raped?

Ireen: Yeah. In our village there are some.

Shelley: [Does] this happen many times? Men [raping] girls?

Ireen: There are, I think three men.

Shelley: Three? In your village?
Ireen: Yes.

[Excerpt from interview with Ireen, August 2005]

* * * *

Shelley: Sex before marriage - is that a problem for girls, or girls and boys?

Penina: Girls.

Shelley: Are you talking about girls who are forced to have sex?

Penina: Yes.

Shelley: Who forces them to have sex? Why are they forced to have sex?

Penina: the men - mens

Shelley: Which men? The boyfriends, or teachers, or men in the community, or -?

Penina: All men.

Shelley: Is it a serious problem?

Penina: Yes.

Shelley: Do you know girls – do you have friends, or do you know schoolgirls who were forced to have sex?

Penina: Yes.

Shelley: This is common?

All girls: Yes.

Penina: ... many rape us.

[Excerpt from A3-ST/FGD (G3), January 2005]

* * * *

In fact, the number of cases of sexual assault experienced by the girls in this study alone is alarming. In the questionnaire completed in September 2006, nine out of 12 girls said that they had been afraid to refuse a request for sex for fear of violent repercussions. Following are some of the reasons they provided.
• “He started to look at me as [his] enemy”
• “He would beat me”
• “When I refused he forced me until I get sex with him”
• “I would have been caned and raped or defiled”
• “You can be abused and punished by these people”
• “Rape me or kill me”
• “That person beats you til death”
• “Hatred [from] those men”

In a survey of 35 letters written by girls to the Straight Talk Foundation in response to a Straight Talk newsletter issue that asked girls and boys to write about difficulties they faced, 11 girls mentioned sexual assault (“rape”, “defilement”, “sexual abuse”, “forced sex”); this was the third most pressing issue (after pregnancy and menstruation). There are many cases of assault/abuse within families, villages, and society in general. A study by Hulton et al (2000) found that “[The girls’] descriptions of forms of sexual abuse were wide-ranging: ‘rape’, ‘abuse from boys’, ‘boys trying to grope you’, or being ‘strongly convinced’. The girls’ reports of forced sex and rape related not only to sex with male peers but equally to sex forced on them by ‘someone in your family – your father, your uncle,’ or ‘[your] father when he was drunk’” (p. 43).

100 The Straight Talk Foundation (STF) has been a registered NGO since 1997; major funders include UNICEF, Dept for International Development, Ford Foundation, European Development Fund, Danish International Development Assistance, Swedish International Development Agency, African Youth Alliance, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. STF publishes Straight Talk, a monthly newsletter distributed as an insert in one of the national newspapers - “The New Vision” - as well as posted directly to some schools that have Straight Talk Clubs. In addition, STF publishes Young Talk (for primary school students) and Parent Talk, and produces weekly half hour radio programs (in English and two local languages) that focus on sexual health issues.
8.4 Early/Mistimed Pregnancy

The combination of various factors, such as early marriage and sexual encounters (forced or consensual), all coalesces in the predominant reason for adolescent girls dropping out of, or being expelled from, school: early/mistimed pregnancy. The NSGE recognizes pregnancy as problematic in Barrier #6: “The insecure environment in and outside school, coupled with the girl’s physical, social and psychological conditioning to a docile outlook with very low self esteem. All this makes her easy prey to sexual harassment and abuse and leads to pregnancy and ejection from school” (GOU, p. 5). There are some extremely contentious assumptions within this barrier - for example, that girls are “easy prey” because they possess “a docile outlook” and “very low self-esteem” - and a critical lack of acknowledgement of the various reasons (discussed at length above) that girls enter into or are forced into sexual relations. Nonetheless, the NSGE does acknowledge mistimed pregnancy to be a major obstacle to girls’ education.

In fact, Uganda has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world (Agyei & Epema, 1992; Hulton et al, 2000; Ndyanabangi and Kipp, 2001; Neema & Bataringaya, 2000; Okuonzi & Epstein 2005; Twa-Twa, 1997); 35 per cent of girls become pregnant by the age of 17 (UNICEF, 2003), and about half of the female population becomes pregnant before the age of 18 (Hulton et al, 2000; Neema & Bataringaya, 2000). There is a geographical (likely associated with socioeconomic and educational differentials) dimension associated with teenage pregnancy in that almost twice as many (61% compared to 34%) of girls who become pregnant live in rural areas (Agyei & Epema, 1992, p. 14; Agyei, Mukiza-Gapere, & Epema, 1994). Of the 12 girls who completed the questionnaire in September 2006, none reported to have ever been pregnant; however, one of the 15 girls
from the research group did become pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl in 2006\textsuperscript{101}. Another became pregnant in 2007, and ran away from school and home. Mistimed pregnancies are common; all of the twelve girls who responded to this questionnaire knew of unmarried girls who had experienced unplanned pregnancies.\textsuperscript{102}

Young women are aware of the very serious consequences unplanned pregnancies can have on their education and their future prospects. If a girl becomes pregnant while still in school, she is almost always expelled as “Ugandan regulations would force these [pregnant] girls to discontinue their education automatically as a consequence of mistimed pregnancy” (Hulton et al, 2000, p. 38). Mistimed pregnancy for unmarried adolescent girls often initiates a life of stark economic hardships as well as severe social consequences. Unmarried mothers with limited educational attainment have few opportunities for earning an income or achieving economic independence, and their (and therefore their children’s) future prospects are extremely limited. These young mothers are generally economically dependent, and therefore limited in choice and freedom in everything from work to relationships. However, many girls who begin secondary school drop out because of early pregnancy (Agyei & Epema, 1992; Hulton et al, 2000; Twa-Twa, 1997).

Unplanned pregnancy for girls was of great concern to teachers and parents. Parents were often reluctant to pay girls’ school fees as they feared the girls would become pregnant, and therefore “waste” the money that had been invested in their education.

That’s why you find that some of the parents – let’s say he has got two girls, two boys – then one girl gets pregnant, the parent will…say even these girls [who have not become pregnant] - I don’t give school fees for them. Then

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{101} This girl did not participate in the September 2006 questionnaire as she had “disappeared”; later I found out that this was because she had run away when she first discovered that she was pregnant.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{102} One girl said she knew about 100 adolescent girls who had become pregnant; one girl said she knew of about 50; one girl said she knew of about 30; one girl knew of 13; one girl knew of nine; and two girls said they knew of four girls who had become pregnant.
he continues with [paying the fees for]… the rest of the boys [but not the]
other girls. So and that has happened in many families -

[Excerpt from interview with teacher Jason, August 2005]

Unplanned, premarital pregnancy was of paramount concern to all of the girls in the research group. It seems that many girls feared pregnancy even more than they feared contracting HIV/AIDS: “They [girls] are fearing of pregnancy. And in Uganda we have a saying that studying students are most fearing of pregnancy not AIDS” (anonymous statement from a girl who completed the questionnaire in September, 2006). Girls know that, if they become pregnant at early age, their future options become gravely limited, and as a result, they will have little to offer their children: “We as young girls we face many problems like early pregnancies. I give to those who gets early pregnancies an advice when they are in school to do abort because they have nothing to give their babies but get a real clinic” (anonymous statement by girl who completed questionnaire in September, 2006).

The following is a letter I received from Ireen, one of the girls who participated in this study, a year and a half after I left Kyato.

Dear Shelley

I didn’t intend to get pregnant because my boy friend tricked me that I will not be pregnant but after realise I felt like dying because I didn’t have a programme to become a mother. I feared because my father would kill me ounce he gets to know and some people told me to abortion but I feared because I have always seen people dying after abortion.

When I informed the father of my child that I was pregnant he feared and run away because if my father got know he would he take to police.
My parents felt very bad and sent me way from home, I am now living with my grandmother.

I was very worried because I had no help from anywhere, I had already annoyed my parents the father of my children run away and I feared to tell Mr Dan my problems at that time. I was not ready to become a mother at this age in fact I was planning to be a mother at the age of 40. I feared about my future because I had not completed my studies and I had no job and my child’s future because I had know programme to support my child.

I was not happy to become a mother at this age, I tried to test sex but I got many problems, which was not good for my age

I don’t have contact with the father of my child because he runs away....

Those are the problems I experienced.

Ireen

Ireen, like many girls who experience similar circumstances, found herself in a desperate situation in which she was disowned by her parents, abandoned by the father of her child, forced to quit school, and without access to any kind of governmental infrastructure to help her support her child or help her finish her education. She was forced to somehow try to find a way to support her child and herself on her own. She had neither access to the sexual health information that should have been available to her nor had she had ready access to contraceptives so that she could have some control over her reproductive options. However, even if those factors had been available to her, the sociocultural factors related to intimate, sexual relationships (i.e., that if a girl insists on her partner using a condom she is either accusing him of being unfaithful, or suggesting that she herself has HIV/AIDS) would likely have negated any initiative she may have taken to
have her partner use a condom as preventative measure. Birth control pills would likely be the best way to prevent pregnancy, but girls do not have easy access to these. Ireen’s letter speaks to the many unfreedoms of young women who are victims of these complex combinations of factors pertaining to sexual relationships.

8.5 HIV/AIDS

The inability of adolescent girls to insist upon protected sex in many relationships is particularly worrying in that adolescents comprise about half of the HIV/AIDS-affected demographic, in which the adolescent female: male ratio of infection is 4:1 in comparison to the adult female: male ratio which is 1:1. (Neema & Bataringaya, 2000). Some research indicates that girls in the 15-19 year age range are up to six times more likely to contract HIV than boys in their age cohort (Malinga, 2001; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Okuongzi & Epstein, 2005), likely because of girls’ sexual relationships with older men: “Age mixing in sexual relationships between older men and adolescent girls has been offered as a likely explanation for these differences, because men often have higher rates of HIV infection than adolescent boys” (Luke, 2003, p. 67; see also Leach et al, 2003). In addition, women are more susceptible to contracting HIV/AIDS because “the vaginal wall is prone to sores and abrasion, and the viral load in semen is higher than that in vaginal fluid” (Kuate-Defo, 2004; see also Dunne et al, 2003). Thus, the combination of socioeconomic and physiological factors can be deadly for adolescent girls in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic: “the low status and powerlessness of the African women have been identified as leading contributors toward their vulnerability to HIV infection” (Ankrah, 1991, p. 971).

There is a vast amount of research and literature on the association of poverty with particular sexual behaviours and vulnerabilities of girls and young women in Uganda and other Southern countries. There is also extensive understanding of the critical risks that can
result from sexual activity in which preventative and protective measures (e.g., the use of condoms) are not taken, but also widespread understanding that, given the power dynamics of many of these relationships (e.g., teacher/student, sugar daddy/impoverished girl), girls can rarely insist on measures that will protect them from pregnancy and/or disease (Jones & Norton, 2007; Leach et al, 2003). Every means possible should be made available to girls to secure all the support and accessibility to contraceptive/preventative measures they need in order to have the best chance possible to lead fulfilling and healthy lives (Ahmed et al, 2001; Agyei et al, 1994). The reality, however, is that adolescent girls (and boys) do not receive the services, information, and resources they need (Ndyanabangi et al, 2003). Studies have shown health clinics to be generally lacking in outreach, and “unfriendly” towards youth: “Adolescents were not accessing the services due to lack of confidentiality and rudeness among service providers, rumours about contraception use and ignorance about the existence of these services” (Neema & Bataringaya, 2000, p. 12).

Thus, given the lack of resources, services, and support with respect to understanding and decision-making around issues of sexual health, very often girls do not have the capacity to prevent pregnancy or the contraction of HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. But, the assumption that the contraction of HIV/AIDS is an individuated problem is erroneous; girls’ mistimed pregnancies and infection with HIV/AIDS are influenced by and affect socioeconomic and cultural factors, as well as the life of the girl. Individual girls should not have to bear the burden of deeply-rooted and complex societal problems.

Promoters of sexual and reproductive health have been criticized for laying undue emphasis on individual behaviour and human rights, ignoring the need for change in negative traditions and cultural factors that have an impact on sexual behaviour and reproductive health in general. (Nalugwa, 2004)
It is imperative that comprehensive sexual health programmes be integrated as a core component of education for all students, but especially for adolescent girls who are most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo et al, 1999). In addition, they must have easy, confidential, and supportive access to whatever resources they require in order to protect themselves. The current state of sexual health education, as I will outline in the next section, is conducive to neither.

8.6 Sexual Health Information, Resources and Services

“Referring to the fact that Uganda had been praised in the past for its AIDS prevention programs, Mr. Lewis [Stephen Lewis, former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa] said it was ‘the ultimate irony that the country and the political leadership most dramatically associated with the decline in prevalence rates’ seems to be de-emphasizing the use of condoms” (Altman, 2005)

From: New Vision (Kampala) - May 17, 2004

“President Yoweri Museveni has attacked the distribution of condoms to primary school pupils, describing it as dangerous and disastrous... ‘I will open war on the condom sellers. Instead of saving life they are promoting promiscuity among young people’ Museveni said” (Ssejoba, 2004)

Given the extensive research and widely acknowledged sexual realities of poor, adolescent girls in Uganda, it would seem that all students, especially girls, should be provided with extensive sexual health education as well as opportunities to protect their lives and futures with free, easy, and supportive access to contraceptive options and STD-preventative measures (i.e., condoms). The students at KSS, however, did not have had
comprehensive sexual health education or access to contraceptive/protective measures.

During a visit to KSS (October 2004), Bonny Norton and Harriet Mutonyi joined Dan and me in a Straight Talk Club discussion with the boys around sexual health.

At first, the boys feigned complete self-confidence and insisted that they had all the information that they needed, but by the end of the conversation, there seemed to be no end of questions they had, and it was quite obvious that they were thirsty for more knowledge about sexual health matters.

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, October 1 2004]

As Harriet’s Master’s and PhD research focuses on youth and sexual health information, we took advantage of her visit to call an impromptu, voluntary, after-school assembly in the library for the students, during which they were free to ask Harriet any questions they had pertaining to sex.

At 4 p.m., the library was bursting with curious students – there must have been over 100 students there. It was a vibrant conversation – full of questions, concerns, laughter, and information – that lasted an hour or so. All of the students seemed to enjoy/appreciate it immensely.

[Excerpt from fieldnotes, October 1 2007]

I videotaped this session, and in the following discussion pertaining to sexual health policies, official messages, and education in Uganda, selected excerpts from the transcription highlight some of the general questions and concerns the KSS students had about sexual health matters.

In the past, Uganda has been touted as a leader in sexual health education (Altman, 2005), with the ABC initiative being widely and publicly promoted: Abstinence until marriage, Being faithful to one’s partner, Condom use. From the mid-1990s to about 2002, President Museveni fully supported each part of the ABC programme, which included the
free distribution of condoms to health clinics and other public outlets throughout the country (Center for Health and Gender Equity, 2005). Now, however, there seems to be confusion and discord around the ABC initiative; “C” has taken a remote back-seat to “A” and “B” (Berry & Noble, 2005). In an interview (Judd, 2004), President Museveni gave the following explanation for his radically reduced support of condom use:

abstinence for the young people is very important because I cannot allow my children to use condoms. When they were still young I could not oh my son, my daughter, you should use condoms when you are engaging in sex; sex for what? Sex has a purpose, not just if you are young and you are not married; what sex are you talking about? That’s why I couldn’t accept so I cannot recommend condoms for the young people. That’s why we said abstinence until you get married.

This shift in emphasis coincided with the introduction of the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2004, in which the overwhelming focus of HIV/AIDS educational programming is on abstinence (Berry & Noble, 2005; Buonocore, Cohen, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2006). Uganda receives a large portion of its HIV/AIDS-prevention programming funds from the PEPFAR, and it is argued that this funding has had an enormous influence on programming content and objectives; as a result, support for education around condom use has been radically reduced. (Berry & Noble, 2005; Buonocore; Center for Health and Gender Equity, 2005; Cohen, 2005; HRW, 2005). Over 50% of the monies received in 2004 – 2006 by Uganda through the PEPFAR programme have been spent on abstinence/be faithful programmes.

ABC billboards have been replaced with advertisements promoting abstinence (Berry & Noble, 2005; Cohen, 2005), and many sources claim that teachers, health providers, and public spokespersons have been instructed not to discuss condom-usage as an HIV/AIDS preventative strategy, but to promote abstinence only (Berry & Noble, 2005;
Cohen, Schleifer & Tate, 2005; HRW, 2005). Cohen (2005) describes how the progressive and innovative President’s Initiative on HIV/AIDS Strategy on Communication to Youth (PIASCY) was initially developed to provide comprehensive sexual health information for every student in Uganda, but was “revised” in a way that accorded with PEPFAR priorities. The original PIASCY text covered a wide range of topics, such as how to prevent oneself from becoming infected (including through the use of condoms), sexual negotiations (e.g., how to “say no”), and sexual hygiene. When the texts were launched in 2003, however, there was a huge outcry from the evangelical community, claiming that the textbooks were pornographic and promoted youth to become sexually active. This had a direct link to President Museveni as “the most vocal supporters of abstinence-until-marriage approaches in Uganda – First Lady Janet Museveni and Pastor Martin Ssempa of the Makerere Community Church – are known to have close ties to U.S. evangelical churches and conservative members of the U.S. Congress” (Cohen, 2005) This was coincidentally, or not so coincidentally, about the time that the US government introduced its PEPFAR initiative that required that one-third of its HIV/AIDS prevention funding be spent on abstinence programmes.

The official message of abstinence has effectively permeated society; when asked how to avoid HIV/AIDS and stay safe, “abstinence” was almost always the automatic response from students. However, it was also clear that many youth were not abstaining, or would not be abstaining from sex until marriage.

Boy 1: What is the best one to protect you from HIV/AIDS?

Harriet: What do you think?

Girl: Abstain from sex. [Many voices echo this]

Harriet: Abstain from sex. Yeah.
Boy 2: No, I can’t agree with that - Playing sex is a nature which we can’t [inaudible] that is why we can’t…but we need also to know what we can do to prevent HIV...

[Excerpt from school meeting with Harriet Mutonyi, October 2004]

The new PIASCY texts emphasized abstinence and characterized sexual intercourse as an act that should be confined to marriage; they omitted information about condom use and sexual hygiene and instead inserted messages intended to scare students away from having sex, such as “pre-marital sex is risky” and “for pupils, sex leads to great sadness” (from Cohen, 2005). In 2004, USAID hired the Uganda Program for Human and Holistic Development (UPHOLD) to provide training for 40,000 teachers on the use of PIASCY materials. Teachers were explicitly instructed not to talk about condoms with their students (Cohen, 2005).

One teacher said, “At the PIASCY training, we were told not to show (pupils) how to use condoms and not to talk about them at our school. In the past, we used to show them to our upper primary classes. Now we can’t do that.” Another commented that President Museveni had recently begun to criticize condoms. “President Museveni said there is no use teaching young people about condom use,” he said, “because then children will go and experiment with them.” Some teachers said they taught their pupils about condoms anyway because, as one put it, “people don’t buy this idea of abstinence, because in Uganda, many girls are using sex to buy their daily bread.” (Cohen, 2005; my italics)

It was also about this time (2004) that the national brand of condoms, distributed for free by the government to health clinics and other public sources, was recalled due to issues of quality. The validity of this recall is contentious as it has been claimed that there were no problems with these condoms, and that the retraction of condoms coincided very
conveniently with the onset of PREPFAR priorities: “Ambassador Stephen Lewis, the United Nations secretary general's special envoy for H.I.V./AIDS in Africa since 2001, and the former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, said that ‘there is no question that the condom crisis in Uganda is being driven and exacerbated by Pepfar and by the extreme policies that the administration in the United States is now pursuing’” (Altman, 2005).

During the students’ after-school meeting with Harriet (October 2004), some students, especially older boys, expressed frustration with the inability to access condoms.

Boy: Some say they [condoms] are there; yet they are not there at the centre, but what can we do to get them?

Harriet: You are supposed to go to the health centre...to be educated about how to use the condoms. That is why they don’t want them to be supplied in just any shop.

However, as mentioned above, health clinics are widely known to be not youth-friendly, and many students would not approach clinics for condoms or other matters related to sexual health (Neema & Bataringaya, 2000). The resulting shortage of and lack of easy access to condoms, and the high price of condoms that were available put large numbers of the population, especially the poor, at risk.

Uganda needed 120 to 150 million condoms a year and that this year's supply of fewer than 30 million condoms, distributed at health clinics, had been exhausted. Privately purchased condoms have more than tripled in price in Uganda, to 54 cents for a package of three, from 16 cents, making them unaffordable for many Ugandans, the critics said. Jodi Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Health and Gender Equity in Washington, D.C., said "there has been a dangerous and profound shift in U.S. donor policy from comprehensive prevention, education and provision of condoms to focus on abstinence only." The shift denies
information and technologies to people at greatest risk of H.I.V., she said. Condoms have become difficult to find in cities, even for a price, and are unavailable in many rural areas, the critics said, and some men have begun using garbage bags as condom substitutes to prevent H.I.V. infection. (Altman, 2005)

Unfortunately, President Museveni and First Lady Janet Museveni, whether of their own accord or whether due to such funding conditionalities, have tempered their personal support for the successful ABC programme, by insisting that abstinence-only is the acceptable practice for unmarried individuals, and condom-usage in this demographic group only promotes promiscuity and immorality.

The distribution of condoms in primary and secondary schools promotes immorality, President Yoweri Museveni has said. “I am not in favour of distribution of condoms in primary and even secondary schools. Leave them in shops so that the ones who are badly off can buy them. Let condoms be a last resort,” he said. He was opening the third Uganda AIDS Partnership Forum yesterday at the International Conference Centre in Kampala. He said children think the only way to have safe sex was to rely on condoms. “I have grown up children and my policy was to frighten them out of indisciplined sex. I started talking to them from the age of 13, telling them to concentrate on their studies, that time would come for sex and that peer groups at school gave them wrong advice from bad families. Indeed, I succeeded in this,” he said. (New Vision, Nov. 30, 2004)

It is unlikely President Museveni’s children ever lacked money for a pen, for soap, for education, or for a condom if need be, and although he may believe that his children abstained from sex until marriage, this is an irresponsible approach to sexual health education. In addition, this study shows (below) that very few parents counsel their children on matters of sexual health, possibly because parents themselves do not have
sufficient information. In the midst of an epidemic that puts young lives at risk, programmes based on moralistic standpoints, especially of those who do not suffer from the disadvantages of extreme poverty such as that suffered by the students of KSS, should be replaced by programmes that acknowledge and respond to the expressed needs and wishes of those youth at the highest risk.

Boy 1: Excuse me, is it [condom] available at school?

Harriet: Do you think you need condoms at school?

Many voices: No!

Many voices: Yes!

Boy 2: We came here to study - not for sex.

Boy 1: As I said, love is nature. Even the animals they are playing sex, even plants - that is why sex should be carried out -

Boy 3: Addition - and even God create Adam and after Adam, he thought I should create a girl so in fact the man can’t stay alone. And that’s why sex is in nature, and even love, you can’t abstain.

[Excerpt from School Meeting with Harriet Mutonyi, October 2004]

Messages, such as First Lady Museveni’s at the United Nations Child Summit, 2002, claim that “The young person who is trained to be disciplined will, in the final analysis, survive better than the one who has been instructed to wear a piece of rubber and continue with ‘business as usual’” (quoted in Stammers, 2003, p. 366), have served to undermine HIV/AIDS prevention measures involving condom-related education. As a result, there has been confusion, contradictions, retractions, fulminations, and remonstrances around the issue of HIV/AIDS education that currently emphasizes PEPFAR objectives. It has left a gaping hole of uncertainty for many, and others fear reprisals for promoting any kind of prevention (i.e., condom use) other than abstinence and
faithfulness. The following are comments made by professional Ugandans who have been dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis found in Berry and Noble’s (2005) report.

- “PEPFAR really shifted the emphasis to A and B [Abstinence and Being faithful] just because of the amounts of money being put into these programmes” - Sam Okware, senior Health Ministry official and architect of Uganda's ABC model.

- "There are some prominent people in government, and some outside, who with the help of conservative agents in the US are stigmatising AIDS, saying that only sinners use a condom. That is the message we are struggling with." - Dr Jotham Musinguzi, director of the Population Secretariat at the Ministry of Finance.

- "Because of the US, our government now says Abstain and Be faithful only. So people stop trusting our advice. They think we were lying about how condoms can stop AIDS. Confusion is deadly." - Dr Katamba, health coordinator of the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau.

As a result, students have many questions and much misinformation around condom use and other issues pertaining to sex. During the Straight Talk Club meeting with Harriet Mutonyi and Bonny Norton103, we discussed where the boys received information about sexual health.

_Dan:_ Do you get the time with the parents, or elders to talk to you about HIV/AIDS?

_Jason:_ No, it is not there - the parents, they are shy to us...For us when we are young, the parents always tell us not to discriminate each other. They just tell you to associate -

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103 Appendix A3: A3-ST/FGD(B1), October 2004
Dan: The culture doesn’t address the problem -

Harriet: So where do you get your information about HIV/AIDS?

Jason: For me - the parents are shy to me, so I get the information from this paper [holds up Straight Talk] – Straight Talk – and from teachers around.

Harriet: So you get your information from this paper?

Jason: Yes I [read] about a lot of problems of people engaging in early sex. I have to abstain from that.

Harriet: So, when you have a question about HIV/AIDS, how do you go about getting information? Do you ask your teachers? Like there are certain issues that are not raised here [in Straight Talk].

Jason: For me, I am somehow, some way mature, so I know what is good and bad. I can advise myself.

Dan: So you don’t go for advice anywhere?

Shelley: But what if you had a question about AIDS, that you weren’t sure about, that you were worried about - where would you go to get information?

[Long silence]

Jason: We can ask teachers around, and listening to problems, because they always talk about that about sex and how to use condoms - they can protect us from getting the HIV -

Harriet: But how will you know how to use a condom?

Jason: No, for now we are still under the age of engaging in such, so -

Harriet: Knowing how to use a condom is different that getting involved in sexual relations. You are getting at this stage...and you are not knowing how to use a condom. How will you -when will you learn?
Jason: But now we students at this age, we are trained how to use this thing. You find that one of us, or two or three will go and have a test to see how this is done or this is... for me I don’t think it is good teach students at this stage how to use condoms as you will find that they are just encouraged to engage in sex. And that is very dangerous, we as students, because we leave education and start thinking about -

Harriet: So do you know anywhere where they teach how to use condoms?

Boys: Yes.

Jason: Certain centres that are - around...and if you are very serious [a teacher] can also teach you.

Peter: And also there was a promotion there, in [the trading centre]...there was a man who is teaching people how to use it by using a stick -

Jacob: And even this Straight Talk there is some information, talk about how we can use condom -

The girls also stated that they did not receive sufficient sexual health information from their parents or school, and that they were in need of this information. In a Straight Talk Club meeting with the girls, one girl made the comment, “The government should give materials to those students whose parents don’t want to counsel their children.” During an interview with Florence, she expressed the need for a woman to whom the girls could talk about sexual health matters.

Shelley: Do you know anyone who has died of HIV/AIDS?

Florence: Yes, I know.

Shelley: How many, do you think?

Florence: Five people.

Shelley: Were they young people, like your age, or were they older people?\(^{105}\)

Florence: Older people.

Shelley: Hmm - ok, so do you know anyone that’s your age?

Florence: Yes.

Shelley: Really?

Florence: She’s there [points in a direction behind her]

Shelley: She has AIDS?

Florence: Yes.

Shelley: Ok - is she in your class? Your classmate?

Florence: No, she completed S - S4.

Shelley: Oh, ok. So she was at this school?

Florence: [nods]

Shelley: She completed S4. Mmm - yeah, because that’s such a big problem in Uganda, isn’t it? AIDS - I guess now it’s getting a bit better -

Florence: [nods]

Shelley: So, is there anything you would like to ask me?

Florence: Yes. Us - us, as girls, we want you to talk - can you talk - can you talk to us about that HIV?

Shelley: Yeah.

Florence: In private, or in certain day…in certain day we can meet you – there

[points] at your home.

[Excerpt from interview with Florence, November 2004]

\(^{105}\) By “older people” I meant adults, but I believe that Sofia thought that I meant anyone older than herself (i.e., even by a year or two).
During a Straight Talk meeting\textsuperscript{106} with the boys and Dan, the boys said that the entirety of their sexual health education consisted of “one or two lessons”, and one of the boys said when we debriefed about Harriet’s visit, “I want other people to come and talk about …the [kinds of] information we got in this paper [Straight Talk]”. We discussed the information the boys were most in need of. One boy said: “Me, I want to talk about sex before marriage. I think that practicing sex before marriage is dangerous because we as young people don’t know how…we don’t know how to use condoms so many people got diseases, like AIDS, and suffer with that diseases”. When I asked the boys how they would go about finding out how to use condoms properly, one boy said, “The packages of the condoms, they are somehow with directions, how to use it”.

Clearly, the education system and society had failed these students in terms of providing them with sufficient sexual health information. The shift in HIV/AIDS education emphasis from ABC to AB, has had serious repercussions for effective and thorough sexual health education for youth. Aside from the intrinsic \textit{unfreedom} of not being able to choose to enter sexual relationships under A/B, there is a vast amount of evidence that shows that “A” is not a viable option for many girls, for a number of reasons, many of which I have discussed in the sections above (Cohen, 2005; Jones & Norton, 2007; Lacey, 2003).

\textbf{8.7 Lack of Legal and Political Commitment to Girls’ Rights}

\textit{Girls in Uganda…fear to talk…they just keep quiet which is not good at all. They also face the problem of being forced [to have sex] by some people such as teachers, doctors, old mans because they fear them. Girls in Uganda have faced the problem of dying for nothing because of abortion…and los[ing] their chance of education due to unprotected sex.}

\textsuperscript{106} Appendix A3: A3-ST/FGD(B2), November 2004.
Barrier #16 of The NSGE acknowledges that there is “Inadequate enforcement of available laws and regulations which would otherwise protect the person and interests of the girl child e.g. laws on defilement” (GOU, p. 6). The GOU has tried to address this in various ways, including the Ugandan Penal Code Act as a statute, often referred to as the “defilement law”, that states that: “any person who unlawfully has sexual relations with a girl under the age of eighteen years is guilty of an offence and liable to suffer death” (Byamukama, 2001, p. 19). Nevertheless:

Despite the legal age for marriage being 18 years, around 50% women marry before 18 and 17% at age 15. Further, nearly 25% of women in all age groups had had their first experience of sexual intercourse by age 15. In addition, nearly 30% of female teenagers (aged 15-19) already had a child or were pregnant. (Pitamber and Chatterji, 2005, p. 25)

There are a number of factors that make the enforcement of the defilement law problematic. First, as discussed above, girls under 18 often have consensual sex with older men for economic reasons (school fees, school supplies, clothing, etc.) or with boys their own age in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, and are not likely to want to bring a charge of “defilement” law against those sexual partners. Despite the unequal power dimensions related to gender, age and economic status, girls considered these relationships to be consensual, and it is highly unlikely they would legally accuse those with whom they had “consensual” sexual relations of defilement. In addition, this law might actually prevent some boys from assuming responsibility for their part in the pregnancy of their girlfriends, as they would fear, like Ireen’s boyfriend, imprisonment (or worse).

Second, there seems to be a culture of fear in young women, along with a sense of resignation about the inevitability of the power of men over women. Of the girls that
completed the second sexual health questionnaire, nine out of 12 had been forced to have sex with boys/men (some girls had been forced into sex by several different men/boys), yet none of these cases had been reported. It is likely typical that most cases of sexual assault and sex with girls under 18 years of age go unreported. Third, the defilement law conflicts with cultural beliefs around the marriageable age of girls, as well as with the harsh economic circumstances that create a climate for early marriages. However, sexual relations between, for example, a 16 or 17-year old girl and her husband (whether he is the same age or considerably older), within a marriage sanctioned by both the girl’s and her husband’s family, would not likely be tried in court as a case of “defilement”. It would be extremely unusual for a young girl to file a legal case against her husband, even if marriage meant the abrupt end to her educational and employment opportunities (and, therefore, opportunities for economic independence), even if she were married to a much older man who already had other wives, and even if the relationship was abusive, but condoned by the girl’s parents.

It seems that there was general awareness by students, teachers and community members of the defilement law. Boys discussed it in FGDs; one boy claimed that the biggest problem about impregnating a girl is “you [the boy] can go to prison”\textsuperscript{107}. Teachers made mention of it in interviews, but said that generally boys and men were able to avoid punishment. Girls talked about it in interviews and focus group discussions, but insisted that sexual abuse, assault and harassment, and sex with “sugar daddies”, teachers and other older men was commonplace. Despite the awareness of the defilement law, it seemed rarely to be enforced and did not serve as a serious deterrent for many men or boys who had sex with girls under the age of 18.

\textsuperscript{107} Appendix A3: A3-ST/FGD(B2), November 2005.
In an article in the Monitor, one of Uganda’s national newspapers, a spokesperson for the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), Topher Mugumya, explained that there are numerous problems with enforcing the defilement law:

Most cases stop at the police stations because the victims fear reproach from the aggressor’s family and children feel shy reporting sexual abuse cases. The Police also stifle some cases by denying receipt of any reports from the victims usually after the aggressors bribe the Police, which is unfortunate. However, victims who take the cases to court usually back off saying they had consented so it was not abuse; or the defendants quote other laws such as Sharia law, which says the age of consent is 12 or 13 years. (Nanteza, 2006)

A Probation Officer in Mbale, Western Uganda, told me during an information interview (October, 2004)\textsuperscript{108}, that very few cases of rape, perhaps two a month, were reported. He said that girls and women are “shy” about reporting sexual assault, and will only do so if there are witnesses. He also made the disturbing comment that the culture “encourages rape”; the “girl child instead of saying no, she means yes…the first sexual relationship is a kind of rape…struggle is part of the culture” (excerpt from interview with Probation Officer, Mbale, October, 2004).

In her notebook, for the topic “The Worst Thing That Ever Happened to Me”, Ireen wrote about being the victim of an attempted rape.

\textit{The worst thing that ever happened to me}

\textit{One day it was morning when I was walking I found a man and he begged me to play with him sex and I refused to do so. He tried to force and I run away and I found my mum when she was cooking food and I started telling her what has}

\textsuperscript{108} See Appendix A1
happened to me. She frightened saying What, pardon me what has happened to you? She asked me the name of that man and I tell her the man’s name.

After that my mother told me to put on clothes without bathing at that very moment my mum thought that, that man raped me. My mum told me to go in the clinic to see whether it is true that, that man has raped me. The doctor started to check whether that man has raped me. He found that it was not true.

Then my mum went to the police to report that man. The policemen told my mum to wait for a little because we are not supposed to excuse any man who are mature to rape a young girl like your child. Even if she was mature enough no one supposed to rape her because we have our laws which we follow.

A policeman gave my mum a letter to call that man. My mum go back at home and she gave letter to that man who want to raped me. The man started by saying that what have I done. In the letter was so many commandments when the day came to go back because the policeman gave us a day to go back with that man want to raped me.

When we are arrived there the policeman started to asked the man to gave him the reason why he want to rape the young girls like me. He keep quiet without saying any word. The policeman decided to prisoned him. He gave him three months before he came back home.

When he came back at home he became jealousy for all us and our relatives. After few weeks he dead, so I concluding by saying that that man too dangerous man than others. Even if he was dead up to now I fear all mature men. So raping should be abolished.
Ireen’s mother took this assault seriously and ensured that action was taken against the perpetrator. In this case, the police also took the case seriously and meted out punishment (it is not clear whether this went to court, or whether the police simply took action of their own accord). Clearly, however, once the man returned to the village, there were many problems between him and Ireen’s extended family. This is one of the reasons people are typically reluctant to take action against someone from their village, or a relative who violates the rights of a girl or woman. Ireen’s mother was an exception and so, it seems, was the police officer who handled the case.

Taking legal action in many circumstances, justifiable as it may be, can have harsh repercussions. If, for example, a girl accused a respected village elder, or a popular teacher, or a male relative, of sexual abuse/assault, she could easily find herself alienated from the family, village or school community. Changes, therefore, must be holistic and societal in nature; they need to examine and address socioeconomic, cultural, political, and legalistic sources of gender inequalities, as well as provide extensive and effective support networks for girls at all levels of society. In addition, there must be a committed and long-term dialogic exchange across and within all sectors/populations of society to bring about universal awareness and enforcement of these laws. Laws, in and of themselves, are not enough to transform cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices that uphold inequalities, but they can at least provide parameters within which those unequal attitudes, beliefs, and practices are reconsidered, and a framework within which transformative change can happen.

8.8 Conclusion

Many of my findings that pertain to the larger, societal issues that constitute challenges to girls’ education are connected to power, freedom, and choice, which in turn
often link directly to socioeconomic conditions. In Uganda, the state provides very few social support mechanisms, and people who do not have access to any kind of financial security are therefore subject to the “unfreedoms” (Sen, 1999) of extreme poverty, which demands that they rely, often heavily, on others in their families and communities or resort to risky behaviour, such as transactional sex, in order to meet their needs (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo et al, 1999). Transactional sex is common amongst poor girls, but the consequences, particularly mistimed pregnancy and/or the contraction of HIV/AIDS, can be dire. Other issues relating to adolescent girls’ sexuality are equally problematic. The fact that girls who traditionally would have been married at the secondary school level age are unmarried and often leading lives independent of their families (e.g., if they are boarding at school) places them in a vulnerable position. They are subject to a wide variety of sexual harassment and abuse within and beyond the school environment, and this has a great impact on their education.

The very important and pivotal relationship between sexuality/sex-related issues and girls’ education is conspicuously absent in the NSGE, at least in terms of the breadth and depth of its impact. In terms of the school environment itself, exploitation, abuse, and harassment of girls by their teachers as well as by male students must be acknowledged and specifically addressed in policies that mandate against such violations, and practices of strict enforcement that mete out severe consequences for transgression of these policies must be implemented. In addition to being a safe place for girls, the school should be a supportive, compassionate and protected environment where girls receive all the information and resources they need to protect themselves against pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases, without fear of judgment or reprisal around their choices of sexual activity.
The situation beyond the school environment is perhaps more complicated as there are numerous kinds of sexual relationships in which girls are involved. Laws that are meant to protect girls and women are either ineffectual or fail to get passed in parliament. For example, the Penal Code Act that states “any person who unlawfully has sexual relations with a girl under the age of eighteen years is guilty of an offence and liable to suffer death” (Byamukama, 2001, p. 19), is not sufficiently nuanced to take into account the wide variety of sexual activities involving girls (and boys) under 18 years of age. In essence, there at least need to be distinctions made between consensual and non-consensual relationships, and laws that vary according to nuances within those categories. In addition, those laws must be enforceable and enforced. However, in addition to laws, there is urgent need for strong and extensive mechanisms and networks of support for girls (e.g., youth-friendly health services, shelters, legal advocates, counselors, crisis centres), as well as a visible, relentless, and educative campaign around girls and women’s rights that actively welcomes and involves boys and men.

Issues around adolescent Uganda girls’ sexuality extend, in fact, beyond the local into the realm of the global. These girls’ sexual experiences have been heavily impacted by the international forces that have shaped their society and economy and influenced cultural practices.

[I]t is important to understand the conceptual, and therefore political, links among women’s politics, the body and globalization…The ability for women to participate in practices that promote reproductive health, empowered to set priorities and make choices, demands a sense of direction and purpose that is not solely an individual by a place-based one determined by culture and community within a wider social and economic context. (Harcourt & Mumtaz, 2002, p. 37).
The complex nature of adolescent girls’ sexuality, sexual experiences, and the way girls are perceived and treated by society makes the articulation, spirit, and enforcement of laws that aim to “protect” the girl child (e.g., Barrier #16 of the NSGE) difficult. Nonetheless it is critical that attempts are made to articulate laws that will best serve the interests of girls/women, and that these laws are regularly reviewed and revised as better understandings of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of these laws come to light. But these protective measures need also to be empowering. Ideally, girls would not view themselves as victims in need of protection, but rather as autonomous beings with rights and entitlements to which society is morally and legally bound to adhere. When girls begin to internalize the fact that they have inviolable rights and entitlements, but that there are many aspects of the existing world that violate those rights and entitlements, they could very well begin undertaking transformative strategies to bring about female emancipation and empowerment. Education should be a critical path that builds the capabilities necessary for girls to demand and embody those rights and entitlements, and achieve powerful functionings in their future societies.

Chapter 9 proposes ways in which to reconceptualize girls’ education based on findings presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 and suggests alternative ways in which girls’ education can be conceptualized and approached to provide girls with opportunities to develop capabilities and agency.
CHAPTER 9: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter focuses on my first research objective, which is to contribute to the Ugandan national policy around girls’ education (NSGE), at the post-primary level. Based on the lives and experiences of the girls who participated in this study, I discuss findings that respond to the following two questions: 1. How effectively has the NSGE identified and addressed challenges to girls’ education?; and 2. How could the NSGE expand or improve its approach to achieving quality, equitable education for girls at the secondary level? Although the 15 girls who participated in this study may not be representative of all adolescent females in Uganda, I believe they are representative of a great many Ugandan girls, especially those who live in poor, rural contexts. In addition, the recommendations made are fundamentally concerned with promoting gender equity in education in meaningful ways for all students so they will be of benefit to all Ugandan girls, whatever their socioeconomic status and geographical context.

9.1 How Effectively Has the NSGE Identified and Addressed Challenges to Girls’ Education?

Overall the NSGE has identified the majority of the challenges to girls’ education to some extent. However, some of the assumptions that are made within the articulation of these barriers, and the lack of acknowledgement and/or emphasis on certain extremely serious and pervasive problems need to be addressed. In addition, the way in which the three main headings - “Socio-Cultural Factors”, “School-Related Factors” and “Political/Economic/ Administrative Factors” – categorize barriers to girls’ education provides a particular lens, (i.e., social conditions and factors) that frames the way(s) in

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109 I will consider these below in the section “Unfreedoms not acknowledged by the NSGE”.

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which girls’ lives are viewed and understood. I think it is useful to create a complementary lens that emerges from framing and focusing on girls’ needs, based on their real life situations and contexts, in order to explore how, why, when, where and by whom those needs are or are not addressed.

The ethnographic nature of my study enabled me to gain insight into the girls’ lives and their needs, and how/if those needs were met. As Brock-Utne (1996) points out: “One of the main contributions of a qualitative research strategy lies exactly in focusing on the actual implementation of policies in schools and thus assessing the points at which policy and practice converge and diverge” (p. 617). By visiting the girls’ homes and families, by engaging in conversation with them on an almost daily basis for a year, by considering their responses given in questionnaires and interviews, and by observing their lives from a nearby vantage point, I came to know how each of the girls interacted in multiple spheres, as well as perceive the commonalities they shared as a group. When I began to consider the girls’ lives and educational opportunities in terms of the 18 barriers within the three main categories of the NSGE, “Socio-Cultural Factors”, “School-Related Factors”, and “Political/Administrative/ Economic Factors”, I struggled to interpret my data within these parameters; the NSGE seemed too much like a checklist of isolated obstacles to be separately addressed. From my research, I understood that every barrier identified in the NSGE had multiple points of overlap and was embedded in layers of nuance because each was rooted in three underlying and interrelated factors - poverty, gender inequities, and sexuality/sexual experiences – and impacted others.

In addition to the way in which the factors militating against girls’ education were organized and presented, I found the word “barrier”, used to depict these factors, problematic; a barrier connotes an objectified, external factor that is not directly connected to one’s life, but that presents an obstacle one must negotiate, overcome, or succumb to.
There is also a sense of resignation or defeatism around “barriers”, for example, that barriers are inevitable and unmovable. The factors that constitute impediments to girls’ education, however, must be understood as socially constructed from the socioeconomic circumstances, cultural and political beliefs, and practices emanating from the contexts to which the girls belong, and to which the girls are very much intimately connected; as such, these factors are “deconstructable”. I argue that the term “unfreedom” (Sen, 1999) more accurately reflects these factors than does the word “barrier”, as unfreedoms can only be understood in connection to one’s life and lived experiences, and the degree to which one is able to fully participate in society and/or the degree to which one’s rights are curtailed. Therefore, for the purposes of the discussion of my findings in relationship to the NSGE, I will use the term “unfreedoms”\textsuperscript{110} to discuss the ways in which girls’ opportunities for education are constrained.

\section*{9.2 Unfreedoms}

By directly situating girls within the social contexts in which they interact, inequitable and discriminatory beliefs and practices that create and perpetuate unfreedoms in their lives are exposed. I consider various fundamental unfreedoms as a shared plight for a general population (i.e., all students, all family members, etc. living in impoverished conditions in this part of rural Uganda), but then focus on how those unfreedoms affect girls in particular. I then discuss how each of these unfreedoms is represented in the NSGE.

\subsection*{9.2.1 Poverty}

The most overwhelming, pervasive and persistent unfreedom faced by all of the students at KSS, as well as the vast majority of people in the area, was extreme poverty.

\textsuperscript{110} From this point on, I will no longer contain the word unfreedom in quotation marks
However, as unimaginable as it seemed at times, given their very limited resources, the KSS students were relatively privileged; namely, these secondary school youth had educational opportunities, where the majority of their peers did not. But, the KSS students were very aware of the fragility of this privilege, as there was no guarantee they would still be in school the next term, or even the next week. Boys and girls alike shared this stress and anxiety around the looming doubt that they would be able to remain in school, but the threat of having to leave school was considerably more acute for girls; for the same reasons many girls never began secondary school at all. Poverty intensified underlying socioeconomic and cultural gender inequities that put girls at a much greater disadvantage than boys in terms of access to schooling.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the relationship between poverty and gender inequities has emerged from a complex historical legacy spanning the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras. However, especially with the introduction of the cash economy and capitalism in the colonial era, and its continuation in the current, postcolonial era of neoliberalism and economic globalization, girls’ and women’s status and overall opportunities to participate not only in the economy, but also in society in general, have been egregiously eroded (Kweisga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). The separation between paid (male, out of the home, wage-earning) and unpaid (female, domestic, subsistence farming) labour, especially amongst males and females who have had little if any education has undermined girls’ and women’s independence and curtailed a wide range of opportunities, including the opportunity for equitable and quality education. As Sen (1999) acknowledges, “the rejection of the freedom to participate in the labor market is one of the ways of keeping people in bondage” (p. 7). The cash economy has largely forced women to become dependent on men for money to pay for goods and services that require financial outlay, and because boys and men have a tremendous advantage over women and
girls in terms of earning an income, boys are generally favoured over girls in terms of educational opportunities, as they would be more likely than girls to be able to use the education they receive to eventually earn money and help support the family: “This inter-generational reproduction of poverty means that girls are disadvantaged from an early age and lose out on the attendant benefits of education and are subjected to a chronic form of poverty that hinders upward mobility” (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 28). The full extent of the unfreedoms caused by these economic factors must be understood, so that long-term strategies can be created to effectively eradicate those inequities that lead to loss of educational, as well as many other, opportunities.

In the NSGE, poverty *per se* is given but a single mention as the last barrier, Barrier #18, which states: “Poverty constrains the choices available to parents even if they were amenable to supporting girls’ education” (GOU, p. 6). This consideration of poverty as an isolated barrier, located at the end of the list of other barriers, is extremely problematic, and perhaps indicative of the intent and assumptions behind the creation of this document. Although poverty is an underlying factor in many, perhaps most, of the barriers that the NSGE does identify (e.g., unequal division of domestic labour, “opportunity costs” related to education, lack of adequate school facilities, etc.) the NSGE does not specifically *link* these barriers to poverty. It seems that the NSGE attempts to provide means of addressing poverty-related inequities without foregrounding poverty, possibly because poverty is a taken-for-granted condition of many Ugandans or because donors are not interested in

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111 Section II of the NSGE lists 16 “Players” that are responsible for overseeing about 26 activities related to addressing this barrier, most of which are concerned with supporting girls with school fees, scholarships and bursaries, or providing parents with income-generating opportunities. Section III, “The Way Forward”, states two main objectives for Barrier 18: “Promote income generation at [the] household level to reduce poverty and support/free girls to acquire education”; and “Promote strategies to reduce child labour” (GOU, p. 43). There are four “strategies/activities” proposed to meet these objectives: “Expand existing income-generating activities and credit schemes...”; “Provide/improve infrastructure and social services to reduce household workload, e.g., water, grinding mills”; “Promote system of bursaries and scholarships for primary and secondary girls at national and district levels and support existing initiatives”; and “Sensitize parents, women, employers and communities to [the] importance of continuing education for young girls” (GOU, p. 43).
hearing about how poverty presents complexities and disadvantages that result in unfreedoms that cannot be tackled by a single programme.

Obviously, a policy document intended to support the education of girls can neither provide strategies to overcome conditions of endemic and severe poverty nor can it be expected to address all the unfreedoms that extreme poverty poses, or develop strategies/activities to effectively combat poverty. I believe, however, that poverty in terms of girls’ education must be addressed simultaneously on two levels by the NSGE (and/or by other national policies concerned with girls’ education): i) through ameliorating the immediate and pressing day-to-day crises and anxieties related to financial demands (i.e., school fees, supplies, examination fees, uniforms, loss of labour at home, money spent for education that is not available to be spent for medical care, food, or other necessities, etc.); and ii) by establishing well-developed and widely instituted awareness-building programmes that engage all members of society in the consideration of the many cultural/historical/ideological unfreedoms that link gender and economics and how those are lodged deep within normative practices and beliefs.

In terms of the former, the NSGE has effectively identified measures being taken and actions that can be developed, in partnership with the many groups that are already involved, primarily through providing financial support to girls and attempting to find ways to ease their workload. There are numerous agencies, groups, organizations and departments listed as involved parties in implementing these strategies/activities, which have the potential to positively impact girls’ education. They will only make a significant difference, however, if the scope of coverage is comprehensive, and involves adequate financial commitment to offer, for example, more than one or two scholarships per district,

112 See footnote 3.
and a serious investment in infrastructure to provide water to communities. I did not see that any such initiatives had reached Kyato Village.

Overall, the NSGE is deficient in examining and addressing the cultural, historical, and ideological unfreedoms associated with poverty, and how these directly undermine the educational opportunities of girls. The specific ways in which poverty exacerbates existing gender inequities is a condition that must be addressed before any other unfreedoms can be mitigated.

9.2.2 Gender Inequities

“As things stand now, Uganda’s gender relations are highly unequal by any standard measure.” (Pankhurst, 2002, p. 125)

There can be no clear understanding of the extent and nature of gender inequity until poverty is addressed; and the more extreme the poverty and gender inequities, the more numerous and egregious the unfreedoms experienced by girls and women. Indeed, as Sen (1999) claimed, “economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme poverty, can make a person helpless prey in the violation of other kinds of freedom...Economic unfreedom can breed social unfreedom” (p. 8). With respect to educational opportunities for girls in Uganda (as well as in many other Southern countries), poverty cannot be understood apart from these other pervasive and prevalent unfreedoms, which in turn cannot be separated from poverty. This is a symbiotic, if parasitic, relationship that strengthens and gains momentum with the extremity of conditions: the more extreme the poverty, the more intensive are unfreedoms linked to gender.
9.2.2a Home

Gender inequities, resulting from cultural norms, beliefs, and practices, including those relating to the clan, constitute many unfreedoms for girls with respect to educational opportunities. As discussed at length in Chapter 6, boys are generally regarded to be more important than girls to the clan, as boys are expected to contribute offspring (inside or outside of marriage), as well as support (e.g., financial) and services (e.g., administrative, political) to the clan. Boys also inherit property from their fathers and therefore have a lifelong connection to the clan community. Conversely, girls marry “out” of the clan and join that of their husbands; as a result, investment in girls’ education is often seen as “wasted” because girls will leave their parents’ home and clan, and therefore, any benefit to be reaped by their education goes to their husbands and clans, not to their parents, which translates into an “opportunity cost” (Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). In addition, boys and men have a substantially greater likelihood of earning an income than do girls and women, even if the boys/men have little or no education, so limited economic opportunities for females result in an unequal burden of domestic responsibilities. Consequently, the time girls spend at school takes away from the labour they are able to perform at home, which is often considered to be an opportunity cost to the family, and if girls do have the opportunity to attend school, they are often given less time than boys to study. Also, if parents become ill, it is expected that girls will assume care for family members, and therefore, relinquish their own education for domestic responsibilities. And, if children become orphaned and are taken in by other families, it is most likely the girls who will suffer most in terms of educational possibilities as, in such circumstances, they are often expected to “pay” for their position in the household through domestic labour or other services. For example, as discussed in Chapter 5, one of the girls, Elizabeth, had to move in with relatives after the death of her parents. Her guardians refused to continue to
pay her school fees, and Elizabeth was forced to drop out of school and perform domestic duties at home instead.

Inequitable distribution of domestic labour is a serious unfreedom for girls, especially for those in poor, rural areas; it affected the girls in this study, as well as many other girls in the area for whom it prevented attendance at secondary school. It is interesting to consider how the NSGE addresses this unfreedom, stated as Barrier 3:

“Traditional division of labour in the home and school which exerts greater social demands on the girls than the boy and often compels the girls to drop out of school to assume domestic duties” (GOU, p. 5). Barrier 3 is located under the first major theme, “Socio-Cultural Factors”; it is then mapped onto the “Key Players” chart as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier/Constraint</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Coverage (area, population, funding)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Traditional division of labour at home and in school</td>
<td>GTZ (German Technical Cooperation)</td>
<td>Support to urban out-of-school children, with specific emphasis on females through non-formal basic education approaches</td>
<td>Kampala District, ? other urban centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WETSU [no definition of acronym]</td>
<td>Women’s science award to best female science student at P7, ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels</td>
<td>Targets 8 sub-regions. 1 award so far. Funds sought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)</td>
<td>(AUTEP) [no definition of acronym] Inservice teacher and management training gives teachers competence to handle girls’ issues</td>
<td>Trained 112 teachers and 150 female school managers. Reached 8525 girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UMS [no definition of acronym]</td>
<td>National maths contest which equitably reward girls and boys excelling in Maths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 “Barrier 3 from NSGE”

The activities proposed to address, ameliorate and/or eradicate this unfreedom neither had any impact whatsoever on the girls in my study, nor do these activities even appear to be relevant in addressing the issue of onerous domestic labour for girls. In the subsequent section of the NSGE, “The Way Forward”, the seven barriers encompassed under “Socio-Cultural Factors”, including Barrier #3, are presented as a single cluster for which “objectives” and “strategies/activities” are outlined. The full chart (Table B, Section A) can be found in Appendix C, but the four objectives outlined for all seven “Socio-Cultural Factors” are:

1. Create a safe environment for girls in/around school and home.
2. Institute/promote programs to boost self-confidence/self-esteem and assertiveness in girls.
3. Discourage early marriage, harmful initiation practices and remove discrimination against females who become pregnant in school.
4. Enhance family stability to ensure love and security for all children.

In total there are about 25 collaborating/responsible parties concerned with the implementation of 16 strategies/activities. Only one of these strategies/activities, however, directly addresses the issue of the demands of domestic labour for girls, which is “Promote energy/time-saving technologies to free girls’ time for formal and non-formal education/training” (listed under Objective 2). But, the “Collaborating/ Responsible Party” (responsible for implementation of the strategy/activity) is named as “etc”; the “Resources Available/Needed” are listed as “----”, the Output/Verifiable Indicator is “------”; and the Target Date is “------”.

The lack of specificity, accountability, and timelines concerning this unfreedom indicates that there is no imminent programme of action that will lessen the workload and
time poverty of girls and women (Blacken & Wodon, 2006). Thus, the NSGE falls short on effectively presenting and instituting ways and means by which the girls’ unequal burden of domestic responsibilities can be effectively addressed (Kwesiga, 2002; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). More importantly, however, is the fact that the NSGE does not suggest ways in which the actual gender inequity of domestic labour could be addressed in order to provide girls with gender equitable educational opportunities. As Kasente (2003) says, “UPE policy has led to increased access for both sexes but it does not challenge the social construction of gender in society that tends to disadvantage girls by allocating them endless reproductive work, among other gender inequalities that specifically keep girls from enrolling in school” (p. 4). This argument can be extended, and is likely even more acute, for adolescent girls at the secondary school level.

9.2.2b School

In addition to the tangible, or measurable, inequities such as unequal burdens of domestic labour, there are many other subtler, and perhaps even more insidious, gender inequities that are rooted in perceptions of girls’ abilities and ambitions. As discussed at length in Chapter 7, these numerous, systemic gender inequities existing in the school environment need to be fully exposed and addressed in order to establish gender equitable education. It is important here to re-emphasize that “equity” is not synonymous with “sameness”, and that “gender equity” in education is not measured quantitatively by “gender parity”. Thus, girls’ needs, circumstances, and aspirations must be given due consideration to achieve truly gender equitable education.
School Location

School location and facilities are extremely important considerations for girls’ attendance at secondary school. The location of schools has a great bearing on whether or not girls are able to attend. The greater the distance between home and school, the less likely it is that girls will be able to attend because of the dangers (e.g., sexual harassment, assault, etc.) of walking long distances alone. In addition, the time spent traveling long distances to and from school takes away from the time girls are able to spend performing domestic duties.

School Facilities and Resources

School facilities and resources, such as classrooms, desks, textbooks and teaching materials, affect all students and teachers, but certain facilities and resources, such as lack of secure, separate and private toilet facilities, and free access to running water, affect girls’ educational opportunities far more than those of boys (FAWE 2001; GCE 2005; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Unterhalter & Brighouse, 2004). Girls require toilet facilities where they can be free of harassment, the necessary sanitary materials, and free access to running water that can enable them to participate in regular school activities during their menses. In fact, Unterhalter and Brighouse (2004) discuss lack of running water as a capability deprivation that specifically affects girls as it affects them unequally as “similar resource allocations, especially when they fall below some threshold, can have unequal (and we think unjust) effect on their future prospects for capability sets.” (Unterhalter & Brighouse, 2004, p. 12). For example, if girls do not have access to running water at school when they are menstruating, it may (and does) prevent them from attending school. In the case of mixed boarding schools, girls require bathing facilities and dormitories that are private,
secure, and separate from those of boys. With respect to school location and facilities, the NSGE has sufficiently identified and addressed this challenge.

9.2.2c Pedagogy and Curricular Content

The exam-driven academic Ugandan secondary level curriculum affects both teachers and students as it severely limits opportunities for innovative pedagogical approaches and critical and creative intellectual development. Instead, curricular and exam-related demands perpetuate teacher-centered instruction and rote memorization. Although all students are affected by this, girls tend to suffer more: teacher-centered pedagogy reinforces submissiveness and obedience to mostly (at the secondary level) male teachers and authorities (Kakuru, 2006; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005); the anxiety and stress surrounding examinations compound the already high levels of anxiety they live with in terms of their ability to remain in school; girls have less time to study than boys because of the unequal distribution of domestic labour; and, the lack of opportunities for creative intellectual development and critical thinking limits the possibilities for girls to imagine future identities or communities in which they would like to participate.

The NSGE recognizes pedagogical and curricular unfreedoms for girls in Barrier #10: “Negative gender stereotyping in the curriculum, instructional materials, teaching-learning methodology and assessment systems” (GOU, p. 5). It identifies nine “Key Players” and about 15 activities that reach anywhere from a total of six to 12 schools to 37 districts. Most of these activities are concerned with revising or creating teaching/learning materials without gender bias and which promote inclusive language. Unfortunately, The NSGE offers no courses of action for the kinds of curricular and pedagogical reform that would most benefit girls, such as those attending KSS, whose access to textual materials is very limited. For these girls, an emphasis on improved pedagogical practices that
encouraged inclusivity and active participation of all students, critical analysis, discussion, and student-centered learning would benefit them enormously. Numerous studies in developing country contexts have shown that a welcoming, supportive, participatory pedagogy that encourages empowerment and critical reflection releases learners, particularly those, such as girls, who have been heretofore marginalized or unequally susceptible to the negative effects of authoritative, teacher-centered pedagogy, from the unfreedoms of classroom tyranny and oppression and cultivates their intellectual, social, and capabilities development (Aikman & Unterhalter, GCE, 2005; 2005; Leach, 2003).

This requires, however, that such pedagogical efforts “need to be sustained and enhanced by attention in policy and practice to address the deep-seated structures of gender inequality that will always constrain anything that the most transformative teacher can do” (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005, p. 248). Thus, the larger society must be actively committed to supporting girls’ education for real change to transpire. There is, however, no aspect of the NSGE that recommends that curricular and pedagogical assumptions be challenged to engage girls in a process that would help shape their educational and life trajectories in ways that would be of most benefit to them.

In addition to the problems inherent in the academic programme, the lack of health/sexual health education and counselors is also an enormous disadvantage to girls (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). One activity, supported by UNICEF, was to produce “Life Skills materials for secondary and primary school teachers – fully gender sensitized to tackle critical issues confronting girls” (GOU, 1999, p. 10). These measures, however, had very little, if any, effect on the students of KSS as the only sets of textbooks the school had were the English texts that were purchased by our Canadian-Ugandan UBC research.

\[\text{\footnote{The UBC-Uganda team, led by Drs. Kendrick and Norton, consists of Canadian and Ugandan faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, as well as several Ugandan research assistants and colleagues.}}\]
team, and which were rarely used (other than by me). Attention to the representation of gender is important, but this is only one aspect of gender discrimination with respect to pedagogy and curriculum.

There are several areas in which the NSGE expresses the need to “sensitize” the larger society about the importance of girls’ education, but the NSGE does not make the connection between negative gender stereotyping in teaching-learning methodology as reflecting “deep-seated structures of gender inequality” (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005, p. 248) that exist in the wider society. Nor does the NSGE address many other issues related to the pedagogical relationships between teachers and female students, such as the general attitudes of male teachers that compared with those of boys, (i.e., girls are less ambitious, have less leadership potential, are less motivated to learn, are less serious about their studies, and are even less intelligent than boys). This has serious implications for the ways in which teachers might interact with, perceive and assess girls academically.

9.2.2d Community and Larger Society

As discussed at length in Chapter 7, teachers’ and other adults’ often low estimations of girls’ abilities constituted yet another unfreedom for girls, and resulted in a lack of serious and committed cultivation of leadership skills. In an interview with Gelly, I asked what she thought could be done to strengthen leadership abilities and roles of girls; Gelly stated that more women politicians were needed, “because they…get more from the communities and they go direct to the government to identify the problems they have seen there. So that the government…learn from these problems” (August, 2005). Gelly’s point was valid and perceptive, but the real experiences of women formally involved in the Ugandan political arena generally attest to the enduring power of patriarchal hegemony, with “accommodation” for women. For example, despite the Ugandan government’s
affirmative action policies around gender and politics, less than 18% of the national parliamentary seats are held by women (Pankhurst, 2002, p. 125), and there are expectations that those women who become formally involved in politics will not challenge the status quo, social constructs around behaviour and activities deemed acceptable for women, and gendered dimensions of labour (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Pankhurst, 2002).

In addition, women who formally participate in politics are “expected to submit to male patronage under prevailing cultural norms, and this has a direct bearing on their ability to pursue civic rights” (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 9), and women’s political roles are further constrained by the expectation that they will focus on areas of “production and marketing, education, health and community development, while their male counterparts dominate in more decision making issues such as finance, administration, and technical services”. (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, pp. 9-10). In addition, because men typically received more and/or better education than girls, men generally possessed abilities and skills that many women did not, constraining women’s participation in politics (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). Political involvement at the local level is especially important for women because it has the potential to “offer a chance to women as well as men to voice their needs and priorities and to demand services and support from authorities which are nearer to them than central government agencies” (Danida, 2000, p. 16). Lack of women’s political involvement at the local level, therefore, perpetuates “deeply embedded cultural beliefs and practices, economic policies by government and continued talk (rhetoric) that seems to have no effect on the gender relations at the household level other than increasing the roles of the women” (Nabacwa, 2004, p. 16).

The GOU’s Local Government Act\textsuperscript{114}, which states that one-third of the

\textsuperscript{114} In 1997, the GOU’s \textit{Local Government Act}, began the process of government decentralization, which decreed that every administration district must elect a woman representative for the NRC (parliament). In
representatives on Local Councils must be women, has not served to balance gender inequities in politics. Many Ugandan women argue that this quota system of representation even works against them as, once the requisite number of women representatives has been reached, the councils (the majority of who are men) believe that their “gender duty” has been done, and that there is no need to include more women: “Although women were not barred from contesting seats other than the women’s seats, it was soon clear that almost all women who offered themselves for the ‘general seats’ were not voted for on the grounds that ‘women already had their seat’” (Butegwa, 1995, pp. 62-3). In addition, women are prevented from engaging fully in politics due to their domestic responsibilities that constitute “time poverty”, as well as gendered notions of propriety:

Unlike their male counterparts, women within local councils also face time poverty. Apart from affecting their ability to attend meetings, they are unable to do prior reading and preparation for scheduled meetings. The social construction of roles and responsibilities enables men to benefit from a social network within the public sphere such as pubs and other places, where women bound with domestic responsibilities cannot participate. All these factors cause women councilors to still lack the capacity to effectively contribute in the effective functioning of LG.

(Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005, p. 10)

Strengthened political involvement of women would likely have far-reaching positive effects on girls’ educational opportunities, but the NSGE makes no mention of this; its only reference to politics is in Barrier 15: “Despite demonstrations of political good will, government is yet to allocate sufficient resources to the planning and management...
processes at central, district and community levels to respond to the needs of girls’ education” (GOU, 1999, p. 6).

9.3 Sexual vulnerability

Adolescent girls’ sexuality and sexual experiences have an enormous impact on their educational opportunities in many ways. Unfortunately, the impact is most often negative, which then characterizes sexuality as an “unfreedom”. And, again, it is the relationship between economic and gender inequitable unfreedoms that perpetuate unfreedoms related to sexuality, sexual health and relationships: “there is a powerful impact of …the pervasive effect of poverty and social norms that perpetuate women’s subordination within sexual relationships” (Kuate-Defo, 2004).

9.3.1 Sexual Relationships/Encounters

As discussed at length in Chapter 8, there are many different kinds of relationships adolescent girls enter into with boys and older men and many different reasons for entering into these relationships, often related to girls’ unfreedoms with respect to poverty and gender inequities. Girls, whose parents may not be able or willing to pay their school fees, or provide girls with basic necessities, often fall prey to exploitation by older men or boys who use money and gifts to entice girls into sexual relationships (Jones & Norton, 2007; Neema & Bataringaya, 2000; Nyanzi et al, 2001; Okee-Obong, 2000; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005; Twa-Twa, 1997). Some relationships are based on extortion/bribery, such as teachers giving high marks to girls who engage in sexual relationships with them, or threats to punish those girls who refuse. And many sexual encounters take the form of abuse and assault. There is also the issue of forced/early marriages of girls of poor families, which is
one of the primary reasons girls who live in poverty drop out of school (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005).

The NSGE does acknowledge several of the above unfreedoms. Barrier #2 identifies early marriage and bride wealth payment as problematic; Barriers #6 and #8 identify problems of sexual harassment and abuse; and Barrier #16 acknowledges that there is inadequate enforcement of laws (e.g., the defilement law) that are meant to protect girls against sexual abuse and exploitation. However, the activities presented that are meant to address these unfreedoms are inadequate for the general population of girls. The activity corresponding to Barrier 2 (early marriage and bride wealth payment) is to prevent female circumcision; this is important, but female circumcision is not a widespread practice, so this measure is applicable to a very limited number of girls. Activities corresponding to Barrier 6 include a “baseline study on defilement of school-going girls”, and the distribution of information leaflets on defilement. Activities for Barrier 8 do not address the issue of the sexual abuse or exploitation of girls at all, and for Barrier 16, which is concerned with the inadequate enforcement of laws that protect girls, there is no listed “Player”, “Activity” or “Coverage” at all. In terms of objectives stated in “The Way Forward” Section of the NSGE with relation to Barriers 2, 6, 8 and 16, there is little proposed other than “sensitizing” teachers and community members, enforcing teacher codes of conduct, and lobbying for the enforcement of laws that would protect girls from sexual abuse and exploitation. However, the target dates for these measures were between 1999 and 2001. As of 2005, little progress had been made in any of these areas (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005).

Again, the NSGE identifies individuated “barriers” related to sexual exploitation and abuse, but it neither acknowledges the pervasiveness of the unfreedoms associated
with them nor does it provide any substantial attempts to address, or even focus awareness on, the root causes such as poverty and normative gender inequities).

9.3.2 Pregnancy

Early/mistimed pregnancies that result from consensual and nonconsensual sexual activity between girls and boys of the same age group are, in many cases, catastrophic, and often fatal. School-going girls who become pregnant are typically expelled from school (GCE, 2005) and often forced to leave home, as was the case with Ireen. Some girls seek abortions, but as abortions are illegal, there is great risk associated with these illegal terminations, and there is a high mortality rate amongst girls who pursue this course of action. The NSGE mentions the unfreedom of early pregnancy for girls as a part of Barrier 6\textsuperscript{115}, but this is hardly sufficient given that pregnancy is the leading cause of girls dropping out of school (Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). The one NSGE strategy/activity directly related to early pregnancy included in “The Way Forward” section is to lobby to have young mothers re-admitted to school. However, without childcare and other support systems, especially if the girl has been forced to leave home, it is highly unlikely a poor, young mother would be able to return to school, even if it were permitted.

9.4 Unfreedoms Not Acknowledged by the NSGE

There are four serious unfreedoms the NSGE does not acknowledge, which is surprising, given their prevalence and conspicuousness.

\textsuperscript{115} Barrier 6: “The insecure environment in and outside school coupled with the girl’s physical, social and psychological conditioning to a docile outlook with very low self esteem. All this makes her easy prey to sexual harassment and abuse and leads to pregnancy and ejection from school” (GOU, p. 5).
9.4.1  HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS affects girls’ opportunities for schooling in multiple ways. In many cases where one or both parents is HIV/AIDS affected, girls must remain home and care for sick parents and/or assume much of the domestic work (Kakuru, 2006; Pitamber & Chatterji, 2005). In addition, HIV/AIDS infection is another serious consequence of girls’ involvement with unsafe sexual practices, resulting in severe and chronic illness, and very possibly death. The fear of contracting HIV/AIDS constituted an unrelenting source of anxiety for girls who were sexually active. It must be acknowledged, however, that unfreedoms related to HIV/AIDS are connected to larger, global forces: “HIV/AIDS [is] an example of how globalization and impoverishment are impacting upon one major disappointment, the failure to deliver African women’s reproductive and sexual rights” (Wanyeki, 2004, p. 94) Although HIV/AIDS in families have devastating effects on girls’ education (Kakuru, 2006), HIV/AIDS is not included in any of the NSGE barriers.

9.4.2  Sexual Relationships/Abuse/Exploitation

9.4.2a  Transactional Sex

Surprisingly absent in the NSGE is any reference whatsoever to the widely-known and widely researched problem of transactional sex. This is a glaring omission of a major societal problem. As discussed at length in Chapter 8, the power imbalances that characterize most transactional sexual relationships, as well as sexual encounters that take the form of bribery/extortion or assault, prevent girls from insisting on safe sexual health practices, such as the use of condoms (Jones & Norton, 2007). In addition, lack of access to free condoms and other contraceptive measures, and the lack of youth-friendly public health services, put safe sexual health practices out of reach for many girls, even if they were in the position to insist on safe sex practices. Numerous studies have shown that adolescent girls engage in risky sexual practices out of necessity or force (Baylies, 2000;
Dunne et al, 2000; Hulton et al, 2000; Kuate-Defo, 2004; Lacey, 2003; Luke, 2003; Ndyanabangi & Kipp, 2001); yet the current trend of national sexual health programming (heavily influenced by funders such as the U.S. government) focuses on abstinence-only programming for youth, an approach that completely ignores these studies’ findings and negates the real-life experiences and circumstances of countless girls.

9.4.2b Sexual Harassment/Abuse/Exploitation at School

As discussed at length in Chapter 7, sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation of girls by both teachers and male students within the school environment are rampant (Dunne et al, 2000; Edinburgh Global Partnerships, n.d.; Lacey, 2003; Luke, 2003; Ndyanabangi & Kipp, 2001; Nyanzi et al, 2001; Okee-Obong, 2000; Scheier, R, 2006; Twa-Twa, 1997). This is a grave unfreedom for girls as it generates fear, vulnerability, insecurity, subservience, timidity, and silence in an environment that is ostensibly intended to cultivate strength, empowerment, and capabilities that will enable girls to achieve the kinds of functionings – career aspirations, socioeconomic opportunities, social and political involvement - to which they aspire.

9.4.3 Menstruation

For most girls and women with access to sanitary pads/tampons, soap and running water, aspirin and adequate garbage disposal, menstruation rarely prevents them from engaging in normal, everyday activities. For girls and women without access to these materials and amenities, menstruation is hugely problematic, and as discussed in Chapter 7, many girls miss substantial periods of school because of this. The NSGE does not address menstruation at all, even though it may cause girls to miss several weeks of schooling per year.
9.4.4 Health problems

Health problems, physical and mental, can be a formidable barrier to education for both boys and girls. Of the group of girls who participated in my study, two suffered from serious medical conditions that greatly affected their educational opportunities. Juliet had to leave school permanently in S6 due to a condition that remained officially undiagnosed, but which was apparently similar to epilepsy\textsuperscript{116}. Thus, Juliet’s hope that she would continue on to tertiary level education and become a lawyer was dashed. Gelly suffered debilitating headaches and various other symptoms such as face-swelling\textsuperscript{117}, exhaustion, nausea, shaking, and hallucinations. Gelly had made many visits to doctors, including some in which I went with her, but no one was able to diagnose the problem. Her headaches, especially, seemed to increase in number and intensity with extensive reading/studying, and so she was forced to drop out of the academic programme in S5 and forfeit her hope to become a nurse, although she did enroll in secretarial school and was able to continue with that.

9.5 Beyond the NSGE

This section will consider ways in which the NSGE could be extended and revised to become a stronger, more effective document.

\textsuperscript{116} Although I was not aware of Juliet’s condition during the time I was working with her in Uganda, Dan told me that she had apparently suffered from ill-health for much of her life; this was one of the reasons she did not board at school with the other girls. In S5 she began suffering seizures, and was eventually advised by doctors to leave school. They could not give her a precise diagnosis, and she was not taking any medication.

\textsuperscript{117} Gelly told me that on one occasion she had endured multiple injections in her face to reduce the swelling.
9.5.1 Emphasis on Action

[F]or many ministry officials (and politicians too) there is an inordinate faith in proclamation, especially when this is in written form. There is a strange assumption that once a directive or plan or strategy is on paper, and has been affirmed by an authority, action will "automatically" follow. It doesn’t. (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006, p. 163)

I argue that general awareness and understanding of the importance of girls’ education (or at least the emphasized aspects of the importance of girls’ education as articulated by various organizations, agencies and departments) has, in fact, “trickled down” to villages and is beginning to take hold in the form of rhetoric, if not yet actual practice. The general population has been sufficiently “sensitized”, at least as much as they are willing to be sensitized, to the premise that girls as well as boys should receive at least a minimum a basic education. I agree with Seel and Gibbard (2000) that “what is now needed is not more ‘awareness’ of the benefits of girls’ education but information that can empower them to ensure that their entitlements are realized” (p. 29). I would extend this claim to include the imminent need for concrete, coordinated, explicit plans of action that involve a variety of stakeholders, including, and most importantly, girls and women from rural and marginalized urban communities, at each of the stages – brainstorming, conception, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The NSGE, like so many policies that are ostensibly intended to improve conditions of marginalized groups, did not include the voices of many, if any, girls or women at the local level. The lack of their input and insights lessens the policy’s potential, positive impact.

Plans at the macro-level are inevitably somewhat insensitive to local and individual motivations for change and proclamation at national level is only the first step to implementation…Connections need to be made to the experience of most teachers
and pupils, and their communities, as it is to individuals, and the institutions they inhabit, that the tasks of realizing reform ultimately fall. (Ward et al, 2006, p. 165)

9.5.2 Building on Existing “Enabling” Factors

[E]ducation systems are not machines but arenas for conflict, and what education systems do reflects how people construct their roles regarding these systems, and it is people who can facilitate the development of knowledge and sustained organizational learning. (Reimers & McGinn, 1997, p. 190)

There are many existing structures, or potential structures that are already present in many communities that support girls’ education, but the NSGE has not built upon these. Instead, the NSGE advocates change originating from the “outside” (i.e., by issuing directives) rather than working from what already is in place on the “inside” (i.e., by working in partnership with communities to extend and strengthen existing support for girls’ education). Below, I will discuss three such examples of structures already “in place” that could be built on to promote gender equity in education.

9.5.2a Family Support

My study found that girls’ mothers were the most ardent supporters of the girls’ education. Some girls also had the support of their fathers, but overwhelmingly and unhesitantly, the girls identified their mothers as the individuals in their lives who provided the girls with the greatest support, encouragement, love, and care. It was the girls’ mothers who would exhaust every avenue to be able to march their girls back to school with school fees in their hands. This seemed to be the case in general, and is supported by
evidence that, in comparison to men, Ugandan women spend more money on the welfare of their family than they spend on themselves (Pitamber & Chatterji 2005).

Shelley:  At the school meeting the other day.  I was looking around and there were 14 mothers and four fathers, I think.  And I wonder, is it mostly mothers that come and show an interest in their children’s education?

Headteacher:  Yes, most of the things –[it is] the mothers that show interest. And again, if you want to get something from the father, it’s better to pass through the mother.

Shelley:  Do you think that – why do they value the education, the mothers – why do they see that as beneficial to their children do you think?

Headteacher:  …Well, of course what people have come to believe now – the culture is changing – is that without education, one will not be successful in life. And because of the fact that the mothers love the children more than the fathers, this I think forces them to fund education, because they wish everything good for their children. So since education is the best that you can give the child, therefore the mothers value education. Of course I don’t want to say that the fathers don’t love their children, but I only want to point out some cases where you find it – that it looks like the mothers are the ones who show interest and concern…if you want to get anything from the father, pass through the mother – to get books to get pens, to get sympathy when there is something wrong that one has done. And I think it is fair to say that the mothers value education more than the fathers. But, of course, there are fathers who value education, who have sacrificed quite a lot so that you go to school and get educated.

[Excerpt from interview with headteacher, Mr. Masinde, August 2005]
My findings suggest that one of the determinants of girls’ opportunities for and achievement in post-primary school is resourceful, determined mothers who provided the girls with not only school fees, but the love and encouragement to persevere against hardship and feel secure in their family relationships. The mothers’ backgrounds, occupations and educational levels were not necessarily relevant to the passion with which they worked to provide their daughters with educational opportunities. The mothers of the girls in this study were very different: some were in monogamous, nuclear-family relationships, others had polygamous husbands, and one was widowed. Some of the mothers had no education whatsoever, some had completed primary school, and some had had some secondary level education. Others were literate in both Luganda and English, whereas some were completely illiterate. Some of the mothers were in their thirties; others were in their fifties. Without exception, all the mothers contended with varying degrees of poverty and hardship. But despite their differences, these women shared the common goal of working hard to provide their daughters with a post-primary level education.

Also, despite the varying family constructions, these girls’ mothers provided family/home stability in the form of a safe, secure, nurturing and loving home environment that enabled their children to develop and shape their identities, and gain confidence and a sense of self-worth and belonging. The girls lamented their mothers’ relentlessly hard lives, but never once did I perceive that the girls perceived their mothers as powerless. On the contrary, I think most of the girls saw their mothers as their champions and spoke of them with respect, pride, admiration, awe, and tenderness. I believe the impressive accomplishments of these women need to be fully acknowledged and appreciated by education policy-makers. To refer back to arguments made in Chapter 4, I contend that the portrayal of African women must be revised from that of powerless victim to that of powerful agent. This does not preclude acknowledging the very real suffering, abuse, and
inequalities that many African women experience, but there should exist a premise of respect for the women’s strength and agency instead of a premise of weakness and powerlessness. This revised portrayal of women would re-shape many of the approaches to women’s involvement in development, including their daughters’ education.

The NSGE, however, only mentions parents in terms of the need to “sensitize” or “counsel” them about positive treatment of their daughters and the need to support their daughters’ education. There is no suggestion that parents, particularly mothers, have a central role to play in their daughters’ education (for that matter, their children’s education), and that they should be considered as partners and collaborators in all initiatives concerning gender equity in education. In fact, the NSGE seems to wedge a divide between an “attractive role model” (presumably a woman with an education and a job) and women without higher education and who do not work in the formal wage sector. Within the NSGE, there tends to be an either/or depiction of a role model, which does not provide much imaginative scope for girls. Many of the girls in my study saw themselves as either having a successful career or being resigned to a poor, subsistence-level existence; they did not imagine a place for themselves somewhere between those two poles. Also, it is likely that if girls perceive their mothers as absent from the “role models” presented, or perhaps even characterized as the antithesis of these role models, the girls would suffer crises around their relationships with their mothers as well as around their own identities. Openly acknowledging the strong, personal qualities of women such as their mothers, and showing how these core qualities (e.g., perseverance, determination, personal strength) are invaluable and integral to various imagined futures, as well as educational attainment, would ground girls in familiar and accessible knowledges and understandings while being exposed to new imaginings of gender, culture and society.
9.5.2.b Boys’ Shifting Identities

The importance of the clan, particularly in poor, rural communities, has been discussed at length in Chapter 6, and reviewed above. In short, because of the lack of effective national infrastructure and extreme poverty, especially in rural communities, communities base their need for self-sufficiency on the clan structure, which is patriarchal and patrilineal. Because of the gender inequities inherent in the clan system, girls are valued less than boys, and boys tend to receive priority in terms of educational, amongst other, opportunities. Girls’ education is considered as an opportunity cost for two reasons: the family will lose the girl’s labour while she is at school, and any money invested in her education will be of benefit to her husband’s clan, not that of her parents. In addition, the clan system supported polygamy because it was believed that the more children (especially boys) a man fathered, the wealthier he would be, and the more he would be able to contribute to, and strengthen, his clan.

In principle, and traditionally, this is how the clan was conceived and operated. However, as also mentioned in Chapter 6, the notion of the clan has become a more loosely defined social construct, determined largely by particular community structures and needs. The clan is neither the tightly-knit kinship group that is defined primarily by locality and perhaps occupation (i.e., farmers, cattle ranchers, tradespeople, etc) nor does it function in the traditional way (i.e., by the boys remaining within the local community for life) as, with each generation and an increasing population, the division of land to all male children would not be enough to sustain them and their families. For example, with the cash economy, increased mobility, and diminishing land resources, many boys do not remain living in the community in which they grew up, but often migrate to towns and cities for employment opportunities; thus, they do not necessarily contribute to their clans for the rest
of their lives. In fact, several of the girls argued that daughters were more likely to help their families than were sons, if girls were able to earn an income.

In addition, many traditional beliefs and practices concerning the clan starkly contrast with many of the messages being promoted and received in Ugandan society. For example, polygamous relationships conflict with national messages relating to sexual health that promote “faithfulness” in relationships; producing many children no longer necessarily has the same connotation of wealth and prosperity if the financial outlay for children exceeds what parents can afford. Furthermore, it is being increasingly acknowledged that higher education results in higher incomes for both men and women, and that families in which both husbands and wives earn an income will be more prosperous and better able to provide for their children than families that rely on one, or perhaps no, regular income. Given these messages and realities, the boys involved in this study were questioning traditional beliefs about the clan, and therefore, their own identities. On the one hand, in public, boys upheld traditional beliefs and practices pertaining to the clan: “we must produce until we’re tired”, “God created man first and then…girls they are the ones that follow us” “But the culture, the culture…we see here in Buganda that girls are not supposed to be equal with boys” (FGD1), “[girls] aren’t equal with men…so we can’t all attend the same education;... The parents pay first for the boys...” (FGD1). But, on the other hand, privately (i.e., in anonymous questionnaires) boys expressed a different viewpoint on family and marital relationships; they seemed to be considering, or willing to consider, new social structures and relationships. I believe this to be a vital key to change: effort should be expended exploring and working with the wavering identities of youth in secondary schools and engaging them in critical analysis about the society within which they live and interact in order to expand the range of imagined identities and communities.
And, it is absolutely essential that boys be involved in this process; girls and boys must work together to establish their own dialogue and determine their own future communities.

9.5.2c Safe Space for Girls

It was not until the final days of my research with the girls that I realized that one of the most important aspects of the research process for some of them had been sharing their life experiences with one another. I had erroneously assumed that they would have been doing this anyway, just as, as an adolescent, I had shared my experiences with my friends. This was a cultural practice that I had taken for granted to be universal. So, I was surprised by the following comments Shakila made during our final interview in August, 2005.

**Shelley:** I’ve learned many, many things from you girls. Did you learn anything from doing this research?

**Shakila:** I learned many things… I learned some of the problems that girls face, because for me I have seen many girls with problems. And some girls have expressed their problems in front of me, so that has helped me to understand the problems of my friends.

Similarly, the women in the adult literacy class told me that they had never discussed very personal, intimate issues around, for example, sexuality, menopause and depression before we had such discussions in class. They also told me that these discussions had been powerful, and at times had provided them with comfort, relief, and insight to know that concerns they had were shared by other women, not only in their community, but around the world. My impression was that girls and women tended not to discuss personal issues with each other, more out of social protocol than inclination, because, with very little prompting, women and girls were keenly interested in sharing their experiences and listening to the stories of others. There is also evidence to suggest that girls
and women considered these discussions of personal experiences to be confidence-building; the process itself of engaging in dialogue was empowering. The following is an excerpt from the final interview I had with Doreen in August, 2005. We were discussing the need for girls to take up leadership roles.

Shelley: How do you think that girls could get more leadership skills? How could they learn how to become leaders...? If girls are shy, how can we help girls to be not shy?...Do you think that doing this research has helped people not to be shy?

Doreen: Yes, it helped us....Because you prepare for us many meetings, whereby every girl have to talk with you.

Shelley: And do you think that...help[ed] people to become stronger? More confident?

Doreen: Yes.

Thus, I believe, simply providing a safe and welcoming space with a female teacher or counselor who is willing and able to facilitate general discussions on issues of importance to girls could quickly and easily establish a community in which girls could explore their identities and imagine their future identities and communities. This kind of community creates the opportunity for innovative approaches to various problems that can be addressed by the girls themselves. In addition, by providing girls with a structured forum to engage in guided, critical discourse around topics of concern to them, there is the potential, once girls feel prepared, to invite boys to engage in dialogic exchange around various topics.

9.6 Conclusion

The NSGE seems primarily concerned with the identification of “barriers” to girls’ education (some of which have been either overlooked or deliberately excluded), and the
indexing of parties and programmes that have been or will be involved in addressing various aspects of these barriers. Portions of this document undermine its credibility as a “National Strategy” when, for example, an initiative has the coverage of “two districts”, or “one school”, or “Where?” (i.e., the geographical area is yet to be determined), or “108 girls”, and some of the activities listed include the building of one science lab for one girls’ secondary school, the construction of a single latrine for girls in one school, and one organization’s donation of books to a “deserving girls’ hostel” (GOU, p. 19). In addition, many of the initiatives and activities listed date back several years. For example, for Barrier 15, which deals with the lack of priority that has been allocated to girls’ education by government and various administrative bodies, one of the activities intended to address this is a “gender-oriented policy” that was developed by the MoES and two other agencies in 1993.

The NSGE appears to have cobbled together inventories of existing resources with lists of widely acknowledged challenges to girls’ education and mapped them into a single document, which links any party and/or programme from the general inventory to any of the aspects of the challenges identified within the 18 barriers of the NSGE. As Seel and Gibbard (2000) argue, the NSGE “seems more an advocacy rather than a strategic document” (p. 29). The NSGE has value as a document that inventories and links a wide range of stakeholders and issues, but it does not propose any radically innovative insights or courses of action that would drastically increase gender equity in education. Although there is enormous potential for the serious advancement of girls’ education through measures such as the NSGE, there are many shortcomings, including a lack of coordination on the part of all the parties supporting and implementing these initiatives, insufficient geographical coverage, deficiencies in monitoring, evaluation and enforcement, and the dependency on donors for many of the initiatives (and, therefore, lack of sustainability). In
addition, the NSGE does not seem to have the political backing necessary to ensure that girls’ unfreedoms receive serious and urgent attention at all levels of educational programming, planning and policy-making. In fact, the NSGE has not been incorporated into the GOU’s Education Sector Investment Programme (ESIP), a policy document under the general Sector Wide Approach Programme (SWAP), that is used to plan, coordinate, and implement all education programming, as well as allocate resources from national and international sources.

Perhaps the most saddening issue is that all the above interventions are not adequately incorporated in the ESIP [Education Sector Investment Programme] document, which is the official checklist for the Ministry of Education for all its programmes and projects for the period 1998-2003. This diminishes the importance of these innovative steps, and renders them cosmetic since there is no framework within which they can be monitored and evaluated. In addition, most of the programmes are donor-funded and therefore the issue of sustainability has to be addressed. (Kwesiga, 2002, pp. 101-2)

Thus, the NSGE has been sidelined from the mainstream educational priorities, and consequently so have girls.

In addition to the problems related to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes, the way in which the NSGE has been conceived and presented neglects to recognize and build upon existing support structures and potentially powerful points of intervention. It does not provide ways for parents, particularly mothers, to become involved in their daughters’ education. Nor does the NSGE acknowledge the wide scope of support from many men and boys that do, indeed, support girls’ education and attempt to harness this support to achieve the overall objective of gender equity in education. It lacks
creative, innovative approaches to parental/community participation and problem-solving that would not require enormous amounts of funding to implement.

Perhaps, however, the most problematic aspects of the NSGE is its failure to address the fundamental unfreedoms related to poverty, gender inequity, and sexual abuse/exploitation, and the degree to which those unfreedoms underpin the “barriers” identified by the NSGE. Perhaps this is because to acknowledge these unfreedoms would be to “state the obvious”, but any truly cohesive and effective document that attempts to address serious, systemic gender inequities in education must at least demonstrate how the unfreedoms of poverty, gender inequity, and lack of control over one’s sexual activities are intricately interconnected as well as the cause of other unfreedoms. The NSGE does not propose any such “meta-reflexivity” because, as a policy document, its purpose is “achieving the targets in advancing girls’ education which we have all set ourselves in the plan of action of this document” (GOU, 1999, Preface). But these courses of action are only as effective as their ideological premises, and if there is no discussion of ideology, activities will ultimately be of little value. But, in many ways the NSGE appears to be designed for donors, as it is indicative of the unfortunate situation that many Southern countries face: the scramble to meet the objectives of international initiatives such as EFA and the MDGs by complying with donor objectives to access to the funding that will help the country achieve the international objective.

By forgetting about history, dropping the politics and foregrounding methodologies and techniques, development organizations may be able to convince themselves and others of ‘impact’. But the result seems to be a kind of inflationary spiral (each NGO feeling the pressure to ‘keep up with the Joneses’) in which expectations become ever more idealized and at the same time, less and less clear…And it stands in the way of a realistic and nuanced understanding of the aspirations of the
‘beneficiaries’ themselves and what they might actually find useful (as opposed to
irrelevant or even dangerous). (Fiedrich & Jellema, 2000, p. 179)

The NSGE lists over 30 local and external organizations involved in girls’ education in
Uganda.

The NSGE is laid out in a way that enables donors to step in and address specific
issues that have been identified as problematic to girls’ education. These issues thus sit, as
obstacles, to be plucked away: “The Strategy is the outcome of a collaborative effort and
now becomes the major tool that will guide government, in partnership with all our helpers
and stakeholders, to remove the numerous barriers which prevent our female children from
achieving their full potential as equal citizens of their country” (GOU, 1999, Preface).
Meanwhile, the sweeping and devastating unfreedoms of poverty, gender inequity, and
sexual abuse and exploitation remain itemized and subsumed under other, more generic and
politically neutral, categories.

There is a need to expose and interrogate these underlying unfreedoms so that
policies, such as the NSGE, have more than superficial value. In addition, open dialogue
concerned with these unfreedoms by all stakeholders – from the community to the
international levels – would present an infinitely more comprehensive (and complex)
picture of the interrelationships between these unfreedoms and external causes (i.e., global
economic inequities and humanitarian neglect) and press policy-makers (international and
national), programme designers, and funders to begin to address the fundamental roots of
those unfreedoms. By circumventing these larger discussions concerning pressing, often
life and death, unfreedoms - many of which are related to global injustice - Ugandan
society is depicted in an unflattering, two-dimensional way, and as wholly responsible for
the difficulties, injustices and inequities Ugandan girls and women face. The NSGE
presents the “barriers” to girls’ education as intrinsic shortcomings and failings of Ugandan
society with no connection to global inequities. This “disconnection” enables international organizations to fund (and control) programmes or initiatives that target specific problems, but to shirk any responsibility for tackling the much larger and urgent unfreedoms that cause those problems. The longer the unfreedoms of the South remain “their” problem, and unconnected to a sense of a shared world, shared responsibility for humanity, the longer extreme inequities will prevail. As Sen (1999) pointed out unfreedom, especially economic unfreedom, begets other unfreedoms.

Nowhere in the “development” process is support provided for Southern countries to take the time to imagine their own approaches to education and future societies. It seems that donors do not want to fund philosophical dialogue that promotes the development of larger ideological goals related to freedom and equality; rather, donors want to fund “programmes”, “activities”, “strategies” that demonstrate “action” and that can be mapped onto evaluative rubrics and project reports. Thus, many of the shortcomings of the NSGE are probably related to its intended purpose which is, I believe, likely to demonstrate to donors the efforts that had been and were being made to promote girls’ education, as well as to provide opportunities for donors to channel their funding into specific areas. Of course, it is important that worthwhile programmes and initiatives receive funding; however, it is equally important that a concurrent dialogue unearths and addresses deeper, ideological issues. I discuss this ideological concern further in Chapter 10, as well as make recommendations to further the goal of achieving gender equitable and quality education for girls in Uganda. By directly situating girls within the social contexts in which they interact, inequitable and discriminatory beliefs and practices that create and perpetuate unfreedoms in their lives are exposed. I consider various fundamental unfreedoms as a shared plight for a general population (i.e., all students, all family members, etc. living in impoverished conditions in this part of rural Uganda), but then focus on how those
unfreedoms affect girls in particular. I then discuss how each of these unfreedoms is represented in the NSGE.
CHAPTER 10: SUPPORTING EMERGING IDENTITIES

“You can help ask the questions if you like, but the answers are here. In Africa.”

(Carol Opok, a trainer of change in Uganda. Quoted in Brock-Utne, 1997, p. 607)

International initiatives such as EFA and the MDGs frame education for girls as a basic and fundamental human right in and of itself. However, girls’ education is also understood to be a means by which to further global social justice and improve the general well-being of all, but especially economically-impoverished countries. Goal 5 of the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA is “eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality” (UNESCO, 2000); and MDG #3 is to “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015” (UN, 2005). That these goals will likely not be met by the specified deadlines is conceded by many, but persevering and tenacious commitment to their principles must remain undiminished if these objectives are ever to be realized.

In many ways, Uganda has made impressive strides in attaining aspects of these goals, as it has been successful in bringing girls into the education system and achieving gender parity, at least at the primary level. And, increasingly, especially with the advent of USE in 2007, more girls are, and will be, attending secondary school. Nonetheless, the Ugandan education system is far from achieving gender equitable education and continues to fail girls, for many reasons that are likely shared by other socioeconomically-impoverished countries.
10.1 Old Ground, New Paths

As discussed in Chapter 6, there are a number of family- and community-related unfreedoms that both hinder girls’ access to education and negatively impact their self-esteem, imagined future identities, and life opportunities. Although these unfreedoms are generally rooted in traditional, historical practices and beliefs around gender, the destructive legacies of colonialism, decades of civil war, and even “development” programmes and initiatives have shaped gender roles into their contemporary manifestations. As discussed in Chapter 4, African feminists claim that the gendered dimensions of present day African societies are not reflective of pre-colonial traditions but rather are representations of traditional, gendered roles and responsibilities that have been warped and distorted by Northern socioeconomic, political and cultural interferences. As discussed in Chapter 7, these gender inequities are perpetuated and further entrenched in the education system because the school environment reflects, embodies and perpetuates societal norms that discourage and undermine the development of girls’ agency and autonomy.

The curricular and pedagogical shortcomings (such as an exam-driven curriculum that promotes teacher-centered pedagogy), especially detrimental for girls, are rooted in a colonial education system that has been further constrained and manipulated by international development policies and initiatives (e.g., SAPs). Additionally, the male-dominated school environment is often an abusive, exploitative and violent place for girls. Overarching societal issues, particularly poverty and sexual vulnerability, considered in Chapter 8, permeate family, community and school-based gender inequities, and connect girls’ unfreedoms to global issues of economic inequity and social injustice.

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118 See Chapter 2 for the discussion of “development” as a contested term.
Given that, “[w]hen we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” (Muir, 1911), approaches to improve education for girls require transformative measures at the local, national as well as international levels. On the one hand, this would appear to make progress impossibly complicated; but, on the other hand, open exchange and dialogue and partnership could substantially enhance the ease, efficacy and collaborative potential of groups and programmes working at all three levels. Such measures, however, require agreed-upon ideological understandings of the purpose(s) of education in general, and the importance of education for girls in particular. In Chapter 3, I quoted Stromquist (2001): “the official discourse about education is still cast in apolitical terms, leaving the ideological function of schooling unquestioned” (p. 48). This, I believe, is true of education in Uganda.

If the commitment to education for girls in Uganda is truly meant to “remove the numerous barriers which prevent our female children from achieving their full potential as equal citizens of their country” (GOU, 1999, Preface), then the approach to education will need to be very different from the existing one which is rooted in a patriarchal colonial system, involving the rote learning of questionably relevant curricula in a teacher-centered, authoritarian environment that not only promotes the status quo around gender inequities, but often abuses, exploits, undermines and violates the rights of female students. If girls are to “[achieve] their full potential as equal citizens of their country” education must have emancipatory, empowering and transformative outcomes. It must acknowledge and address girls and women’s multiple roles and real-life factors – economic, family, community, cultural, political – in both the particular local and the general global contexts. (Elabor-Idemudia, 2002; Lazreg, 2002; Parpart 2002; Saunders, 2002; Staudt, 2002; Njiro, 1999; Umerah-Udezulu, 1999).

The girls in this study - girls from extremely impoverished rural contexts in one of
the poorest countries in the world - are at the brink of becoming a powerful force of change in their society. If they receive an education that provides them with opportunities to develop the capabilities they need to learn to negotiate local, national and international power structures, they will truly become empowered, autonomous agents, able to bring about change (James, 1999; Parpart, 2002; Umerah-Udezulu, 1999). However, reconstituting the learning environment, both in terms of curricular content, power roles and gender equity, involves shifting, or re-negotiating, relationships at many levels. Where gender inequities are blatant and prevalent, education for girls and women should not merely reflect the status quo, but should actively seek to provide opportunities for transformation:

gender-equitable education will be based on broader societal change for gender equality, with implications for the sustainability of practice, and girls and women will be empowered to demand that their rights be respected and their positions in society strengthened. They will benefit from an education that provides them with the capabilities to achieve the freedoms and the kind of life that they have reason to value. (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005, p. 246)

This study has found that the very presence of girls in secondary school, and exposure to their abilities, ideas and aspirations has shaken the foundation of many culturally-bound gender assumptions, for boys, teachers, parents, as well as for the girls themselves. The data collected reveals confusion, uncertainty, contradiction and struggle in grappling with a future society in which women/wives/mothers are as educated, and perhaps more educated, than men/husbands/fathers. There are aspects of this future society that are unprecedented and yet to be realized, but aspects of it already exist and are resisted, underestimated or overlooked completely. For example, conceptions of gender, and relationships between girls/women and boys/men are changing. Although there is
reluctance by many boys and men to wholeheartedly embrace this change (as, by virtue of achieving more equitable circumstances for girls and women, it dismantles the absolute and unbridled control and power of men over women), this site of tension is one of immense transformative potential. Thus, the pedagogical approaches to, and structure and content of education for girls should reflect this aim and reimagine educational environments from places that further entrench and even exacerbate both local and global inequities into sites of resistance, personal and social development, and political action.

However, “bringing about change” – change which often is aimed at overturning many cultural beliefs and practices that are deeply entrenched in tradition, sense of identity (individual and collective), and history – can be a precarious, disenfranchising, unsettling and even dangerous, undertaking. A single, seemingly insignificant, shift in local practices can resonate sharply and deeply within a culture – much more, and at much subtler levels, than an outsider can be aware. Programmes that simply tell girls what they should do as individuals, or even as a group, are ineffective; girls on their own cannot bring about equality in a society that resists it. There must be a social learning that crosscuts both horizontally and vertically, penetrating hierarchies and parallel groupings of social identities (Hulton et al, 2000). Therefore, girls must be supported by the communities in which they live, the society at large, and the global community that purports to be committed to their education. In other words, girls must have the freedom within their society to develop capabilities, imagine futures communities, and achieve functionings.119

The combined theoretical frameworks of imagined identities/communities and the capabilities approach to development offer exciting possibilities for such positive, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change. The capabilities approach is premised on equity, supported, transformative social change.

119 In Sen’s (1999) capability approach (discussed at length in Chapter 3), functionings are defined as outcomes, or achievements.
and measures achievement, or successful “development”, by the freedom an individual has to participate fully in society. Full participation in one’s society means that every individual is entitled to equity, dignity and reason for hope, or future possibilities. To achieve such “development”, society must assume a collective responsibility to ensure that all people have such freedom and none are subject to discriminatory hegemonic inequities and/or oppression. In this spirit, an approach to education based on imagined identities/futures and capabilities would provide individuals with opportunities to develop the capabilities necessary to become autonomous agents who are able to achieve functionings in order to fully participate in their societies. Such an education would not only provide girls with the potential to imagine identities and future communities, but the capabilities and societal support necessary to realize them.

10.2 Recommendations

This study has shown that the girls at KSS did not have access to an education that effectively provided opportunities to develop capabilities, or sufficient freedom within their society to achieve their full potential, or full and equitable rights of participation in their society. As a result their scope of imagined identities and imagined communities to which they might belong were limited. As discussed in Chapter 9, the girls at KSS were subject to many unfreedoms related primarily to the three major and interconnected unfreedoms of poverty, gender inequity and sexual abuse/exploitation/vulnerability. These unfreedoms resonated from the village to the global contexts; consequently, the nature of the challenge to bring about gender equitable education is expansively broad and intensively layered. Nevertheless, there are measures (many of them relatively simple and financially tenable) that can be taken to begin to substantially improve the state of girls’ education. As discussed in Chapter 9, many structures already exist to support girls’ education at the local
level, but have been ignored or under-utilized by national and international policies and programmes. This section outlines a number of recommendations for consideration for inclusion in future policies to improve quality and gender equity for secondary schoolgirls in Uganda.

10.2.1 School location and facilities

School location, facilities and structures are important considerations for girls’ secondary level education.

- Long distances between home and school often limit girls’ educational opportunities as i) girls are at risk of being assaulted if they must walk these routes alone, and ii) the time it takes for girls to travel to and from school is often perceived as an “opportunity cost” for the family (i.e., it takes away from the time girls are available to work at home). Ideally, of course, girls would not be at risk, and their domestic burdens would be eased; however, long distances would still be problematic (e.g., in terms of fatigue, etc.). Free transportation to and from school would significantly boost girls’ attendance (and likely also their performance) at secondary school. Or, in contexts such as Kyato Village where, for cultural reasons, girls are prohibited from riding bicycles, advocates for girls’ education could petition for changes to the cultural codes that uphold such restrictions. Then, access to free or inexpensive bicycles, perhaps even bicycles built for two riders, would be immensely beneficial in enabling girls to traverse long distances more quickly and easily.

- Every school should have a “girls’ space” – a safe, comfortable place where girls can gather to hold discussions, study, or simply meet and talk with other girls. This study attests to the high value girls place on having the time and opportunity to
meet, exchange experiences and concerns, and learn about each other. As discussed in Chapter 8, some of the girls in this study expressed that an important aspect of participating in this research was that they learned about the problems of their friends. Similarly, the women in the adult literacy class also remarked that our discussions in class provided them with opportunities to discuss important issues that they had never talked about with anyone else before. This study points to the need for regularly scheduled girls’ discussion groups. There were many topics ranging from relationships to problems at school to international news to sexuality that the girls were eager to talk and learn about. In addition, many of the topics I introduced for discussion (e.g., gender equity, economic development) were of great interest to the girls, although they had never previously discussed them. These discussions provided the girls with an opportunity to hear the ideas of others as well as develop their own ideas. Ideally, a “girls’ space” would serve as a place for regular discussions, perhaps facilitated by a teacher or a woman from the community. It would be useful to have either female teachers or women from the community trained as facilitators, perhaps with some guidance materials, to lead such discussions on a regular basis.

- Due to female students’ vulnerability to sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation in the school environment, particularly in mixed boarding schools, girls require safe, secure, sanitary accommodations, as well as adult female supervisors who reside with the girls. In fact, many girls in this study stated that there was a need for more girls-only boarding schools. However, in mixed schools, it is imperative that separate and secure toilet facilities are provided for all girls, and that girls have free and easy access to running water at school so that they are better able to deal with
their menses. Girls should also be provided with free sanitary materials during menstruation.

10.2.2 School-based support structures and measures to promote gender equity

In addition to material and structural provisions, girls require particular programmatic and procedural support.

- Counselors are required for career planning, sexual health, personal and school-related issues. Every teacher who participated in this study mentioned the need for counselors, as did several of the girls. Many schools cannot afford full-time counselors, but even regular visits from counselors who perhaps work with clusters of schools would be immensely beneficial. Girls require effective, comprehensive sexual health education, far beyond what is provided in the school curriculum, and this could be provided by counselors or health workers. There is also an urgent need for support (including child care) for young, single mothers to re-integrate into schools and continue with their education.

- School administrations must also begin to aggressively undertake measures to curtail and punish the mistreatment of girls in school, by both teachers and male students. Standardized, well-publicized, effective and protective grievance procedures must be made available for girls (as well as female teachers) so that they are able to report cases of abuse without fear of reprisals. The school administration must also enforce vigilant monitoring and strict enforcement of laws concerning the sexual and physical exploitation and abuse of girls by male teachers and students, and insist on zero tolerance for the mistreatment of girls.

- In addition to punishing violations against girls and women, there is an urgent need to support the development of open, respectful and collegial relationships between
girls and boys in the school environment. Gender equity will only be established when girls and boys, women and men work together, respectfully, as colleagues. Many girls and boys do not have models of “gender equitable relationships” at home or in their immediate communities and therefore it is incumbent for schools to cultivate gender equitable behaviour in students who will become the future role models of their communities. This can be facilitated both by formal structures and interventions as well as informal activities. Formal measures can include: visible and significant leadership roles (and training) for girls in school and active promotion and enforcement of equal responsibilities and duties for both boys and girls at school. Informal activities might include co-ed extracurricular activities – sports, events – that perhaps even reach out and involve the larger community.

• Although some gender-sensitive behaviour can be prescriptive, true gender equity must emanate from an inner belief in its value. This study points to the immense value of discussions between girls and boys on issues of societal importance (i.e., the role of the clan, desired marital relationships, attitudes towards girls and women) in the cultivation of gender equity amongst students. Many girls said that discussions with boys were very helpful because the girl and boys were able to understand each other’s points of view as well as develop a rapport that enabled them to articulate and consider perspectives that they had not previously considered. Thus, exchanges between girls and boys with the objective of achieving understanding, respect and equality are highly recommended as a means by which men and women will be able to “walk together as educated people”, as one girl said. These kinds of communicative skills will potentially facilitate cooperation and partnership in future relationships where, as one boy said, “There is a combining of different ideas that each of these partners have and they are always interested in
knowing each other …[and] they end up having discussions to develop their family”.

10.2.3 Pedagogical and curricular measures

It is of the utmost importance that education provides Ugandan students with critical, comprehensive exposure to the theories and realities associated with globalization and colonization. Their worlds are fundamentally and profoundly affected by a colonial legacy, abysmally misguided and egregious “development” programmes, and an exploitative, neoliberal global economy.

• Students need to understand how unfreedoms in their lives are connected to larger, global powers, circumstances and events if they are to resist, challenge and transform the ways in which hegemonic entities and practices shackle them to poverty and poverty-related inequities, including various aspects of gender discrimination. By developing an awareness of the global and historical forces that impact their lives, they will gain insight into how those forces have negatively impacted gender relations in multiple ways (e.g., the great demand for domestic labour, the financial barriers to sending children to school, heavy reliance on the clan for financial and social support due to lack of national infrastructure, etc.). Pedagogical opportunities to explore the construction of gender will also provide opportunities to deconstruct gender inequities.

• There is also the need for innovative pedagogic and curriculum reform that encourages girls’ active participation in learning and responds to their real-life needs and experiences. This requires a revised curriculum that: promotes student-centered learning and active student participation in class; is more relevant to, and appropriate for girls (and all students); reflects Uganda’s priorities for social and
economic development; breaks from the educational legacy of colonialism; includes indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing; is less exam-driven; and, has more flexibility with respect to learning materials.

- In order for curricular and pedagogical changes to be effectively implemented, it is necessary that teachers be provided with regular (e.g., twice a year) workshops on student-centered, participatory approaches to teaching. Teachers themselves have generally received a teacher-centered, authoritarian, exam-driven education, as well as been trained in this style of teaching. It will require a great deal of re-training, support and professional development for existing teachers to transform their pedagogical practices to ones that are more student-centered and participatory. Teachers also require professional development and in- and/or pre-service training on gender-sensitive approaches to teaching to promote and maintain a gender equitable school environment. This must include revised methods of classroom management (i.e., to replace corporal punishment).

- To facilitate revised pedagogical approaches and strategies, teachers require access to more resources, both professional (e.g., pedagogical resources on learning activities, classroom management, innovative teaching approaches, etc.) and pedagogical (e.g., text and reference books, science equipment, etc.). Teachers often become demoralized and unmotivated without such resources and opportunities. Although it would be too costly to fully resource all schools with all the resources needed, it would be possible to establish “traveling resources centers” (e.g., buses that served as mobile science and computer labs, libraries, etc.) that make regular visits to poorly resourced schools. During the time of my fieldwork in Kyato Village, Dr. Kate Parry sponsored a teachers’ workshop at Kyato Community Library. There were hardly enough chairs to accommodate the dozens of teachers
who attended from throughout the surrounding villages, eager for fresh teaching ideas.

10.2.4 Community-based activities and support

Progress towards gender equity in education needs to be complemented by progress in gender equity in the community. In the same way that gender-sensitive workshops and programmes are necessary for teachers, they are also necessary for community members. My study found that teachers, community members and the girls all believed that these kinds of workshops would be valuable and welcomed. However, programmes of this nature would best be developed together with community members so that their particular concerns and experiences are acknowledged and incorporated into the content.

- Programmes that actively and sincerely encourage participatory input from community members will be far more effective than prescribed, generic programmes developed with no community consultation. These programmes must address issues of sexual abuse and exploitation, supportive agencies and grievance procedures for girls who have been abused, and strict enforcement of laws concerning the abuse and exploitation of girls and women in society, the school and the family.

- Some of the girls and teachers who participated in this study stated that in order for there to be real change in society, more women were needed in positions of power. So far, efforts to bring about gender equity in politics – through quotas and affirmative action initiatives – have met with limited success. Uganda’s National Gender Policy (1997) was intended to “[mainstream] gender concerns in the national development process in order to improve the social, legislative, political, economic and cultural conditions of the people of Uganda, in particular WOMEN”
(Danida, 2001, p. 14). The Local Government Act (1997) was meant to complement this policy by insisting that one-third of the representatives on Local Councils must be women. However, many Ugandan women argue that this quota system of representation also works against them. Once the requisite number of women representatives has been reached, the councils (the majority of whom are men) believe that their “gender duty” has been done, and that there is no need to include more women (Butwega, 1995; Kwesiga, 2002; Pankhurst, 2002). Less than 18% of the national parliamentary seats are held by women, and these women “generally find it very difficult to push for radical agendas” (Pankhurst, 2002; p. 128).

Increased numbers of women on local councils would likely facilitate the expediency and scope of gender equity in society.

- A central component of gender equity is the right for girls and women to have control over their own health, bodies and reproduction. Given the extremely complex nature of sexuality for girls and women (as discussed in detail throughout this thesis), immediate measures must be put in place to offer girls and women free and easy access to confidential, friendly and supportive health care services, as well as free and easy access to contraceptives and STD-barriers (e.g., condoms).

- All community members, including parents, teachers and youth, must also be involved in consultation on issues pertaining to girls’ education. They must kept informed of emerging policies and strategies, and asked to provide input and feedback on the policies and strategies themselves, as well as their implementation.

10.2.5 Girls’ programmes beyond the school environment

The rapidly increasing numbers of girls – especially from poor, rural communities - who are, and will be enrolled in secondary school is unprecedented and they have few
available mentors or role models that represent possible opportunities and *imagined identities*, i.e., young women from poor communities with post-primary education. In many ways these girls rely heavily on each other for advice and guidance even though they have extremely limited knowledge of available lifestyle and career options.

- These girls would benefit immensely from mentors. An extensive mentorship programme that links young women at college, vocational school and university with secondary schoolgirls would not only provide leadership and guidance opportunities, but it would also promote solidarity and sociopolitical opportunities for young women. In addition, there are enormous possibilities for “on-line” mentorship programmes that not only connect girls locally and nationally, but also regionally and globally.

- Finally, it is imperative that girls have access to income-earning opportunities, as do boys. Many girls are forced to undertake drastic measures (i.e., transactional sex) in order to acquire the money they need for school fees and other basic necessities. Employment opportunities would not only mitigate their desperate need for money, they would also provide valuable learning experiences.

### 10.3 Further Research

There is immense potential for exciting research in many areas concerning education for secondary schoolgirls. It would behoove the global community to pay close attention to this generation of adolescent girls in Uganda, as they are essentially mapping uncharted territory in their society, as well as representing girls in a number of other Southern countries, not only in the areas of post-primary education and gender equity, but in social justice, economic development, and interfacing with globalization. Following are some suggestions for further research.
10.3.1 Promote the development of communication and support networks amongst girls and women

As discussed above and throughout this document, in order for girls and women to achieve and maintain gender equity in their societies they need to be able to rely on strong support and communication systems: “to participate in a larger movement for political change, women need to be able to communicate through mail, e-mail, and so forth” (Nussbaum, 2003a, p. 333). It would be of great value to know what kinds of support systems girls and women need, and how best to implement those. It would be useful to study this both as a national project – linking girls and women around Uganda – and as a transnational project.

10.3.2 Explore and document employment/entrepreneurial opportunities and their educational requirements for young women in various sectors of the economy

In order to provide relevant and effective career and guidance counseling, it is necessary to know what kinds of opportunities exist for girls with various levels of education (i.e., primary, secondary, tertiary) and kinds of education (i.e., academic, vocational). It is also important that successful entrepreneurial activities are investigated, to provide small-business options for girls. In addition, research needs to be done on emerging and future employment/business prospects.

10.3.3 Investigate the sociocultural/economic/political changes that might result from large numbers of girls receiving secondary and tertiary level education.

As the numbers of girls receiving post-primary level education dramatically increase, the society will be impacted in many ways – culturally, economically, and
sociopolitically. It would be of great interest to a wide variety of stakeholders both within Uganda and internationally, to closely monitor these impacts.

10.3.4 Determine how girls/young women define gender equity

The exercise of deconstructing gender-based norms concerning behaviour, roles, responsibilities, choices and opportunities is new for many girls and women in rural Ugandan communities. As this study shows, many girls have adopted the official rhetoric that proclaims that women and men are “equal” in Ugandan society, even though every girl in this study (as well as every female teacher or community member who participated in some way, as well as many – perhaps most – men and boys) gave real-life evidence to the contrary. The girls had difficulty reconciling these contradictions and, prior to their involvement in this research, they had never attempted to tease out and analyse the points of discrepancy, nor had they engaged in discussions about what gender equity might look like, or how it might be achievable. The goal of gender equity is impossible to attain if there is no visualization, or explicit articulation, of that goal. Girls and women need to engage in discussions with each other, as well as with boys and men to work together to provide shape and substance for the goal of gender equity.

10.3.5 Determine what girls/young women desire for the development of their country

It is necessary to learn what young women desire for their societies and country as a whole in order to provide them with an education that responds to those desires. It is not acceptable for others (e.g., external/international organizations) to forge the path of development, and consequently education, for Southern countries. This needs to be done by citizens and community members themselves. And, if girls and women are indeed the
primary stakeholders and agents of development, their views, hopes and imaginings of the future must constitute the premise and platform upon which development programming is based.

10.3.6 Address the vital role that mothers play/can play in the opportunities and education of their children

This study has shown that mothers are central to the well-being of their daughters and yet there is little research that explores the strength and influence of mothers with respect to their daughters’ education. In addition, mothers are often ignored or discounted or overlooked by policy-makers in terms of their important influence in their daughters’ educational opportunities. Mothers play a central role in fulfilling policy objectives for girls’ education and they should be included in the policy-making process with great attention paid to their knowledge, their experiences and their challenges. Mothers need to be acknowledged and valued as crucially integral allies in the education of girls.
EPILOGUE

TWO YEARS LATER...

In early May 2007, Dan returned to Uganda (from his one-week trip to Canada) with several copies of the first draft of my thesis. I wanted the girls to read it, especially the parts of it that pertained directly to them, to ensure that they felt that I had been true to their lives and experiences, and that I had not misrepresented them in any way. I also wanted to provide them with the opportunity to let me know if they wished for me to edit or remove any of the passages that referred to them. Dan agreed to arrange to contact the girls and facilitate the meeting.

Dan notified all the girls that there would be an all-day meeting on Saturday May 12th at the library for the purposes of reading through my thesis. I had provided him with money to buy lunch for all the girls, and to pay for transport for those who lived far away. I had also arranged to call on his mobile phone at a certain time (2 p.m. Ugandan time, 4 a.m. Vancouver time) so I could talk to all of the girls for a few minutes. I asked Dan to stress to the girls that this was their opportunity to provide feedback, to voice any concerns; they could do this as a group, they could approach Dan individually, they could do it anonymously. I also asked him to let the girls know that he would retain the copies of the theses, so they would be able to read them again later, if they wished, and he would have them for the girls who were not able to attending the meeting.
May 12th arrived and nine girls came for the meeting. I called Dan as scheduled at 2 p.m. Ugandan time. When he answered the phone I could hear the girls' voices, laughter... Dan told me that the day had been more like a party, a celebration, than a meeting. The girls had been poring over the copies of my thesis in groups of two or three, discussing it with great animation. They approached Dan only to ask the meanings of certain words, or to explain certain concepts. They were happy with it – they had no concerns.

When I spoke to the girls, each in turn, I could envision them sitting around one of the large, rectangular, heavy wooden library tables, in the hard, straight-backed library chairs. Each of their voices brought their smiling faces clearly to mind, and for a brief moment, time and space collapsed and I was once again sitting around the table with them, in the warmth and light of the afternoon sun, as I had done so often. The realness of their voices on the phone, the realness of their lives (now in their final year of their secondary programmes), the realness of their futures makes me hope that their stories, told here, will inspire changes that will benefit girls like these, who deserve lives of freedom, choice and well-being.

120 The girls who did not attend: Louise (she was working at a resort far from KSS); Joanne (she was working in Kampala); Juliet (she was ill); Doreen (she was pregnant and had run away from school and home – no one was sure where she was), Yudaya and Sofia (I am not sure why they were not in attendance).
Penina

Penina is taking a secretarial programme and will finish in December 2007.

“Dear Shelley – I hope you are fine. How is Shakira?..During your research in 2004, you interviewed me and I told you that I wanted to be a doctor. Well that was my target by due to some reasonable problems my goal changed. The reasons why I will not achieve my goal is that one of school fees. A lot of money is needed when on the doctor’s course. That’s why I will not manage to achieve my first goal…My best experiences in the past two years was the first day when I reach to the college…My worst experience in the past two years was when my brother died. He died when I was at school. I didn’t bury him…The problems which I faced in the past two years were during the time of Easter days, men disturbed me…According to my size, men think that I am ready to have sex yet I am still too young to have sex and get marriage…As a researcher, I also have to advise many people about their way of living with HIV/AIDS which is not an easy solution/advice. Education, researches, they have been helpful tome in that now I know how to treat an HIV person and to council him/her. It also helpful to me in that I have got many information about people’s lives. The level of education which I want to achieve is a master’s degree in business. I think if my goal has been achieved, my life in future will be delicious.” (letter, May 2007)

Ireen

Although Ireen dropped out of S5 due to pregnancy, she had otherwise been doing well. Ireen was bright, gregarious, light-hearted and had strong hopes for her future. When Dan told me that Ireen had left school and had been forced to leave home because she was pregnant, I asked if he could locate her and encourage her to return to school. She has been
living with her grandmother, who helps with her baby daughter, and in enrolled in secretarial studies.

“Dear Shelley – How is life in Canada, plus Shakira?...I am very happy to what you done for me especially paying school fees...My baby is ok. Her name is Janice. Now she is playing with other children, laughing with them. Yes it is true that I gone back to school but Mr. Dan has done a big role at that point of going back to school. Yes, I am on secretarial studies. Yes I am living with my grandmother and she is very happy...So I changed my goal, because I was planned to be a teacher and I am sure was my target but now I am on secretarial course and it is ok, no problem with that...I was think that my chance [for education] was over but I explained Mr. Dan and he agreed with my words because he is a trustworthy guy...Now I am happy because I am at school but I was not expected in my life to continue with my study...A special kiss to Shakira” (letter, May 2007)

**Henrietta**

Henrietta began the upper level, A-Level, secondary programme with Caroline, Shakila, Doreen, Ireen, Jenenie, Sofia and Florence. She did well in S5, but in S6 she finally confided in Dan that she was being constantly harassed by one of the male teachers who was threatening her. It had reached the point that she was afraid to walk around the school by herself for fear of encountering this teacher. She believed if she remained at the school any longer, he would rape her. She wanted to change schools. Dan was aware that reporting the teacher would probably not make the situation any better, and so he immediately found Henrietta a place in a tourism programme at a vocational college, where she is happy and doing well. She will complete this programme in April 2008.
“Hello Shelley – How are you and how is Shakira, our friend? I am studying very well now. Thank you very much for our research because now I am very interested in research and I want to be a researcher in my future…I want to visit Canada and British Columbia to see the university because it seems to be interesting because I want to widen my researching memory when in outside countries…” (letter, May 2007)

**Yudaya**

Yudaya had wanted to become a nurse, but she failed S4 and did not wish to repeat it, so she enrolled in a vocational tailoring programme. She will complete the programme in December 2007.

“I send my greetings to you that how are you nowdays, how is Canada, including Shakira…I wanted to be a nurse but now I have changed my goal because I faced problems in studies at KSS. Some of the problems I got are: discrimination among teachers and students, big punishment, i.e., hitting, fetching water, etc. These forced me to fail my goal…now I joined tailoring programme, and this course is not resembles as well as the one I hoping (nurse). The best experiences of the past two years is that now am back to school. and the worst is that I pained by headache a lot…I wish you all the very best in future and I miss you, but let me think that we meet you again” (letter, May 2007)

**Florence**

Florence is about to begin her final term of S6, and will graduate from upper secondary (A-Level) in December 2007, if she passes her final examinations.
“Education is helping me to get a better job to be paid high salaries...Education is helping me to know more about my body...and more things around my motherland Uganda and other outside countries...There are several things for me if I was not in school life. As my parents are so poor they would have taken me to be marriage. If not that one I would have been taken me to work as a housegirl. If not that, I would have been there at my parents’ place digging, fetching water, cooking food, looking after goats, chicken, sheep and others. Education has created me as a mature person – according to my appearance, acts, and my behaviours...Education has expanded my mind as thinking on things I will do if my future became success like paying school fees to my young brothers and sisters, contribution in the development of my community, helping my parents and others.” (letter, December 2006)

Gloria

Gloria was taking the same tailoring vocational training programme as Yudaya, but changed to attend hairdressing school. Gloria, too, is in her final term and will finish in November 2007.

“now I want to change [schools] and course because of the low standard to those who studying tailoring course and there are few sewing machines but the number of students are many but the problem is that in the week we have one day for there are more than two classes in the same time remember we who starting or beginner in tailoring no one allow you to use sewing machine when you are cut and also teachers are not take too much effort for all us. [I want] to join another school with new course called hair styles.” (letter, October 2006)
“Education has given me more knowledge, how to read and write and to great friendship between other students.” (letter, December 2006)

**Tracy**

Tracy is the only girl to pursue a science-oriented A-Level programme. She is doing well, and will graduate in December 2007.

“Dear Shelley – How is life going, I hope everything is ok with you. I am, in fact, very happy for your research plus the letter that you sent. Thanks for having compiled such true information in the book [thesis] that you sent to girls. May you please succeed...Incidentally, I am still struggling to become a doctor. I have reached somewhere. In fact you and Mr. Dan have put in more effort in my becoming a doctor...I have almost all faced nothing like a problem, because Mr. Dan is supporting me much through you. My future will be very interesting. I hope if I get money, I will do a favour to people with no help like people have done for me. I may be in the hospital treating people...” (letter, May 2007)

**Jenenie**

Jenenie is in her final term of S6. She will be graduating from upper secondary school (A-Level) in December 2007, pending the successful completion of her exams.

“I congratulate you from having finished your great exercise (research) you have been doing. How is Canada? Uganda is fair. How is Shakira?...My plans are [changed] because I know what I like and what I can afford to attain. All along since from my primary, I admired my female teacher who was “Nandege” who had nice looking face and the whole body but she died 5 years ago. Her standard of living was quite good and from that moment I wanted and I want to be a
headteacher...Unfortunately my father...cannot pay my school dues and household requirements [for university]. Despite [this] my struggle is to become that I have told you in past years. My plans are I am going to work in any primary school I will find after finishing my Senior 6 in 2007. In the name of Jesus Christ, while working, I shall be collecting my school fees for higher institution. After joining and finishing this course I will be able to make a stand for myself and to help my brothers, mother and father plus other relatives.”

**Shakila**

Shakila is about to begin her final term of S6. If she passes her final examinations, she will graduate from upper secondary, A-Level, in December 2007.

“Dear Madam Shelley – I hope you’re ok, so I want to send my greeting to you. I told you that I want to be a nurse and now I want it but due to certain circumstances I would not get it, due to the following: on the results of S4 I failed to get required marks in sciences that’s why I am now taking arts subject...now I plan to be a businesswoman because of the subjects I am doing...something that can help me to receive my goal is that if I get enough money I should apply to private nursing schools...The worst thing that I have ever had in this 2 years is that my mum got sick and she failed to raise money for requirements; and I got sick while at school, I was not present at school [classes] all of the time...I wish I would get a certificate in nursing if god wishes because I also need it or else a degree in business administration...Madam Shelley I wish you the best in all that you’re doing more especially to complete your book [thesis]. Send my greeting to Shakira.” (letter, May 2007)
Louise

Halfway through second term, Louise decided to leave home and try to find work in Kampala. Even though she was one of the girls for whom I was paying school fees in exchange for household work, her father had no money for other basic necessities, her stepmother was cruel to her, and she had no future where she was. Knowing the fate of many girls that leave to seek a “better life” in Kampala, I did everything possible to discourage her. She did, in fact, finish her year at school, although her academic standing had fallen considerably, and she did not seem to have much interest in her studies. After completing S4, she went to work/live at a beach resort. She is still there.

Caroline

Caroline is completing her final year of vocational (secretarial) education. If she passes her final examinations, she will graduate in December 2007.

“Shelley great thanks for the work of paying school fees for me in fact if it was not you I don’t think that I would have reached to this level on which I am…Shelley in the first term I managed to get 6 points but this term I got 2 points due to the fact that I spent one month at home because I was missing some requirements and I found that they left me behind but if I get them in time I think that I will perform better…” (letter, October, 2006)121

“Dear Shelley – Let me take this opportunity to say how are you...and congratulate you to get to the close of finishing your thesis...Shelley when you first interviewed me in 2004 I told you that I wanted to be a teacher. Yes, it’s true as you stated

121 Caroline did return to school, but this letter outlines the problem that all the girls face: even if their school, boarding and examination fees are covered, they still require money for supplies, text books and basic necessities such as clothing, soap, etc.
because it was what I told but let me take a chance to inform you that according to the fact that during my S4 results the results were going to take me to another solution whereby now I am hoping to be a lawyer...this is now my goal...The best experiences of the past two years were I got my school fees in time, acquiring of more education I [made] new friends which advise me in issues concerning education, also in the past two years I was promoted to another class and now the level which I am on is the one determining what I will be and it’s the one that will determine my future...in the past two years I also faced a problem of sickness and this affected me very much. The thing that has been helpful to me is education whereby in the past two years I saw many people of my age lacking education...and I had an advantage and escaped the problem of ignorance and illiteracy problems. The level of education I would like to get a degree if god wishes and I get support and I hope my future will be bright...”

Sofia

Sofia is completing her final year of upper secondary, A-Level, education and is due to graduate in December 2007.

“Education is important to me in expansion of my knowledge...[and] getting friends, and planning for my future. Education is important to me to be popular in the society and to be an example to young generation and our friends. The opportunity of finishing S4 and attending S5 changed my life by growing mind from where it was in S4 to [becoming] mature...by getting more democracy from that I have in S4 to getting more freedom...by starting thinking to my future plan...and starting following the politics of our country Uganda by looking where our freedom is covered by other issues...Education also has
given me a life of enjoying for example through education I got knowledge of searching
information and other enjoyable things. Education has given me a friend that is my fellow
students and teacher...Education has given the image of my future in that I started thinking
what I will do.”

Doreen

From KSS, Doreen continued on to upper secondary school and lived in the boarding
section with several of the other girls from KSS – Penina, Shakila, Sofia, Florence, Jenenie
and Caroline. Doreen was in S6, her final year of the A-Level programme, but she
“disappeared” in April of 2007. The other girls in the study who attended the same
secondary school told Dan that they suspected she was pregnant, but they did not know
where she had gone (although it is very possible some of them knew, but remained loyal to
Doreen by not revealing this). In May, Dan traveled to her parents’ home. Doreen’s
mother was distraught. She told Dan that Doreen had called someone in the neighbourhood
who owned a mobile phone, and she spoke to Doreen briefly. Doreen told her mother that
she was safe, but that she would not be returning home or to school. She did not tell her
mother where she was, or why she had run away, although her mother suspected she was
pregnant. I have no further update on Doreen.

“Education has given me a way of getting solutions to some of the problems I face
for example diseases, poverty because I hope that if I finish my education I will get
a good job hence solving the problem of poverty. Education has also given me good
friends who can help me by supporting me in some of the problems. What I want to
say to people in Canada who are giving me money for school fees is to thank them
please thank you very much am struggling with all my level best to read books in

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order to pass well no to waste your money for nothing am reading books and I hope…to have a better future…” (letter, December 2006)

Gelly

Gelly suffered from severe health problems that forced her to leave the A-Level upper secondary programme. However, Gelly transferred into a secretarial programme at a vocational school, and has done well there. She will be completing the programme in May 2008. As to be expected, feisty, ever-hopeful, determined Gelly has made the best out of her situation.

“When I completed S4 I was at home in my village and the time came to join “A” level education because I passed [S4 exams]. I planned as I can with my parents to get basic needs what to be used in the boarding section apart from school fees. Then I got those basic needs to be used and the time came so that we went up to school. It was February then I started schooling without any problems. I read my books without feeling any problem in my life. But the time came – it was March – we started much reading so that to do better results and as I have that problem of headaches, due to that excess reading, I started to feel sick. It was a time for mid-term exam. I had to read much so that to do end of term exam. Then I started staying in the dormitory without attending classes but remember that my friends was revising their books but as I was too much interested in my studies I started forcing myself in the dormitory to pass through my books because I spent two weeks in the dorm without attending lessons but the time came and I felt too much pain without looking in my books, without eating, drinking anything.

I came back home then Mr. Dan took me in the hospital in Ganda Town, they refused...after there we went to another hospital. It [was]the same, so I went
back home. I had my books at home. I started revising but even the time came when I was reading I started feeling a lot of pain and whatever time I read the eyes changes colour to red and tears started coming out. I was thinking that I will go back to continue with the end of term exams but whatever time when I read my book I started feeling sick...Now I failed to do any exam for this term.

Now Madam Shelley I am requesting to change at last to try another studies which will not need too much reading. I am just asking because as feel in my life, I will not manage to complete with “A” Level books so that’s why I am begging to try on secretarial course so that to see whether I will manage.” (letter, April, 2006)

“Ever since I joined secretarial studies I was a bit ok without any problem but at the beginning of April 2007 I spent a month at home without attending school but now I am at school studying and we are about to do the exams for the first year...Apart from being sick lost my father – he died....I think to attain a diploma in secretarial studies and I imagine my future to be well after achieving my vision.”
(letter, May 2007)

Juliet

Juliet both suffered from severe health problems that forced them to leave upper secondary. Unfortunately, Juliet had to drop out of school completely. Her condition remains undiagnosed, but she suffers from severe seizures and fatigue.

“My hope is I want to be a lawyer and I want to complete A-Level then I join that course...Education is important to me because it enables to earn money whereby after education you get a job then start earning a living...It helps girls to get jobs
so that they do not suffer in the world and earn a living for better standards of living."

Joanne

Joanne failed S4 and then moved to Kampala to take up a job that was offered to her by a relative.

“*My hope for the future is I like to be a doctor. I like to achieve the diploma of doctor because in our village there no person who educated to be a doctor...*Education is important to me because on our village there nobody educated like me, so education is important and when you not educated you can’t get a good job and you not be in good future...”

The four girls who dropped out of the research project (2004)

Elizabeth

Although quiet and somewhat shy, Elizabeth was bright, thoughtful and self-possessed. In an interview, Elizabeth told me that she wanted to become a lawyer, to fight for the rights of people to get an education. Elizabeth was a “double orphan”\(^\text{122}\). Her father had died two years before, and her mother had died one year before. Elizabeth’s father had had seven wives, and when he contracted HIV/AIDS, he and all of his seven wives died, leaving behind many orphaned children, including several young children who were infected with HIV/AIDS. Elizabeth and her many siblings had had to move in with various relatives. Elizabeth’s guardians were an aunt and uncle living close to KSS. It seemed that Elizabeth’s situation was not as dire as it could have been as her uncle had a good

\(^\text{122}\) In Uganda, an “orphan” is a child who has lost one of her/his parents; a “double orphan” is a child who has lost both of her/his parents.
education, was a headteacher at a nearby primary school, and earned a regular salary. Elizabeth’s aunt had a “good education”, although Elizabeth did not know what level education her aunt had attained – but she read, wrote and spoke English and was involved in leading workshops around agricultural education. However, there were seven children in addition to Elizabeth living at her guardians’ home; in addition Elizabeth’s uncle had three other wives, with other children, who lived in various locations. Near the end of S3, Elizabeth dropped out of KSS; the other girls told me that she had to stay home and help with the younger children and domestic duties. A few months after S4 began, some of the S4 girls saw Elizabeth sitting behind a sewing machine on one of the main streets in Ganda Town, sewing clothes. It was rumoured that her earnings went to her guardians. I don’t know where she is now (August 2007).

**Grace**

I wrote about Grace in Chapter 1. Grace was a (“single”) orphan – her mother had died – and she lived with her elderly, very poor, (paternal) grandmother, and several younger, orphaned cousins. Although Grace’s father lived near the village, he had other wives and showed no interest in Grace’s life. Grace was timid, had very low self-esteem and performed poorly in school. She just seemed to fade away at some point during S3.

**Catherine**

Catherine lived with five sisters and two brothers. Her mother was dead, and Catherine was not sure of her father’s whereabouts. Catherine said that an uncle had been contributing to her school fees, but his contributions seemed to be erratic and insufficient. Catherine was one of the weakest students, she had very low self-esteem, and she did not seem to readily
engage with the other girls. She was often alone and, over time, she simply ceased coming to school.

**Sharon**

Sharon lived with her father and stepmother and several step-siblings. I do not know much else about her home-life while she was attending KSS. Sharon was the one girl who consistently distanced herself from others, and was not enthusiastic about participating in this research project. I had scheduled several times to interview Sharon, but she did not show up for any of those meetings. By November, Sharon had dropped out of school. I was told by Mr. Masinde that she moved to a town near Mbarara in Western Uganda with her boyfriend.

(Photograph 22 “The girls”)
The researcher

Shelley

I have been straddling two worlds since I began this research in 2004. Now that this work is coming to a close, I am thinking of where my path might lead. I will be teaching a course in global citizenship in the fall, completing the development of an education and development course, as well as a course in literacy and development. Through YouLead I will continue supporting community projects in Africa, as well as work on creating a programme for international service learning.

Most importantly, however, I will continue to be immersed in motherhood, supporting Shakira on her own life’s journey. She is now 4 years old – witty, stubborn, dramatic, full of love and laughter. She is on the brink of reading independently, she rides her bike with no training wheels, she is becoming a good swimmer, she sings about everything, she’s a fabulous dancer, she has a generous spirit, she is happy and full of questions and observations. She knows that we adopted each other in Uganda, and she knows that although she did not come from my belly, she came from my heart. She sometimes comments on the difference in our skin colour – “I’m brown and you’re yellow”, but one time she noticed that our palms and soles were both pink and said “we’re the same, too”. We have been living in family housing at UBC and she has friends from all over the world – Taiwan, Israel, Zimbabwe, China, Venezuela, Portugal, Ghana, Korea, Brazil, France, Iran. Shakira and three of her special girlfriends – Yan Lin, who is Taiwanese, Akacia, who is African American, and Rachel, who is Zimbabwean – have claimed the playground out back as theirs and romp and yell and shriek with laughter whenever they are together. It is especially wonderful to see the four of them on their pink and purple bicycles, helmets strapped on, racing around, displaying new talents (e.g., riding with one hand), and skidding to a stop.
All experiences fade with time, I know, but I don’t believe Uganda will never be a significant part of my life. Dan has become a dear friend, and I hope to be able to maintain some form of contact with the girls. I would love to be able to continue my research with them, or – I should say – have them continue as co-researchers with me for another few years, as there is still much to learn about their challenges, opportunities and future lives. And, one day Shakira and I will travel to Uganda; I would love for her to (re)meet these girls, as Shakira was as much a part of our research (meetings and all) as anyone.
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APPENDIX A1 – FIELD METHODS CHART

Below is a data chart that outlines data collection methods, researchers and participants, and time-frames within which the data were collected. Following sub-appendices (indicated in the “Appendix/ID# column below) provide further details on interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Data</th>
<th>Appendix/ID #</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Method of recording</th>
<th>Participants/respondents</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Journal – personal reflections</td>
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<td>Journal kept during fieldwork and post-fieldwork journal/reflections</td>
<td>Written, photograph ic images</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Aug. 2004-present</td>
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<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Aug. 2004 – Aug. 2005</td>
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<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Aug 2004 – Aug 2005</td>
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<td>School meeting/information session on HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>videotaped</td>
<td>Harriet Mutonyi, Bonny Norton, KSS students</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>A2-IG1</td>
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<td>Oct-Nov 2004</td>
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<td>A2-IG2</td>
<td>Closing interviews with girls</td>
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<td>Interviews with teachers and staff at KSS and KCL</td>
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<td>KSS/KCL teachers and staff</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>July - Aug 2005</td>
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<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Interviews with individual women in adult literacy class</td>
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<td>Jan-May 2005</td>
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<td>Information interview with Parole Officer in Mbale*</td>
<td>Notes taken</td>
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<td>Shelley</td>
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<td>Information interview with the director of a national sexual health programme for youth*</td>
<td>Notes taken</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Bonny Norton, Harriet Mutonyi, Shelley</td>
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Focus Group Discussions

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<th>A3-ST/FGD</th>
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<td>General discussions; sometimes impromptu</td>
<td>Some videotaped; some recorded in fieldnotes</td>
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<th>Participatory Research FGDs</th>
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<th>A3-GLDB</th>
<th>Girl-led discussions with boys</th>
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<td>Small groups of S4 boys and girls</td>
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Questionnaires

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<td><strong>A4-KSST1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A4-S4GB</strong></td>
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<td><strong>A4-GOSH1</strong></td>
<td>Girls-only sexual health survey</td>
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<td><strong>A4-KSST2</strong></td>
<td>Follow-up to KSST1</td>
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<td><strong>A4-KVPT</strong></td>
<td>General questionnaire re: gender relations, attitudes towards girls’ education, etc</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A4-GOSH2</strong></td>
<td>Girls-only sexual health questionnaire 2</td>
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<td><strong>A4-GOIF</strong></td>
<td>Girls-only imagined future questionnaire</td>
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<td><strong>A4-GOE</strong></td>
<td>Girls-only gender equality questionnaire</td>
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<td><strong>A4-GOGE</strong></td>
<td>Girls-only education questionnaire</td>
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<td>Participatory Research Activities</td>
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<td>Songwriting</td>
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<td>Drawing “imagined identities”</td>
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- cannot be identified by name to protect anonymity
APPENDIX A2: INTERVIEWS

Below is a chart indicating various interviews that were conducted during my fieldwork (August 2004 – August 2005). For interviews that consisted of several participants responding to the same questions, I have assigned identification codes (ID#) to correspond with further details on those interviews (e.g., names of respondents, questions asked). These additional details are found in the following pages, identified by the descriptor and ID#.

(see chart on following page)
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<td>A2-IPO</td>
<td>Information interview with Parole Officer in Mbale*</td>
<td>Notes taken</td>
<td>Parole Officer</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Oct. 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2-IDSH</td>
<td>Information interview with the director of a national sexual health programme for youth*</td>
<td>Notes taken</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Bonny Norton, Harriet Mutonyi, Shelley</td>
<td>Oct. 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A2-IG/1:
OPENING INTERVIEWS WITH GIRLS

Questions¹²³

1. What is your name?

2. How old are you?

3. Can you tell me about your family? (e.g., Who lives at home with you? How many brothers and sisters do you have? How old are they?)

4. What kinds of hobbies do you have? / What kinds of things do you like to do?

5. Do you think education is important? Why or why not?

6. What are your hopes for the future re education?

7. What is the educational level of your parents?

8. What do you know about / What are your ideas about international development?

9. Could education contribute to development? How?

10. Many people think women and girls are important for development. What do you think?

11. Is your mother, or any woman in your family involved in a self-help group? If so, what is it? What are they trying to accomplish?

12. Do you think men and women have equal power in your community/Uganda? (Discuss)

13. There is much research being done in Uganda, especially Masaka District, into HIV/AIDS. Has HIV/AIDS affected your family, friends or community in any way? (Discuss)

¹²³ As all interviews took the form of semi-structured interviews (discussed in Chapter 4) these were guiding questions. They were not always asked exactly the same way, and there were often additional questions asked to follow-up on certain points.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Nov. 11, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Nov. 23, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>Nov. 7, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Nov. 17, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Nov. 30, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelly</td>
<td>Nov. 1, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Nov. 11, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Nov. 19, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>Nov. 13, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireen</td>
<td>Nov. 15, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Nov. 19, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Nov. 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penina</td>
<td>Nov. 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakila</td>
<td>Nov. 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Nov. 17, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yudaya</td>
<td>Nov. 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Girls not interviewed:**
Sharon (dropped out of school before the end of S3)
Mimi (health problems in November 2004; changed schools in 2005)
Patricia (changed schools)
Juliet (health problems; interviewed in August 2005)

---

124 Pseudonyms are used.
APPENDIX A2-IG/2:

CLOSING INTERVIEWS WITH GIRLS

Questions\textsuperscript{125}

1. We have been working together for almost a year now. What do you think I have learned have you girls?

2. What have I learned about your families?

3. What have I learned about your communities?

4. What I have learned about your school?

5. What have I learned about the difficulties girls face in terms of getting an education?

6. What level education would you like to achieve?

7. Would you like a career/job? What is that?

8. What would help you to get the education you want?

9. What would you like to tell people in the government about the situation of education in Uganda for girls?

10. Many teachers don’t think girls have the same leadership abilities as boys. What do you think about this? How could girls get more leadership skills?

11. Many teachers believe that girls are less ambitious than boys. Do you believe this is true? Why do you think teachers think this? How could girls show that they are ambitious?

12. Do you think boys feel that they are superior to girls? If so, why?

13. Do you think girls generally feel inferior to boys? If so, why? Do you feel inferior to boys?

14. This year, KCSS had its first co-ed intramural games. Do you think this had any effect on the way teachers and boys students thought about girls’ abilities to participate equally in games? Would this be a good thing to continue?

\textsuperscript{125} As all interviews took the form of semi-structured interviews (discussed in Chapter 4) these were guiding questions. They were not always asked exactly the same way, and there were often additional questions asked to follow-up on certain points.
15. I learned many valuable and interesting things from you. Did you learn anything from doing this research? What?

16. What was the most interesting part of the research?

17. What was the most challenging or difficult?

18. What did you enjoy the most?

19. Did you learn anything that will be useful for your future?

20. Did you learn anything about the world outside Uganda?

21. Did you learn anything about development?

22. Do you think about the relationship between boys and girls and men and women any differently than before this research? If so, how?

23. Do you think that men and women are equal in society now, or do things need to change before they equal? What changes would you suggest?

24. What is the biggest challenge in your life right now? What could be done to help you overcome that?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Aug. 10, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>July 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelly</td>
<td>July 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Aug. 14, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>Aug. 14, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireen</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenenie</td>
<td>Aug. 10, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Aug. 15, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>Aug. 17, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Aug. 15, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penina</td>
<td>July 29, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakila</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Aug. 15, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>July 31, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yudaya</td>
<td>Aug. 17, 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

126 Pseudonyms are used.
APPENDIX A2-IT/S:

INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND STAFF AT KSS AND KCL

Questions

1. Most teachers who completed the questionnaires think that girls show fewer leadership skills than boys. It is important that girls are given opportunities to develop leadership skills if they are to be able to achieve gender equality (in all areas of their lives). What are some practical things that can be done in school to promote leadership skills in girls? Outside of school?

2. Most teachers who completed the questionnaires believed that various cultural/traditional practices prevented girls from achieving full equality with boys, as well as were often hindrances for them in reaching educational goals. Which cultural practices, if any, do you perceive to be problematic, and how could these practices change?

3. Most teachers who completed the questionnaires think that girls are less ambitious than boys. From my research, however, the girls I’ve been working with have all expressed the hope that they will reach S6 as a minimum, and have a career or job when they finish school. Thus, my impression is that they are ambitious. Why do you think teachers believe them to be less ambitious?

4. The girls I have been working with have often said that they are “weak”, that people (particularly) men, don’t think they can do the same jobs as men, even if these jobs do not require physical strength. They have said they don’t have “energy” for those jobs. Where do you think this perception comes from?

5. It seems that most students and adults that I’ve talked to believe that boys have preference over girls when it comes to parents providing educational needs (i.e., school fees, supplies, etc). Why do you think this is? Many people have said it is because there is a good chance that the girls will be “spoilt” (i.e., get pregnant), and so financing their education would be a waste of money. What do you think could be done to prevent early pregnancies and what could be done to help girls continue with their schooling if they did get pregnant? And, how could things be made easier for girls who did get pregnant? What about the boys? How could they be forced to take equal responsibility?

6. Wife beating and domestic violence has been recognized as a serious problem in Uganda. It seems that physical violence begins to be experienced at a young age, in the home, and is perpetuated throughout primary and secondary school by teachers. The United Nations’ Convention of the Rights of the Child (to which Uganda has been a signatory since 1990) claims that beating children is a violation of their

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127 As all interviews took the form of semi-structured interviews (discussed in Chapter 4) these were guiding questions. They were not always asked exactly the same way, and there were often additional questions asked to follow-up on certain points.
rights. In addition, beating children (or anyone) is illegal according to the Uganda Charter of Human Rights.


Why do you think beating is a common disciplinary practice in schools in Uganda? Do you agree with this practice? Do you think there are any other ways discipline problems could be dealt with?

7. Beating students over 16 years old actually constitutes beating adults (as once an individual reaches 16 years of age he/she is considered by law to be an adult). When a girl is 16 or 17 years old, and is beaten, this is, in fact, is violence against women.

Preventing violence against women, too, is one of UNICEF’S priorities. Yet, it seems the topic of beating students is often dealt with lightly, and is not considered as “violence”.

What are your thoughts?
How could this school culture of violence and beating stop?

8. Do you think girls have the same employment opportunities as boys? Why or why not?

9. Do you think measures like awarding girls extra points for entrance to Makerere will help more girls attend university?

Schedule of teachers interviewed (B2-IT/S)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent*</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dan (translator; librarian)</td>
<td>Aug. 14, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doris (librarian)</td>
<td>Aug. 9, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold (teacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason (teacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 9, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary (teacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 19, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Masinde (headteacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 17, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen (teacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 2, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrance (teacher)</td>
<td>Aug. 2, 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs) CHART

Below is a chart indicating various focus group discussions (FGDs) that were conducted during my fieldwork (August 2004 – August 2005). I have assigned identification codes (ID#s) to specific FGDs, or groupings of FDGs, that I referred to in my thesis. Additional information on these FDGs can be found in the following pages.

Focus Group Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Method recorded</th>
<th>Participants /respondents</th>
<th>Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General discussions; sometimes impromptu</td>
<td>Some videotaped; some recorded in fieldnotes</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Shelley (Translator: Dan)</td>
<td>Sept 2004 – Aug 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3FGLD-GB</td>
<td>Girls and boys</td>
<td>Videotaped by girls</td>
<td>Small groups of S4 boys and girls</td>
<td>Girls (the girls led these discussions; Shelley was not present)</td>
<td>August 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A3 –ST/FGD:
STRAIGHT TALK FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Straight Talk Club meetings were scheduled to be held every Wednesday at lunch hour, throughout the school year, although this was not always possible. The meetings were co-facilitated by Dan and me. One week we would meet with the girls, the next week we would meet with the boys, and the following week we would bring the two groups together for a discussion. This sequence happened only three times during the course of my fieldwork, for various reasons: a few months passed where the school did not receive Straight Talk newspapers (despite requests to their main office); there were often times the students could not meet due to other school-related activities; around the times of exams students needed to spend all of their free time (including lunch break) studying, so they did not attend Straight Talk Club meetings. The tables below indicate video-recorded Straight Talk FDGs, conducted from September 2004 until January 2005, that are included as data in my thesis.

**Girls’ Only ST-FGDs**
(Recorded FGDs during Straight Talk Club meetings involving only girls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>General Description/Details</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (G1)</td>
<td>7 girls, Dan, Shelley</td>
<td>General discussion about topics of concern/interest to the girls around sexual health</td>
<td>Oct. 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (G2)</td>
<td>6 girls, Dan, Shelley</td>
<td>Discussion about topics of concern to them that they were going to write letters about and send to Straight Talk</td>
<td>Oct. 19, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (G3)</td>
<td>4 girls, Shelley</td>
<td>Reflection on various topics that had been discussed during previous ST-FGDs</td>
<td>Jan. 19, 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boys’ Only ST-FGDs  
(Recorded FGDs during Straight Talk Club meetings involving only boys)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>General Description/Details</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (B1)</td>
<td>6 boys, Bonny Norton, Harriet Mutonyi, Dan and me</td>
<td>Bonny Norton and Harriet Mutonyi present</td>
<td>Oct. 2, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (B2)</td>
<td>5 boys, Dan, me</td>
<td>Follow-up discussion re: Bonny and Harriet’s visit</td>
<td>Nov. 3, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mixed Girls and Boys ST-FGDs  
(Recorded FDGs during Straight Talk Club meetings involving girls and boys)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>General Description/Details</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3-ST/FGD (BG)</td>
<td>6 boys, 7 girls, Bonny Norton, Dan, Shelley</td>
<td>Discussion of cultural attitudes around sexuality and relationships</td>
<td>Oct. 20, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A3 – GL/FGD/B

GIRL-LED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH BOYS

In August 2005, after many months of the girls and I discussing various issues around gender equity, the girls and I decided upon three topics that the girls would discuss with the boys. We divided the girls into three groups, and the boys into three groups to have these discussions. One girl, Gloria, was the designated “videographer”. I was not present at any of these discussions because I wanted the students to feel free to express themselves without a teacher, or researcher, or adult’s direct presence. All the students were aware, however, that the exchanges were being videotaped for my research purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID#</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3-GL/FGD/ B-1</td>
<td>3 girls, 4 boys</td>
<td>Should boys be given priority over girls for educational opportunities?</td>
<td>Aug. 3, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3-GL/FGD/ B-2</td>
<td>4 girls, 4 boys</td>
<td>Why do boys and men have higher status than girls and women?</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3-GL/FGD/ B-3</td>
<td>3 girls, 4 boys</td>
<td>Why do boys have more opportunities for employment than girls?</td>
<td>Aug. 10, 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX A4 – QUESTIONNAIRES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Participants/respondents</th>
<th>Researcher(s)/Facilitator(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S3GB</td>
<td>S3 girls and boys</td>
<td>20 girls, 16 boys</td>
<td>Shelley (Translator: Dan)</td>
<td>Nov. 4, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSST1</td>
<td>KSS/KCL teachers and staff</td>
<td>3 female, 12 male</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Nov. 2004128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4GB</td>
<td>S4 girls and boys</td>
<td>12 girls, 20 boys</td>
<td>Shelley (Translator: Dan)</td>
<td>May 10, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOSH1</td>
<td>Girls-only sexual health questionnaire 1</td>
<td>13 girls</td>
<td>Shelley (Translator: Dan)</td>
<td>May 26, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSST2</td>
<td>KSS/KCL teachers/staff</td>
<td>2 female, 9 male</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>June 1292005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVPT</td>
<td>Teachers from primary schools in Kyato Village</td>
<td>8 female, 7 male</td>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>July 2005130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO2</td>
<td>Girls-only sexual health questionnaire 2</td>
<td>12 girls</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Sept. 4, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOIF</td>
<td>Girls-only imagined future questionnaire</td>
<td>10 girls</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Oct. 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOGE</td>
<td>Girls-only gender equality questionnaire</td>
<td>10 girls</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Dec. 27, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOE</td>
<td>Girls-only education questionnaire</td>
<td>11 girls</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Dec. 15, 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

128 the KSS/KCL teachers/staff returned their completed questionnaires throughout the November 2004
129 the KSS/KCL teachers/staff returned their completed questionnaires throughout June and July 2005
130 The Kyato Village primary school teachers returned their completed questionnaires throughout July 2005.
APPENDIX A4 –S3GB:

S3 GIRLS AND BOYS QUESTIONNAIRE (NOV. 4, 2004)

By answering this questionnaire you will be helping me very much with my research into gender, literacy and development. All your answers will be strictly confidential, so please answer the questions as accurately as you can. Thank you very, very much for your help with this!

1. Are you a _____girl _____boy

2. How old are you? ___ years.

3. Do you live with
___ your mother and father
___ your mother
___ your father
___ other (please specify) ______________

4. How many sisters do you have? ______

5. How many brothers do you have? ______

6. Does your father have more than one wife? ___ Yes ___No
   If yes, how many wives does your father have? ______
   Do his wives all live in one household? Yes ____ No ____
   If not, do his wives live in the same village? Yes ____ No ____
   Do you spend any time with your father’s other wife/wives and children? Yes ____ No ____
   Do you think that it is a good thing for a man to have more than one wife? Yes ____ No ____
   Why or why not? _____________________________________

7. Does your mother have more than one husband?
   ___Yes ___No
   If yes, how many husbands does your mother have? ____
   Do you think that it is a good thing for a woman to have more than one husband?
   Yes ____ No ____
   Why or why not? _____________________________________
8. What kind of work does your mother do around the home?
_______________________________________________

9. Does your mother also have a job outside the home?
   _____ Yes  _____ No
   If yes, what does she do? _______________________

10. What kind of work does your father do around the home?
     _____________________________________________

11. Does your father also have a job outside the home?
    _____ Yes  _____ No
    If so, what work does he do? _________________

12. What kind of work do you do at home?
    ___________________________________________

13. Do the boys and girls in your family do different jobs at home?
    No _____  Yes _____
    If yes, what do the boys do? ___________________
    ___________________________
    What do the girls do? ________________________

14. Who brings an income into your family?
    _____ mother
    _____ father
    _____ mother and father
    _____ neither mother nor father
    _____ other (please specify) _________

15. Does your family have a garden?
    Yes ____  No ___
    Who does most of the work in it? ___________
    What do you grow in your garden? ___________

16. What kind of decisions does your father make at home?
17. What kind of decisions does your mother make at home?

18. Who takes the most care of family members?
   Mother _____
   Father _____
   Other _____ (please specify) _____

18. Is your father involved in any community groups?
   Yes _____
   No _____
   If yes, which group(s)? ____________________

19. Is your mother involved in any community groups?
   Yes _____
   No _____
   If yes, which group(s)? ____________________

20. Who do you think values education the most?
   Father _____
   Mother _____
   Both think it is important ______
   Neither think it is important _____

Section 2

It seems that the family and the clan are very important to Ugandans, and that children are expected to keep the family and clan names going into the future. This may have an impact on many decisions pertaining to children and education. Please read the following and give us your comments, ideas, and thoughts.

Scenario A. Moses from Clan X has 3 wives. Wife A, has given birth to 7 children, but 4 have died at a young age. Wife B has given birth to 8 children, but 2 have died. Wife C has given birth to 4 children, all of whom are still living. The man now has 13 children of school age, but he does not have enough money to support all of his wives or pay for health care or school fees for all of his children. However, he is happy that he has increased the size of the clan.
Scenario B. Dan from Clan X has 1 wife. They live together and have 3 children. The man and his wife have enough money to pay for health care and school fees for their children. They also hope to be able to have enough money in the future to send their children to university. The man knows that he has not increased the size of the clan very much, but he hopes that his children will be able to contribute to it in a positive way as well-educated adults.

1. How has Moses contributed to the clan? ______________________

2. How has Dan contributed to the clan? ______________________

3. Who do you think has made the better contribution to the clan? Moses ___
   Dan ___

   Please explain your choice. _______________________________

4. Which Scenario do you think is better?   A ___   B ___

   Why? ________________________________

Do you think it is more important to have:

   a) many children whom you may not have enough money to support in terms of health care and education

   OR

   b) a small number of children whom you will be able to support in terms of health care and education (i.e., school fees, university)?

   a) _____   b _____

   Please explain why you chose a) or b).

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

Section 3
Many people in Uganda believe that equal rights are important. Sometimes, however, equal rights in for husbands and wives may clash with cultural practices and personal ambitions. Please read the following and give us your ideas, thoughts and comments.

A. Loi and James met at Makerere University. Loi has a PhD in engineering and James has a teaching degree. Although Loi and James have different levels of education, they treat each other with equal respect and make all of their family decisions together. They are going to decide how many children they would like, what kind of house they will buy, and where they will live so that they both can work and earn salaries. Loi has told James that she loves him, but that if he ever beats her, or has a girlfriend outside of marriage, she will divorce him. James has promised he will never do either of these things. They are committed to making sure that their children get a good education and go to university if they wish.

B. Ken went to Makerere University and got a science degree. He returned to his village in Masaka District to marry Gertrude. Gertrude finished P7 but could not go to secondary school because her parents could not pay her school fees. Ken is going to work for the government in Ganda Town, while Gertrude will live in the village, work in the garden, look after the children and do domestic work. Ken wants to have 3 or 4 wives and many children. He doesn’t think that he needs to discuss the number of children with Gertrude or his other wives. He expects Gertrude to obey him because he is the man, he has a university education and he earns money. If Gertrude does not obey him, he will beat her. Ken will try to support his wives and children with regards to health care and education, but he doesn’t know if he will be able to.

Which married couple do you think will contribute more to the development of Uganda?
Loi and James _____
Ken and Gertrude _____

Why do you think this?
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire!
KSS/KCL TEACHERS/STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE 1 (NOV. 2004)

Thank you very much for kindly agreeing to complete this questionnaire. It will contribute greatly to my research in the area of “gender, literacy and development in rural Uganda”. This questionnaire is strictly confidential and anonymous, so I encourage you to answer the questions as accurately as possible, to the best of your knowledge. This will assist me very much in getting as accurate an understanding as possible of the situations addressed.

Section 1

1. Are you:  female ___  male: ___

2. Do you think equal rights between men and women are important?
   Yes ___  No ___
   Why or why not?

3. In general, do you think men and women/boys and girls have equal rights and opportunities?
   Yes ___  No ___
   If no, please explain…

4. Do you think that women and men in Uganda have the same amount of power:
   a) In marriage?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
   b) In pre-marital relationships?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
   c) In family planning?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
   d) In sexual relationships?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
   e) In local politics?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
   f) In national politics?  Yes ___  No ___
      Why or why not? __________________________
5. In Uganda, do you think that parents usually treat girls and boys
   a) As equals in society? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   b) As intellectual equals? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   c) As equals in leadership? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   d) As equals in politics? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________

6. Do you think that teachers usually treat girls and boys
   a) As equals in society? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   b) As intellectual equals? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   c) As equals in leadership? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   d) As equals in politics? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________

7. Do you think that adults in general usually treat girls and boys
   a) As equals in society? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   b) As intellectual equals? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   c) As equals in leadership? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________
   d) As equals in politics? Yes ___ No ___
      If no, who is treated as superior?
      girls ___ boys ___
      Why? _______________________

8. If there are any changes that could be made in your community to promote equal rights between men and women/boys and girls, what would these be?

________________________________________________________________________________

9. If there are any changes that could be made in Uganda to promote equal rights between men and women/boys and girls, what would these be?

________________________________________________________________________________

Section 2

In 1997 the Government of Uganda produced the National Gender Policy, with the goal of "....'mainstreaming gender concerns in the national development process in order to improve the social, legislative, political, economic and cultural conditions of the people of Uganda, in particular WOMEN'' (Danida, 2001, p. 14). Despite the government's affirmative action policies around gender and politics, under 18% of the national parliamentary seats are held by women (Pankhurst, 2002; p. 125). It is argued that girls need to become fully engaged in the political processes in education in order to achieve gender equality and empowerment in society at large:

...political participation starts at the personal and family level. Women need to learn how to assert themselves, to put their arguments forward in the best and most convincing manner, and to deal with power (that of others and their own). This needs to start at the private and family level. Civic education for women must include training and practice in this crucial area.

(Buteegwa, 1995; p. 60)

1. Do you think girls and women feel that they can freely voice their opinions

   a) In the home: Yes ___ No ___
   
   If no, why not? ______________________________________

   b) In school: Yes ___ No ___
   
   If no, why not? ______________________________________

   c) At local political meetings/events?: Yes ___ No ___
   
   If no, why not? ______________________________________

2. In your experience, DO girls and women generally express their opinions as openly, assertively and often as boys/men?

   Yes ___ No ___

   If no, in your opinion, why don’t they?

________________________________________________________________________________

Section 3
Although Uganda is often seen to be a leader of women’s rights in Africa, many deep-seated cultural norms and traditions work against women gaining full parity with men in virtually all areas (Goertz, 2002; Tripp, 2001). Disturbingly, the subordinate status of women seems to be accepted by many women and girls as well as men and boys (Mirembe and Davies, 2001). Many young Ugandan women feel that they are inherently less equal than men. In an editorial piece in Arise, a leading Ugandan women’s journal associated with ACFODE (Action For Development), the author (female), writes:

Some of the women still have the feeling that the men are the superior sex (yes they are), but we should not take them to be 100% superior. We should not think that since they are superior, then we should not pursue careers.

(ACFODE, 1999; p. 38)

1. Why do you think women and girls (as mentioned in the above quotation) feel inferior to men/boys?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Based on your own experience, do you think that most girls feel that they are inferior to boys?
   Yes ____  No ____

In what ways?_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why?__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Based on your own experience, do you think that boys feel that girls are inferior to them?
   Yes ____  No ____

If yes, In which ways?
______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why?__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What do you think can be done to enable women/girls to feel and be treated as equals to men/boys?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Section 4

Gender stereotypes seem to be rooted in, or supported by, beliefs that girls are inherently less intelligent and less able than boys, and that they do not possess the same capacity for leadership as their male counterparts. Sperandio (2000) reports on a survey that indicates that both male and female teachers believe that, in comparison to boys, “[g]irls in secondary schools were …less intelligent, found it more difficult to learn, were less ambitious, were shyer in class, spent less time studying, were less likely to ask questions, showed fewer leadership skills, and co-operated less with the teacher” (Sperandio, 2000; p. 63).

1. Do you believe that girls are less intelligent than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___

2. Why do you think other teachers (for example, the ones referred to in this survey) might think that girls are less intelligent than boys?

3. Do you believe that girls find it more difficult to learn than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___
   If so, why?

4. Do you think that girls are less ambitious than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___
   If so, why?  

5. In your experience, are girls shyer in class than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___
   If yes, why do you think this is?

6. Do you think girls spend less time studying than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___

7. In your experience, do girls ask fewer questions in class than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___

8. In your opinion, do girls show fewer leadership skills than boys?
   Yes ___   No ___
   If yes, why do you think this is?

What could be done to change this?  

What are your general thoughts on the findings of this survey?  

Section 5

Sperandio’s (2000) findings were corroborated by those of Mirembe and Davies (2001), which found that “…girls are made subordinates of boys [and this is] achieved through both formal and informal control of girls” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 404), that “[t]he male was reported to dominate all formal power positions [within the school environment]”, that “…girls shied away from positions of leadership” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 405), that “[l]eadership was defined in male terms and stereotyped both for staff and pupils” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 405), that “…the few girls in leadership positions reported being constantly undermined in the decision-making process…..” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 406), and, ultimately, that the school environment is “…fertile ground for exploitation, as it increases the power imbalances between boys and girls” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 406).

1. Do you think that girls are made subordinates of boys (through both informal and formal control of girls)?
   a) Yes ___ No ___
   b) If yes, how does this happen? _______________________________
   c) What could be done to change this? ____________________________

2. If no, why do you think individuals in Mirembe and Davies survey found this to be the case?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. In your experience, is it true that males generally dominate all formal positions of power within the school environment?
   a) Yes ___ No ___
   b) If yes, why do you think this is so? ______________________________
   c) How can more women have access to these positions of power?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Do you agree with the finding that “leadership [is] defined in male terms and stereotyped both for staff and students”?
   a) Yes ___ No ___
   b) If yes, describe – from your perspective - how leadership is defined in male terms. ______________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
5. In your experience, are girls and women who try to assume leadership positions “constantly undermined”?
   a) Yes ___  No ___
   b) If yes, why do you think this is the case?

6. “The school environment is ‘…fertile ground for exploitation, as it increases the power imbalances between boys and girls’” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 406).

Do you agree with this statement?
   Yes ___  No ___

   a) What are your general thoughts on this statement?

Section 6
Mirembe and Davies’ (2001) study of an elite, co-educational secondary boarding school, close to Kampala, (with corroborating data from an additional 21 schools located throughout Uganda) offers several important findings around school culture and gender inequity. As Mirembe and Davies (2001) report, girls are expected to take courses which pertain to “homemaking” and are prevented from taking courses that are more technological, or scientific, in nature, as these courses are considered to be for boys:

...girls and boys had to be channeled into the ‘right’ future careers. In an interview with the deputy principal, an explanation was given for the gendered choice of subjects: ‘Home management is sewing, cookery, washing shirts and keeping the home [for girls]. Foods and Nutrition is technical and is for the boys.’

(Mirembe and Davies, 2001, p. 408)

Questionnaires revealed that the girls “...had been forced into doing arts subjects because the male teachers were prejudiced about girls’ capacity to do mathematics or sciences” (p. 63). Even if girls go through secondary and tertiary education, traditional gender roles tend to determine the fields they go into:

The male power structure in schools is used to reproduce the culture and values which force women to take up subordinate positions in the labour force….culture is seen to be used as a justification for the unequal distribution of knowledge between male and female students…schools start matching students with what is perceived to be their traditional adult roles. The process of choice of examination subjects at secondary school level is often based on unnecessary and unjustifiable sex distinctions.

(Kakande, 1999; p. 56)

1. In your experience, are girls often discouraged from taking science and technological subjects in favour of home management-type courses?
   Yes ___  No ___
If yes, do you agree with this practice?
Yes ___ No ___

Section 7

Few women in Uganda that attain tertiary level education seek out careers in scientific or technical areas, largely due to gender stereotypes in the labour market. For example, “[e]ducated women do not normally seek careers as water engineers or technicians. These are thought to be jobs suitable for men, not women” (Danida, 2001, p. 36).

1. Do you agree with this statement?
Yes ___ No ___

If yes, what do you think could be done to change this?

Section 8

It is argued that female teachers provide important role models for girls (ODI, 2000), and that women teachers are needed to address and challenge the gender inequities in education. Unfortunately, however, the school culture is often as biased and discriminatory towards women teachers as it is towards girl students (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; Sperandio, 2000) largely because “female subservience is accepted by most men and women” (Mirembe and Davies, 2001; p. 402).

1. In your experience, is the school culture biased and discriminatory towards women teachers?
Yes ___ No ___

If so, how are women teachers discriminated against?

Section 9

Sexual harassment, abuse and assault is identified a common problem identified, even in GOU documents on education (GOU, 1992). This, apparently, is not unusual, as “[t]he issue of sexual harassment of girl students by male teachers is constantly in the newspapers in Uganda” (Sperandio, 2000; p. 63). Sexual abuse has a real impact on girls’ ability to succeed in education. The author, Gertrude Nagadya, comments on how, on the one hand, it was very impressive that 35 per cent of the 1999 graduating class of Makerere were women, but how, on the other hand, 20 girls at a nearby school had been impregnated by their male teachers (Nagadya, 1999; p. 47). Teacher Talk (a newsletter produced by the Straight Talk Foundation), in fact had an entire issue devoted to this topic – and many male teachers wrote letters admitting to having sexual relationships with their students and defending their actions (even though the students were minors and this constitutes both a serious legal and ethical transgression).
1. Do you know of any teachers who have had sexual relationships with their students?
   Yes ___    No ___

2. Do you agree that this is a general problem in Uganda?
   Yes ___    No ___

Section 10

The challenges that girls face in the education system in Uganda are very much extensions and reflections of the entrenched and pervasive gender discrimination that prevails through many layers and aspects of society in general. Pankhurst (2002) says: “[a]s things stand now, Uganda’s gender relations are highly unequal by any standard measure” (Pankhurst, 2002; p. 125).

1. What are your thoughts on this statement?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Once again, thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!!
Many of these questions are based on your interesting responses to Questionnaire 1. It would be very helpful to me if you could answer these questions in order to help me understand your thoughts on some of these important issues. Thank you for answering this questionnaire!

1. In Questionnaire 1, many of you said that “education is the key”. Is this what you think? Yes ___ No ____
   a. What is meant by “education is the key”?

2. In Questionnaire 1, all of you said that your parents/guardians value education. Why do you think they value education?

3. If parents value education, why do you think they often have more children than they can pay school fees for?

4. In Questionnaire 1, many of your responses imply that the clan is important to you and your family’s lives. Do you believe this? Yes ____ No ____
   If yes, what role does the clan play in your family?

5. In what kinds of ways do clans help clan members?

6. Has your family’s clan helped your family? Yes ____ No ____
   If yes, how has the clan helped your family?
7. Has your clan helped you, personally? Yes___ No ___
   a. If yes, how has it helped you?

8. Have you ever helped your clan? Yes ____ No ____
   a. If yes, how?

9. Do you plan on helping your clan in the future? Yes ____ No _____
   If yes, how do you plan to help your clan?

10. Many of you stated that you think expanding the clan is important. Do you believe this is important? Yes ___ No ___
    If yes, why is it important?

11. What do you think is the best thing that you could do for your clan?

12. Are boy or girl children more important for the clan?
    Boys ___ Girls ____ Same importance ____
    If there is a difference, why is this so?

13. Do you think boy or girl children are more important to a family?
    a. Boys ___ Girls ____ Same importance ___
    b. If there is a difference, why is this so?

14. If there was not enough money in the family to pay for school fees for all the children, do you think a boy or a girl child would be more likely chosen to get an education?
    Boy ____ Girl _____ no discrimination based on sex ___
    Why?

16. The Ugandan government has put in place some initiatives – such as Universal Primary Education – to increase educational opportunities for girls, however, there
are still far fewer girls in secondary and tertiary (college, university, etc) education. Why do you think this is?

17. Some of you stated that you think that educated people are more likely to have discussions and decide on things together with their husbands or wives if they are educated.
   a. Do you think this is true? Yes ____ No _____
   b. If yes, why do you think this?
APPENDIX A4-GOSH1

GIRLS-ONLY SEXUAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE 1 (MAY 26, 2005)

1. Have you suffered any illness in the past year? ______
   Yes ___     No ___
   If yes, which illness(es) did you suffer from?
   ________________________________________________
   If yes, have you missed any school in the past year because of illness? Yes ___     No ___
   If yes, how many days of school do you think you missed in the past school year (i.e., S3)?
   ____________________________

2. From conversations I have had with many girls, I have found that they consider menstruation to be a problem for them. Do you consider menstruation to be a problem? Yes ___     No ___
   If yes, why? ____________________________
   Is there anything that could help make menstruation easier for you?
   _______________________________________

3. Have you ever missed school because of not having sanitary napkins when you were menstruating? Yes ___  No ___
   If yes, how many days of school did you miss because of this during the last school year (i.e., S3)?
   ____________________________

4. Many girls have talked about the problem of girls having sex for money – to pay for school fees, supplies, etc. Do you think this a general problem in Uganda? Yes ___     No ___

5. Do you know of any parents who have encouraged girls to have sex in order to pay for school fees? Yes ___  No ___

6. Do you of any parents who have encouraged boys to have sex in order to pay for school fees? Yes ___  No ___

7. Do you know of any girls who have had sex to pay for school fees/books/supplies? Yes ___  No ___
   If yes, how many? __________

8. Have you ever had sex in order to raise money for your own school fees/supplies/books? Yes ___  No ___
   If yes, how do you feel about that experience?
   __________________________________________

9. Do you know any male teachers that have had sex with their female students? Yes ___  No ___
   If yes, how many teachers? ___  How many girls? ______

10. Why do you think that girls might have sex with their teachers?
    _________________________________________

11. How much money do you think a man would pay a girl to have sex with him? ______

12. If having sex for money were the only way that you could raise money to go to school, would you do this?
    Yes _____  b. No ___
The following problems have been identified in terms of unequal access for girls to education (especially secondary education). Please tick all of those you believe to be true (if any).

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<tr>
<th>ocio-cultural factors</th>
<th>School related factors</th>
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<td>___</td>
<td>patrilineal cultural practices</td>
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<td>traditional practices and attitudes</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>traditional division of labour in home and school</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>insecure environment in and out of school</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>cultural conditioning of girls and low-self-esteem</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>vulnerability to harassment</td>
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<td>lack of role models and gender stereotyping in media and society</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>inadequate sanitary facilities</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>long distances to school</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>restrictive clothing for activities</td>
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<td>negative stereotypes in materials</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>negative teaching attitudes</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>few roles models or counselors</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>little alternatives for girls out of school</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>insensitive planning and management at local level</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>preference by parents of sending boys rather than girls to school</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>unequal distribution domestic labour</td>
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<td>early marriages</td>
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<td>early pregnancies</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>lack of female teachers</td>
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<td>___</td>
<td>lack of employment opportunities</td>
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</table>
One study conducted on secondary girls education in Uganda found teachers believed that secondary school girls experienced difficulties with schooling/education for a variety of reasons (listed below). Please tick all of those that you believe are true:

Girls in secondary school are (compared to secondary school boys):

___ less intelligent
___ find it more difficult to learn
___ less ambitious
___ shyer in class
___ spend less time studying
___ are less likely to ask questions
___ show fewer leadership skills
___ co-operated less with the teacher

Please list any other reasons you think that secondary school girls may experience problems with their schooling/education.

A couple of questions about you:

1. Are you ___ female  ___ male
2. What level education did you achieve? ______________
3. How long have you been teaching? ______
4. Do you teach sciences (including math) or arts subjects (history, Luganda, English, CRED, etc?) ___ sciences ___ arts

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire!!
Thank you very much for kindly agreeing to complete this questionnaire. It will contribute greatly to my research in the area of “gender, literacy and development in rural Uganda”. This questionnaire is strictly confidential and anonymous, so I encourage you to answer the questions as accurately as possible, to the best of your knowledge.

1. Do you think equal rights between men and women are important? __Yes __ No

2. In a previous questionnaire, one individual stated that problems in the home can arise if men and women have equal rights, because “the man will not be fully respected.” Do you agree with this statement? ___ Yes ___ No

3. Do you agree that men should have more respect in the home than women? Yes ___ No ____ Why or why not? ________________________________

4. There was recently an article in New Vision which stated that wives should obey their husbands to prevent problems in the family. Do you agree with this? ___Yes ___ No

5. Some men and boys have expressed that they would not like to have girlfriend or wife who has a higher level of education than he does. Do you think this is a general feeling amongst boys and men in your community? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, why do you think men and boys feel this way?

6. Do you think that women and men in Uganda have the same amount of power:

   (If no, who has more? Please indicate in the brackets)
   a) In marriage? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)
   b) In pre-marital relationships? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)
   c) In family planning? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)
   d) In sexual relationships? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)
   e) In local politics? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)
   f) In national politics? ___ Yes ___ No (__women __men)

7. In Uganda, do you think that parents usually treat girls and boys:

   (If no, who is treated as being superior? Please indicate in brackets)
   a) As equals in society? ___ Yes ___ No (__girls __boys)
   b) As intellectual equals? ___ Yes ___ No (__girls __boys)
   c) As equals in leadership? ___ Yes ___ No (__girls __boys)
   d) As equals in politics? ___ Yes ___ No (__girls __boys)
8. Do you think that teachers usually treat girls and boys:
   . (If no, please indicate in brackets who is treated as superior).
   a) As equals in society?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   b) As intellectual equals?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   c) As equals in leadership?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   d) As equals in politics?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)

9. Do you think that adults in general usually treat girls and boys:
   (If no, please indicate in brackets who is treated as superior).
   a) As equals in society?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   b) As intellectual equals?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   c) As equals in leadership?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)
   d) As equals in politics?  ___ Yes  ___ No (___ girls  ___ boys)

10. Do you think girls and women feel that they can freely voice their opinions
    a) In the home:  ___ Yes  ___ No
    b) In school:  ___ Yes  ___ No
    c) At local political meetings/events?:  ___ Yes  ___ No

11. Do you think that girls and women generally express their opinions as
    openly, assertively and as often as boys/men?  ___ Yes  ___ No

12. Do you think that most girls feel that they are inferior to boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   If yes, In which ways?____________________________________________

13. Do you think that boys feel that girls are inferior to them?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   If yes, In which ways?____________________________________________?

14. Do YOU believe that:
   girls are less intelligent than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls find it more difficult to learn than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls are less ambitious than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls are shyer in class than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls spend less time studying than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls ask fewer questions in class than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   girls show fewer leadership skills than boys?  ___ Yes  ___ No

15. Do you know of any teachers who have had sexual relationships with their
    students?  ___ Yes  ___ No
    Do you think that this is a general problem in Uganda?  ___ Yes  ___ No

16. Why do you think there are fewer girls than boys that complete secondary school
    and attend college/university?

17. Do you think measures such as giving female students extra points for entrance to
    Makerere University will help more girls to get a university education?
    ___ Yes  ___ No

18. What else could be done to help more girls finish secondary school and get a
    college/university education?
19. If there are any changes that could be made in the school community to promote equal rights between men and women/boys and girls, what would these be?

20. If there are any changes that could be made in Ugandan society/culture, in general, to promote equal rights between men and women/boys and girls, what would these be?

A few questions about you:
18. Are you: ___ female ___ male

19. Are you a: ___ secondary school teacher ___ primary school teacher other (please specify) ______________

20. What educational level did you achieve? ______________________________

21. How long have you been teaching? ______________________________

21. Are you teaching in a ____ town school or a _____ village school

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
There are many risks (for example, early pregnancy and becoming infected with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases) that can result from unprotected sex. Research shows that in Uganda adolescent girls/young women (from ages 12-24 years) are particularly vulnerable to these risks for various reasons. By answering this questionnaire, you are helping me (and other researchers) to better understand some of the challenges young women face with regards to sex and relationships, as well as providing us with valuable information that can be used to help improve the situation of adolescent girls/young women. There are some very personal questions in this questionnaire, and you are not required to answer any that you do not want to. However, as your answers will remain anonymous, no one will know which are your responses, so please try to answer the questions as fully as possible.

1. Sexual health is connected to both physical and mental health. Sexual health means having the knowledge/information and the ability to prevent unwanted pregnancy and to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. It also means being able to identify and protect yourself from relationships that are physically and/or emotionally abusive.
   a. Do you think you have received enough information about matters relating to sex and sexual health?
      ____ Yes  ____ No
   b. What do you know about sexual health? (Please write on the back if you would like more space).

   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________
   ____________________________________

   c. Do you have questions relating to sex and sexual health?
      ____ Yes  ____ No
If yes, what are these questions? (Please write on the back if you would like more space)

________________________________________________________________________

2. a. From where have you received most of your information regarding sex and sexual health?

________________________________________________________________________

b. Where would you go to receive more information?

________________________________________________________________________

3. a. With whom do you discuss sexual matters? (check as many as you like)

___ friends
___ female friends ___ male friends
___ parents
___ older relatives/family friends
___ teachers
___ nurses/doctors
___ other (please specify) ______________________________________

b. With whom would you LIKE to discuss sexual matters? (check as many as you like)

___ friends
___ female friends ___ male friends
___ parents
___ older relatives/family friends
___ teachers
___ nurses/doctors
___ other (please specify) ______________________________________

4. At what age do you think most adolescent boys in Uganda become sexually active?

___ 12 years ___ 13 years ___ 14 years ___ 15 years ___ 16 years

___ 17 years ___ 18 years ___ 19 years
5. At what age do you think most adolescent girls in Uganda become sexually active?
   ___ 12 years   ___ 13 years   ___ 14 years   ___ 15 years   ___ 16 years
   ___ 17 years   ___ 18 years   ___ 19 years

6. Do unmarried girls usually expect money and/or gifts in exchange for sex?   Yes
   ______ No _______
   Please explain:
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

7. Do gifts and money received for sex depend on the boy’s/man’s age, status and relationship to the girl?
   ___ Yes   ___ No
   If yes, what might a girl receive from a:
   boy her own age ____________________________
   sugar daddy ____________________________
   older man (casual sex for gift/money) ______
   bodaboda man ____________________________
   teacher ____________________________
   other (please specify) ____________________________

8. Have you ever heard of something called kukuula binnyo (or – “detoothing” – in English)?   ___ Yes   ___ No
   If yes, can you describe what it is?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

   Is it a common practice?   ___ Yes   ___ No

9. Do you think that most girls are aware that condoms prevent the transmission of AIDS?   ___ Yes   ___ No

10. Do you think that most girls are aware that condoms help to reduce the chances of pregnancy?   ___ Yes   ___ No

11. Are you sexually active?   ___ Yes   ___ No
If yes, at what age did you first have sex? ________

What motivated you to have sex:
___ Peer pressure
___ Money
___ Pressure from boy/man
___ Because you wanted to have sex
___ school grades/access to exams
___ other (please specify) ___________________________

How many sexual partners have you had? _______

Have you had sex with:
___ an adolescent boy
___ a sugar daddy
___ an older man (i.e., only once or twice for money)
___ a teacher
___ in primary school  ___ in secondary school  ___ both
___ a boda-boda man

Have your partners used condoms:
___ all the time
___ most of the time
___ sometimes
___ rarely
___ never

Have you asked your partners to use condoms?
Yes ___ Yes ___
If yes, why?

If no, why not?

12. If girls have sex, do they insist on the boy/man using a condom?
Yes _____ No _____
If yes, why?

If no, why not?
Do boys/men usually use condoms when they have sex with adolescent girls?
___ Yes ___ No
If yes, why?
____________________________________________________
If no, why not?
_____________________________________________________

Have you received gifts or money for sex?
___ always ___ most of the time ___ sometimes ___ never
If yes, what have you received?
________________________________________________________________________
If you have received money, what have you used that money for?
________________________________________________________________________

Do you have any concerns about having unprotected sex?
___ Yes ___ No
If yes, what are these concerns (check as many as you like)?
___ pregnancy
___ HIV/AIDS
___ other STDs
___ reputation
___ other (please explain) ________________________________

Have you ever been afraid to refuse a request for sex?
___ Yes ___ No
If yes, was the request from:
___ A boy your own age
___ sugar daddy
___ older man (casual sex for gift/money)
___ bodaboda man
___ teacher
other (please specify) _______________________________________

Why were you afraid? ______________________________________
What do you think would have happened if you refused the request for sex?

________________________________________________________________________

16. Do you know any unmarried girls who have had unplanned pregnancies? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, how many girls? __________
What did these girls do? (i.e., have an abortion, marry the boy/man who impregnated them, give birth and stay at home with their parents, leave home with the baby)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

17. Have you ever been pregnant? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, what did you do?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

18. Are you worried about becoming infected with HIV/AIDS?
_____ Yes _____ No
If yes, why?

________________________________________________________________________

If no, why not?

________________________________________________________________________

What do you think you can do to prevent yourself from contracting HIV/AIDS?
19. Do you know any young women or men who have become infected with HIV/AIDS? (not including those who may have been born with it)
   ___ Yes  ___ No
   If yes, how many
   girls _______  boys _______

20. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share about some of the problems and situations that adolescent girls/young women face in Uganda? Your thoughts on this important topic will help researchers understand how to provide support for girls/young women around matters of sexual health and relationships. (Please write on the back if you would like more space).

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
APPENDIX A4-GOIF

GIRLS-ONLY IMAGINED FUTURES (OCT. 2006)

Name (optional): ___________________________________________
Age: ________________
Current educational situation (i.e., S5, tailoring school, etc) ________________

1. Would you like to get married? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, you do not need to answer questions 2, 3 or 6.

2. How old would you like to be when you get married? __________

3. How old would you like your husband to be when you get married?

4. Would you like to have children? ___ Yes ___ No
   If yes, how many children would you like to have? _______
   Would you like to have:
   ___ more sons (if yes, why? _________________________________)
   ___ more daughters (if yes, why? _________________________________)
   ___ doesn’t matter

5. What kind of work would you LIKE to do (i.e., farming, teaching, being a doctor)?
   ______________________________________________
   Why would you like to do this kind of work?

6. What kind of work do you think you WILL do? _______________
   If this is different than the kind of work you would LIKE to do, please explain why.
   ________________________________________________________________

7. Write a paragraph describing a day in your life in the future – as a mother a wife,
   and/or any other role you can think of. Will you have a job or career? Will you be
   a farmer? What kind of domestic duties will you have? How will you raise your
   children? Will you be actively involved in the community or women’s groups? Will
   you spend time with friends?

8. Write a paragraph describing the kind of husband you would like to have. Discuss
   his personality, his appearance, his work, his education, his ideas about
   relationships, his attitude towards his wife (or wives) and children, his contributions
   (if any) to domestic duties, his role (if any) in the community.

9. Write a paragraph describing how you would like to contribute to the development
   of your community in the future.

10. Draw a picture of your future family (you, your husband and children, maybe other
    family members) doing something together. You can be doing whatever you like

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
1. What does gender equality mean to you?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Have you ever had the opportunity to engage in discussion or debates about gender equality at school?
   ___ Yes  ___ No

   If yes, did you have these discussions/debates in
   ___ primary school
   ___ lower secondary school
   ___ upper secondary or vocational school

   If yes, were these discussions/debates (check as many as you like):
   ___ led by a teacher in the classroom
   ___ led by a teacher (or other adult) in a school club
   ___ informal discussions between students
   ___ other (please specify)

   If yes, who was generally involved in these discussions/debates:
   ___ girls only
   ___ girls and boys
   ___ girls and teacher(s)
   ___ girls, boys, and teacher(s)
   ___ other (please specify)

   If yes, what kinds of topics did you discuss/debate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If yes, were these discussions useful to you?  ___ Yes  ___ No
If yes, in what ways?

________________________________________________________________________

9. How would you rate your overall experience of the promotion/discussion of gender equality, gender-sensitivity in secondary school?

   ___ excellent
   ___ very good
   ___ satisfactory
   ___ unsatisfactory
   ___ very poor

10. Would you like schools to do more to engage students in debates/discussions around gender equality? ___ Yes  ___ No

   If yes, why?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

   if yes, what would you suggest that schools do?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

   Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire!
APPENDIX 4A-GOE

GIRLS-ONLY EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE (DEC. 28, 2006)

Name (Optional): __________________________________________________________

1. Why did you choose to go to Kyato Comprehensive Secondary School for your secondary school studies?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

2. How far is KCSS from your home? _______________________________________

3. Is there a secondary school closer to your home? ___ Yes ___ No
   If yes, why didn’t you attend that school? ________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have brothers or sisters that went to other secondary schools (i.e., not KCSS?) ___ Yes ____ No
   If yes, why did they go to a different school?

_____________________________________________________________________

5. What were some of your best experiences at KCSS?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

6. What were some of your worst experiences at KCSS?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

7. Which school are you attending now, and what kind of programme are you in?
8. What do you like (if anything) about the school/teachers?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

9. What (if anything) do you NOT like about the school/teachers?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

10. How (if at all) do you think attending secondary school will be beneficial to you in your future?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11. Is there anything that you could do or learn in the secondary school environment that would help you with your future lives (i.e., in areas other than academic or vocational)?  ___ Yes  ___ No
   Please explain:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12. What do you think you would be doing now if you were not in school?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for answering this questionnaire!
APPENDIX A5 – “SHADOWING” THE GIRLS

As discussed in Chapter 5, I visited many of the girls’ homes to meet their families and come to understand more about their home lives and circumstances. Below is a schedule of these visits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>Dec. 2, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelly</td>
<td>Dec. 1, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Dec. 9, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Dec. 8, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>Dec. 8, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireen</td>
<td>Dec. 3, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>Nov. 21, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Nov. 24 &amp; 30, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penina</td>
<td>Dec. 11, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakila</td>
<td>Nov. 16, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Dec. 9, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yudaya</td>
<td>Dec. 2, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

131 Pseudonyms are used.
Girls whose homes I did not visit:

- Caroline (home long way from school; difficult to coordinate time with her parents, as her father worked in Kampala, and her mother worked at the Ganda Town market)
- Catherine (often absent from school; we scheduled times to visit, but she would not be there)
- Elizabeth (dropped out of school before the end of S3)
- Sharon (dropped out of school before the end of S3)
- Florence (changed schools before the end of S3)
- Mimi (changed schools before the end of S3)
- Joanne (we scheduled times for home visits, but these were cancelled due to illness, parents being called away and Joanne’s absence from school)
- Jenenie (began KSS in S4; her family home was a long distance away from the school, and she was boarding at KSS, so there were not many opportunities to schedule a home visit. Those that we did schedule tentatively did not work out for various reasons, including illness (both of Jenenie and of family members)).
- Sofia (began KSS in S4; her family home was a long distance away from the school, and she was boarding at KSS, so there were not many opportunities to schedule a home visit. Those that we did schedule tentatively did not work out for various reasons, including illness, parents spending time in Kampala, etc.)
- Sharon (dropped out of school before the end of S3)
APPENDIX B – “BRIDGE” DEFINITION OF GENDER EQUITY

From: Gender and development: Concepts and definitions

The term ‘gender equity’ is often used interchangeably with ‘gender equality’. Here, a distinction is drawn between these two concepts, reflecting divergent understandings of gender differences and of the appropriate strategies to address these. Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. This expresses a liberal feminist idea that removing discrimination in opportunities for women allows them to achieve equal status to men. In effect, progress in women’s status is measured against a male norm. Equal opportunities policies and legislation tackle the problem through measures to increase women’s participation in public life. For example, in Chile, the National Service for Women (SERNAM) developed an Equal Opportunities Plan for Chilean Women 1994-1999. This focused on equitable participation in education, the labour market, health services, and politics. Judicial reform is another key tool in the fight for equality, but lack of implementation and enforcement might limit its impact. However, this focus on what is sometimes called formal equality, does not necessarily demand or ensure equality of outcomes. It assumes that once the barriers to participation are removed, there is a level playing field. It also does not recognise that women’s reality and experience may be different from men’s. Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognising their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. The goal of gender equity, sometimes called substantive equality, moves beyond equality of opportunity by requiring transformative change. It recognises that women and men have different needs, preferences, and interests and that equality of outcomes may necessitate different treatment of men and women. An equity approach
implies that all development policies and interventions need to be scrutinised for their impact on gender relations. It necessitates a rethinking of policies and programmes to take account of men’s and women’s different realities and interests. So, for example, it implies rethinking existing legislation on employment, as well as development programmes, to take account of women’s reproductive work and their concentration in unprotected, casual work in informal and home based enterprises. It is worth examining the content of policies, not just the language, before deciding whether an equity or an equality approach is being followed. Gender equity goals are seen as being more political than gender equality goals, and are hence are generally less accepted in mainstream development agencies.
APPENDIX C – “BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION”

From the NSGE (1999)

The following is reproduced from pages 5-6 of the NSGE document:

The first step in the process of developing the Strategy was to identify the issues which impinge on girls’ education and the specific barriers which must be addressed to accelerate girls’ full and equal participation in education. These have been identified and extensively discussed in numerous fora and documents at international and local levels. Although many of these were consulted, the focus was placed on issues highlighted in The Government White Paper on The Education Policy Review Commission Report, 1992, the Report of the African Conference on the Empowerment of Women Through Functional Literacy and Education of the Girl-Child, 1996, the Report of the Girls’ Education Consultative Meeting, July 1997, and the Education Strategic Investment Plan 1997-2003...

These issues were reviewed, and the barriers synthesized. The players in girls’ education in Uganda unanimously agreed that the issues presented below constitute the main barrier to girls’ full and equal participation in education in Uganda. The Strategy will therefore be pegged to these 18 barriers.

Socio-Cultural Factors

1. Constraints related to Uganda’s patriarchal cultures which oblige parents to uphold the needs and interests of the male above those of the female child and to view girls’ education as an opportunity cost.

2. Harmful traditional practices and attitudes which inflict physical and psychological damage, e.g., initiation rituals, early marriage, and bride wealth payment.
3. Traditional division of labour in the home and school which exerts greater social demands on the girls than the boy and often compels the girls to drop out of school to assume domestic duties.

4. Family instability which deprives all children of the love and security of one or both parents and often exposes the girls to rejection or abuse – including sexual abuse by a step-parent.

5. Some religious beliefs which reinforce negative cultural practices.

6. The insecure environment in and outside school, coupled with the girl’s physical, social psychological conditioning to a docile outlook with very low self esteem. All this makes her easy prey to sexual harassment and abuse and lead to pregnancy and ejection from school. These conditions are greatly intensified in areas of political instability/conflict.

7. Differential motivational scope for the male and female child reinforced by parental/societal/school expectations of each sex, role models available in the home, school and society and negative gender stereotyping in instructional materials and media.

**School-Related Factors**

8. Inadequate school facilities, especially:
   a) sanitation facilities for female students in co-educational institutions
   b) shortage of secure accommodation for girls in day institutions and the long distances they have to travel, exposing them to constant abuse on the way to school
   c) lack of provisions in public and private buildings to allow for easy mobility of persons, especially girls, with disabilities.
9. Lack of comfortable, appropriate clothing to allow the girl-child to participate freely and actively in a variety of school activities.

10. Negative gender stereotyping in the curriculum, instructional materials, teaching-learning methodology and assessment systems.

11. Factors related to school and college personnel:
   a) a dearth of attractive, high profile female role models among the teaching and administrative cadres at all levels of the education system
   b) negative/biased teacher attitudes which discourage the girls from participating freely and improving performance in school
   c) the absence of trained guidance and counseling personnel catering for girls’ needs
   d) a scarcity of personnel trained in gender-screening mechanisms

12. Shortage of relevant alternative quality education opportunities and facilities for girls who remain outside school.

13. A critical bottleneck in female access to secondary and higher education.

   Limited offering of appropriate courses there catering for girls’ social and economic needs on the one hand, and inhibitions barring girls from male-dominated science and technology course on the other. All these limit employment opportunities available to girls in the public and private sectors.

**Political/Economic/Administrative Factors**

14. The general public are largely unsensitized to the importance of girls’ education and are ignorant of their responsibility for providing a secure environment for female students.
15. Despite demonstrations of political good will, government is yet allocate sufficient resources to the planning and management processes at central, district and community levels to respond to the particular needs of girls’ education.

16. Inadequate enforcement of available laws and regulations which would otherwise protect the person and interest of the girls child, e.g., laws on defilement.

17. Limited availability of and access to gender-disaggregated data and information.

18. Poverty constrains the choice available to parents even if they were amenable to supporting girls’ education.
1. Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. Bodily Health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.

5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)

7. Affiliation.

A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control Over One’s Environment.

A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association.

B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to
seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unspecified search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

(Nussbaum, 2003a, pp. 41-42).
APPENDIX E – DEFINITIONS FROM UGANDA’S NATIONAL GENDER POLICY (2)

**Gender**: Socially and culturally shaped cluster of roles, attributes and expectations assigned to women, men, girls and boys. Hence these roles are not biologically determined but they are part of the culture, values and practices of a given society.

**Gender equality**: The goal of equal opportunity for and equal enjoyment by women and men, girls and boys, of rights, resources and benefits/rewards. Gender equality does not mean that women and men become “the same.” It means that women and men have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life.

**Gender equity**: Fairness of treatment by gender, which may be equal treatment or treatment which is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

**Gender gap**: Imbalance, between men and women, in terms of their levels of participation, their work load, their access to assets, resources and remuneration, their rights and their benefits.