UNDERSTANDING OBSTACLES TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:
PERSPECTIVES OF POOR, URBAN GIRLS FROM NAIROBI, KENYA

A Dissertation in
Education Theory and Policy
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

This study was guided by two questions: What are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling? And why do some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite the serious challenges, while others do not? Data for this study was obtained by interviewing adolescent girls attending Kamu and Lafaña Schools in Nairobi Province, those who had dropped out, and a sample of teachers teaching in the two schools.

This study established that the social construction of girls affected their educational attainment. This construction affected the perceptions of others about girls, and how girls viewed themselves. The negative views of girls permeated into the families and influenced the way the parents treated their daughters. The social construction and negative attitudes provided a fertile ground for sexual harassment that plagued the girls in and out of school. In addition, girls worked in the households and outside the households. However, girls’ individual attributes added to their risks of not performing well in school.

For those who persisted, one environment compensated for the risks that were present in another environment. For instance, the school cushioned girls from negative events in the households for a sample of girls from Lafaña School. Overall, this study shows that the Kenyan Ministry of Education and the Kenyan government, in liaison with school principals still have many options they can explore jointly and individually to alleviate the hindrances affecting girls’ secondary education in disadvantaged settings of Nairobi Province.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world has no chance of achieving many of the ambitious, health, social and development targets it has set for itself” (UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, March 2005, cited in Global Campaign for Education, 2005).

Education enables people to make reasoned choices and provides them greater opportunities. It alleviates poverty and disease, and gives people a stronger voice in their respective societies. For nation states, education creates an enlightened workforce and citizens who are well adjusted—having the ability to compete as well as co-operate in a global environment, thereby enabling greater socioeconomic development (World Bank, 2004). Providing girls with an education is one of the fundamental rights that they deserve. It not only develops their human capacities, but enables them and the nations in which they live to advance economically (Oxfam, 2000; Klasen, 2002). Girls’ education is an important component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)\(^1\) of which the third tenet is to promote gender equality and empowerment of women (United Nations, 2008). To achieve this objective, secondary school enrolment needs to be supported to match the increased primary enrolment and thereby strengthen the “bridge” to higher

\(^1\) The Millennium campaign was initiated in October 2002 after 189 leaders agreed to the declaration of the September 2000 Millennium Summit to set eight targets that were time bound that if achieved will end extreme poverty across the planet. The campaign “informs, inspires, and encourages people’s involvement and action for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals” The campaign’s objective is to hold their individual governments accountable for the Millennium promise (Retrieved January 23, 2009 from \text{http://www.milleniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp}).

This study on the adolescent girls is motivated by both the many benefits to girls, women, and society accruing from their education and by the vulnerability of this group to a myriad of challenges in this critical period of transition into adulthood. This transition includes various interconnected events and changes in their roles (Pallas, 1993). Adolescence is also seen as a dependent state (Keniston, 1970). Adolescent girls are dependent on their respective families for support to complete school and thereby realize their educational potential. Completing school will enable girls to function effectively in a global economy.

Therefore, this study focuses on adolescent girls because future global targets in socioeconomic development depend on them. Specifically, “...the size and competitiveness of tomorrow’s labor force will be shaped by today’s girls’ education and skill building and how much these girls use their education and skills in formal and informal economic activities...a decline in fertility caused by increased female secondary education would lead to fewer dependents per worker, allowing economic growth to take off” (Levine, Lloyd, Greene & Grown, 2008 p. 1). Research on education of adolescent girls is still necessary because the developing world—especially Sub-Saharan Africa and Kenya in particular-- is still failing its girls. Specifically, research documents that it is in the poor countries at the lowest levels of development where a vast majority of the young people, mostly women and girls face the greatest challenges (Plan, 2007).
This study focuses on the adolescent girls, in part, because of the realization of their vulnerability to becoming parents at a young age, which is often because of sexual predation. Teenage parenthood pushes the girls out of school, either through expulsion by the school authorities or through self expulsion, when they are not able to balance the role of being a student and that of being a parent (Pallas, 1993). School exit may come at a time that girls have not had adequate time to reflect on the gender norms that jeopardize their health and future sexual lives (Rogow & Haberland, 2005). Although education on its own may not overcome the multifaceted problems experienced by the girls, education makes girls confident in their abilities and rights as future women (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000). Girls become able to process information because of their education while using it as a stepping stone to greater income. It is no wonder that the United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000 recognized that, “educating girls is a first step towards ending poverty and achieving human rights.”

**The Problem**

Female education is a prerequisite for the development of “human capital of children in the form of child health, stature, and schooling, each of which is larger with an increment in the schooling of their mother, than their father” (Schultz 2002, p. 219). Yet entrenched cultural, political, and institutional constraints continue to perpetuate disparity in educational access by gender (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004). Despite the importance of education, globally 121 million children are still out of school, out of which 65 million are girls (UNICEF, 2004). In Sub-Saharan Africa, 30 million girls are
still excluded from schooling, the most important determinant of their future life chances (Gachukia, 2004). UNESCO (2007) estimates that in Sub-Saharan Africa, 33 million children are out of school, of which 54 percent are girls. Estimates show that in 2009, there is an increase of the out of school children to 75 million, of which 55 percent are girls (UNESCO, 2009). Additional estimates show that in 2010, there is a slight decrease of out-of-school adolescents to 71 million, of which 55 percent are still girls (UNESCO 2010). This suggests that many girls are still out of school and barriers continue to constrain their access to school. This study seeks to investigate the plight of girls drawn from two schools in Nairobi, Kenya; those who have dropped out of school; and their teachers; and to use the investigation’s results to suggest ways of ensuring that girls access, attend and complete secondary school.

According to the United Nations Report (2008) there has been a substantial increase in girls’ enrollment in primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). As such, gender parity has been achieved in primary schools since the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2002. However, few poor girls in Sub-Saharan Africa have an opportunity for secondary education. Girls continue to miss secondary education in poor countries of Africa, even when girls’ secondary education leads to an

---

2 This forum was one of the most important events in education at beginning of the 21st century (UNESCO 2000). The 1100 participants at the Forum adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, where they reaffirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by 2015. UNESCO was given the responsibility of coordinating all the global stakeholders and sustaining the global education momentum. (UNESCO, 2000. Education for All. Retrieved January 23, 2009 from http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef_2000/)
increased labor force, thereby reducing the dependency ratio, and stimulating economic growth (Levine, Lloyd, Greene, & Grown 2008, p. 1).

The situation of girls’ education in Kenya is not significantly different. Only 17 percent of females have secondary education (KDHS 2003; Levine et al., 2008; UNAIDS-IATT on Education, 2008), compared to 22 percent of males (Demographic and Health Survey, 2003). It was estimated that between 1997 and 2000, girls’ dropout rate stood at 50 percent (Mualuko, 2007). Among the various age groups, there is generally no difference in the school attendance among students who are between 6-15 years old, an indication of the parity attained between boys and girls in primary schools. However, disparities between boys and girls become clear between the ages of 16-20, the age group who are in secondary school. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2003), nationwide 51.3 percent of the males aged 16-20 are in school, while only 36.9 percent of the females of the same age group are in school (See Table 1). In urban areas, in Kenya there is a higher male to female school attendance for young people aged 16-20, with 35.5 percent and 23.0 percent for males and females respectively. In Kenya, girls’ secondary education seems not to have benefitted directly or indirectly from the drive towards getting all the children in primary school. Table 1 shows that out of the 89.3 percent of the 6-15 year olds who attend primary school in Kenya, only 44.1 percent attend the next level of schooling. It is important to understand the obstacles that underlie these data and hinder girls from effectively navigating secondary schooling, which is a gateway to higher education, and subsequent realization of the ultimate goal of gender equity in education and women’s empowerment in Kenya.
Table 1-1 Percentage of the Population aged 6-24 Currently Attending School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2003

Secondary education is clearly problematic in terms of gender equity, yet research on girls’ education in the context of Kenya has focused mainly on rural districts with girls of primary school going age (Mensch & Lloyd 1998; Lloyd, Mensch & Clark, 2000). Other studies have focused on the comparison of school enrolment between Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004). In the context of secondary education in Kenya, studies have focused on orientation of female students to work (Achatz, 1990), on gender differentials in the study of science subjects in high school (Eshiwani, 1985; Ndunda 1990), girls’ access to vocational training (Wamahiu, 1996), sexual coercion of young women in central Kenya (Erulkar, 2003), on secondary school financing (Ngware, Onsomu, & Muthaka, 2007) and on gender based violence and resilience among post secondary Kenya Women living in two cities of the United States (Kanga, 2005). In Nairobi, studies have focused on primary education, with specific reference to Free Primary Education (FPE) (Ngware, Oketch, & Ezeh, 2008a; Ngware, Oketch, & Ezeh, 2008b; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh, & Epari, 2008; Oketch,
Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezeh, 2008). Aside from the issue of gender equity, another area of concern is access to secondary school by girls.

**Access to Secondary School in Nairobi Province**

Equitable education among secondary students is not the norm in Nairobi. The lag in girls’ enrolment is shown by the Ministry of Education statistics. See Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrolment in Numbers</th>
<th>% Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14436</td>
<td>11568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12301</td>
<td>11327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10434</td>
<td>8995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8879</td>
<td>7821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11409</td>
<td>8803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>18022</td>
<td>11686</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1-2 shows that in 1999, secondary school girls were 10.9 points behind boys. This lag in enrolment between boys and girls, in Nairobi Province widened to 21.3 points in 2004, after the implementation of free primary education in Kenya. This is contrary to the expectation that increased primary enrolment would translate into improved transition into secondary school for girls. But, the problem of access, manifested in low enrolment is not the only problem afflicting girls in Kenya.

Aside from the problem of access to secondary school, a bigger problem is the inability of girls enrolled in Form One in secondary school to complete Form four. See
Table 1-3. The percentages of girls entering Form One\(^3\) in all the years where data is shown is lower than those graduating from Form Four. Therefore, an overemphasis on the numbers of girls entering secondary school, points to increased progress in girls’ school attendance, while concealing the growing gap in the completion of girls’ education. Focusing only on access and equality of educational opportunity misses the point: that access to education alone does little to guarantee substantial improvement of the quality of lives for girls.

**Table 1-3 Secondary Enrolment in Form One and Form Four**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Form 1 Enrolment</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Form 4 Enrolment</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Percentage Female</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Percentage Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1999</td>
<td>180537</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>156465</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2000</td>
<td>187101</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>170071</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2001</td>
<td>195262</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>185907</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>201004</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>185184</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>205312</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>183662</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2004</td>
<td>215599</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>193087</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from The Kenyan Ministry of Education Statistics Section 2005.

If there is a lag in the secondary education participation for girls, ultimately there is a lag in their participation in higher education. Table 1-4 shows the absolute and percentage differences between males and females in Kenya who are admitted into university. University admission for males between the years 1999-2003, is above 60 percent while female admission into university is below 40 percent. This shows the presence of gender disparity in higher education, a manifestation of unequal access in

---

\(^3\) Form One in the Kenyan context is equivalent to 9\(^{th}\) grade in the American School system. Typically Form One is the starting point of the Secondary School cycle in Kenya. The subsequent classes (grades) being Form Two, Three and finally Form Four in the current 8.4.4 system of education.
girls’ participation in secondary schooling. Therefore, girls must overcome obstacles at the secondary school level to participate effectively in higher education.

Table 1-4 Secondary to University Transition Rates 1999-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates (c+ and above)</td>
<td>30,243</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>30,666</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates Admitted</td>
<td>8,150</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8,899</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Males</td>
<td>5,261</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>5,783</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Females</td>
<td>2,889</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>3,116</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In sum, the gender gap may be closing with time in many countries, Kenya included, but disparities in school attendance still persist. It is important to note that this gap persists throughout the ages when children are in secondary school. This gap attests to the disadvantage that accrues to girls when they enter into the secondary stage of schooling and that leaves them far behind in university enrolment. Girls must not only access, but complete secondary schooling. This can only happen when gender-related discriminatory practices encountered by girls in social institutions such as the family, and school are given attention. Addressing these issues is essential for the status of women and the girl-children to improve (Mannathoko, 1999).

Consequently, this study is timely in its essence as it sheds light on the experiences of girls which hinder their access to and completion of secondary school. Using a sample of girls drawn from within and out of school and their teachers, this study will generate hypotheses on the problems that hinder girls’ education, and reasons why some girls have managed to persist in school despite these difficulties, while others do not.
Issues in Need of Investigation

Little research seems to have illuminated girls’ secondary schooling in the major urban areas of Kenya, especially Nairobi. As mentioned earlier, much research focuses on primary education. Consequently, the experiences of poor girls attending secondary school in poor slum neighborhoods in this city is missing in the discourse of education and development. This is one area in which my study makes a contribution. Moreover, research done in the context of Kenya has not questioned the underlying root causes of the lag in girls’ education in general and secondary education in particular. I recognize that girls low enrolment, low retention, and low completion rates make girls lag behind the boys. Beyond this, I argue that these phenomena are the immediate manifestations of underlying problems, including the way girls are socially constructed in Kenya.

Therefore, this study’s unique contribution will be to understand these underlying problems by exploring the experiences that the adolescent urban girls undergo during their high school years in Nairobi. Moreover, this study seeks to unravel why some girls persist in school despite the serious challenges, while others do not. This study’s contribution will be accomplished through exploring two questions: What are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls in Nairobi that are obstacles to their secondary schooling, and why some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite serious challenges, while others do not. In so doing, I hope to illuminate the dynamics at play in the pool of girls who are part of the disadvantaged urban population and denied education, and provide information that can be vital for public policy.
Research Questions

This study explores two questions in an attempt to explore hindrances that adolescent girls face in an attempt to obtain secondary education in Kenya, and to explain reasons why some girls are able to persist in school despite the serious challenges, while others do not. The questions are:

1. What are the in-school and out of school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling?

2. Why do some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite serious challenges, while others do not?

Significance of the Study

In light of the global move towards education for all, it has become inevitable that secondary education for girls in Sub-Saharan Africa should gain the attention of researchers and policy makers. Thus, findings of this study will add to the ongoing international dialogue on possible ways for the girls to make a transition and persist in secondary school. The study will provide a much-needed understanding of contemporary day-to-day experiences of poor urban girls struggling to get a secondary education in Kenya. This research begins to fill in the gaps in understanding urban girls’ secondary schooling, and it will contribute by doing so from the girls’ own perspectives. Thereby it will provide more specific insights about the problems adolescent girls face in completing high school. This study is also important in re-evaluating the impact of sexual harassment
on the schooling of girls. Such specifics are needed by the Ministry of Education in Kenya to strengthen retention programs. This study also seeks to draw attention to possible interventions that the government can channel to the parents, guardians and the ‘significant others’ who shape and determine the future of these girls directly through their interaction and nurturing, and indirectly through the resources that they avail for girls to continue with schooling. In addition, this study will shed light on ways to effectively strengthen teacher training programs, to better equip teachers in dealing with adolescent girls’ problems at the transition stage, so that they can be helped to complete school.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the importance of education for girls. Thereafter, it briefly introduces the problems that surround the education of girls, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the organization of the dissertation. Chapter Two reviews the historical development of education in Kenya with a special mention of the gender dimensions. Secondly, I discuss the empirical literature on girls’ schooling. Thirdly, I explain the conceptual framework for the study, namely the risk and resilience framework. In Chapter Three, the research design for the study design of the study is presented. Included in this chapter are the sampling procedure for sites and participants, methods of data collection and analyses, the methodology that was employed in the pilot study, and the methods of data analysis that will be used in the dissertation. Chapter Four
outlines the findings of the study in reference to the two guiding questions for the study.

Chapter Five is the discussion and the concluding chapter of the study. It starts by giving a brief synopsis of the findings. Thereafter, I discuss the policy implications and recommendations emanating from the study. This is followed by limitations of the study, directions for future research, and concluding remarks.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter establishes a foundation for this study by highlighting research findings pertaining to education in Kenya, gender issues relevant to Kenyan education, and girls’ persistence in education despite obstacles. This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section addresses the meaning of gender, the gendered nature of schooling in Kenya, and its application in the African society in general and Kenyan society in particular. The second section of the chapter traces the origins of the problem of access to schooling for girls in Kenya since pre-colonial times, during the colonial period, and at independence and beyond. The third section explores the empirical literature on girls’ education. The fourth section discusses the risk and resilience framework.

Meaning of Gender

Gender is socially constructed by society and delineates the roles that are performed by males and females respectively. The use of gender to define people is a universal phenomenon. However, the use of gender to apportion societal benefits and status is more apparent in African countries where the societies are typically patriarchal in nature. In Kenya, the differential treatment of persons based on their gender has pervaded every aspect of the society. The perceived roles in the society for boys and girls have been the cornerstone of education in Kenya, and the differential experiences that
boys and girls have. According to Webster (1999), the influences of gender roles’ on the type of education and on the experiences derived from education, for boys and girls have a historical root. It dates back to the pre-colonial period, when Africans were in charge of education in their communities and during the early years of colonialism when missionaries provided the education to the Africans. Later the colonial government provided education, and this was the system that was inherited by the Kenyan government after the departure of the British in 1963, with the attainment of independence.

**Education and Gender Roles in the Pre-colonial Kenya**

Before the advent of colonialism, African societies practiced informal education—an education that focused only on survival skills and efficiency in society. Women were given roles that were less dangerous and more submissive. The African man was the major provider for the family while the woman engaged in the duties of being a mother, a housewife, and a cook (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004). What the children learned was dictated by the family and the village’s needs. Instruction was based on sex roles; on family’s traditional division of labor; on their lineage and kinship ties in their respective villages, and communities of origin. Traditional education in pre-colonial Kenya incorporated the lives of children, the interactions that they had with the parents, within the nuclear family, and the general community as a whole into a rich learning

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4 African is a generic term that refers to a people as they were referred to in respective countries, including Kenya during the colonial period. Thus the term appropriately refers to an African in Kenya in this context.
experience (Bogonko, 1992; Furley & Watson, 1978, Sheffield, 1973). The main purpose of pre-colonial education in Kenya was to socialize individuals towards a predetermined life-course within their respective societies, thus perpetuating the smooth running of their families and communities (Bogonko, 1992; Furley & Watson, 1978; Sheffield, 1973). Bogonko (1992: 1) observes of the function of traditional education in pre-colonial Kenyan society:

> Education was a lifelong process through which an individual progressed by predetermined stages from birth till death. He ultimately arrived at full membership in his group, emerging as a socialized person with knowledge of what was required of him and emotionally fit for the life that awaited him.

Additionally, men have been accorded higher status than women since pre-colonial time (Kabira, 1993). Similar to other patriarchal societies, women rarely held religious and political positions in their various villages and communities (O’Barr & Firmin-Sellers, 1984). Therefore, formal education in the pre-colonial Kenya carved out different “paths” for boys and girls. This depended on what roles girls and boys were expected to perform as they made a transition into adulthood. It is apparent that boys had to be exposed to a different type of instruction that befitted their status as future men in the society. Girls, on the other hand, were instructed on chores that were geared towards becoming future women, who were meant to provide for the male folk and children in their respective households and their extended families.
Colonial Education and Gender Roles

The situation was no different with the advent of colonialism. Colonialism in Africa in general, and Kenya in particular, had an objective of enabling the colonies to be self-sufficient and pay for the costs of their administration. Therefore, the initial infrastructural developments in the form of the building of roads, railways, establishment of plantation agricultural economies, building of factories, and mining ventures attempted to make African economies self-sustaining, in addition to paying for the costs of their administration. Thus, the colonial administration aimed to create a populace with the necessary basic skills needed for the colonial governments in Africa to exploit the resources in their respective colonies. According to Shabaya and Kwadwo (2004), work in the colonies required a lot of stamina and the working environments that were established in African countries like Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe were dominated by males with very few females. Males received a superior education so that they could be representatives of their people in the colonial administration (Rharade, 1997).

Even after 1920s, when the settler farmers put pressure on the colonial government to provide the Africans in Kenya with an education so that they could serve as a source of cheap labor, the response of the colonial government did not include educating girls. Rather, the colonial government focused attention on boys by providing an expanded curriculum that entailed agricultural and technical training, but leaving girls’ education in the hands of the missionaries who provided them with a domestically-oriented curriculum (Webster, 1999). The emphasis remained on boys education throughout the colonial period, for the major purpose of producing a technically-oriented
labor force for the needs of the settler farmers in Kenya. According to Tignor (1976), the emphasis of the colonial government on the education of boys were similar to the household beliefs of Kenyan people, who believed that sons were better placed to benefit from the colonial technical and industrial education. Boys in the African Kenyan families were looked upon to participate in the colonial labor economy by the colonial government.

The 1940s saw the development of schools that were predominantly for girls at the primary, junior, and senior secondary levels (Webster, 1999). In 1947, there were only 37 girls schools out of the 2000 primary and secondary schools. The schools that catered to girls provided instruction for only six years. Secondary education in the 1940s was single sex, but the government continued to give more resources to the education of boys than girls (Kenya Colony Protectorate, 1948 cited in Webster, 1999). As the 1940s drew to a close, girls’ education received little attention and was still under the control of the out of station\(^5\) mission schools. The mission-run schools for girls continued to pay attention to the training of girls in the domestic sphere (Kenya Colony Protectorate, 1948 cited in Webster, 1999). Therefore, the African, missionary and colonial education favored boys (Webster, 1999).

It is clear that precolonial education was gendered, as were the missionary and the colonial education systems. Therefore, the gender gap that has been carried into the 21\(^{st}\) century has its roots in the historical development of education in Kenya. Although the gender gap began to be addressed at independence (Webster, 1999), the disparities

\(^5\) Out of station Mission Schools were those schools established by Missionaries away from the bases/camps set up by the Missionary Societies.
continue to persist in the education of girls and boys at the secondary school level. According to Shabaya & Kwadwo (2004), these disparities are an outcome of the socialization of girls from an early age to be future mothers and care givers. A girl’s responsibilities still include cooking, fetching of water and firewood, looking after siblings, and selling items in the market to raise income for the family. Because of the priority given to the role of girls as future wives and mothers, there is less emphasis on girls’ educational opportunities. This has also reinforced the idea that girls should have less education because their roles are already defined in the society as per the traditional practices (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004).

Situation at Independence and into the 1990s

Kenya became independent in 1963 after eighty years under the British colonial rule. On December 12, 1964 Kenya became a republic. With the attainment of independence, many African leaders found deficiencies in the education structures that they had (Nyerere, 1968). Kenya was thus not an exception to this situation that was afflicting the new independent nations immediately after colonial rule; it too had an educational system that was of poor quality and inadequate for her citizens (Otiende,

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6 Julius Kambarage Nyerere was the President of Tanzania formerly called Tanganyika during the period of colonial rule under the Germans. He was President from 1964-1985 when he relinquished the presidency to Benjamin Mkapa. He is remembered for his strong beliefs of Africanization of structures in the African countries after the end of colonialism. He introduced the policy of ‘Ujamaa’ meaning collectivization and pooling of resources together for the betterment of all the people in the country.

He was a teacher and a writer whose knowledge has been used as a blueprint by young African nations emerging out of colonialism.
Wamahiu & Karugu, 1992). The leaders of this new state looked to assess the educational system so that they were better informed to make major decisions, taking into consideration the highlights of the Addis Ababa Conference\(^7\) (Rharade, 1997). The Addis Ababa conference recommended the expansion of education systems to advance social and economic development in all African countries (Rharade, 1997).

The education adopted from the colonial masters comprised 4 years in primary school, 4 years in intermediate level, and 4 years in secondary school (Rharade, 1997). With the attainment of independence, the government was hard pressed to provide a different kind of socialization needed to change the racial and ethnic differences that had been nurtured over years of colonial rule. Thus, at independence, the formidable challenge the new Kenyan Republic had was to design a system of education that would provide for more opportunities for Africans in Kenya, with a relevant curriculum suited for African children. The new republic also intended to provide universal, free primary education (UPE) (Otiende et al., 1992; Rharade, 1997).

Immediately after independence, there were a series of reports aimed at education reform. The first among these was the Ominde Commission (Rharade, 1997). The Commission was charged with meeting the educational demands of the period 1963-1974 and advising the newly formed government on the formulation and implementation of the broad goals of education which were:

- appropriately express the aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country; take account of the need for trained manpower for economic development

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and for other activities in the life of the nation; take advantage of the initiative and the service of regional and local authorities and voluntary bodies; contribute to the unity of Kenya; respect the educational needs and the capacities of the children [emphasis added]; have due respect for the resources, both in money and in personnel, that are likely to become available for educational services; and provide for the principal educational requirements of adults (Otiende et al 1992, p. 79).

It was on the basis of this report that Kenya carved out broad educational goals for post-independent Kenya (Otiende, Wamahiu, & Karugu ,1992). This Commission broke fresh ground and set forth a new way of thinking about education. Broadly, education was a tool for changing attitudes, relations, and fostering equality among the various racial, tribal and religious groups in the country. The report established a blue print in educational policy and practice in Kenya in terms of manpower training and development (Otiende et al., 1992).

The second report following closely after the Ominde Commission was the First Development Plan (1964-1970). This report emphasized the need to expand economically, Kenyanization, and the need for an education relevant to the required manpower skills (Eshiwani, 1990). The Third Development Plan (1974-1978) defined the path that educational policy was to take (Eshiwani, 1990). It underscored the constraints put on the country’s development by the inadequate utilization of manpower and by inadequate skills at all levels.

In 1976, to put further emphasis on the educational developments and educational objectives for manpower developments, the government instituted the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (NCEOP), also called the Gachathi Report. This report “was entrusted with the task of defining a new set of educational goals or objectives for the second decade of independence and formulating a specific
program of action for realizing them within the nation’s financial constraints” (Otiende et al., 1992, p. 109). One of the key suggestions of this report touched on rural development (Eshiwani 1990).

By focusing on the aspect of rural development as one of their suggestions, the NCEOP was in agreement with the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) report entitled, Employment Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya. This report had recommended “a restructuring of the school system to incorporate the teaching of the pre-vocational subjects from the primary level” (Otiende, Wamahiu, & Karugu, 1992, p. 109). Before the recommendations of the NCEOP could be fully implemented, it was overtaken by the Mackay Report of 1981.

The Mackay Report of 1981, “Report on the Presidential Working Party on the Second Public University,” changed the structure that had hitherto existed since independence: the 7.4.2.3 system (7 years in primary school, 4 years in secondary school, 2 years in advanced level and 3 years at the university), into the 8.4.4 (8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education, and 4 years of university education). The purpose of the 8.4.4 education reform, “was to adjust the education system to the country’s needs, reduce inequalities by building new schools in disadvantaged regions and, above all, to solve the problem of young people entering the labor market without any vocational training” (Rharade 1997, p. 169). By so doing, the Mackay Report reaffirmed the reasoning behind the NCEOP that eight years of primary education should provide school leavers with, “Numeracy and literacy skills in the first six years; basic education with practical orientation in the last two years; one examination which was

To this end, the 8.4.4 education system introduced a curriculum whose goal was to prepare students for self-reliance, vocational training and lifelong education (Moyi, 2006). The proponents of the education system realized that there was a need to tailor education to development that was immediate, and to the rural areas where vast majority of the Kenyan people lived. King & McGrath (2002, p. 89), assert that “the 8.4.4 policy arose out of the concerns that a basic academic education might lack the necessary content to promote widespread sustainable self employment.”

But the 8.4.4 curriculum was criticized for being expensive, and placing tremendous pressure on the teachers and the students (Moyi, 2006). This curriculum was broad and could not be taught in a given school year (Moyi, 2006), leading to backlog of work both for the teachers and students. Schools had to get extra time to teach the students during the holidays in order to complete the stipulated work required for the Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE) exam.

Currently, the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) develops the curriculum taught in both primary and secondary schools. In addition, KIE is responsible for undertaking research into the curriculum. Pupils in primary school are taught the following subjects: English, Kiswahili, Science, Mathematics, and Geography, History and Civics (GHC). Upon entry into secondary school, students are required to study all the subjects (usually 13) in their first and in some instances their second year of school. However, in preparation for the Kenya Certificate Exam (KCE) they choose from the different clusters of subjects. For instance, English, Kiswahili, and mathematics are compulsory subjects.
They choose from the sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology); Humanities (History and Government, Geography, Religious Education); and technical subjects (Business Education, Art, Music, Agriculture, Computer Studies). What KIE developed as curriculum was similar to the recommendations by Mackay Report for the primary and secondary curriculum (Moyi, 2006).

In an attempt to reform and strengthen the educational system and the 8.4.4 even further, the government appointed the Commission of Inquiry into Education System, chaired by Dr. D. Koech. The Koech Report, also called Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET) released in 2000 recommended a one year pre-primary training, a primary education of 7 years, and a secondary education of 4 years (Achola & Pillai, 2000). This was to constitute 12 years of basic education, 2 years of pre-university education and 2 years of university coursework. It also recommended that the number of examinable subjects at the end of primary cycle be increased to five. These were Mathematics, Kiswahili, English, and General Paper (GHC). The General Paper examines the students’ overall awareness of the current issues in the country (Moyi, 2006).

The introduction of research into education by KIE and TIQET succeeded in making the education system adaptable to the Kenyan people for national integration; introducing vocation education; and integrating quality education and training (see section above). However, these changes did not explicitly address the plight of girls beyond primary school. For instance, these reforms targeted primary schooling, and they did not explicitly address issues of gender parity at the secondary school level. In 1963, for example, girls were 34 percent of the student population; this increased and peaked at
49 percent in the 1994, showing a steady increase of girls’ enrolment in primary school since independence. The boys were 66 percent in 1963, and 51 percent in 1994. Therefore, in the mid-90s, girls were almost at par with the boys in the primary school category in Kenya—having only a 2 percent difference. (See Table 2-1.)

Increased primary enrolment notwithstanding, the proportion of girls entering secondary school has been lower than the primary enrolment since 1963, in which girls comprised 32 percent of the enrolment. The difference between the primary and secondary school enrolment for the girls widened from a 2 percentage point difference in 1963, to its maximum in 1973 with an 11 percent difference. This difference reduced in the 1980s, but increased to a 10 point difference in 1985; in 1994, it reduced to a 5 percent point difference (Republic of Kenya, 1995; Republic of Kenya [Development plan], 1997).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary Enrolment</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Secondary Enrolment</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Percentage Female</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Percentage females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>891,533</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30,120</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1,040,890</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47,976</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,427,590</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>126,855</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1,816,017</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>175,725</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>2,881,255</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>226,835</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,926,360</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>419,201</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>4,323,870</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>493,710</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>4,702,414</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>437,207</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5,559,2300</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>618,461</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>5,428,600</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>531,342</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>5,556,800</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>618,839</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Republic of Kenya, 1995; Republic of Kenya [Development plan], 1997
Despite the Kenyan government’s effort to reform and re-structure education to improve the ability of schooling to serve citizens’ needs, Moyi (2006, p. 43) contends that, “the education sector is still in poor shape; schools and public universities lack facilities, teachers are poorly remunerated, school strikes are frequent, there are declining enrollment and participation rates, and widening gender and regional disparities.” [Emphasis added].

Access to primary education for the girls has not translated into equal access to secondary school as shown in Table 5. Although, many more girls are accessing primary school now than they were at independence in 1963, girls are still comparatively disadvantaged compared to boys and face greater hurdles today in secondary and higher education. Hence, we still see a reflection of the gendered nature of schooling, similar to what existed in pre-colonial and colonial era. As girls enter adolescence, usually in the upper grades of the elementary schools, their numbers begin to drop. When they enter Form One at approximately 14 years, the boys’ enrolment supersedes that of the girls and the trend continues into higher education. This situation was not different at the end of the 20th century.

The lag in girls’ education persisted, despite the catalytic entry of the international bodies such as UNICEF, UNESCO and other non-governmental organizations, who lent their support to research, conference presentations, and affirmative action in the 1990’s to focus keenly on the education of girls in Africa (Kitetu, 1998). One such conference, *Pan African Conference on the Education of Girls* in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in March/April 1993, underscored the “multiplicity of barriers to girls’ participation in
education” from a country specific situation of fourteen countries (Kitetu, 1998 p. 6). This conference highlighted Africa’s lag in female education, three decades after the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and UNESCO’s educational plans for Africa were launched in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in 1961.

In 2003, the Kenyan government instituted yet another reform into the education sector. This was Free Primary Education (FPE). The launching of Free Primary Education was a historical milestone in the development of education in Kenya. This policy was adopted by the newly elected NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) government in January 2003. The policy recommended that all children of school going age be absorbed and maintained in school, without any statutory charges such as fees being levied on parents. This policy adoption resulted in an increased enrolment of children; from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in formal public schools alone by 2004. This represented an increase of 18 percent. Another 300,000 primary school going children enrolled in non-formal learning centers countrywide. This policy was part of the government’s effort to achieve Universal Free Primary Education in an attempt to attain “Education for all” by 2015 (Government of Kenya, 2005). Whereas the nation made good progress increasing primary school enrolments, the gender gap is still present within secondary schools.

According to a World Bank (2006) document, Kenya’s gross secondary enrolment rate\(^8\) depicts a gender gap that was highest in 1990, at 7.2. (See Table 2-2).

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\(^8\) Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, as a percentage of the eligible official school going age population to the same level of education in a given year. This is different from the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) which is the enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.
The gap diminishes to -1.1 in 2003, the year FPE was introduced in Kenya, showing a possible increase in enrolment by girls who, prior to the introduction of FPE, were not attending school. By 2006 it stood at 3.4 percentage points. There is still a gender gap in enrolment between girls and boys in Kenya—the reason why this study is focused on hindrances to girls’ secondary education.

**Table 2-2 Gross Secondary Enrolment Rate in Kenya 1990-2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Gender Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank 2006

In January 2008, the Kenyan government introduced Free Secondary Education (FSE). According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), 10,000 Kenyan Shillings (Ksh) ($130) were to be allocated to each student to meet his or her needs in public schools. However, those students attending boarding schools would have to raise an extra Ksh 18,000 ($240) for their living expenses (Business Daily, 2008). Parents still had to provide the students with uniforms and lunches; parents with children in boarding school would have to pay for costs of their residential life (Oyaro, 2009).

Many stakeholders in the education sector argued that children from poor families may still not even be able to top up the fees that the government expects them to pay. The
tuition that the government offered to pay is only a small fraction of the total cost of secondary schooling. In the event that the government cannot provide textbooks, employ more teachers, and build more classrooms, parents would have to pay for these costs. This would reduce the chances of children from poor families of enrolling. Although the effects of the FSE on Kenyan pupils are still unevaluated, recent media reports acknowledge that Free Secondary Education (FSE) has not alleviated the plight of poor children attending school, especially girls. With dwindling resources, boys are more likely to get the opportunities to continue with school (Ayodo, April 2, 2008).

**A Glimpse into Tanzania and Uganda**

By way of getting some perspective on education in Kenya, it is useful to consider Kenya’s neighboring countries. Similar to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda also adhered to the Addis Ababa conference that set the pace for expanding secondary and tertiary education in their respective countries (Oketch & Rolleston 2007). However, recently Tanzania has adopted a national development plan called “Vision 2025”. This plan focused on alleviating poverty, thereby providing the capacity for the population to be both providers and consumers of education (Galabawa, 2001). According to Galabawa (2001) Tanzania has also experienced a greater participation by the donor community and weakening of central government control. This has partly solved issues related to the top down approach to education, hitherto present in the Tanzanian government (Galabawa, 2001).
The case of Uganda seems unique in the sense that it is still grappling with challenges of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Uganda has achieved gender equity in primary education, but modalities of financing education remain its biting problem. Uganda gave priority to girls and the disabled in the reintroduction of the UPE (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). The Ugandan case shows that fees present a serious hindrance to enrolment, paralleling the Kenyan case. However, the quality of education is also compromised by institutional limitations (Bategeka, 2005). These limitations include providing classrooms, qualified teachers, and textbooks. Although the governments of Kenya and Uganda have moved fast to solve these problems, corruption has continued to constrain the implementation of UPE (Bategeka, 2005).

Overall, the experiences of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, show that dramatic results can be achieved in schooling, particularly in primary education, if fees are abolished. However, unplanned enrolment leads to problems of quality and higher demand for secondary level of education (Raja & Burnett, 2004). In all three countries, enrolment is an outcome of the income in a household, cost of schooling, availability of schools, how involved the community is, modes of transportation, the quality of education, and its relevance (Raja & Burnett, 2004).

The situation of girls in each of these countries shows a move towards getting more girls enrolled in primary and secondary school in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The re-introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) attests to this. For instance, the introduction of FPE in Kenya in 2003, increased enrolment up to 85 percent by 2005 (Vos, Bedi, Kimalu, Manda, & Nafula, 2004). Following the gains on enrolment from the 1990’s onward gender parity was achieved in
primary education in Kenya (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). Tanzania prioritized primary education after the Arusha declaration in 1967, and the policy shifted in favor of government aided schools. Therefore, enrolment increased particularly of girls into primary schools (Bogonko, 1992). Similarly, in Uganda, despite the initial struggles with UPE, the gender gap has closed in primary schooling. Girls accounted for 49 percent of enrolment by 2003 (Bategeka, 2005). What remains to be seen is the equal progress in secondary education, with the global move to make secondary education part of basic education.

Empirical Literature on Girls Education

This section explores the current empirical literature of girls schooling in developing countries, especially Kenya. First, I trace the benefits that accrue to girls when they attend school and secondary school in particular. Second, I highlight barriers of girls’ schooling that past research has documented. I argue that the barriers are an outcome of the construal of girls at the family, school and societal levels.

Benefits of Girls’ Education

Positive Benefits of Girls’ Schooling

Research documents positive benefits of girls’ education on the individual, family, and society in general. The positive benefits include “higher levels of economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality and a longer life expectancy” that are
greater for countries that have achieved high girls' enrolment rates (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004, p. 399). There are not only big ‘economic returns’ to years completed in primary school for women, but social returns are also associated with primary school completion. These ‘social returns’ to education include reduced fertility, decreased levels of infant and child deaths, improved health for children, decreased instances of gender inequality within households, and late entry into marital unions (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark 2000; Schultz, 2002; Knodell & Jones, 1996; Murphy & Carr, 2007; Rihani, 2006). Research also documents that girls' schooling has an indirect effect on the “human capital of children in the form of child health, stature, and schooling, which are larger with an increment in the schooling of their mother, than their father” (Schultz, 2002, p. 219). Therefore, researches have argued that female schooling should be a higher priority than male schooling (Schultz, 2002).

Women’s Education and Child Health

Research shows that there is a strong linkage between maternal education and children’s health. Children born to educated women suffer less from the incidence of malnutrition, a condition that leads to wasting and stunting in children. Additionally, educated mothers are more likely to immunize their children at the appropriate ages, thereby lowering their mortality rates (Schultz, 1989; Summers, 1992, Weale, 1992; World Bank, 1992; UNICEF, 2000). Recent estimates show that an additional school year a girl undertakes yields a 10 percent reduction in the under-five mortality as
education makes mothers have both better knowledge of children’s health, and sanitation and nutritive food intake (Smith, 1999).

**Women's Education and Fertility Change**

Educated women can choose to have fewer children than uneducated women. Estimates from econometric studies on the impact of education on fertility change show that an additional year of schooling for a girl is bound to reduce her fertility by between 5-10 percent (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004). Therefore, education changes the way benefits and costs of having children is perceived, postpones the timing of marriage, and shapes attitudes towards contraception. In the long term, increased girls’ education eventually results in reduced fertility (King & Hill, 1993; World Bank, 1993).

**Women’s Education and the Probability of a Girl Remaining Enrolled in School**

Research documents that education of girls and women creates an intergenerational effect, thereby becoming an important determinant of girls’ educational attainment (See Figure 2-1). Research shows that educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school (Shabaya & Kwadwo, 2004). Each additional year completed by a woman in school enables her offspring to remain in school for about one third to a half of a year (Partnership on Sustainable Strategies for Girls, 2000). Women who are educated are better able to enter the labor force, thereby making it possible for the families of the households headed by these females to thrive. Many of these studies
have been focused on schooling at the primary school level. They have established how education is important to girls in determining their economic and reproductive outcomes. It is important to move a step further, not only to document the benefits that accrue to girls as they obtain secondary education, but also to establish what hurdles reduce the chances of girls’ secondary schooling to make an impact.

Figure 2-1 The Intergenerational Impact of Educating a Girl.

Benefits of Girls’ Secondary Education

Recent research shows that equally important are the benefits that accrue to the girls beyond primary education as they make a transition to secondary school. This is what Rihani (2006) calls the “virtuous cycle”. She posits that the mere presence of secondary schools has an effect on greater primary school enrollment as well as completion of primary school. The completion rate will increase because of the anticipation to attend secondary school. Girls’ secondary education is associated with increased social benefits to the society through increased political and civic participation, reduced instances of sexual harassment, and a lowered probability of young women being trafficked for labor and for sex. Secondary education offers girls greater ability to deal with HIV/AIDS by having the information required not only to prevent the disease, but to alter the way of thinking, and indirectly increases the chances of adopting self protective behavior. Thus the “virtuous cycle” indirectly leads to increased secondary enrollment in an intergenerational effect (Rihani, 2006), which transcends beyond the immediate societal effects that accrue to girls’ primary education.

Research in the context of sub-Saharan Africa shows that secondary schooling is crucial in young women’s lives (Bloch, Beoku-Betts, & Tabachnick, 1998; Heward & Bunwaree, 1999). Girls enter secondary school during puberty, and they are often faced with prospects of early marriage due to the religious and cultural expectations of society (Mueller, 2006). With secondary education and beyond, girls get a renewed sense of responsibility—one that enables them to take charge of shaping their own future, without leaving it in the hands of their fathers or future husbands (Murphy & Carr, 2007).
Research in the developing country context by Jejeebyoy (1995) posits five linkages between education and the ability of girls and young women to be healthy and be productive. These links include increased knowledge and exposure to the events happenings in the world beyond them, enhanced emotional autonomy, enhanced economic, social independence and self reliance, increased ability to make decisions in the home, and increased physical independence in interactions with the outside world. The evidence presented by Jejeebyoy (1995) suggests that education improves outcomes not only for the women who participate directly, but also for their families and communities. This potential is developed beyond primary school, with exposure to secondary schooling.

**Barriers to Girls’ Education**

Jejeebyoy (1995) shows how girls’ schooling is beneficial to their success and to society. Yet, girls face constraints in school, within their families, in their communities/neighborhood and their societies in general. The constraints, an outcome of the way girls have been *constructed* in the broader society, influence investment in their education, and negate the positive impact of girls on their respective societies. Therefore, the increase in the number of secondary schools since independence has not translated into girls’ access to secondary school. Girls’ school participation rates remain lower than those of boys in Kenya, thereby perpetuating a gender disparity that is prevalent well into the 21st century.
The Family Environment

The role of families in the educational attainment of girls has been widely documented in literature (Chernichovsky, 1985; Blake, 1981, 1989; Parish & Willis, 1993; Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994; Lloyd, & Gage-Brandon, 1994; Downey, 1995; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996; Knodell & Jones, 1996; Lam & Martelelo, 2002; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). However, there are notable conflicting hypotheses when looking at family components like sibship size and its influence on the educational attainment of girls. One argument suggests that girls are at risk of low educational attainment in large families, but where the families are small, the girls should be at par with the boys (Blake 1989). Blake (1989) further asserts that the disadvantages girls face are not only embedded in “dilution of parental resources” but also in the way sex roles are defined, putting emphasis on marriage and childbearing at the center of girls’ upbringing. The central finding in Blake’s research (1989) points to the differential loss of about a year of schooling of children between small and large families. This translates into differences in the high school graduation rate.

Blake (1989) established that school performance declines with increase in sibship size net of the controls. The explanation of how sibship size affects educational performance is through the resource dilution model (Downey, 1999). Blake (1981) sees three different types of resources that are finite: (1) “types of homes, necessities of life, and cultural objects (like books, pictures, music and so on),” (2) “personal attention, intervention and teaching,” and (3) “specific chances to engage the outside world or, as kids say, ’to get to do things’” (p. 422). The author adds, “The more children, the more
these resources are divided (even taking account of economies of scale) and, hence, the lower the quality of the output” (Blake 1981, p. 422).

Downey (1995) establishes that even with the similarity of parents, children in large families will get fewer resources from their parents than children from smaller families. The author argues that not only does the total quantity per child decrease, but there is also a decline in the value of the resources with increases in sibship size, as “the resource is less likely to be combined with interpersonal investment of time from the parents” (Downey, 1995, p. 758). He argues that certain resources may be double diluted by, “simply being less available as sibship size increases and second by being of less benefit to children in the large families even if they are provided” (p. 758).

Some scholars have argued that sibship size affects education attainment of girls in large families because of the time taken by girls to care for younger siblings (Fuller, Singer, & Keilley, 1992; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). Approximately 13 percent of young people in Kenya, many of them girls, are involved in care giving (Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). Therefore, girls who have younger siblings have a lower chance of ever enrolling in school than boys who have younger siblings (Lloyd, & Gage-Brandon, 1994; Lloyd & Blanc 1996; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). These authors find that an important influence in the educational achievement of girls is time spent in school, meaning that there is greater benefit of schooling to girls if, and when, they can spend a lot of time exposed to the schooling experience.
Influences on Parental Investment on Girls in Families

Parental investment in girls’ education is an outcome of family choices on schooling, gender roles, labor demands (Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994), parental survival, the attributes of the head of the household, and the quality of life within the household (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). In the context of African societies, family practices, labor demands, and gender-based roles are three salient influences on girls’ education (Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994). In their study of Botswana, a country that in many ways is similar to Kenya, Fuller, Hua, & Snyder (1994) found that young females’ enrolment rate falls below young males’ enrolment after junior secondary at an approximate age of 15 years. Based on their findings, they conclude that “family background and gender roles involving demands that compete with school attendance may be more influential than school factors in explaining this persisting inequality in educational attainment” (Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994, p. 352).

According to Fuller, Hua, and Snyder (1994), the opportunity cost of education (loss of labor from the children) may encourage parents to invest heavily in educating their sons (Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994). Research shows that in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, families and parents prefer to send their sons to go to school over their daughters (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). One reason for this is that many of the households consider education of sons as having the highest benefit, since future investment of boys eventually remains in the home. Girls’ education is often seen as having the greatest benefit to the family she marries into, which then strengthens the rationale for boys’ education as the future heads of the households.
Therefore parents can become selective when it comes to the payment of school fees for their children. Boys are more likely than girls to be kept in school. This concurs with research that was done in three districts of Kenya—Nairobi, Muranga, and Kwale which suggest that children from wealthier households are more advantaged when it comes to education (Buchmann, 2000). Gender discrimination in school enrolment for boys is associated with family instances of resource constraints: “parents will invest less in daughters when resources are limited, as in the case of households with many sons” (Buchmann, 2000, p. 1372).

Moreover, the patriarchal nature of Kenyan society also puts a lot of labor demands on the female members of the households, thereby endangering their schooling. For instance, my pilot study findings reveal that girls spend much of their time engaged in household labor, cooking, cleaning, and washing utensils before they can get time off to study. Hence, the time girls put into domestic work directly competes with the time that they have left to invest in the demands of the “institutional schooling.” Patriarchy also strengthens the rationale for educating boys rather than girls, often justified by boys’ education strengthening their future paternal roles.

Research documents that education of parents has a strong, positive, statistical significance in its relationship to the education of their children, especially girls. Children whose parents are educated are more likely to be enrolled in school and have greater years of schooling in comparison to the children of uneducated parents (Knodell & Jones, 1996; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). One mechanism that parental education operates through is the higher socioeconomic status of educated parents, who, when compared to uneducated parents, have more resources to invest in their children’s education. This is
particularly true of Sub-Saharan Africa where research shows that children who are more likely to be enrolled and stay in school are those that are born into families with greater financial resources (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). Educated parents are more likely to be informed of the benefits of formal schooling, which includes personal prestige, social mobility, health benefits, and a generally good life. Therefore, educated parents have a greater personal value on the education of their children.

Lam and Martelelo (2002) posit that as the number of the children attending preschool declines in a household, girls will have a greater likelihood of attending school. However, in specific countries in Africa—Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana, research shows that children with older siblings are more likely to attend school, complete their education, or be enrolled in school than children who do not have older siblings (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). This is because older siblings may be willing to remit income to their parents, to cover the costs of their younger siblings’ education. In addition, children from the households headed by females are more likely to be enrolled and complete grade four than the children from male headed households (Chernichovsky, 1985; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). Female-headed households are able to keep their children in school because “female household heads are more likely to invest resources, including time, money, and emotional support, in facilitating the education of children living in their households” (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996 p. 288). Lloyd & Blanc (1996) note that the extended families offer the children who are academically promising to move from their own families to households which will allow them access to better schools. Thus, female-headed households seem to be associated with greater and better opportunities for children’s education (Buchmann & Hannun, 2001).
Parents’ survival is a factor that determines the level of investment into the education of girls in Kenya. High mortality among parents leads to high incidences of orphanhood among school-going children. According to Muganda-Onyando & Omondi (2008), the proportion of orphaned children between the ages of 15-19 years has increased from 9 percent in 1998 to 11 percent in 2003. Nyanza province leads in the number of orphaned children with 20 percent of children without parents. Additionally, the authors identify that girls are not only becoming heads of households but that they are also susceptible to low-paid domestic work in the towns. Girls are more likely to work is to support their immediate families. There are approximately 2.4 million orphans in Kenya—who are considered vulnerable children requiring protection (Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). According to Muganda-Onyando & Omondi (2008), when girls are orphaned, there is a higher likelihood that they will drop out of school in order to get married.

**Barriers within the School Environment**

Current research highlights the persistence of gender differentials in schooling between girls and boys. Boys perform better in secondary school, shown by their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. This relates to boys and girls performing better in secondary school, shown by their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. This relates to boys and girls performing better in secondary school, shown by their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. This relates to boys and girls performing better in secondary school, shown by their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

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9 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education is a national examination administered in Kenya after every four years of secondary schooling. The Kenya National Examination results for 2000-2004 show that a higher percentage of male candidates got grades A to D+ in English (101), Mathematics (121), Biology (231), and Chemistry (232), than the female candidates in the years 2000-2004. The numbers in parentheses are the subject codes identifiers used by The Kenya national Examination for these subjects. In general the boys performed better in most subjects for the five years under review. (Education Statistical Booklet 2000-2004).
girls having different experiences, albeit belonging to the same school, which is due to the exposure to a different curriculum, differential treatment by teachers, differences in the school rules, school regulations and practices by administrators (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000).

In the study of primary school quality and its effects on school dropout among adolescent boys and girls in Kenya, Lloyd et al. (2000) document that gender differentials can be observed in school outcomes, a manifestation of the different ways in which the school environment can affect girls and boys. Therefore, girls’ performance in school is an outcome of how they are able to overcome the environmental challenges which are prevalent in their school settings. This is particularly difficult when girls reach puberty and are transitioning to young adulthood. The period of adolescence is one where girls become vulnerable within the schools, partly, because of the negative attitudes that the broader society holds about them as girls, and due to the absence of a supportive learning environment for them in school. This lack of a supportive learning environment is manifested in the manner in which girls are viewed by teachers as being self absorbed, inadequately motivated, and being incompetent relative to male adolescents (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Lloyd & Grant, 2005).

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10 In the secondary schools at the end of the 9th grade the students are given a chance to choose the subjects that they want to concentrate on as they move on to the 12th grade. However there are core subjects that are compulsory which every student gets to be tested in the national exam after four years which are English, Kiswahili, Math, and Chemistry. They get to choose between the other subjects like Physics, Biology, Geography, History, Christian Religious Education, French, Agriculture, Home science, Computer Studies, Islamic studies. The choice of subjects depends on what a respective school offers. The difference in the curriculum is that many girls choose the humanities, while boys get to choose the science subjects.
The prevalence of schooling differences by gender is seen in performance in examination. Eshiwani (1985) observes that girls have a higher standard seven\textsuperscript{11} dropout after the Certificate of Primary Examination (CPE).\textsuperscript{12} Eshiwani (1985) affirms that more girls were dropping out of school than boys between 1974 and 1985 after seventh grade. According to Eshiwani (1985) more boys than girls enrolled to take the CPE exam, with 71 and 67 percentages respectively; girls obtained lower scores on the CPE; Mathematics and Science had the highest performance gaps between the boys and girls, while the gap was smallest in English language.

Research done in Kenya shows that girls are at a disadvantage compared to boys, in part, because more girls initially enrolled in Harambee schools.\textsuperscript{13} Research shows a higher drop out in Harambee schools compared to the government assisted schools (Eshiwani 1985; Kinyanjui 1988). Harambee schools arose out of the Harambee movement (Moyi 2006). According to Mwiria (1990), “Harambee schools play an important role as agents of socialization and promoters of meritocracy and expanded economic opportunity, however limited they may be in that role” (p. 367). According to Moyi (2006) the strength of the Harambee schools was in their ability to harness resources beyond that which was provided for by the tax payers. In so doing, the

\textsuperscript{11} Standard seven is equivalent to seventh grade in the American educational system.
\textsuperscript{12} Certificate of Primary Education was the original exam undertaken at the end of the primary section of schooling before the system of education was changed to 8.4.4 in 1985. The primary school students then began undertaking the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.
\textsuperscript{13} Harambee schools represent those schools that local communities started to boost the number of secondary schools and enroll more students. For the better period after independence the Harambee schools were not assisted by the government.
Harambee schools may have put too much burden on families to finance their children’s education—therefore producing low quality schools.

Researchers posit that Harambee schools have been both a solution and a problem in the education landscape of Kenya. As a solution, these schools increased enrollment among the schoolgoing population. As a problem, they have exacerbated educational inequality in Kenya (Bray & Lillis, 1988; Buchmann, 1999; Eshiwani, 1993; Mwiria, 1990). According to Mwiria (1990) the poor quality of Harambee schools aside, they still provide a chance for many Kenyans to access secondary education. It is for this reason that many parents tend to enroll girls in Harambee schools which are within the community and are often cheaper than attending boarding schools which were far away from home.

Contrary to what was hoped, enrolling girls in Harambee schools within the community does not shield them from sexual harassment. According to Webster (1999) sexual harassment transcends the school type in western Kenya. Her research establishes that girls are prone to instances of sexual harassment whether in the Harambee schools or in the Provincial\textsuperscript{14} schools. Webster (1999) based her research in Western Kenya, a region that is considered predominantly rural. She acknowledges that a study that illuminates the experiences of urban girls would highlight what girls go through in their pursuit of secondary education in such a setting.

The school type is also not necessarily protective of girls from negative construal. For instance, research shows that in Kenya, girls are susceptible to negative attitudes and

\textsuperscript{14} Provincial schools are schools that were initiated by the government, financed to a large extent by the government and admit students from the wider “province” in which they are situated.
discrimination, whether it was a high performing school or a low performing school. Even though high and low performing schools both employ female teachers to serve as role models for the girls, teachers in the low performing schools have a stronger negative feeling towards girls and “strongly prefer teaching boys” (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998, p.182; Murphy & Carr, 2007). This strong negative feeling reinforces a gender-biased environment, which increases the risks for girls dropping out of school.

Although the role of schools remains critical in imparting skills to adolescent girls in Kenya, Mensch et al. (1998) posit that schools can reinforce gender inequality by being conservative, thereby subjecting girls to sexual harassment by their fellow students and teachers. When students fear harassment by their fellow students, community members, and even their teachers, the result is non attendance of school (Mudege, Zulu & Izugbara, 2008). Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination against girls and women. When men expose women and girls to sexual, mental, and physical harm or suffering as well as threats of coercion or other acts of violence, it deprives women of their rights and violates their liberty. Reports of various instances of sexual and harassment of girls around the world signifies a rise in the violation of their rights and liberty (Leach & Mitchell, 2006).

**Conceptual Framework**

In conceptualizing the hindrances and educational resilience of adolescent girls, I adopted the risk and resilience framework. Many scholars have devoted their effort to understanding the factors that can and do protect students against risk associated with
poor outcomes (Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Mandleco & Peery, 2000; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; Spencer, Dupree, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1996; Wang & Gordon, 1994; Winfield, 1991; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). The risk and resilience framework seeks to explain how children and young adults in hardship and distress exhibit positive academic outcomes, emotional attributes, and show social competence (Nettles, Mucherah, & Jones, 2000). On one side of the framework are the risk factors that make a student vulnerable to an unfavorable outcome (Murray, 2003). On the opposite side of the framework are resilience factors—protective factors that decrease the likelihood that an adverse outcome will occur, even when children and young adults are exposed to life stressors (Murray, 2003). Therefore, resilience denotes that children can overcome severe hardship and have positive adult outcomes (Moskovitz, 1983 cited in Murray 2003). In the following section, I elaborate the meaning of risk and resilience, explain the relationship between risk and protective factors, and discuss the ecological dimension of risk and resilience.

**Defining Risk and Resilience**

**Risk**

“Risk” has been defined differently by many scholars. To some scholars, risk is a composite term that comprises those stressors common to groups (Gordon & Song, 1994; Masten, 1994). In the case of this study, it is viewed as the hindrances that girls face in their attempts to obtain secondary education. Other scholars define risk as the general
condition that is associated with low socioeconomic status (Luthar Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). For the purpose of this study, I adapted Gore & Eckenole’s definition of risk (1994), which referred to risk as the presence of various life events and the effects of these life events on various groups. The definition encompassed the view that “negative life events” may be experienced differently among different groups and may be perceived as posing different stress levels among individuals or across groups. In keeping with this definition, hardships experienced by adolescent girls in secondary school in Nairobi Province may be different from what boys experienced. Likewise, the experiences of adolescents in mixed school settings may be different from those experienced by girls in single sex schools, and the experiences of adolescent girls attending secondary school in poor neighborhoods may be typical to these neighborhoods and different from experiences of those attending school in relatively affluent neighborhoods.

**Resilience**

Scholars have not reached a consensus on the definition of the construct resilience (Arrington & Wilson, 2000). Scholars have defined resilience as: “the lack of development impairment, or adaptation, despite exposure to risk” (Hauser, Vieyra, Jacobson, & Wertlieb, 1985; Masten, 1994; Masten, Coatsworth, Neeman, Gest, Tellegen, & Garmezy, 1995; Taylor, 1994, cited in Arrington & Wilson, 2000, p. 225), maintaining positive adjustment faced with the impact of adverse life events (Cohler, Scott, & Musick, 1995), and being successful beyond what is expected taking into account the high levels of stress that may be experienced (Bartelt, 1994). According to
Arrington & Wilson (2000), resilience is the capacity to adapt despite the presence of risk. However, resilience does not mean that individuals are not vulnerable to stress (Arrington & Wilson, 2000); rather, it is the capacity of an individual to exhibit competency despite high levels of stress (Luthar et al. 1993; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). According to Bartelt (1994), resilience is *relational*. Thus, resilience includes an individual’s personal experience with stress, the reserve of resources available at his or her disposal, and personal account of the individual’s successes and failures. A key ingredient of the construct resilience is the existence of *risks* and *promotive* factors, which enhance positive outcomes or decrease the likelihood that negative outcomes will occur (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004).

However, Winfield (1994) offers a more dynamic definition of resilience as a process resulting from an individual’s reaction to risk or vulnerabilities found within their environment. Consequently, resilience becomes an *interactional process* which comprises the attributes of the individual as well as the environment. This process of resilience is enhanced by the protective factors present in both the individual and the environment. Inherent in this definition is the notion that resilience is enhanced by an individual, his or her interaction with the environment(s), and the presence of protective processes that buffer the impact of risk on the individual. On the other hand, scholars have advanced the notion that resilience can “enable people to develop social competency, skills in problem solving, and critical consciousness in relation to oppression, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. …resilience involves traits such as self esteem, self efficacy, autonomy, and optimism” (Benard, 1995, cited in Arrington & Wilson, 2000, p. 225).
In explaining adolescent Kenyan girls’ persistence in urban secondary school, the dynamic definition of resilience focused on both the individual girls’ interaction with their different environments and how this interaction may have led to development of attributes to persist in school. In addition, their persistence led them to develop qualities that continued to make them stay in and complete school. Therefore, the risk and resilience framework frames my investigation into the hindrances to schooling (risks), and the protective factors that buffer students from the sheer impact of the risks and enable them to persist in school.

**Protective Factors**

Protective factors are defined by Rutter (1985, p. 100) as those “influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person’s response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to maladaptive outcome.” Other scholars have defined protective factors as those factors that act to reduce the chances that a negative outcome will occur (Cowan, Cowan, & Schultz, 1996; Murray, 2003). The concept has been also defined as the attributes of the family, school, and community that have the capacity to alter an adverse outcome (Benard 1995). Werner (1990) defined protective factors as procedures that decrease the occurrence of negative outcomes by compensating for the deficits, while being a challenge to the individual or providing boosters against the negative outcomes. Winfield (1991) asserts that self efficacy and self esteem are good examples of protective factors associated with resilience.
Protective factors that make individuals be resilient to life stressors fall in four categories: Individual characteristics (positive mood, having an internally controlled and motivated locus, high levels of self esteem, positive focus on what happens in the future, and being intelligent); family factors (having at least a parent who encourages a warm relationship and is supportive, being exposed to parenting styles that are effective); school factors (learning in quality schools, having a sense of belonging to the particular school, good relations with peers); and community characteristics (having social support from significant adult members of the community, being involved in other organizations that are prosocial) (Jessor 1993; Svetaz, Ireland, & Blum 2000; Wang & Gordon, 1994).

In sum, the protective factors that enable the youth to escape from the negative impact of risk can be classified as assets or resources. Assets are positive attributes that are intrinsic to the individual, self-efficacy, coping skills and competence. Resources are positive attributes that are essential for the youth to overcome risk and are external to the individual. The resources that promote resilience are the support of parents, mentoring by adults, and presence of community groups and organizations that offer positive experiences to the youth. Thus, resources emphasize the way adolescent development is impacted by social and environmental influences, meaning that resilience has an ecological context to it (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004).

**Relationship between Risk and Protective Factors**

In adapting this model as a tool to explain adolescent girls’ struggles to attain secondary education, I concurred with scholars who have argued that a relationship exists
between “risk factors and protective factors” (Murray 2003, p. 18). For instance, girls from disadvantaged households—a risk factor—still have the capacity to “exhibit positive outcomes” despite the adversity brought about by poverty (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004). Therefore, the interaction of the individual girls with their families, schools (and peers in the same school), and communities is bound to shape their educational outcomes. The differences in the quality of families, the school (and peers in the same school), and the communities may either be protective or negate girls’ schooling. When these factors are negative they become a hindrance; when they are protective, these factors promote adjustment to life stressors and persistence in school. (See figure 2-2).

The risks that hinder schooling are in constant interaction with the protective factors and, as Murray (2003) has argued, this kind of interaction can influence “development indirectly.” Beyond this, I argue that the ability of some of the girls to persist in school depends on whether the protective factors within the individual, family, school (including peers in school), and the community/society outweigh the risks that these respective environments posed. Secondly, it will also depend on how much the other “environments” compensate for the risks that the girls experienced from the various “environments.” For instance, it may be possible that certain girls persist in school because the school can compensate for some of the adverse effects of their families.

The interplay of the risks and the protective factors on the vulnerable student can result in either the students overcoming the obstacles and persisting in school or in poor adjustment to school and thereby non-persistence. Thus, there is a transactional relationship between the risks involved in schooling, the protective factors that encourage persistence and the vulnerability of the student (Murray, 2003) to either persist or drop
out of school. In this interrelationship, the student is also capable of influencing the different “contexts” within which she operates to contribute towards persisting or non-persistence in school. For instance, a girl who has a great deal of domestic work at home may share this with her teacher(s) who may in turn seek audience with the parent(s) or guardians to minimize the domestic work—a risk to the girl’s schooling.

Figure 2-2 Risk and Resilience Framework

Adapted from Murray (2003)

What is important is the interrelationship that the student develops with the family, school (including peers), and the community/society. These “contexts” exert an
influence, which is either *risky* or *protective* on the individual girls. The risk to adolescent girls’ schooling increases when “their environments make them vulnerable” (Arrington & Wilson, 2000, p. 224) to events that will necessitate their below average performance, and in extreme cases to dropping out of school. According to Arrington & Wilson (2000), environments make young people vulnerable when they lack social resources, when stress levels are high, and when institutions are lacking support. Therefore, positive outcomes in young adults may be an outcome of environments that have social resources, low stress levels, and institutions that have support.

**The Ecological Dimension of Risk and Resilience**

In this regard, the risk and resilience framework encompasses an *ecological perspective* which emphasizes the different levels in which an individual student is bound to interact: her family, the school, and the community in which that particular student is situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989; Johnson, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It is by examining the interrelations among the individual student, the family, the school, and the community (Arrington & Wilson, 2000) that a clearer picture can be painted to show what hardships students face in the respective contexts and what protective factors can be generated at the different levels to boost resilience. Yet, the students (girls) also may exert influence on the different “contexts,” and this relationship may either promote or negate their schooling (See figure 2-3). For example, a girl who overcomes her own fears, and shares her negative family situation with her class teacher may get extra support from the teacher, other teachers and sometimes the school principal. This support
will prolong persistence of such a girl in school. Thus, the ability of a girl to navigate the different contexts is essential for persistence or lack of it.

**Figure 2-3 Interaction of Student and Interaction Effects**

In exploring components of the “contexts” that either pose risks or protect youth, this study will also consider attributes of family and community/society that are relevant in the context of a Sub-Saharan African country. School attributes include teacher attitudes towards and treatment of girl students, student participation in class, and student-student interaction. Family characteristics include the type of housing that the adolescent girl inhabits with her family, parental attitudes to education, and the number of siblings in the households.

Moreover, the role of the community is critical in the development of the child and their subsequent behavior (Hobbs, 1978; Evans, Evans, & Gable, 1989; Young, Gable & Hendrickson, 1989). There is the interaction of the community with the individual child, with the home in which the child resides, and with the school that the
child attends (Johnson, 1994). The community’s characteristics of interest to this study are the socioeconomic status of the community, and the site of the school relative to the average distance to the individual adolescent girls’ homes. A close community interaction with the school leads to more meaningful experiences for the adolescent girls, whereas a remote community interaction with the school leads to less meaningful experiences.

In addition, the educational success of students is dependent on the cultural orientation of the community/society in which the student is a member. For instance, girls’ positive or negative experiences in school may be dependent on the way girls are perceived in the Kenyan society. Society and culture transforms the characteristics of every individual to contribute to a particular collective of a group’s existence (Johnson, 1994). Moreover, a “child is transformed into a group member by the accumulation of human experiences preserved in the cultural repository” (Johnson, 1994, p. 45). In addition, adolescent girls have incorporated in them the human experiences that are part of their respective cultures and societies. Some of these experiences are those that have glorified the schooling of boys at the expense of the girls, while others have advocated for total exclusion of girls from schooling.

Cultural values are expressed in school, in the household by parents, in the extended community, and these expressions have discriminative undertones for girls. In the process of interaction between the individual students and the different contexts, the risks and the protective factors trickle down to affect the failure or success of individual girls. The individual attributes of girls are reinforced by the different contexts either positively to foster resilience or negatively to lead to dropout. In sum, the ability of the girls to complete school depends on how well the different contexts, individual
characteristics, families, school experiences (including peers in school) and the community reinforce their efforts and compensate for the deficiencies of each context. Therefore, this study addresses the extant problems that are unique to girls who attend secondary school in a disadvantaged setting in Nairobi.

In essence, a vast body of research exists on schooling of girls in developing countries and in Kenya. Yet, the majority of studies have left out the experiences of the adolescent girls who make the crucial transition into secondary school. While primary school enrollment and retention has been achieved, there is need for a refocusing on secondary school retention. The vulnerability of the adolescent girls as they enter secondary schools makes a study about girls’ experiences in the secondary schools crucial. In order to further this discourse, questions that arose in regards to adolescent girls at the primary level of schooling have to be reexamined with girls attending secondary school.

Using girls who are still attending Kamu and Lafama schools (two urban schools in Nairobi Province), teachers in the two schools, and girls who have since dropped out, I explore and document the experiences of adolescent girls’ which are hindrances to their secondary schooling. For those girls who have persisted in school, I am interested in their perceptions of what has made them continue despite the difficulties. This study will provide additional answers on how to “take girls …beyond the broken bridge” (Rihani, 2006; UNAIDS-IATT on Education, 2008) of primary schooling into secondary schooling. If Kenya hopes to empower and enable girls and women to attain equality, it is imperative that the country engages in ways to strengthen girls’ secondary education. For without substantial participation of girls in secondary education, girls cannot participate
in higher education in the short term, and diminishes the effort towards women’s empowerment and equality in the long term.
Chapter 3
Research Design

This chapter describes the research design for the study. I start with a brief description of the Geography and the Economy of Kenya, the country in which the study is situated. Then, I describe the pilot study that informed this research, and the sources of data for the dissertation. Following this is a synopsis of the schools from which participants were drawn, a discussion of sampling issues (including what influenced the choice of the schools), the sampling procedures, and the criteria of inclusion of study participants. Lastly, I discuss the use of qualitative methods, methods of data analysis, and the threats to validity.

Country Profile

Kenya is located in the Eastern region of the African continent. It is bordered by Tanzania to the south; Uganda to the west; Ethiopia and Sudan to the north; Somalia to the north east, and the Indian Ocean to the south east. Kenya is divided into eight provinces and 72 districts. The country is geographically divided into two major regions, the lowlands and the highlands. The lowlands consist of the coastal region and lake basin while the highlands cover areas from north to south of the Great Rift Valley (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 2003).
History and Population

Kenya a former British colony, achieved its independence on December 12, 1963 and became a republic in 1964. There are 42 ethnicities with the major ethnic groups being Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, Luhya, Kamba, and Kisii. The languages spoken in the country are English and Swahili. Christianity and Islam are the major religions. In 2003, the estimated total population of the country was 32.2 million (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002 cited by the KDHS 2003).

Economy

Kenya’s economy is primarily agricultural, but tourism and the industrial sectors are other major sources of income for the country. The major export crops are coffee, tea, and horticulture produce (flowers, fruits, and vegetables). However, the agricultural sector accounts for only one-quarter of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (KDHS, 2003). In recent years, the performance of the economy has been below average, thereby undermining the well-being of the vast majority of the Kenyan people. According to KDHS (2003), during the first 10 years after independence, the economy grew at a rate of 7 percent per year. Between 1996 and 2002, the GDP growth rate declined to about 2 percent. This decline has been attributed to bad weather, low prices of agricultural commodities, poor infrastructure, and a general world recession (KDHS, 2003).

In addition, the KDHS (2003) reports that the numbers of people living in poverty increased from 11 million in 1990 to 17 million in 2001. According to the World Bank (2006), the poverty rate increased from 49 percent in 1990 to over 56 percent in 2003.
HIV/AIDS further complicates this situation by reducing the number of people engaged in the economically productive activities, resulting in negative consequences on most sectors—agriculture, health, education.

Pilot Study

Preliminary Data

For the pilot study, A Phenomenological Study of Girls’ Perspective on Obstacles to Educational Attainment, I interviewed 10 girls from two schools in the summer of 2007. I conducted six classroom observations in each school to observe the classroom dynamics. I also interviewed four teachers of Kamu School including the school principal. The girls were purposefully sampled to get to a sample of girls who were more likely to provide rich representations of girls’ attempts and struggle to obtain secondary education. I used a snowball sampling approach to get to the four teachers who were involved with the girls in various departments in the school and were in a position to provide me with data on girls’ struggles as they attempt to complete secondary education. For the preliminary data collection and analysis, I followed the phenomenological tradition, a methodology that highlights “how someone actually experienced what has been lived” (Giorgi, 1985, p. 1), because I was interested in the “lived aspects of human phenomena”. I used a protocol of questions which served as guidelines for the interviews, while allowing the participants to talk and elaborate on their experiences within and outside the school. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.
Preliminary Analysis and Findings

The analytical procedure followed Moustakas (1994). It entailed writing my own experience of the phenomena as a young girl schooled in Kenya. This procedure is called the Epoche. Moustakas (1994, p. 85) defines Epoche as “preparation of deriving new knowledge…” (p. 85). Through Epoche—documenting my own experience, I was able to have a clear mind and to bracket other experiences that might influence my own experiences as a onetime adolescent girl. Consequently, I was able to “create new ideas, new feelings, new awareness and understanding” of the experiences of the adolescent girls. I then used phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation (identifying and treating the statements in the transcripts as having equal value, and using imagination to seek meaning in the data), and synthesis of meaning and essences (establishing the essence of experience) to get to the experiences of the girls. The most salient findings include:

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a collective term that is often used interchangeably with sexual violence. It denotes at least any one or all of the following: attempted rape, rape, sexual abuse and exploitation (Population Council, 2008). It entails “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the survivor, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2005 cited in Population Council 2008). Sexual harassment was a major experience that adolescent girls undergo
within the school and out of school. All the ten girls who were part of the pilot study had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment (see a detailed analysis in the next chapter).

**Negative Attitude towards Girls’ Schooling by the Community**

Negative attitude refers to bad, thoughts, or feelings towards a person. The pilot study finds that the broader community had negative attitudes towards girls attending secondary school. The neighborhood is hostile towards girls and people in the neighborhood had negative comments about girls’ schooling. Alise explained attitudes she experienced in her neighborhood:

Educating the girls is a waste of money because they say that the girl will get married and go with her husband and leave you there, (pause) stay with their children and meanwhile they do not help you. So they say, it is better to educate boys, because they will live with their parents there help them.

Bewa too had to constantly deal with the negative comments about her schooling from her neighborhood. She was told, "*that girls are not supposed to be educated, guys (meaning boys) are the ones who must be educated because he is the one who will provide food but ladies will get married... if a girl is not educated all she needs is a guy who has money and he will take care of you.***"

**Fear**

Fear is the feeling of agitation or/and anxiety caused by the presence of imminent danger. The pilot findings show that the schooling experience of girls is one that is characterized by danger—feared, heard and experienced. Part of the experienced danger is embedded in sexual harassment. Girls felt fear as they walked to and from school on
their way home. Gracy sensed danger as she walked to and from school “*disturbed by those who are idlers*”.

**Parental Neglect**

The schooling experience of the girls is also characterized by parental neglect. Parents are not prompt in taking their responsibilities and often they are not available to support their daughters’ schooling. Parental absence is substituted by the grandparents. Bewa’s schooling experience worsened because of the lack of parental concern. She had not seen her biological mother for a while. She lamented, “the people who care for me are my grandfather and grandmother, and I don’t even know where my mum is.” As a result of this, Bewa “feels alone” like she is “*not supposed to be in this world.*” Based on this, I hypothesize that a girl who is neglected feels unmotivated even when attending school.

**Compromise**

The pilot study findings also reveal that adolescent girls’ schooling experience is characterized by *dangerous compromise*. There was a glaring concern about sexual harassment for the girls both in school and out of school, which hindered the girls’ ability to function effectively as students. However, the girls continued to compromise their safety and attend school. They also compromised their self esteem, values, emotions, and quality of education. The girls endured long walks in unsafe neighborhoods to attend school daily. They encountered incidences that made them fearful and were dangerous to their own lives but they persisted, and they did so by justifying the usefulness of schooling. Aggy, an in school participant saw school as being useful to girls and she said,
Girls nowadays are capable of helping their parents even more than the boys. When they are educated they can be able to take care of themselves; they know what is right and wrong, they are able to take good care of their children too.

In an attempt to attain secondary education, girls also compromised the quality of education. The quality of education was compromised when the girls were not able to attend school frequently due to time lost while seeking treatment for sexually transmitted diseases due to rape, time lost when they were away from school because the school fees had not been paid by the parents, when they were ‘cheated’ by the boys and they did not attend school on Saturdays as intended, and when schooling material like textbooks were not provided because they are girls.

Figure 3-1 Emerging Conceptual Model from the Preliminary Analysis
The results of my pilot offer a preliminary assessment of the hindrances that adolescent girls face in pursuit of secondary education in two poor slum schools in Nairobi Province. This project seeks to build on the initial findings by examining adolescent girls’ perceptions to hindrances to their educational attainment. I do this by examining the experiences of girls who are still attending school and those who have since dropped out. In addition, I seek to establish the views of some of the ‘significant others’ in the two schools—the teachers—who are in contact with the girls on a daily basis to corroborate girls’ experiences. It is for this reason that I proposed to interview fourteen teachers. In the dissertation, I used intensity purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) of girls within the two schools—Kamu and Lafama schools. I revised the initial interview protocol for the interview of the girls (see Appendix A and B) since the preliminary data collection. In addition I have included a protocol for the interview of the teachers (see Appendix C), and a protocol for girls who have dropped out (see Appendix D).

The preliminary findings showed that there was a lot of interaction between in-school and out-of-school factors in influencing the adolescent girls’ schooling. In the dissertation research, I sought to obtain detailed information from girls who are still in school, those who have dropped out of school, and their teachers on the problems that hinder girls’ schooling, and why some of the girls persist despite the challenges, while others do not. The question of persistence of the girls in school will build on the “compromises” that the girls made as they faced the “dangers” that they encountered while trying to attain secondary schooling. To this end, I have chosen to focus on two research questions:
• What are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling?

• Why do some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite serious challenges, while others do not?

From Pilot Study to Dissertation

Dissertation Data

The dissertation is an interview-based study. Data for the dissertation is obtained from interviews with twenty girls who are still in school in Kamu and Lafama, fourteen teachers, and ten girls who have dropped out of school. I have incorporated the preliminary data collected during the pilot study because it remains relevant (its collection was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Penn State)

The Schools: Kamu and Lafama

The preliminary data and the dissertation data are from in-school girls and their teachers, attending and teaching, at Kamu and Lafama schools respectively, and those who have since dropped out of school. These schools are located in the informal/slum\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} A slum is a word that is used in Kenya to refer to neighborhoods that people live in poverty. Hence it can be substituted for “poor neighborhoods” as it is used in the USA. In these areas there is poor housing, poor infrastructure, no medical facilities except those which have been offered by churches or by the city council of Nairobi, lack of sanitation facilities and intermittent supply of tap water. However, the slums have heavy population densities and are inhabited by people who cannot afford to live in other neighborhoods.
settlements of Nairobi Province, Kenya a metropolitan city in Sub-Saharan Africa. See figure 3-2. The informal settlements ("slums") are home to about 1,116,971 people, approximately 60 percent of the total population living in Nairobi (Mitullah, 2003). The sites of my research, Lafama, is a school situated in Kariobangi North at the tip of Korogocho slum. Lafama is home to approximately 22,899 people. Kamu School is in the neighborhood of Majengo, an informal settlement which is home to approximately 36,232 people (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). In the informal settlements within Nairobi a vast majority of the people live below one dollar a day. Therefore, everyday life in the households is already a struggle for the parents and guardians to maintain their families, let alone send their children to school.
Description of the Schools

Kamu\textsuperscript{16} is a co-educational secondary school located in the heart of Nairobi\textsuperscript{17} city. It was established by a former Member of Parliament, alongside other schools, like Wamaina,\textsuperscript{18} and Uhu\textsuperscript{19} secondary schools. Kamu School is situated about one kilometer

\textsuperscript{16} Kamu is a pseudonym for one of the schools where the adolescent girls were interviewed.

\textsuperscript{17} Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya. It has an area of 684 square kilometers. The total population of Nairobi as at 07-01-2006 was 2,845400.

\textsuperscript{18} Wamaina School was established the same time like Kamu School.

\textsuperscript{19} Uhu School is a mixed gender school just like Kamu School.
from the central business district. To the east, the school borders a major country bus station for travelers to and from all parts of Kenya. To the west, the school borders “Gikomba jua kali sheds.”\textsuperscript{20} The jua kali sheds is an area known for metal-smithing and presence of idle youth, making it a zone prone to criminal activity. To the north and south, the school borders slum housing estates. The school is accessible by foot and vehicles from the city centre. The school has seven departments; Guidance and Counseling, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Languages, Technical and Games. The school is a two-streamed\textsuperscript{21} public school with nineteen teachers and 280 students—both boys and girls. The school has very basic facilities, which are also very old and dilapidated. Classroom floors are full of holes, and are an indication of the poor physical condition of the school. The classrooms have a blackboard, student chairs, and desks, though too few for the students who attend at a given period of time. An initial room that used as a staffroom during my visit to the school in 2007 was not big enough for the teachers. The room had simple tables, chairs, and lockers that the teachers used to store teaching materials. The room used as a laboratory is not equipped, and it doubles as a classroom when labs are in session.

Lafama\textsuperscript{22} School, located about eleven kilometers east of Nairobi, was built by the Comboni\textsuperscript{23} Missionaries in 1988. It is a mixed day school, intended to serve the poor

\textsuperscript{20}“Jua Kali” is a Kiswahili word that literally means “in the hot sun” It refers to the open air business that is conducted by traders who forge all manner of items from metal.

\textsuperscript{21} A two-streamed school is one that has at each grade level two classes of students that are within the same level.

\textsuperscript{22} Lafama School is also a pseudonyme for the second school where the adolescent girls were interviewed.
population who reside within the Kariobangi and Korogocho locality. High poverty housing surrounds Lafama School in all directions. The Comboni missionaries have lived up to their original pledge and have continued assisting the school to build physical facilities. Consequently, the school has been able to offer quality education and at the same time maintained very low fees. Due to church sponsorship, the school has grown rapidly. In 1993, it grew from a single stream to a three-streamed school. In 2003, Lafama School became a four-streamed school with a student population of 800, and a teaching staff of thirty-eight. The school has eight departments: Guidance and Counseling, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Languages, Technical and Creative Arts, Library, and Games.

Despite the fact that Lafama is a public school like Kamu, its facilities have been developed by the church far beyond what the government provides through the Kenyan Ministry of Education. The classrooms in the recently completed block are relatively new, but those in the initial block of buildings that started the school are slowly beginning to degenerate, although not at the same rate as the classes in Kamu School. Lafama’s classrooms are relatively well equipped with a blackboard, student chairs, and desks, which are adequate for seating students in attendance. However, in some cases, desks were broken. The initial staffroom used by the teachers has since become small and as a result the school converted the teachers; dining hall into the second staffroom. The staffroom has simple tables, chairs, and lockers where teachers store teaching materials. There are three fairly equipped laboratories.

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23 The Comboni Missionaries is part of The Catholic church and they sponsor schools that are within the poor neighborhoods in Kenya. They build physical facilities like classrooms, laboratories and have provided the students of Lafama with the lunch program.
Choice of Sites

Issues of access influenced my choice of the two sites. Having been a former teacher in Lafama School, I was aware that it would be easier to get the school administration to let me into the school for purposes of research. However, deciding between Kamu School among others took awhile. It was while brainstorming with one of the teachers at Lafama that I got the idea that the Kamu school administration would be cooperative and allow me into the school to conduct research. In spite of the schools seeming easily accessible, I had to fulfill other Ministry of Education requirements—getting letters from the Ministry to grant me access into the schools. The principals had to approve in writing their willingness to allow me into their schools. Additionally, the two schools had to meet the basic requirement for my investigations—they had to be in an urban slum setting, a secondary school and in Nairobi Province. This is because my research was motivated by seeking to understand the experiences of girls’ secondary schooling in a disadvantaged urban location. Due to resource constraints, I was not able to undertake my study in additional schools each and every school in Nairobi Province.

Sampling Procedures

School Sample

My two study sites, Kamu and Lafama are co-educational schools, with both boys and girls attending the school during the day. These two schools represent the current mode of schooling in Kenya, where boys and girls learn together within the same class in
the same school. Moreover, the schools are in high poverty locations, and thus offer rich representations of disadvantaged girls’ attempts and struggles to obtain secondary education. These schools are typical of other slum schools, in the number of students, student teacher ratio, and level of funding that they receive from the Ministry of Education. Drawing participants for the study from the two schools broadened my understanding about them, and enabled me to generate hypotheses regarding what obstacles girls encounter in school while receiving their secondary education.

**Sampling of Individual Participants**

Twenty girls who were still attending school, fourteen teachers, and ten girls who have dropped out of school were interviewed for this study (See Table 3-1). The twenty girls and fourteen teachers were sampled from Kamu and Lafama secondary schools in Nairobi Province, with ten girls and seven teachers interviewed in each of the sites. This sample of twenty girls was selected in Kamu and Lafama Schools based on an *intensity purposeful sampling*, which captures information rich cases worth of an in-depth study. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling puts an emphasis on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, the very reason why *information rich cases* are selected for a study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Pilot Study</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-school girls</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class observations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information rich cases are “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). In my study, I was interested in understanding what hinders, and what accounts for, persistence of girls in school. Thus, I needed an in-depth understanding of this phenomena from a “small number of carefully selected” (Patton, 2002, p. 46) participants--girls who were still attending school, those who had dropped out and the teachers in the two schools.

Through intensity purposeful sampling, I selected girls and teachers who would “manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely but not extremely” (Patton, 2002, p. 234). In this study, the phenomenon was the experience of schooling—hindrance and persistence. Teachers who were in constant interaction with the girls helped me identify information rich cases such as girls who had undergone difficulties and whose experiences typified the obstacles to persistence in school. The sample consisted of girls between 15 and 19 years of age in Form Two through Form Four, and in school for at least two years. This was to allow for the initial transition into secondary school.

In order to reach the girls who had dropped out, I used a network of current teachers and students. This network of teachers and students enabled me to get to the first five girls who had dropped out of school. Once we had these five participants, the participants themselves gave referrals to other girls who had dropped out who were then included in the study.

In addition, because teachers were significant others in the lives of the girls while the girls attended school, I interviewed a sample of fourteen teachers in the two schools to articulate and corroborate the adolescent girls’ reports of their experiences. One
teacher was selected from the seven academic departments in the two schools. Since there were between three and eight teachers in each department, I randomly picked one teacher in each department among those who consented to participate in the study. I selected seven teachers from each of the two schools. This selection of teachers from across the curricular areas may potentially allow a broad range of perspectives on the girls’ experience in school.

Criteria for Participant Inclusion

The criteria for participant selection of students who were still in school included being female, having attended the school for at least two years, willingness to be tape recorded and photographed in the course of the interview, and able to participate in a follow-up interview if necessary. Teachers were to be teaching in the respective schools, willing to sign consent, be photographed and tape recorded, and participate in a follow-up interview. Participants, who had dropped out of school, also had to have attended school for at least two years, be willing to sign consent, and participate in a follow-up interview. The two-year attendance requirement was to allow them to have had a significant experience with the schooling process. Participants were invited to sign consent forms if they were over 18 years, while those below 18 years only signed if their parents or guardians had already signed. Overall, participants had to be willing to participate in the research and able to articulate the experiences that characterized their every day schooling life. The participants were volunteers and were not expecting payment for participating in the research.
Methods

Why Qualitative Methodology

This study employed a qualitative methodology because of its focus on understanding “the meaning or nature of experience of persons” (Straus & Corbin, 1998, p.11). My study sought to “obtain the intricate details…feelings, thought process and emotions” of, and about, adolescent girls that “are difficult to extract or learn through more convention methods” (Straus & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). In-depth interviews with the participants allowed “understanding of the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1998, p. 3). Since my aim was to describe, explain, and explore the experiences of girls and possible hindrances to their schooling in two schools in Nairobi Province, I used an interview-based approach to obtain the data from the participants (girls who are still in school, their teachers, and those girls who had dropped out). I was interested in explaining the in school and out of school experiences of girls attending Kamu and Lafama Schools, those who had dropped out of school, and gain insights on girls’ schooling experiences from the schools’ teachers.

Additionally, qualitative research methods were appropriate for this study because I was interested in generating rich, detailed data embedded in the context of the schools that girls attended. Although interviews were the main source of information, this study also relied on information from media reports collected during the interview period, which provided additional context to the girls’ narratives. In this study, adolescent girls and their teachers were participants drawn from Kamu and Lafama Schools, while the
girls who had dropped out were drawn from the network of girls still in school and the teachers.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

The main instrument of data collection was the use of interviews. Interviews were conducted by the researcher in person or by telephone. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) argue that interviewing can be used as a primary source of data collection or can be combined with other methods—review of documents and artifacts. For this study, interviews were the primary methods of obtaining data from all the girls and the teachers. Interviewing was ideal because it provided rich and in depth information, while at the same time it was also “directed towards understanding informants’ perspective on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Bogdan and Bliken, 1998, p. 88).

**Interviewing**

Once, I had identified my participants, I arranged for a convenient time and place to conduct the interviews. Preliminary interviews for the pilot study were conducted in the summer of 2007 and 2008. For the main study, the interviews were conducted on the phone between September 2009 to November 2009, and face to face in the month of December 2009. All the interviews were conducted in English. Protocols of open-ended questions were used as guidelines for the interview process (see Appendix A, B, C and D), and participants were allowed to talk and elaborate on their experiences within and
outside the school. The open-ended questions thus allowed for free expression of individual opinions, thereby providing a variety of responses from the participants (Patton, 1990). Interviews with the teachers aimed at getting their perspectives on girls’ schooling in order to corroborate the girls’ perspectives. While conducting interviews with the girls, I enlisted the services of counselors, whose role was to give professional counseling to the girls after the interviews, if needed.

Even though the questions were open-ended, the schedule of questions was still used in the research as a guide because of its necessity. The schedule of questions was a list of questions, which I was interested in exploring as an interviewer (Hoepfl, 1997). The main objective of having an interview protocol or guide was to ensure consistency on my part as the researcher posing the questions to my participants. Using the guide ensured that I explored the same issues with each of my participants. However, the interview guide remained flexible and changed based on the responses of the participants.

The interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. The mean length of the interview was forty-five minutes for girls, and one hour for teachers. Each of the interviews was tape recorded to ensure that all the data had been captured. Participants in the interview were expected to clarify and elaborate on their experiences and perceptions, and what meaning they made out of their experiences. My focus as the researcher was to understand the experiences the participants narrated by and to use prompts to encourage participants to elaborate. To that end, I used a set of probes—questions that allowed participants to detail the experiences they were describing. For instance, in response to girls’ remarks that they had been sexually harassed, a probing question would be “at what point outside school did sexual harassment occur?” When their experiences were fully
explored, the next series of questions was asked. One of the advantages of using a semi-structured interview format is that it allows for an interviewer to guide an ongoing interview using “a list of questions and issues to be explored” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

Moreover, the interview format enabled me to react and “respond to the situation at hand, to the world view” of my participants and to “new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). At the end of the interview the participant had an opportunity to explore any other ideas that they felt were useful to the schooling experience that may have not been explored in the course of the interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis for the dissertation project is perhaps the most important beneficiary of the preliminary study. In the preliminary data analysis, I used *phenomenological data reduction* leading to the essence of meaning of the schooling experience for the girls. The analytic strategy, though useful, left chunks of data not interpreted. A phenomenological approach limited the analysis to the experiential data from the interviews. This limited the policy issues that the data illuminated. In the analysis of the dissertation project, I followed the analytical strategy of Miles and Huberman (1994).

**Coding Process**

Nvivo software was used for the initial coding process. This software package facilitated work with the data and assisted in organizing for the coding process. I
generated codes from the themes that emerged from the pilot findings, from my conceptual framework, and from my research questions. I also read my transcripts several times to further identify any other relevant codes within the chunks of data—either looking for phrases that occur frequently, or having an eye for unique occurrences within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first time was to familiarize myself with the data and to gain insights and clues of what is contained in the data. The second time, I was looking for the ideas, phrases, concepts, words that “jumped” at me from the data. For example: Fear, danger, harasses, rape, chores; phrases like “they call you” “they follow you”, “boys are the ones who go to school”, and “we lack basics.” These words and phrases formed the roots of the themes that emerged from the data. The subsequent readings enabled me to use the phrases from the transcripts, the pilot findings, concepts from the conceptual framework, and the research questions to generate initial codes.

The initial codes generated allowed me to tentatively group the data, make descriptions, and extract quotes from the data chunks to support the emerging categories, based on the emerging patterns and interpretations given to a code or sets of codes. This process is what Patton (1990) describes as creating multidimensional categories to give the researcher a basic frame of analysis. There were thirty nine initial codes generated from the data. With subsequent readings of the transcripts, I merged several codes, and with this merging, data chunks fitted onto categories that were already established by the initial coding. For example, “cooking,” “wash clothes,” “clean the house,” “look after my sister,” fitted into one category, “domestic chores.” With further analysis, related broad categories merged to form eight broad themes.
The categories and themes that were generated from coding the transcripts represented the bottom up categories that “emerged” from the data. These were issues that girls identified as either hindering their progress, led to their dropping out, and for some girls, supported their persistence in school. The data-generated categories were compared with the categories that were generated from the literature review—those issues that are perceived as “known” in the literature and are important to scholars. The purpose of this type of analysis was to develop a relationship between hindrances to schooling and reasons for persistence as it emerges “bottom up” from the data obtained from the girls, with those that are “top down” from the literature. This allowed for a grouping of issues: 1) important to girls, 2) important to scholars and not identified by girls, and 3) issues already raised by scholars. (See Figure 3-3). Matrices, described below, were then used to visually display the data in arrays.
Use of matrices

I used matrices to display the evidence in the course of the analysis. In the respective arrays, I placed evidence gathered from girls (both in school and those who have dropped out), teachers, and categories from the literature. This provided a visual display of the relationships among the data. Matrices are, “the crossing of two or more variables …to see how they interact…can be expanded to a more holistic case oriented style” (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 239). Codes were important in locating important concepts, themes, and relationships to be mapped on the matrix. Conclusions were be drawn by “noting patterns, themes; making contrasts, comparisons; clustering; and counting” (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 243). Matrices were useful tools in this analysis because they enabled me to think about my research questions—whether they have been
answered and what sections of the data have answered the questions. They enabled me to undertake a full analysis, leaving out no information that is relevant (Miles & Huberman 1994) to the schooling of girls. I was able to follow relationships, ideas, concepts, and events, in a given set of data from my informants. For example, I was able to relate the occurrence of an event like harassment to sequelae, such as school absence or fear. In this way, conclusions were drawn from categories grounded in the data within a matrix.

Table 3-2 Example of Matrix Display

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the issues? (obstacles)</th>
<th>Issues important to scholars- I</th>
<th>Issues important to scholars not mentioned by girls-III</th>
<th>Issues important to girls not mentioned by scholars-II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Sexual harassment</strong></td>
<td>Yes- <strong>1.1</strong></td>
<td>Yes, <strong>BUT...1.2</strong></td>
<td>Yes, <strong>BUT...1.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transactional sex</td>
<td>Male teachers, in one school but mentioned in another.</td>
<td>Types: name calling, made fun of, men try to stop them blocked pathways, Dragging from the paths to their houses <strong>within families</strong> Reasons for vulnerability differ **Complicity by girls Effects differ across groups-fear, absence from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerability to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-soliciting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-physical force</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Jeering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Girls internalize – blame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Male teachers in school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Validity Threats

Qualitative studies that are interview based can be vulnerable to validity threats. According to Maxwell (2005, p. 105), validity should be assessed in relation to the “purposes and circumstances of the research.” Thus, it is important for the researcher to identify aspects in which they could be wrong so that they can eliminate the potential validity threats to a study. In this study using intensity purposeful sampling, follow-up interviews were conducted. Triangulation of sources of data—girls (in school and those who have already left school) and the teachers sufficed to address internal validity. For instance, interviewing both girls and teachers served as a check on the self-reports provided by girls and their teachers.

Two threats to validity were evident in this study: researcher bias and researcher reactivity. These threats are particularly related to the positionality of the researcher, especially in the process of conducting interviews. I chose a topic that I had been interested in since my childhood. This interest was sparked by my childhood experience as a girl who lost her father so early in life, and was exposed to the struggles of a widowed mother trying to make ends meet for her children. Hence, from an early age I knew that I had to work hard, and make a life for myself as a girl and in turn be a voice to girls who found themselves at a disadvantage. This interest may have shaped my views about how the world looks at girls and women, and therefore introduced an element of bias into the study.

As a teacher in a school in a disadvantaged setting, I saw the struggles that girls underwent in their attempts to get an education. It was always my desire to conduct
research on girls, especially on issues related to their secondary education, because this was the point in their lives that they experienced the greatest challenges as girls and in which they have the potential of experiencing the greatest benefit from their education (Rihani, 2006). As a onetime adolescent girl, and driven by my passion for girls’ and women’s issues, I may have been open to bias arising from my empathy towards girls.

Another validity threat is related to my reactivity in the process of conducting interviews (For further details, see Chapters 5, 9, and 11 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As a doctoral student studying in the United States at Penn State University, I became aware that my affiliation with my place of study carried great weight with my participants. As such, it influenced the way my participants reacted to me in the course of the interviews. Initially, they perceived me as being different from them. Once the participants learnt that I had been associated with a similar school and I had been part of that experience, they identified more strongly with me as a researcher.

Overall, my Kenyan background was a big influence on the success of my study. Being born and raised in Kenya gave me two advantages. First, it gave me the advantage of understanding the Kenyan context in the way that a complete outsider would not. Secondly, I was able to bring to my study the experiences of having been a student and teacher in Kenya and in the United States. My interactions with people (students, faculty, staff and the general population) in my university broadened and diversified my thinking in ways that were useful to my study. In addition, I acquired knowledge from my classes, especially the research classes, which were very instrumental in the design of this study. In the next chapter, I present the findings of this study.
Chapter 4
Hindrances and Resilience of Girls

In this chapter, I present the data from the study participants. I begin with findings related to the first research question; what are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling. I present findings in this order: Social construction of girls; role of parents; negative attitude; fear; sexual harassment/violence; work; and individual attributes of girls. Next, I present the findings that answer the question; why girls persist in school despite the serious challenges that they face. This chapter brings together the risks and resilience factors that hinder and promote girls’ schooling respectively. See Figure 2-2. There were risks among individual girls, in families, at school, and in the community. But individual girls also exhibited protective factors that were present in the families, and in school.

Question I: What are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling?

The Social Construction of Girls

Social construction is defined as the form of messages and ideas which are internalized by members of the society and influence their adaptation and modes of participation. Different groups within a society will receive and internalize different kinds of messages (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The findings of this study reinforced this
notion that girls, and by extension, women are socially constructed by others. Girls in school internalize these constructions, which plays a big part in the risks that they face in an attempt to attain secondary education.

The construction of girls emanated from the society, tribe, and the cultural values associated with that particular tribe or group. The way a girl was treated at home, by her parents, guardians, and siblings, in part, influenced the amount of time that a particular girl spent on her studies. This mirrored the expectations of a girl in her cultural context. Eleven out of twenty girls interviewed in school expressed that girls are socially constructed. For example, Lighte had this to say about the position of a girl in her community:

I told you in African communities like mine, and I believe others too, most girls are household workers, and boys are given all the opportunities to do their studies. The girls have limited time to study….They are also expected to help their parents and sisters…Male members of the family, for example, boy siblings know the rules of the society. They also say they cannot work, if there is a woman or a girl in the house.

Social construction made girls to be second-class citizens, and as such, a source of domestic labor. A few girls felt that the manner in which they were perceived had them spend more time on domestic work at the expense of their school work. It also showed a lack of gender equity in their respective households. The fact that the burden of housework fell on their shoulders while their brothers often rested was an indication to them of the higher status accorded to boys in comparison to the girls. Reba intimated:
I think most girls like me pass through hardship. Like the work that we are required to do at home as girls. It is a lot, while boys are not required to do any work. It all comes to the absence of gender equality, and, the way girls and boys are looked at as different by the parents. So, girls spend a lot of time working, while boys are revising and studying.

Reba’s sentiments were shared by Zena, whose feelings were that if work was shared equally, there was a possibility of enabling girls to perform better and bridging the gender gap. Zena said:

What I can say is that a child is a child; we don’t have to discriminate by gender or sex. When it comes to work, let it be shared equally, so that girls can be given enough time for their homework, and begin to have enough time for their academics. The girls need not necessarily do many chores, while boys are just sitting. I think this is the reason why girls do not perform well.

Girls felt obligated to undertake all the tasks in a household (see the section on domestic chores) because it was expected of them. They had to take up the roles that society defined for them. Two teachers from Kamu School thought that constructions had something to do with culture. One of the teachers said this about girls’ class participation:

…but, I think that there is something cultural. Girls culturally are supposed to be less active than men. Maybe their upbringing is such that boys talk more than girls. Unless you insist on the girl doing something, normally they are not so active in class.

Girls and women were presented as having prescribed and rigid positions in their respective communities, and were told what to do by “significant others” in their lives.
The significant others ranged from male family members to those they interacted with outside the households. For instance, girls indicated that males in the family assumed that girls could not make any meaningful contributions in their respective families. There was often arrogance by their brothers or other male relatives whenever girls attempted to have their voice heard in the households. Cynthy observed, “they usually say that there is nothing a woman can tell them. Even if he makes a mistake and as a girl you try to correct him, the boys will always say there is nothing a girl can tell them.”

A few girls stated that in their respective families and communities, the construction of girls, and their subsequent treatment was justified in a religious manner. This interpretation hinged on the notion that man was created first, and woman came afterwards. Therefore, boys should also come first and girls can only get whatever is left. This is what Vero had to say about the interpretation of one of her family members regarding the position of boys and girls. She explained:

…you know, my grandfather said that even from the beginning, God gave man everything. And us, we came after man so everything should be given to boys. Everything, meaning even us [women]. When the boy is given everything then we follow. From the beginning, God created man first. So, everything should be given to boys first. There is no place for the woman; the woman is only a companion for the man.

While there was a consensus that the construction of girls was rooted deeply in the society, some participants felt that the construction was intertwined with other factors. For instance, the need for money from potential suitors for their daughters drove parents and guardians to give out their girls to be married early. Sharona explained:
I think it originates from the society. Because you find that the society believes that boys are the ones who should go to school….For example, there are some people, and communities, who believe that girls should be married early. And that is why there are early marriages; meanwhile the boys stay in school. They are driven by wealth; they want to get cows when girls are married, and also money. So, they will not take girls to school. When dowry is offered by any man, the parents take the dowry, and give out the girl even when she is still young…

The fact that the girls were going to get married provided enough justification for families not to take girls to school. One of the participants explains how her father was ridiculed for keeping her in school. Reba noted the following of her experience:

Some people say, even if I go to school it is still useless. They take it like; I cannot go to school and do better. They also say that even if she goes to school, she will still be married. So, they say girls just waste time going to school. Some ridicule the parents like mine, who still pay fees for me to come to school. Girls should be ignored, because they are not going to benefit from that education…

Lighte felt that the way girls are constructed is related to the manner in which society has been used to elevate one gender and downgrade another. In essence, men have been elevated at the expense of the females. She said:

…the community has been used to push women down while men are pushed up.

Because men are the ones who make rules…

Although many communities co-exist together, and there have been government efforts aimed at raising awareness on the need to keep girls in school, this has not been easy in the light of the way girls are perceived by others. As one of the participants noted,
the government campaigns are good, but there is no guarantee that these messages get to
the roots of the cultural orientations of many communities. Lighte noted:

…I know that there have been various government efforts to educate people. But
it is one thing to have mass campaigns, and another for people to internalize the
messages. Many of the people still believe that abandoning their earlier ways of
living, is getting away from their own culture, and beliefs. And it is a sign of
disrespecting the ancestors…

This scenario depicted above shows how deeply rooted these cultural ideas are. If
the constructions towards the girls, as future women, are embedded in this cultural
context, it is no wonder girls still encounter numerous risks in their attempts to obtain
education, particularly, secondary education. The “echoes” of the social construction is
felt in the manner in which people in the neighborhood react to the prospect of, and to the
reality of a girls’ attending school. This reaction often hinged on the notion that girls
were able to survive in their respective communities, with or without an education, as
long as their future husbands were educated. Jamu had this to say about the magnitude of
social construction, and its effects on the education of girls:

Girls only need enough education to make them be able to read. They say, why
should girls struggle so much, grow thin in the process, and yet they will, and can
still be taken care of by their husbands? Sometimes they say, going to school
exposes girls to relationships with boys, who can make them get the diseases, like
HIV/AIDs… Do not finish school, and the money goes to waste…

The social construction of girls places them in an inferior role within the home
and the wider society. In turn, this justified the manner in which girls were treated in their
respective families and schools, and helped to explain why they were sexually molested and required to assume responsibility for domestic work.

Role of Parents

Parents and guardians of girls were part of the cultural context that already existed in the girls’ various communities. The way a girl was treated at home, by her parents, guardians, and siblings, in part, influenced the amount of time that particular girl spent studying. Differential treatment at home was a sign of how girls were viewed leading to discriminatory undertones in the households—showing the effects of social construction in the households. As such, girls were discriminated against in their respective households by their parents and guardians. Table 4-1 shows girls’ parental characteristics.

Table 4-1 Girls’ Parental Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls’ Parental Characteristics</th>
<th>In School Girls</th>
<th>Out of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s only</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardians</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrimination within the Household

Social construction manifested itself as discriminatory undertones and negative attitudes towards females by parents and guardians within the households. Girls felt discrimination and endured negative attitudes towards their education. However,
discrimination of girls, as described by the girls themselves, took an interesting twist, very different from the notion advanced by scholars. Scholars attribute discrimination of girls as far as schooling is concerned to instances of resource constraints within the households (Buchmann, 2000). On the contrary, about half (9 out of 20) of school girls interviewed in this study explained that they had experienced discrimination, and were of the opinion that it stemmed from gender alone—the fact that one was a girl or a boy. In addition, many girls believed that discrimination was a factor that determined whether they would get placed into secondary school by their parents, guardians, and mothers.

This discrimination was apparent in the manner in which parents distributed money for school. Those who had brothers in school often received less money for fees. In such instances, girls were sent home for lack of school fees, while the boys stayed in school the whole time. Vero had this to say regarding this form of discrimination:

I was almost losing hope in Form One…I had a brother who was also in Form One, so my dad was paying for both of us. So, he got five thousand, I got two thousand for school fees. Because my fees were not paid in full, I began to accrue balances. After a while, the teachers started sending me home… Every day when I come to school, Monday I am sent home, Tuesday I am sent home, like that, like that, so I even lost hope, I was ashamed, I wanted to perform, but I could not because I was always going home. …This is not because the money wasn’t enough, no; it is because my dad felt he could not pay that much money for me like my brother.

For some girls discrimination resulted in no money for school, thereby making them exit school. Berie, a drop out, explained:
...I thought I would continue with my studies after that when my brother finished college. This was not to be. After I dropped out of school, I stayed home for three years. After my brother was done with college, I talked to my mother and told her I wanted to go back to school but she refused. I really longed to go to school, because I saw other girls going to school. This was the end of my dream.

These two cases exemplify instances where girls got “the short end of the stick” simply because they were girls. In Vero’s case, it is not necessarily that the parent could not balance out the fees between his children in equal amounts, but the parent decided to let one child have more at the expense of the other. In Berie’s case, the brother was the family’s priority. While it may be true that resources can be limited, girls seemed to be deprived of going to school simply because of their gender. Thus, the notion advanced by scholars that girls are discriminated against because the resources of their parents are constrained is not always true. The issue often left unaddressed is the reason the girl does not get favored when those resources are constrained. Zena had this to say:

Yes, as I said earlier, a girl is also a child just like the boys. And they deserve the treatment that is given to boys in terms of the resources they are given for school. Girls should be treated the same like the boys.

Zena highlighted that in the absence of gender equity in the households girls can be at risk of non-attendance of school disguised as resource constraint, yet, parents out rightly favor their sons. For instance, Prewa had to wait at home for a whole before money for her school fees became available. The reason given was that her brother needed to go to college. Seemingly, the brother’s college education was more important than the start of Prewa’s secondary education. She explained:
I was told there was no money to take me to a good school for a whole term, even though I had qualified (256 marks). Because my brother needed a lot of money, and, he was to go to a college….I always wondered why they could not divide up the money, and let me go to school, and pay his college fees in installments.

Parental discrimination reinforced the importance of boys and their future paternal roles and as future heads of households. This was identified by girls and echoed by scholars in reference to SSA. Cynthy noted that:

Some of our parents will say that the boys must go to school, because they will be the future caretakers of their homes. And a girl can always survive without going to school, as long as the husband was educated by his parents. But I feel that I should continue with school, so that when I get married, I will be able to work, and fend for my children. And, I don’t have to wait for my husband to give me money…

Some parents took their girls to school because they had to. But they, too, did not believe in education of their daughters. Nellya had this to say about her perceptions of some of their parents, “I think there are some parents who do not believe in girl child education. Parents prefer to send their girls to school, not because of positive beliefs about the transformative power of education, but because school is better than the street”

Beyond discrimination regarding school fees, parents and guardians were reportedly not concerned about the general welfare of their daughters.
Unconcerned Parents, Guardians, and Mothers

Inadequate Provision of Basics

This study finds that parents were not supportive of their daughters’ schooling. Seventy five percent (15 out of 20) of in-school girls expressed that their parents were not concerned about their needs to be able to perform well in school. The role of families is critical in the schooling outcome of children. The role of the family in participation in formal schooling is a big concern to scholars, who have studied sibship size, dilution of parental resources, gender roles, marriage, and child bearing. (Chernichovsky, 1985; Blake, 1981, 1989; Parish & Willis, 1993; Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994; Lloyd, & Gage-Brandon, 1994; Downey, 1995; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996; Knodell & Jones, 1996; Lam & Martelelo, 2002; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008).

The study finds that critical to the schooling of girls was the provision of their basic needs. Basic and personal needs of most concern to girls included sanitary towels, food, personal items like oil for their bodies and for their hair, and paraffin to light the lamps to provide light for reading and completion of homework. These needs were very basic to girls’ persistence in school. For instance, sanitary towels for girls were an essential component of school attendance that many parents overlooked. Hence, many of the girls interviewed were kept out of school at least one week every month during their menses. On the lack of sanitary towels, Nellya had this to say:

Some of us have limited time to be in school, every month when periods start. If we don’t have the sanitary towels, we have to be absent from school for like two
to three days. If you count those three days for all the months we are in school, we lose a lot of study time.

Nellya was concerned about the lack of sanitary towels but most crucial to her was the amount of time that girls spent out of school by the end of a school year due to absences that could have been prevented by having sanitary pads. When parents could not provide this basic need, girls sought help elsewhere and in some cases this help was sought from boyfriends. Shewa said, “... there are some girls who have to leave school to find sanitary towels for themselves...For some of us girls, it is our boyfriends who provide.” The fact that girls relied on their boyfriends to provide sanitary towels put them in a vulnerable situation that may have led to sexual harassment. Shewa admits that girls had to give “just sex” in return for the favors given to them by their boyfriends.

According to one teacher, many girls lacked not only the basics for school, among them being sanitary towels, but they also lacked the necessary knowledge of how to take good care of themselves, and they did not have the means to do so. For instance, the teacher observed that girls did not have oil for their bodies and for their hair and looked untidy as a result. This led to low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority, which affected learning. The teacher reiterated the need for sanitary towels for girls as a mandatory requirement for school attendance throughout a given month. The teacher observed:

Another problem is that girls lack proper care... It is so demanding to train her how to take care of herself... They need to take care of their hair; they need to have some lotion for their bodies and their faces... I mean that most of them might not get all that and some of them miss a very important requirement, which is sanitary pads... There are times they don’t come to school. They absent
themselves from school. Maybe this is one of the reasons. If you don’t have
sanitary pads, you cannot be comfortable in school. I have witnessed cases where
they come to me and ask, “teacher, help me with fifty five shillings, so that I go
and buy sanitary pads.” And you have to assist.

The teacher pointed out that in certain cases teachers have had to come to the
rescue of girls by being the suppliers of the sanitary pads. This was also observed by
Judia who said, “when some girls don’t get them some will borrow from their friends,
teachers, and even from people in the community...”

Girls also lacked food, while some of them were expected to supply food to their
parents and siblings at home. Apart from having low nutrition intake before and after
school, the search for food also consumed a lot of the girls’ time and made them anxious
while in school to a point that they were not able to concentrate in class. Shewa observed:

Some of us girls also go hungry because we lack food in the evening. For
example, there is a girl in my class who divides her lunch to take home. Yes, and
she puts in polythene bag. And if you ask her where she is taking this food, she
says, “I am the one to provide food, so I have to feed my siblings at home.”

For Shewa she could not ask for breakfast before school. Her parents always
made it clear that she should choose between her school fees being paid, or being
provided with breakfast. For instance, Shewa would be told, “do not even ask for
breakfast...Let us now take your school fees for this term and provide your food, and then
you stay at home...We can only pay your school fees and you go to school...” To girls
like Shewa it was a hard road to tread. She had to choose to be in school, do without
having breakfast almost all mornings, but still fend for her siblings.
My study finds that girls also faced the risk of not being able to read and complete homework at home because of lack of paraffin for the lamps. The slum neighborhoods where a majority of girls lived did not have electricity. Sharona observed:

Sometimes, we miss paraffin and we have to sleep early, so that we wake up early and do our homework in school. Yes, I start my homework in the evening.

Depending on the amount of homework, if it is a lot, I make sure that I leave the school when I have finished… When I go home, I don’t know whether I will get paraffin or not...

Girls had to finish schoolwork in the evening before going home or wake up at sunrise and complete the work for the previous day. Reba explained that she was never sure when the lamp at home would have paraffin so that she could study. This made her very anxious because her attendance at school the following day depended on her homework being complete. She explained, “There is no electricity. So I use a lamp, and sometimes the lamp may have no paraffin. So, I have to sleep and wait for the next day, when the lamp will have enough paraffin to take me through the evening.”

Scholars over time have argued that dilution of resources affect the schooling of children, especially when they are many in a household (Blake, 1981, 1989; Downey, 1999). The evidence above suggests that there was dilution of resources, but it did not necessarily go hand in hand with the presence of many siblings. In certain instances, the girls only needed training on grooming from their parents, guardians, and mothers. This was possible if the parents were involved and cared for their daughters. In some instances, resources were scarce, but care and concern were also lacking.
Inadequate Provision of Financial Support

Among the many areas of concern to researchers investigating children’s access to schooling in sub-Saharan Africa is the issue of parental investment in education. Scholars have argued that female heads of households are able to invest money in their children’s education. In addition, extended families help children move to places where they can improve their chances of academic success. be helped to succeed (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996).

However, this study found that there was a diminishing role of mothers towards their daughters, both in terms of the general support in the family, and financially, to support their daughters’ secondary schooling. About half of girls who were still in school expressed that their mothers were not able to support them financially. For the drop-out girls, all of them had financial difficulties (those who had mothers, supported by guardians, and those who had no parents). Mothers, having little or no resources, were unable to provide for their daughters. Reba revealed that:

It is not only me who goes through this; it is the same for all others who come from poor backgrounds. Their parents do not take care of their needs because they do not have the resources. So, when you go and tell your mother what you need, she is like, I have no money…. Many girls are going through this kind of hardship…. Many of us can not even dare ask…. Many of the girls say that their mothers can even slap them, because many times she is thinking about food, and you are telling her about other things. So, she really gets angry with you. She can even slap you. So, we fear to face our parents, especially our mothers at times.
Susie, one of the dropouts, said, “in the absence of money for school, you could not go to ask whoever was at home for money for anything. You had to “jipanga”.”

Contrary to the notion that mothers will spend more money on their children, this did not hold true for the sample of girls who were part of this study. This stemmed partly from the single parenthood by the mothers of these girls, and from poverty. One out of four girls in the in-school sample whose mothers were single parents expressed that singlehood and poverty of their mothers were hurdles to their schooling. The double jeopardy of poverty and the presence of only one parent proved to be a risk factor as is highlighted by Reba:

…when my dad went away life began to change for the worse. My mother became the breadwinner and she had to work all the time. For example, one month she was working and the next three months she would be without work; it was very hard for her. At the beginning of the terms, she would try her best to pay a little money, but by midterm, I would be sent home. Sometimes, I could stay for one week, then I came back and she paid some amount. Sometimes, she could come to school, and, talk to the teacher, and I would be allowed in class. I would be sent home later again if she did not pay.

Girls were sent away if their parents and mothers did not pay. School fees and levies are still payable in secondary schools by parents to support development projects within the schools. Despite the free provision of education, in essence, levies are still enforced in schools. My study findings showed that school levies charged in secondary

24 “Jipanga” is a Kiswahili word that means “to figure out or organize yourself”
schools continued to pose a very big challenge to girls attending school. The challenge of school fees operated both within the school and out of the school. Within the school, it negated the schooling process by denying the girls the chance to sit in the classes when the teachers were teaching. Out of school, it exposed girls to the dangers and excessive fatigue as they walked to and from school to get school fees payments or to get their parents to explain to the school administrators when they would pay the fees. Taqui of Kamu School explained this in relation to the school levies:

We are sent away for school fees. At home there is no one to give you the money so that you can come back to school. We miss a lot when we are sent home for school fees. I have been brought up by a retired father who is out of work, and he has to look for money elsewhere to pay my school fees. The school staff do not understand. You can talk to them today about your problem and the following day they have forgotten, so it means that you have to just go and stay at home….

*Effects of Inadequate Financial Support*

Girls were frustrated when school administrators sent them home for school fees because it meant missing time away from class instruction and led them to fall behind in schoolwork. Reba expressed how painful this experience was:

It is painful, because I really love my education. I would like to be a doctor so the moment I am sent home, I feel I have lost so much…. When a teacher is teaching, you get more than when you read on your own… Therefore when I am sent home, I see that I am missing a lot of things, and it is painful.
Girls felt that their parents, guardians, and mothers did not care much about their frustration, as Prewa explained:

There was one time I was sent away from school. When I told my parents, they did not even come to school to explain when they will bring the money. It was as if I was just singing a song to them. I was suffering because I wanted to learn, but they were not playing their part of paying my school fees.

Some of the girls took advantage of the situation and found the excuse to roam rather than go straight home and get their parents, guardians, and mothers to pay the fees or come and talk over with the administration on the modalities of payment. Cynthy said this of the way girls behaved when they were sent home for school fees, “…that brings a lot of problems to us, because some of us do not go home to get our parents. When we are sent home for school fees, we use that time to do things which are not good even to our lives.”

Lack of financial ability on the part of the parents prevented their daughters from attending school regularly. It forced schools to adopt crude measures of sending the students away from school to go and physically bring the money from the parents.

**Mothers Looked Down Upon Their Daughters**

In addition, girls reported that their mothers ignored and demeaned their daughters, lowering their self esteem. Despite the fact that girls had done well in previous exams and wanted to continue with their education, the mothers and guardians often did
not give them a chance to do so. One third of the in-school sample of girls reported that they had demeaning experiences at the hands of their mothers. Zena explained:

…So many girls pass their exams in class eight but their mothers do not appreciate these efforts. So, instead of encouraging girls to continue with school, they leave them to get employed. I think that those parents and guardians should handle their children well even if they don’t have school fees.

As noted above, some of the mothers advocated for boys to go to school at the expense of the girls, clearly unsupportive of their daughters’ education. They openly stressed the importance of boys’ schooling. Dama had this to say about her mother’s attitude on her education, “My mother always tells me that boys should read, while girls like me have to do the household chores first, like wash clothes, before anything else.”

Because mothers were in favor of boys’ schooling, daughter felt demeaned by their mothers’ unsupportive attitudes.

_Inadequate Role Modeling, Weak Rapport and Communication_

Although the literature underscores the role of mothers as very important to the schooling of girls, data from this study shows that effective role modeling was absent. On one hand, mothers were not able to interact effectively with their daughters, nor teach and guide them on what they needed to know and how to take care of themselves as girls.

About one third of the girls (7 out of 20) in-school girls, and (2 out of 10) out-of-school girls reported the phenomenon of inadequate role modeling by their mothers. For instance, Nellya reported, “…most of mothers know what it is to be a girl. The problem...
comes in because some of them were not taught about such things ...How to be girls amidst boys in schools, so they do not see the reason they should teach their daughters.”

Caro, a dropout, had this to say about the role she would have liked to see her mother play in her life. She explained:

And my mother was not there for me. I understand she had to struggle for us. But, had she been available to talk, I would have turned out better. But I am not blaming her totally. I should have known better, after all it is my life.

The absence of the interaction between mothers and some of their daughters made girls uncomfortable talking to their mothers on issues that most affected their lives, schooling included. Becka, Brimwe, and Lighte, girls affected by this problem reported that they feared their mothers and did not have a strong rapport with them. For instance, Becka said, “yes... I fear my mother”. Brimwe similarly noted, “some of us girls do not talk to our mothers... Some of us fear our mothers.” Lighte concluded by saying, “I only tried it once, but the answer I got was not encouraging. I expected something better from the conversation. Hence, I have never asked her anything again.” It may seem that thirty percent of girls in my sample reporting ineffective communication is a relatively small proportion. In the context of Africa, however, where most children do not question parental authority, and children are dependent on parents to a large extent, the fact that girls even mentioned a problem with parents is notable.

Mothers have been the point of contact when it comes to the education of their children especially girls. Their roles were diminished because there was no established rapport between them and their daughters. Lack of rapport between mothers and their daughters was one of the avenues that made girls more vulnerable to have closer
interaction with boys. They shared with boys ideas and thoughts they were not able to share with their mothers. Brimwe noted, “we turn to the boys our age and tell them our problems instead of telling our mothers...This in turn brings about closeness between us and boys and leads to sexual advances on the part of the boys. This is how trouble begins for many of us girls”. From Brimwe’s account, the inattentiveness of mothers increased daughters’ vulnerability to sexual harassment as they sought to find supportive relationships with boys.

Moreover, some mothers did not have any contact at all with their daughters. There were instances where girls did not know where their biological mothers were and were raised by their grandmothers. The absence of the mother was a risk to the particular girls who were traumatized from the knowledge that their biological mothers were alive, yet they had never had a chance to see them. Bewa had not seen her biological mother for a while. She lamented, “The person who cares for me is my grandfather and grandmother, and I don’t even know where my mum is.” Because of this, Bewa “feels alone” like she is “not supposed to be in this world.” She had to be content with the little that the grandmother and grandfather provide. She felt sorry for her grandmother and the way she struggled to support her, she says, “I am sent home and she struggles to get me school fees to go back to school.”

Negative Attitude

Scholars emphasize that some teachers hold negative attitudes towards girls. However, my data shows that girls brought with them into the school setting the already
ingrained negative attitude about, and towards, themselves, and their education, from their homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Therefore, the attitude of the teachers was an extension of what was already being experienced by girls in their respective homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Four out of fourteen teachers advanced that negative attitude was an integral part of the lives of the girls. A teacher at Kamu School had this to say:

But I must say that sometimes these girls’ problems are farfetched. Some just seem to have a negative attitude towards their work. They are not confident at all in what they can do. One time a girl said, teacher why should I really struggle yet no one expects me to do well …. I see what my mother goes through, and that is what is waiting for me.

Negative attitude was an extensive risk towards adolescent girls’ schooling. Negative attitude, defined as bad acts, thoughts, or feelings towards a people was common towards girls and their schooling. Beyond the descriptions of Alise and Bewa in the pilot study, there are several other instances where girls faced this risk. More than a third of the in-school girls interviewed (7 out of 20), expressed the effects of negative attitude that they experienced. For instance, Lucina had to endure negative talk every day about how schooling for a girl like herself was not useful in society. This talk came from her father at home and from the people who live around their neighborhood. This negative talk extended into the schools, and made the teachers in the respective school think that girls are not adequately motivated for school. Some of the teachers thought it may be ingrained in the cultural context. One teacher explained:
…but I think maybe there is something cultural. Girls are supposed to be less active than men. Maybe their upbringing is such that the boys talk more than girls. Unless you insist on them talking girls normally are not so active in class… Those who agree to talk usually do so very softly so you have to move near them for you to hear what they are saying.

Girls felt differently as Lucina explained:

We as girls are not appreciated much because of the fact that we are few in the classes, and the majority are boys… We also lack facilities like textbooks, the school does not have a library… We are not given an opportunity to prove ourselves as girls and be appreciated as learners in the school… Even the teachers despise us at times, when they ask a question and a girl is not able to answer, probably because they have a boyfriend in the same class, the teacher then harasses the girl because she is not good at answering questions.

From Lucina’s excerpt, the negative attitude is attached to other areas of lack, or vulnerability emanating from the school setting, or from the liaisons that the girls have outside school, such as lack of being picked on by teachers when they cannot answer questions in class, and the everyday negativity that girls are forced to endure outside school.

The schooling of girls was shunned by the neighborhood and the girls’ families because of the general belief that the parents may be risking their money in a venture that was not going to be fruitful. This negative attitude stayed with the girls as they attended school. The people in the neighborhood argued that girls may not stay long enough in school for their parents to see the benefit of their secondary schooling. There was an
emphasis on the education of boys because families believed this was their sure ticket to family and neighborhood glory. Gracy observed:

They say this because of what they see. Many girls have actually dropped out of school due to pregnancy. They tend to believe that the community can depend on the boys to finish school. And, as a result the families can gain, by the very fact that the boy does complete school, and helps his family.

Some of the girls were confronted by neighbors in regard to their schooling. These neighbors expressed their disapproval openly in regard to the money that was being spent on them for school. It was the general feeling of the neighbors that at a particular age, girls could be a source of the money for their respective families, and not a drain on the same resources. As such, neighbors offered alternatives to schooling for girls and their guardians. Alternatives offered for girls included and was not limited to working as a domestic servant. Vero encountered the negative attitude and she vividly put it this way:

Yaah they just say that educating a girl is just waste of money, and waste of time. When you reach fourteen, fifteen, is the time you are mature enough you can be married. By the way, living among many tribes makes you learn a lot about the conditions that befall girls when they reach fourteen years. Many of the family members say that she is mature and she can be married. That money that you are looking to spend on her, you can use to buy land. Personally, I repeated in class eight, then our neighbor, a woman, told my grandmother that I would not pass and instead I should find a job as a ‘yaya’ meaning [house help]. My grandmother said that I will learn. There is no way she will let me find a job. The neighbor
would say something like: when you take her to school, she will just let you down. She will meet with boys, and then by the way it is better educating a boy… Some others would say even if you ‘chop’ (a sheng word meaning study), you may or may not get jobs and you will end up getting married anyway, you will go to the kitchen, so it is a waste of your parents’ money.

Such girls who encountered such situations may not have been eager to go to school. In the event that they persisted in school, they did not have the motivation needed to perform well.

In the vicinity of schools, girls were not spared the negative attitude from school dropouts, idlers, strangers who felt that if they never made it, others will not make it as well. Linak said, “they do say that, ‘look at her, she thinks that she is the only one who can be going to school. Where are other girls who are going to school at this time, does she think she is perfect than others? Look at us we were in school too.’”

Fear

Fear is the feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence of imminent danger. The schooling experience of girls was often characterized by fear. Part of this fear was embedded in the sexual harassment. Girls felt fear as they walked to and from school on their way home. All the girls in the in-school sample expressed that they had experienced fear, and had felt danger at one point or other, in their journeys to and from

25 Sheng is code language that had developed from a mixture of English and Kiswahili. It is often used by peers of a similar age group or by people who live in a particular locality who share particular characteristics. Sheng is commonly used in the slum areas.
school. For instance, Gracy sensed danger as she walked to and from school “disturbed by those who are idlers.” Gracy “occasionally manages to ignore them,” but when she does this she is “nicknamed” and called “a lot of names.” The fear of danger intensified as the girls walked to school and sometimes came into direct contact with other girls who have fallen victims of rape and molestation. “Robbery, molestation on the way to school” is what Bewa had witnessed as she travelled back and forth from school. She also sensed danger from the idlers who sometimes “pretended to be insane.” Alise on the other hand, heard about danger; she mentioned that “there is a girl” who would be called a “prostitute” if she did not respond to the men’s calls. Alise sensed danger through her experience of walking by the “jua kali sheds” which are “everywhere,” and “you never know who is actually hiding in the paper and wood structures late in the evening.”

Fear was so rampant that it denied the girls a chance of sitting in school to finish their homework. The girls had to rush home before it became dark, to escape the looming danger. The rush to go home rather than stay in school to complete homework reduced the time that girls had for their schoolwork. Aggy also sensed and heard danger on her way to school. She came face to face with a girl who had been raped by boys, and she learnt that the girl “used to abuse them, so one day the boys decided to rape the girl.” This experience made Aggy fear to talk with the boys because “they can do something, or better still, do the same thing to me.” Fear traumatized the girls psychologically to an extent that it undermined their ability to concentrate in school, as their thoughts were focused on their safety, on their way home from school especially in the evening. For those who had been molested on their way to or from school or seen their fellow classmates go through the ordeal, fear of imminent danger was immeasurable.
From the perspectives of the girls who were interviewed, fear was embedded in the whole spectrum of sexual harassment. The anticipation of what may be ahead if they left school late in the evening made girls apprehensive of coming to school. It affected their concentration when they were in school and putting in the required hours into their homework. The section below elaborates on the incidences of sexual harassment.

**Sexual Harassment**

**The Context of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a key component of sexual and gender based violence. Thus in a broad sense, it is a collective term that is often used interchangeably with sexual violence. In a more subtle form, sexual harassment is expressed by bullying, verbal, psychological abuse, corporal punishment, use of the pupils’ labor, and being aggressive towards the pupils (Dunne, M., Humphreys, S., & Leach, F. 2006).

The way girls were defined and constructed in the African context in Kenya; the treatment they received from their parents; the negative attitude that ensued from the perceptions of others about them; and the danger that constantly loomed in the neighborhood of the schools made girls vulnerable to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment was rampant among the two schools’ participants. The difference was that in-school sexual harassment seemed more pronounced among participants from Kamu School, with explicit illustrations from the girls of the occurrence of the phenomenon. Moreover, participants from both study sites expressed the prevalence of sexual
harassment on the way to school. However, participants from Lafama School had explicit explanations about the occurrence of sexual harassment at home.

My study findings suggest that girls experienced sexual harassment in school. All the in-school sample of girls reported one form or other of sexual harassment. In the sample of the dropouts, only one participant expressed that sexual harassment may have been part of her schooling experiences. The in-school sample of girls in this study highlighted the seriousness with which sexual harassment and violence continued to be a part of their lives in school.

**Sexual Harassment in School**

**Sexual Harassment in the Classroom**

Sexual harassment was one of the major obstacles that adolescent girls in school experienced within the school and out of school. Almost all the twenty girls who were part of the in school sample had experienced one form or the other of sexual harassment in school. From the earlier section on social construction, girls and women were culturally defined as inferior to males. Boys have carried the gendered nature of the society and the construction of the girls into the schools. Thus, boys used negative language toward girls to erode girls’ self esteem so that girls could be amenable to their demands. All the girls in the in school sample in Kamu school experienced sexual violence in the classroom. The girls were unanimous that boys justified and perpetuated their actions to their female classmates. They said, “...they intimidate girls, by saying...
there are others who will want us to touch them...you girls keep pretending and yet you want to be touched.”

This sample of in-school girls in Kamu School reported that boys were the key perpetrators of the violence. They carried out this vice in the classroom by leaving their respective seating places and moving to sit closer to girls. When no one seemed to be watching they embarked on touching the respective girl(s). Trina captured the sentiment of her fellow schoolmates when she reported, “boys in our class used to come to where I was sitting and start touching me like this (silence)....” This treatment was extended to other girls in the same class by other boy classmates. She said, “…some of the boys wanted to sit near a girl just to touch her” About half of the teachers agreed that sexual harassment happens in the classroom perpetuated by boys. However, one teacher from Kamu added that even male teachers are responsible for sexually molesting girls. She explained:

Boys may be the key culprits. But it has been reported to one of the Guidance and Counseling teachers, that one of the teachers is also taking advantage of their tender age and having sexual relationships. Girls are lured and they get into the relationship without understanding the consequences….That is one factor that is bringing down the girls. The girls will be in class physically, but they cannot concentrate.

In addition, about half of the girls in school expressed that they were not well prepared for the interactions in mixed schools, making them more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Brimwe captures the experiences of this set of girls and she observes, “Some of us do not know how to talk and relate to the boys. We just agree to what we are being
This depicts a situation whereby girls easily fall prey to the boys, and they do not know how to deal with the interaction.

In addition to the sexual violence, girls were also subjected to physical violence by being beaten. A quarter of the girls (5 out of 20) said that beating was part of their schooling experience. Alise one of those girls who had suffered physical violence explained, “many times girls are beaten but what happens usually happens in class when everyone is watching...One time a girl was slapped in the back by a boy in front of the class.”

Moreover, most girls noted that in the classroom they were vulnerable to sexual encounters in school when teachers are not in class. One of the participants, in Kamu School, Jose highlighted the plight of the girls in respect to sexual harassment when they are alone, “Sexual harassment happens when we are on our own in class, because they can’t do that when the teacher is in class”

**Sexual Harassment outside the Classroom**

Outside the classrooms, sexual harassment often went unnoticed by teachers. All in school sample of girls in Kamu School expressed that they experienced sexual harassment outside the classroom while they were in school. In a typical day school in Nairobi Province, the teachers are not around the girls all the time. Teachers are not usually close during the breaks: tea break (when the teachers break for tea and the students take their bathroom breaks), lunch break (when both teachers and students take a break for lunch), after school breaks (when the students clean their classes and get them
ready for the following school day), and on Saturdays (when the students come to school for private studies). It is during such times that girls are touched, slapped, and forced into sexual encounters in school. Gracy, one of the girls who witnessed sexual encounters in school between her fellow classmates said:

Some girls have been caught in intimate situations in these rooms where boys who come from far stay in. For example, a girl was caught in one of these rooms with the boy, and she was sent away from school.

According to the girls, when students were unsupervised, boys had an opportunity to harass the girls without getting caught by the teachers. Not only did this happen during cleaning time in the evening, but girls were also prone to harassment during the break times in a given school day. Lucina noted:

In school, boys harass the girls during the break times and during the cleaning times. This is one reason why parents fear mixed schools. This is because more girls get pregnant from their schoolmates, the boys. Girls cannot continue with school after that, and yet boys get on with school as if nothing has happened. It is for this reason that we are fewer girls in this stream of Form 3. The boys often lure and cheat the girls with very small gifts even in school. All in all, there is a lot of sexual relations that go on, but some girls escape getting pregnant.

The harassment sometimes extended to sexual intercourse in school. Some of the study participants who were still in school felt that girls could be victims of sexual advances including sexual intercourse while in school. Alise emphatically said, it is the boys who “force the girls to have sex.” This gave a sense of the sheer force which characterized such sexual encounters in school. This was corroborated by one of teachers,
who, while admitting that boys are to blame, also put the blame on fellow teachers as noted above.

On the other hand, a few girls (about a quarter of the in school sample) said there are those girls who have “encouraged” the boys in perpetuating sexual encounters in school. Bewa’s sentiments suggested this when she observed that, “some girls however make the first move on the boys.” Half of the in-school sample from Kamu School revealed that girls were put in situations of material need or want, and their boyfriends became key players in alleviating the need. Thus, their cooperation with the boys was for the girls’ own good. Lighte, one of the girls in this category noted, “Girls help themselves by getting boyfriends who they pay back by giving their bodies for sex.”

Data shows that it was not so much a question of girls complying with boys’ sexual overtures in school, but rather sexual harassment was as a result of them fearing the repercussions that came with refusing to play along, especially if they were asked for the sexual favors. As Jamu observed:

…if you fail to adhere to what they want…if they ask for sex, and you do not agree you stand to be ridiculed. This makes girls to agree to have sex in school because of the fear of being ridiculed and made to feel small. Being a girl, when you make a mistake in class, afterwards the boys will laugh at you. And on the way home, they get an opportunity to harass you, and intimidate you, by telling you that you know nothing.

Thus, when girls succumbed to the pressures put on them and the hope of keeping ridicule at bay, they agreed to the sexual encounters as suggested by boys. In one of the study sites, the sexual encounters were possible by dormitory structures in the school.
Formerly used as the administration block, these are now used as dwelling places for the boys who were orphans or who lived too far away from the school to commute daily. These structures were one of the places that real evidence was seen, as a girl and a boy were found by the school administration as was noted Gracy of Kamu School:

Some girls have been caught in intimate situations in these rooms where boys who come from far stay in. For example, another day a girl was caught in one of these rooms with the boy, and she was sent away from school.

**Sexual Harassment out of School**

*On The Way to School*

Out of school, sexual harassment occurred along the way to and from school, and at home. Along the way to school, girls are prone to be harassed by idlers, strangers, matatu touts (makangas).\(^{26}\) All girls in the in school sample had experienced sexual harassment out of school. The types of sexual harassment that girls contended with on the way to and from school included name calling and insults, aggressive pushing and touching, blocked pathways and girls stopped on the way to school, transactional sex, and rape. For instance, one girl reported that she was actually raped while on her way from school. Bewa was “forced “into a car and “later they raped me.” She was taken to Nairobi Women’s hospital, where she was treated, but she could not continue the

\(^{26}\) Makanga is a word that is used by those who are employed within the Motor industry in Kenya to fondly refer to the young men who passengers give money as payment for the journey they are about to take in that particular van (otherwise called a Matatu). A makanga is essentially an assistant to the driver.
treatment indefinitely because, “things I was supposed to be tested for are over, so I am supposed to pay for any test.”

Aggy, one of the girls who has experienced sexual harassment on the way to school, observes, “the men always disturb me, call me, push you back, touch me as I am walking. If you refuse they abuse you. Yes, they abuse you and laugh at you.” Alise experiences harassment when she was called “bad names” by strangers and had been “stopped on the way to school” by men who tried to tell her “some things which did not interest” her.

The plight of Aggy and Alise as relates to the insults and name-calling is shared by five other girls from the two study sites. Although the girls experience this kind of harassment at different times, the similarity lies in the manner in which the events occur. For instance, name-calling and insults always followed the attempts by the harassers to get attention and persuade the girls to succumb to their sexual demands. Thus, in the cases for which data is available the name-calling succeeds the attempts by the strangers and the idlers along the way to get the girls to notice their sexual overtures. For example, Racheli and Cynthy are abused when the men are not able to forcefully talk to them. Cynthy observes, “they abused me...they wanted me to greet them by force, and when I refused they pushed me around.” Racheli confirms this by noting that, “…they want to talk to you, but when you refuse they start calling you names.” For other girls like Jamu, the abuse and name-calling becomes a repeated affair to the extent that one of the options that she had was to stop using the same route to school and seek an alternative route. She observed that:
… Some of these people will abuse you… and others start disturbing you constantly along the route to school every day, insulting, chasing, and holding you by force….So the only option is to stop passing through that route again…

Additionally, on the way to school, girls often had their paths blocked and being completely stopped. Four girls including Jamu expressed concern with blocked pathways to school. Jamu noted, “they made it difficult for me to pass along the usual route to school, so I had to change my direction” In one instance a girl was stopped on the way and dragged to a house. Jamu noted, “He dragged me and did me bad. I had no other alternative. He carried me up to Majengo estate and he left me in a house and asked me not to scream...”. This experience illustrates the severity of the problem of sexual harassment, which in this case led to rape.

Thus girls had to change direction faced with blocked paths, meanwhile it remained unclear whether some of the girls went back home, or they found other routes to school and how long that could have possibly taken. Blocked pathways made it difficult for the girls to get to school on time. Girls expressed a lot of frustration with this deed from the strangers and the idlers on the way to school, and they wished that girls could be appreciated more and left alone to get on with their journey to school every day. This frustration is summed up by Lighte when she observed that “…girls would also wish to be appreciated when walking to school without people blocking their paths on the road sometimes…” This frustration led to anxiety and fear among girls. Girls feared for their safety and well being because on the way to and from school anything could happen to them. Cynthy was very disturbed about the happening on the way from school and she boldly summed up her anxiety in this way:
I feel bad and fearful because when you are going home, and you are alone, then it’s possible that anything can happen to you from rape to death. Because these people standing on the road are unknown to you. It is very dangerous.

One of the reasons men blocked girls’ pathways as given by one of the participants is so that they could get to talk to girls. This made girls want to fight back by calling the harassers names. This made the men angry, and in the process, they were also ready to fight back. Vero noted her ordeal with one of the harassers on her way to school when she attempted to insult a man so that he would leave her alone, “some men block you on the way…I want to talk to you. When you call them names in return, then they are ready for a fight...”

Transactional sex is yet another form of sexual exploitation that characterized girls’ attempts to obtain secondary school in the two study sites Kamu and Lafama. Transactional sexual relationships included an exchange element—exchange of money or gifts for sex. Even with government subsidies to schools to reduce the school fees, school pupils still needed to purchase books, uniforms, school supplies, and additional fees are needed for other informal activities as well as finding or paying for costs of transportation to and from school whenever needed (Leach, & Machakanja, 2001; Luke, 2008, cited in Collins, 2009). Thus, schooling increases the chances that adolescent girls will need money, thereby making them more vulnerable to sexual demands by the older males in exchange for the gifts received (Collins, 2009).

In certain instances, the transactional sexual relationship started with the males telling the girls that they are attracted to them, and they are in love with them. About a half of the girls, including Gracy, vividly recounted their experience with transactional
sexual relationships. She stated, “...the catch is they say that they love you, and yet they just want to use you”. Girls fell for the trap, then the harassers quickly followed up with the offer of the money as Gracy observed:

As we go home in the evening, a majority of men have finished their work and they have a little money. And they will give you, if you can agree with what they tell you. The money is given to you so that they get to you, and get what they want. If you are not principled and you give in, then, they will destroy your life.

The lure of money and lack of basic needs played a part in making Gracy and other girls likely to be vulnerable to be sexually exploitation. Girls will be given money for “their needs especially if your parents can not afford.” Becka said, “most of us girls are given money by the sugar daddies, when our parents cannot give. We need some things which we may not do without. So we are eventually forced to have sex to pay off.” Prewa agreed with Gracy in regards to the basic needs—money to buy sanitary supplies being at the forefront of girls engaging in transactional sex. She narrated:

As a girl you have so many things that you need, so it forces you to get an older man who can provide you with those things...If girls are not financially stable, it forces girls to go out and look for money from those who are older, and willing to provide. And sometimes, many girls can become prostitutes.

The lure of money was so great that girls were willing to sacrifice their schooling time and use it to please their boyfriends in the hope that he could provide money that they needed. Thus, a girl may have left home to come to school and ended up at a boyfriend’s house. In this case, the girl was not forcibly abused, but rather chose to be involved in a relationship in the hope of receiving some money. One of the participants
observed that a girl would be hooked to the money, and not realize the damage her absence did to her work. Jose observed:

Yes, some are going for the obvious, but some are following the money. When a girl goes to see the boyfriend during the day, she is taking money more seriously than the education. Many of us are not willing to listen to advice, especially, when we see the man can be able to give money. When you try to advice, it falls on deaf ears a lot of times…

The boyfriends who provide girls with money include schoolboys, boys in the neighborhood, Matatu touts (Makangas), and “sugar daddies”. The Matatu touts were identified by the girls in both Kamu and Lafama as being one of the perpetrators of the transactional sexual relationship outside school. What was interesting in the case of the Matatu touts was that the gift was in the form of free rides in the matatu in the morning and in the evening. Girls who the touts already knew entered the Matatus and took their strategic seats either at the front of the van or at the back. The tout already knew that he was not going to ask for any money from the girl(s) as payment for their ride. From Rowa’s perspective, some of the girls also enjoyed the admiration that came with knowing someone who could be able to give them something for “free”. She noted:

The girls just sit there, wait for a Makanga who is admiring them, and some of these people are married men. But girls are always attached to the exchanges and favors given to them by these men… We seem to enjoy it at times when someone offers us something for free, like a ride. Occasionally, you notice that a girl is not paying the fare sometimes ….Rides for free all the time without paying fare…Such Matatus will always be full.
Occasionally, a few girls would be caught unawares at the bus top in the morning and evening by the touts’ actions. The touts squeezed themselves against the girls, touched them as the girls boarded the Matatu vans. Rowa observed:

There are some guys who will want to disturb you… These are people like the Makangas [also called turn-boys or touts]. Once you are in the Matatu, they come and sit next to you, squeeze against you, and attempt to tell you all manner of things…

Things were not any easier for the girls even when they already decided to board one of the Matatus. The success of persuading girls to enter the Matatu served as excuse to move closer to them and harass them as Shewa observed:

Yaah, like when you are in the Mat [a short form of Matatu] and it is full; the manner in which the Makangas squeeze themselves against your body is real bad. You cannot say anything, because when you complain, they tell you to get down and walk. While the Makangas do this, the boys enjoy the whole scenario, and even join in their conversation.

As indicated earlier it was not only Matatu touts who were putting girls in a vulnerable situation on their way to school. Other girls were being given money by the sugar daddies whom they had met outside school. This was observed by one sixth of the girls in school. The sugar daddies were older men and, like the touts, were also married. Thus, the schoolgirls were easy prey to them especially when they realized that they easily accept money. Becka a participant from Lafama School said, “…most of the girls are given money by these sugar daddies and they are forced to have sex.” In some
circumstances keeping the older men from harassing girls took a very spirited effort.

Vero explained:

…He then began talking to me. Every day I just see you, and I love you … I want to hug you. Meanwhile I am thinking, but he is an old man, and he is not young. I asked, you are old, why don’t you wait for me until I finish my education? Then he says, ‘I can pay for your education. I just want you to be close to you.’ Then I asked him, if he is fond of me, and if he knew I was in school…Why do you keep on disturbing me, and I am a child, compared to you?…That’s like child abuse …

In addition, boyfriends from the same school and in the neighborhood also had sex with girl(s) and gave girls money in return. Aggy was one of the girls whose schooling was compromised by lack of basics that made her succumb to sexual complicity so that her boyfriend could provide for herself what her aunt could not. Aggy’s hope was on the boyfriend whom she relied on to give her pocket money. She was forced to “have sex with him so that he could give her some pocket money.” She not only agreed to a paid sexual relationship, but she seemed to naively trust the boyfriend, and she timidly said, “he always says that I should trust he cannot do anything bad.” Lighte of Lafama School observed that girls fell into this trap of accepting sexual favors in exchange for money when money was not forthcoming from their parents to provide for their needs. She said, “Some of us girls are not given money by our fathers. We help ourselves by getting a boy friend.”

According to Gracy, when girls got money from their boyfriends, the touts, or the sugar daddies to buy their basic needs, it was not free because, “afterwards they must pay … with sex.” Because some of the girls were eager to try out new things and were
curious about sexual relations, they accepted the "dates" given by the men. Girls were forced to complete their part of the transaction by offering themselves as the repayment.

One girl vividly explained how this scenario played out:

When you see somebody treating you that nice these days …the day he will ask you to pay his money is when all that they have been interested in comes out.

And he will not want the money he gave you, but he will ask you for something else… He will ask you for sex, because there is nothing else you can pay with. So, girls find themselves cornered when it reaches a time when these people want their money back. A girl has no other choice but to do that…have sex.

Sexual encounters became the immediate payment for the money or the gifts that girls had taken. According to other participants, the impact of this transactional relationship ran deeper than this. Repeated sexual intercourse with the touts, sugar daddies, and boyfriends left the girls exposed to pregnancies, constant threats to diseases, and threats to their life. In the most frighteningly severe cases, they were threatened with killing if they did not succumb to their part of the bargain. On the other hand, having sex made the girls fearful of contracting HIV/ AIDS. Vero intimated,

I am the only girl in secondary school in my immediate neighborhood, some reach form one, form two they get pregnant. You know girls have a soft heart. They are cheated with money and then they get pregnant, meaning that the next thing is for them to leave school…If you take the money and you “eat” a guy’s money, the next thing he tells you is, you “ate” my money…he comes to threaten you…that you took my money. If you refuse to pay me the way we agreed, I will kill you…This becomes very frightening, so many of us will give in to the demands,
and accidentally you get pregnant. But pregnancy is not the fear these days. What is more frightening is to contract HIV/AIDS…And you say this is the way it has to be for you…the end of the road.

As relates to the vulnerability to contract HIV/AIDS, about half of the girls concluded that it was futile for them to expect anything less than repeated sexual demands from the men. This exposed them to HIV because it was unclear how many other girls the particular men had solicited for sex in exchange for money. Prewa emphasized:

Of course they sleep with you, and all the time they give you money. They sleep with you, and you may not know if they have HIV. It means that you can get infected or even get pregnant if they don’t use the appropriate measures.

This sentiment by Prewa showed that at times the girls were caught between a rock and a hard place as they navigated the schooling enterprise. It was a matter of choosing to comply with the sexual demands of the boyfriends, sugar daddies, and matatu touts in order to get money for the basics. This was not an easy way of life, but about one third (7 out 20) of the girls had to endure this to be able to continue with their schooling process.

Sexual Harassment Within the Families

From the in school participants drawn from Lafama School there was an explicit account of the sexual harassment that went on within the families. At home, girls fell prey to family members who lived in the same household. Data available from this study
suggested that it was male household members who sexually molested the girls. Almost all the girls in the in school sample from Lafama School had experienced one form or other of sexual harassment at home. For instance, the girls become the substitutes for their father’s sexual partners in their mother’s absence. This sometimes happened without the knowledge of the school administration until the girl stopped going to school. This was recounted by Zena one of the in-school participants. She explained:

Yes, we have so many cases of girls being abused sexually. You find that those who do such evil things to the girls, are sometimes their fathers. For example, I was living with my father, after my mother had just died. My father continued to use me as his wife. I stopped coming to school until the teachers sought me out. And, I have recently heard of a girl in a similar situation, and now she is just there, no one can help; the girl has nowhere to turn to.

One other girl survived a rape ordeal at the hands of the uncle when sent by the mother to collect school fees. Yet, a girl with such an experience often had only her classmates to confide in. Dama remembered, “*When my mother sent me to my uncle to get some money for school fees he tried to rape me...*”

Three salient reasons were advanced by the girls why they thought the home environment was making girls’ susceptible sexual harassment. First, the very nature of the houses in the slum neighborhood encouraged girls to hang out along the corridors and outside the gates of their respective dwellings. In a slum like Korogocho, where a vast of majority of Lafama School students live, the houses are small. These houses are single rooms that are partitioned by a curtain—separating the living room from the bedroom. A family would share this room, with the children sleeping in the living room (one side of
the curtain), and the parents and guardians in the bedroom (the other side of the curtain). Another scenario is the parents would have one room to themselves (which would be the main house), and parents rented for the children an extra room (which would double as the kitchen, and the place where all other members of the household: children, cousins, visiting relatives, younger uncles) would share at bedtime.

Either way, girls would be vulnerable. In the first scenario, they would be susceptible, because the father or the male guardian could easily prey on the girl if the mother or the female guardian was not present. This happened if girls lived in single rooms with their brothers and fathers in the absence of their mothers. Nthia disclosed her ordeal:

I have been living with my father, my brother just came in recently…Before my brother came to live with us, my father on several occasions had sex with me…He then told me not to tell anyone.

In the second scenario, the other male relatives: uncles, cousins, and extended relatives from upcountry get an opportunity to sexually molest girls. Judia said,

The rented room that we share away from the main room (house) is a place that a lot of sexual activities go on. Many of these relatives will pounce on you in the middle of the night when others are asleep….You cannot scream because of the fear of what others will think….

In sum, the type of housing offered provided very small space without any privacy, and the social construction of girls as not worthy of respect or care made girls to be easily targeted. Almost all girls in the in school sample of Lafama School had
experienced one form or the other of sexual molestation at the hands of either a father or a male relative.

The experiences of these girls exposed the subtle nature of sexual molestation within families. Fathers cajoled their daughters not to tell anyone about their ordeals. Girls were sexually molested for a very long time before anyone knew. A lot of the sexual molestation in the families often went unreported until somebody was able to stand up in the neighborhood to talk about a particular neighborhood.

With limited space, girls tended to wander around (kurandaranda, a word used by many girls to refer to the phenomenon of wandering). Wandering (moving without any particular reason and to no particular destination) made girls vulnerable to sexual encounter in the proximity of their households as suggested by Judia, “The home environment also makes girls vulnerable to people who live near them, are familiar to them, and take advantage and exploit them sexually. This happens when they meet them in the corridors that separate the houses in a slum such as the one I live in.”

Girls are vulnerable to sexual molestation around the homes when parents especially mothers oblivious of the danger that lurk outside sent girls to the shops at night. Or, per above, are oftentimes unconcerned with their daughters’ needs. This

27 For instance, a story carried by the East African Standard Newspaper on December 22, 2009 confirmed the traumatic experiences that girls undergo at the hands of their fathers. The girls who had been molested said, “when my stepfather married my mother he took us to his home in Chawia village where we lived happily until my mother died...”My father has been warning me not to disclose my sexual relationship with him.” According to this story, the girls’ grandmother only realised that the girl was being molested very recently because she [the victim] had kept it a secret. “It is unfortunate the girl has dropped out of school due to unwanted pregnancy,” reported the Senior Education Officer in charge of Education in that particular District (Mnyamwezi, 2009, December 22).
provided an opportunity for the harassers around the family homes to pounce on the girls. One girl from Lafama School had fallen victim to sexual molestation while running errands for her mother. This was recounted by her friend Nthia:

Yes, one of my friends in my class told me, that last week her mother sent her to the shop at night. When she was on her way going home, the boys from the adjacent house to theirs followed her from behind, grabbed her, and put her in the car and sped off. She was later raped.

**Complicity by Girls in Sexual Harassment**

As noted earlier (see the section of social construction), the way girls were constructed influenced the manner in which they were viewed in their respective communities. But this also influenced their views about themselves. It is for this reason that girls became accomplices to the sexual incidences not only for their own personal gain—being given money to buy their basics—but also for the personal prestige of having a boyfriend. These boyfriends became “mentors” of their girlfriends who the girls were duty bound to listen to without questioning. For instance, the boyfriends would tell the girls to come to their houses and the girls would comply, missing a whole day(s) of school. This phenomenon was explained explicitly by Jose:

…You know, there are some girls who take the advice they are given by their boyfriends, more serious than what they hear in the school. So, you can go there (meaning his house), and he tells you that don’t go to school. Just come we stay
here and then….That is why I am saying, a girl can end up taking the advice from the boyfriend seriously more than school.

With limited or no parental monitoring, girls were encouraged to comply in specific incidences of sexual harassment. Some girls felt that when parents do not ask them to confirm whether they had been to school, it left many loopholes that were exploited by girls. Such girls stayed in their boyfriend’s houses and eventually went home in the evening claiming that they had been to school. Alise noted that some girls “cheat their parents” by telling them they are going to school and instead going out on dates with their boyfriends. Jose another participant observed, “…in the evening you then put on your uniform and then go back home, telling your parents or guardians who you are living with that you have been to school.” It appeared like most parents or guardians took the girls word for the truth and did not counter check if they had been to school.

Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Several consequences stem from the sexual harassment experiences of girls. These include risk of disease, reduced interest in learning thereby having a careless attitude, inconsistency in reporting, and psychological trauma. All girls who were part of the in-school sample expressed that at one point in time, they suffered from one or other of the after effects of sexual harassment.
**Risk of Disease**

One of the consequences of sexual harassment was that the girls did not get to decide whether they could use protective measures during sexual intercourse. This happened in those instances when the girl(s) had obtained favors from the boys in the form of money or gifts. The boys dictated the terms of repayment. Lighte, a study participant from Lafama School elucidated this point when she said, “...the boy is the one who is being paid back, so he gets to decide whether to use protection or not...the girl doesn’t have any voice towards it...she cannot make the decision”

Moreover, when a girl is forcefully raped, the harassers seldom use condoms (see Lighte’s explanation in the opening paragraph of this section). Brimwe explained how girls found themselves in the situations where they became pregnant, “they want to cheat you that they love you, and when you are cheated they will go ahead and sleep with you. And before long you may become aware of the consequences, either pregnancy or you get a sexually transmitted disease...” Pregnancy, sometimes an outcome of forced sexual harassment, often meant that girls had no choice in what befell them, as Vero reiterated, “...it is not their wish to get pregnant it is by accident, some are forced to do it”

When a girl became pregnant, sometimes she chose abortion in order to continue with school, as shown by Lucina’s admission of what happens to her friend. She said:

One of the girls, who is a friend of mine, was just cheated like I have been saying. She went along with the money game, and after a while she discovered that she was pregnant. She could not keep the baby. So, she aborted, and now she is in school.
A sexually transmitted disease (STI) also an outcome of having unprotected sex with an infected individual is a common consequence of sexual molestation and or rape. According to the explanation offered by the girls’ contraction of STI was initially hidden by the affected girls from the parents, because of the fear of being beaten by parents, fear of being ridiculed and teased by friends and peers. Gracy noted:

Other girls go away because they are pregnant. Not from the people in school, but from people outside the school. Others get infected with diseases, and then they cannot come back to school… Majority of the boys have girl friends, and you don’t know them. You get involved with them while you are in school, but you don’t know who they are with on Saturday. You don’t know who else they are sleeping with, and that is why diseases are spread…Because, today he will be with you, and tomorrow he will be with someone else. When this happens, then as a girl you are most likely to be infected with sexually transmitted diseases… I must say that at times, it is not easy to own up when you have a sexually transmitted disease. And this makes one unable to seek and get treatment. As such, a girl may stay out of school for long. I had to rely on my friends to buy me the drugs, because I could not just say this to anybody in my family.

Contraction of a sexually transmitted disease not only kept girls out of school for a long time but also made them miss much instructional time. Gracy lamented that missing school led to poor preparation for exams. She said, “we suffer from lost time as me and others miss classes, and don’t put in the required time for the home work. Girls end up taking examinations that they have not adequately prepared for”
In addition, there are those girls who felt that the plight of girls at the hands of men in general, and boys in particular, especially in school, as relates to the aspect of pregnancy, and dropping out of school, did not augur well for gender equity. Girls expressed that they got pregnant and stayed away from school, while boys continued to attend school. This showed that gender inequity exists in schools. Gracy observed, “even when the boys impregnate girls they go on with their education. But girls they drop out.

Reduced Interest in Learning

The teachers noted that girls who had experienced any kind of sexual harassment developed a careless attitude in class and towards their schoolwork. Moreover, such students stopped taking their studies seriously and lacked discipline in school. A teacher participant of Kamu School pointed out, “these girls are very undisciplined. And they don’t even care. In class, they don’t take their studies seriously.”

This lack of concentration in class was also noted by the girls themselves. Almost all girls were unanimous that when a girl was touched in class, without her consent, she often lost concentration. This happened because the girls’ attention got diverted to the relationship with the boys, and she got trapped in the touching game. Jose recounted this effect on girls, “if boys start to touch you, you will not concentrate. You will only concentrate on playing with the boys. There needs to be a lot of self control.” This participant suggested that there was need for self-control if the girls were to continue in school.
Inconsistency in Reporting

However, what concerned Jose was the casual way with which sexual harassment was treated more so by the girls themselves. A few girls did not find it necessary to report to the teachers, although a few did report the incidences to the teachers. Jose noted, “Yes there are some who will report and some just take it as a joke”. Moreover, there was a feeling among some of girls that those who never reported did so because they were at ease with it. Jose further observed, “… I would say that it is something that she is used to doing.” The sentiments expressed by Gracy, the student who contracted an STI sentiments noted just above, show the difficulties that girls can have in owning up and getting themselves to talk about molestation. Therefore, fear of reporting may at times inhibit the ability of girls to report and get medical attention.

Psychological Effects

For other girls the effect of sexual harassment was so traumatic that they kept it a tight secret until such a time that they could be sure that whoever they told their secret would be able to keep it in confidence. Nellya painfully explained this sentiment, that was shared by three other girls, “…for most of us who have undergone the experience we keep it to ourselves and die slowly from within” The phrase “dying slowly from within” shows the trauma, pain, and psychological stress that girls who have been sexually molested go through, especially when they cannot trust anybody with their secret, leave alone get access to counseling.
Domestic Work in the Households

Domestic work by girls was one of the key findings of this study. All girls interviewed expressed concerns on how domestic work at home before or after school hindered their ability to be effective participants in school. Secondary school girls interviewed concurred on the amount of work they had to do before and after school. They expressed concern that members of their households always expected them to perform different tasks, especially in the evenings for the rest of the household before they could get a chance to settle down and continue with their studies, if and when they got the chance. Trina observed, “When I had morale to study, that is when my mother’s sister usually told me to go and cook or do something else….Happened when my mother was not around.” Working made girls go to school late and this interfered with their concentration. Trina observed, “I usually come to school late. And, when I get to the class I am very tired. And, I can’t do anything.” Nellya, a participant in the study from Lafama School, expressed the expectation of household members when she said that, “…Most of the family, believe that it is only girls who can do most of the house chores...”.

Girls spent a lot of time performing tasks for members of their households and had very little time to devote to their studies. Prewa observed this in connection with available time she had after school to divide between her class work and her domestic chores, “…time is not there, because when you come from school, you must work like wash the uniform and cook. Therefore there is very little time”. The common domestic
chores in the households included cooking, washing clothes, washing utensils, cleaning the house, and tidying it after supper, and above all making sure that the younger siblings were all set and ready for school the following day. All these activities consumed a lot of time, and girls were not able to put in enough time into their studies. Furthermore, they could not rest for school the following day. A teacher from Kamu School, whose classroom teaching had been challenged by the effect of domestic work that girls performed, observed:

What comes to my mind first is that the girl child has a lot of responsibilities at home. They kind of take the roles of their mothers. They are made to do a lot of their mothers’ chores, like taking care of the young ones… When girls go home in the evening, they are supposed to cook, make sure the young ones are bathed; you know such like things…. Again, that affects them. When they come to school they are tired, compared to the boys.”

Moreover, according to the teachers, the roles (cooking washing, keeping the household in order, caring for their siblings) that the girls undertook in the households when their mothers were absent, made them tired and stressed, to a point where their schooling became intermittent. The teacher noted:

…the girl comes to school tired, because, she did a lot of work at home. And, got late and decided not to come to school… The girl is living with the father, and the mother is upcountry. She has all the responsibilities. She has to act like the woman of the house… You know they are still young, and she might not be able to cope with her school work and at the same time with house work. … She does a
lot of work at home. In school, she will be saying, I am stressed, because of this and that…And finally, you stop seeing this girl in school.

Another teacher participant in this study admitted that girls were affected by the domestic work that they performed everyday in their homes. In her view, the heavy domestic work that girls undertook was a result of girls not staying with their biological parents. Contrary to the idea that the extended families reinforced the education of children outside their original households (Lloyd & Blanc 1996), the girls interviewed in this study had their progress thwarted because of heavy domestic work they had to perform for their guardians and relatives living with them in the same households before school. The teacher said, “…they’ll say I woke up to perform domestic chores. I think it affects them. Most of those who do not stay with their parents have to do so many things before they come to school. At school, they are too tired to concentrate.” For instance, girls who had constant chores to perform in their households always found themselves lagging behind in their schoolwork. Zena noted that, “…yes, I say this because when the girl is doing all the chores, the boy is continuing with his studies and revision. The girl will always be behind in her school work.”

A girl who worked very hard in their household before and after school explained the nature of the work that she did every day, and the effect this had on her. Marcela noted:

After school instead of studying, I usually have chores, which I have to finish like cooking, and washing. After all these chores, I am exhausted and I cannot even study. I go straight to sleep. The following day waking up will be hard, it will be around six thirty, and I have to go to school. That is the time that I start my
studies. While the boys can study the whole evening, and they study even when they wake up in the morning. They use so much time in their studies.

**Work Outside the Households**

Girls performed work in the households as part of the daily routine that was expected of them by the parents, or the household members present, either to help when the parents were not yet home, or/and in the absence of mothers in the households. But girls also worked outside the households to support their parents and to keep their brothers in school. Nellya noted, “Sometimes, some of us just stay at home. Most of us take care of the household duties. Others help will their parents in petty jobs. Indirectly, they help the parents to educate their brothers, because it is the money that will pay their brother’s fee.” Those girls, who did not attend school frequently, helped their parents to generate income to pay school levies for their brothers. Judia had this to say, “for those of us discriminated by our parents, like those of us whose parents did not keep us in school on a regular basis, we generated income by helping in the business so that the money gotten in the business can be used to educate the boys in the family.”

In sum, scholars have advanced the notion that work by children, and particularly by girls, working in towns as servants have contributed to their education woes (Moyi, 2006; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008). This study found that girls worked within the households, and the heavy domestic work affected the time they had for their studies, the time they reached school, their ability to concentrate and perform well in school, and in the extreme instances, it increased the likelihood of them being absent from school.
Girls’ Individual Attributes as Risk Factor

Scholars have identified key aspects of the individual attributes of children and adolescents that foster their learning. Such attributes include self-esteem and self-efficacy. If children lack these attributes, their ability to be self-motivated for school becomes impaired. The loss of self-esteem has been discussed earlier (see the section on the role of parents).

Timidness and Non-Participation

This study found that closely linked to the loss of self-esteem and low self-efficacy was the inability of the girls to participate in class. They were often timid, and unwilling to share their views with their peers in class. At times, the teacher was forced to call out an individual by name for the girl to respond. A teacher participant from Kamu School had this to say:

…but, I think maybe there is something cultural. Girls are supposed to be less active than men. May be their upbringing is such that the boys talk more than girls. Unless you insist on them talking, girls normally are not so active in class… Those who agree to talk usually do so very softly. So, you have to move near them for you to hear what they are saying.

On the other hand, non-participation was attributed to the fear of confiding in some teachers. Two girls felt that this was something that not only affected their participation in class but also their overall interaction in school. Linak explained:
You know sometimes we fear teachers. Because, we do think that if we tell the teacher...the way I am now telling you all this is happening, she will go and discuss it with another teacher. Okay, we have no confidence in the teachers. Because, they make everything the talk of the staff room. May be the teachers need to be told such things. Like, we need what we tell you to be kept confident, because we need help from you.

From other teachers’ perspectives, non-participation was linked to girls having been sexually harassed by some teachers, diverting their attention from classroom activities.

…Girls are lured and they get into the relationship without understanding the consequences…that is one factor that is bringing down the girls. The girls will be in class physically but they cannot concentrate.

Moreover, girls’ timidness and non-participation in classes was associated with girls’ attendance of mixed gender schools. That the very presence of boys in these schools and classes was a challenge to the girls who felt that they were not up to the challenge to perform as well as the boys in class. Hence, the girls ended up taking a “back seat” reducing even further their chances of performing well in class. One of the teachers said this:

Girls in a mixed school are a little bit timid… Scared of the boys or something. But, they don’t really perform well… They reach a point where they give up. They leave the academic side to the boys. Even in my class, they don’t participate much. So, I don’t know whether it’s because they are intimidated…
A teacher observed that for effective learning to take place among girls, the teacher had to be keen on ensuring that girls stayed engaged in class. Otherwise, it was easy for the girls to be “left behind”. She observed this in one of the classes she taught:

… they don’t participate much. Unless you pay keen interest to them, or pay special attention to each one of them, you might forget them. When they are in class they are quiet, they hide behind the boys…Unless you notice that, you might forget them…They give up, and their performance declines. As a teacher, you realize that they are not doing as well as the boys…

**Peer Influence**

Teachers also identified that peer influence was a very important risk factor for girls still attending school in terms of their performance. Peers both in the estates where the girls lived, and within the school, derailed the performance of the girls. Hence, even when girls did not drop out of school, the negative impact of peers was so great that it was difficult for these girls to recover their academic ground. This was associated with their underachievement. A teacher observed:

Girls are facing the problem of peer influence. They are being influenced by other children in their estates…Then, again, you find that girls are more influenced by new students. Especially, when the newcomers are from different estates, further away from this school, and, have behavior that entices the other students who they find in the school… We start to see such behavior like missing school. So, when a
new student arrives, and is outstanding even in negative way, it derails those girls who choose to follow such a student. A lot of times they take time to recover.

Girls also explained that peer influence was a negative factor in the schooling experience of girls. Whenever girls were sent home for one reason or another, they found themselves in the company of their peers. The result was not always useful for schooling purposes. Trina had this to say about the influence of peers:

Yes, when girls are sent home for school fees, or something else, they usually go into town. They will walk around town, and sometimes find their ways into bars to drink…This will be done with the friends. It can be those from the same school or those friends who learn in schools that are in the center of town… They actually follow the friends and their friends cheat them to do other things that do not encourage performing well in school?

Laziness and Lack of Enthusiasm

Self-efficacy (potential to achieve their educational goals) of girls is further diminished by their own lack of enthusiasm, which translates into less time spend on homework or other out-of-classroom academic tasks. For example, pupils have to put extra hours into their studies in the form of group discussions. However, some of the girls interviewed lagged behind the boys in class, because many of them preferred to be idle while discussions were going on in and outside class. Shewa, one of the girls, observed that:
You see girls… sometimes we are lazy and during the discussions we do not participate… Often girls are just chatting while boys are continuing with the discussion, or if not they keep quiet and pretend that they are studying…

Sometimes girls don’t want to help fellow girls because of fear of defeat, but boys don’t feel this way.

Shewa’s observation shows the impact of the girls’ social construction. Their disengagement with what is happening in their classes, may suggest that they are not supposed to be worthy of educational investment.

**Unwillingness to Assist Other Girls**

Data also shows that girls are sometimes not helpful to one another during the schooling process. In essence, girls were not helpful to fellow girls in realizing the dream of an education free of hurdles. Zena observed the following in relation to the kind of relationship between the girls in class:

We are free with the girls, but sometimes some of us girls pretend that we are very special, and we don’t want to talk to others. If one of us does something wrong in class, like fail to solve a math problem we just complain and don’t help at all. This makes life difficult for girls in class because we usually do not want to help our own… On another level, boys are very serious with their work but girls don’t do their homework, they just ignore.

In sum, the sample girls in this study were socially constructed. Social construction was a deeper problem beyond the negative attitudes. The construction
influenced the perceptions of significant others towards girls, and how girls viewed
themselves. The negative labels permeated into their respective families, influencing the
way their parents perceived them; cemented the negative attitude in the households, and
in their neighborhoods. This construction justified the discrimination in the households,
and the way the girls were treated by their parents—provision of basics and financial
resources for school. This affected girls’ abilities to attend school regularly, and complete
school.

Moreover, social construction and the ensuing negative attitudes provided a fertile
ground for sexual harassment that plagued the sample of in-school girls in both Kamu
and Lafama Schools. More surprising, was the traumatic experiences of sexual
harassment that girls had in their homes, at the hands of the very people who were
supposed to protect them—their uncles and/or their fathers. These experiences of sexual
harassment, coupled with physical beating, girls lived in constant fear. In addition, girls
were subjected to domestic work reducing their study time, and ability to concentrate in
school. Girls’ individual attributes were also a risk factor to their self efficacy in school.

Question 2: Why do some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite serious
challenges, while others do not?
Resilience

What Promoted the Resilience of Girls?

This section focuses on the second research question: Why do some urban Kenyan girls persist in school despite serious challenges, while others do not? I will highlight the key concepts of the resilience framework in order to enhance the understanding of the factors that promoted persistence.

Key Components from the Resilience Framework

Arrington & Wilson (2000) define resilience as the capacity to adapt despite the presence of risk. This does not mean that individuals are not vulnerable to stress (Arrington & Wilson, 2000), rather it is the capacity of an individual to exhibit competency despite high levels of stress (Luthar et al. 1993; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). Thus, resilience includes an individual’s personal experience with stress, the reserve of resources available at his or her disposal, and personal account of the individual’s successes and failures. Therefore, a key ingredient of the construct resilience is the existence of risks and promotive factors, which enhance positive outcomes or decrease the likelihood that negative outcomes will occur (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004).

This section outlines what resources adolescents girls had in the process of their schooling that promoted their ability to stay in school despite the risks that they faced; and enhanced positive outcomes or decreased the likelihood that negative outcome would
occur (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004) which would adversely affect their schooling. Moreover, this section will shed light on the educational outcomes of those girls who were not able to benefit from these resources and eventually dropping out of school. Scholars generally agree that there are resources that individuals at risk can harness to boost their resilience in school. These resources include individual factors (self esteem and self efficacy), school factors (quality of the school, sense of belonging, and good relations with the peers), and family factors (i.e. parental encouragement) (Jessor, 1993; Svetaz, Ireland, & Blum, 2000; Wang & Gordon, 1994).

**Role of Significant others in Families**

In-school girl participants in this study expressed multiple pathways by which they were able to adapt and stay in school despite many obstacles they encountered as they attended secondary school. For instance, girls identified that in the absence of parents, many of them were raised by grandmothers who were “significant others” in their lives. This was identified by a few girls in the in school sample. The grandmothers provided the support they needed both economically and socially allowed the girls to continue with school. According to Vero of Kamu School, her grandmother continuously encouraged her. She observed, “…I am in school because of the advice from my grandmother, my grandmother usually told me to “chop” meaning read hard …” She also demonstrated how her grandmother was able to disregard negative remarks from their neighborhood and continue to offer her the support she needed to get through school. Vero added:
When I repeated class eight, one woman told my grandmother that I would not pass, and instead I should find a job as a “yaya” (meaning house help). My grandmother said I will continue to go to school, and learn, and there is no way she will let me find a job. The neighbor would say things like; when you take her to school she will just let you down… By the way it is better educating a boy…

For girls like Vero, resilience in school is also attributed to other members of her family who have acted as her role models. Even though these family members do not cohabitate in the same household, their distant success has been instrumental for the girls’ own adaptation despite hardships. Vero intimated:

…I have my aunts and uncles who are working in good places. My aunt is a cateress at Hillcrest; she also encourages me, and she tells me to continue on with school. She says that, she wishes she knew better then, what she knows now. She would have “chopped” [read hard and worked hard in school]; because when you pass chances can be higher for girls than for boys …When you pass as a girl, you will get a chance to go to those higher levels …

The lessons learnt from the experiences of significant others in their lives, especially if they were family members, continued to be significant in encouraging some of the girls to persisting school. For example, some girls stated that their own mothers’ hard work to keep them in school made them committed to stay in school despite difficulties. Racheli noted, “yes, my mother works very hard, so as to see me through school. I felt that I have to persevere in school despite all the bad things that could be going on.” For Jose, her experience with her mother foregoing meals in order to save and keep her in school provided the necessary motivation. She said, “…sometimes my
mum stays without eating so that she can save money for me to come to school...Going without food means that she is fighting for me to go to school, so that I can get more education, and, I can help those who are suffering.”

School Factors

**Role of the Boys as Classmates in School**

Persistence for some girls was related to the manner in which they were challenged by a few of their boy classmates to continue to struggle on. Some girls were able to persevere with the rigors of school because of the encouragement they got from their classmates. A third of the in school sample at Lafama School expressed that the boys were very useful in the process of their academic resilience. One plausible explanation for this could be that since girls from Lafama School experienced a great deal of sexual harassment at home, they found their peers in school helpful. To such girls, school may have offered some sort of safety. Therefore, in as much as boys were a problem in school, comparatively, they still were an important resource for the in-school sample of girls from Lafama School. One of the participants, Racheli said, “Yes they encourage us and they tell us to compete with them.”

For other girls getting help with solving some of the challenging questions made them acquire “academic resilience”, thereby developing the motivation to continue their schooling and to continue trying to excel. Zena noted:
Yes we normally listen to each other. Our classmates are the ones who help when we don’t know something. You ask your friend who is a girl, and if she does not know it means that you will have to ask the boys in the class. Most of the boys are very helpful, and are willing to help, when they know what you are asking. But in cases when they too are not able to help then we go to the teacher. So the few who are friendly to us help us a lot when it comes to learning, but this is only when one is willing to help.

**Role of Teachers**

A majority of the teachers interviewed identified various ways that they have addressed the difficulties of girls in an attempt to help keep them in school. It starts from talking to girls and building confidence in them about their ability to stay in and complete school despite the hurdles. One teacher observed:

In talking to them, I tell them the importance of doing school work, the advice I give them is to try to organize themselves and they can still take care of the young ones, make sure they have bathed, make sure they cook, and then get even one hour so that they can actually do their school work because this is what will help them in their future. I try to encourage them …

This particular teacher encouraged girls to persevere, and to keep coming to school despite experiencing difficulties. This shows that the teachers realized that girls had numerous difficulties but school was equally important as the teachers argued it “**will help them in their future**”
In Kamu School, the teachers reiterated the importance their school puts on guiding and counseling girls. This particular school established a Guidance and Counseling Department with a group of teachers ready to render help to girls. The concerted effort of teachers in this department offers a wide range of possibilities for girls who have issues and difficulties to talk to any one of the seven teachers. One teacher from Kamu School said:

In our school, guidance and counseling is a large department, seven teachers are involved and so the students can choose who to approach; they have been made aware about the presence of the teachers; and who they can approach when they have a problem. They normally do, but rarely do they come alone. But, most of the time it is us who actually identify that this student has a problem. You go to class and find the student is low, or the student is sleeping on the desk. Then, you tell the student to come and see you later. When the student comes, you are able to talk to the student alone about the cause of that particular behavior.

The teachers were able to identify students with problems in the process of their teaching. But, they could also notice when a girl who had been performing well began to perform badly. At this point, the teacher called in the girl for a counseling session in an attempt to find out why the girl is not performing well and help out before it got serious. One teacher observed:

…you realize that a student had been doing well when they came in and then all over a sudden the student (girl) loses interest. So, as a teacher I get concerned. I try to find out what the problem could be with the girl. So, together we can talk about these problems.
Lafama School has set aside a specific day where the girl students air their views regarding issues that may be disturbing or worrying them. This has given the girls an open forum where they learn about ways to cope with school amidst the challenges. One of the counseling teachers said:

…. So, we also have class sessions, it’s on Thursdays where they air their views under the guidance of a class teacher, then at that time also the guidance teacher would have prepared a talk to them if need be…

Having a specific time with the class teachers not only enabled the teachers to tackle the general issues of their respective classes, but it was a chance to talk to all the students in class about academic, and social issues. One class teacher observed that this session was both “diagnostic as it was therapeutic” to the students.

Teachers in both Kamu and Lafama Schools were unanimous about the need for their schools’ administration to be patient and exercise control and leniency on the students in dealing with extreme cases of misconduct among girl students. According to the teachers, girls should be enabled to persist in school. The teachers observed that the two schools have chosen guidance and counseling over suspension or expulsion from school. One teacher from Lafama observed:

I think we have also tried to understand and to give them a conducive environment to learn. Because, even when they play around and misbehave, the school has been very lenient with them. Some of the issues we have been able to deal with the help of their parents…Okay depending on the problem, we choose to focus on guidance and counseling instead of expulsion and suspension. So this
gives them some hope. They will know that even if they make a mistake, that’s not the end of it all. I may not be expelled; I can still get another chance.

Focusing on guidance and counseling served the purpose of creating the interaction between the teachers and the girls. As such, girls were able to talk about issues afflicting their education. It also fostered an interaction between the girls, the teachers and the parents. When teachers discusses issues with girls’ parents, the girls escaped suspension or expulsion that may have led to them dropping out; also, parents were forced to be part of the schooling process. As noted by the teacher above, hope fostered by this interaction became a big part of resilience.

In school girl participants noted that guidance and counseling was very important in fostering resilience. A quarter of in-school participants from both schools recommended that guidance and counseling could help girls stay in school. Jamu had this to say:

…I just try to avoid, avoid them (meaning boys), then I just come here and talk with the Guidance and Counseling teacher. She tells me that when you see something like that happening outside school, try to avoid getting involved. Sometimes, she will give advice based on other issues that am facing. I must say that when you listen to the advice it helps. Anytime you want to do something, you will ask yourself, what the teacher would have said about it.

Sharona reiterated this idea of counseling in schools when she said, “I think a lot of counseling is needed. I know the teachers are trying their best. But, girls especially just need a lot of counseling because they go through a lot of experiences...”
On the other hand, those girls who had dropped out expressed that over and above the fees, they would have persisted in school if they had listened to their teachers more keenly. Perhaps their mothers would have listened too and struggled on their behalf.

Beatrix said:

I would say that if my father had continued working, then school fees would have been available. But, if I had listened to the few teachers who were advising us, I think that even my mother would have listened to the teachers and struggled more for me. But today, there are many teachers who are qualified in Guidance and Counseling, so the girls now are in a much better position to stay in school longer.

One other participant felt that the school administration should have listened more to them who had school fees issues. In addition, she felt that if their class teachers talked on their behalf, they would have completed school. Berie noted:

But, probably had the schools been more lenient, and listened to our problems about fees, and allowed us to pay little by little, things would be different for some of us. I think a lot of us would be in school today if someone just listened.

**School Lunch Program**

The school lunch program initiated in the two schools was mentioned as being significant in ensuring that many girls (and this may be true for boys) continued attending school. It was a motivating factor because it was one way of ensuring that girls had food to eat for the day. One teacher observed:
...yes it motivates them. Because, if you stay at home in this area, most likely, you will be staying at home minus lunch. So, this lunch program is good motivation, but at the same time the lunch keeps them in school. They do not have to go out loitering for lunch...Before, many girls fell prey to men, whenever they went out during the lunch break.

Another teacher reiterated the importance of the school lunch program in ensuring that girls stay in school. She said:

I want to say that most of them come from families where lunch is not available. And in fact, sometimes, when you tell them to go home like in the course of the day, they’ll not go. Because, they’d rather be here around lunch time. In my opinion, the lunch is what could be motivating them.

Therefore, the lunch program in the two schools enabled girls to come to school, ensured that they got at least one meal a day, and ensured that girls were spared the disturbance by men in the course of a school day. Wangie, one of the dropouts, felt that school lunch was a good idea. However, she said it was a recent development in schools. She said that if it had been introduced into schools earlier it that may have prevented absenteeism, and subsequent dropping out of school, for some of them who had to fend for their respective families. She explained:

Nowadays school have lunch. This is a good, but it is a recent development...

Now you have no reason not to learn. For some of us sometimes, you had to miss school to work and provide the food for yourself, and your family. After a while, one felt like why is school important? You are in school, and at the end of the day
you have no food. Sometimes, you had no place to stay, if you found the landlord had locked the door because your parents had not paid rent.

Encounters with Peers out of School

Girls also observed that from the encounters with their peers out of school, they felt obliged to stay in school. The advice they received from their peers and the struggles that the drop outs were facing outside school made them want to stay in school despite the difficulties. For instance, Racheli noted:

I relate with the dropouts. I cannot say I don’t want to talk to them, because they have dropped out of school, they are my friends. Some of them give me advice, and, because I see what they are going through outside school, I strive to stay on and complete school as long as a little of my fees is paid.

From this excerpt, the experiences of the drop outs may became a “resilience booster” to their friends who were still in school.

Individual Attributes of the Girls

The attributes possessed by girls also proved to be protective towards their schooling. Some girls mentioned being goal driven and knowing what brought them to school. As such, they were able to withstand the negative comments that were made about them in particular and girls in general. Racheli observed:
… I don’t bother with what people talk about us, because I know myself. The more they talk the more confidence I build around myself…I know I come to school, so that I can manage my life in future… And my goal is clear, to be in school and stay in school.

For Racheli no amount of negativity is going to keep her out of school. Probed on what differences exist between her and her friends who have dropped out, Racheli was emphatic that being driven by her dream, and a particular career, enabled her to have a different way of thinking than some of her peers who are out of school. She explained:

… I know my future is brighter than these friends of mine who are out of school. I have to struggle to stay in school because I want to become a lawyer or a nurse. Those who are out of school don’t think like me. But it is not their wish to be like that. I have bigger dreams than them, and it is the reason I am still holding on in school.

For some girls resilience was a result of the acceptance that challenges exist, and that one of the ways to overcome the challenges was through perseverance. Thus perseverance would bring better “fruits of schooling” Jacy intimated:

…I know that there are different kinds of challenges that come with schooling. Because, I have experienced some of them. When you come across a challenge, you are supposed to be strong, and persevere in school. …After school they are benefits. As a woman, I expect to reap the benefits of my schooling some day. I have to be strong to overcome the difficulties…I try to focus and ignore the negative comments.
Resilience as an Outcome of the Realization of the Benefits of Education

Girls were resilient in school because they realized that schooling carried immense benefits in the future. Many of the girls interviewed saw school as the only way out of the kind of lives that they knew. The realization that girls could not only perform well in school, but perform even better than the boys, was a motivator for persistence in school. Mercela from Lafama School observed, “contrary to those who thought we cannot perform in school, there are a few of us who are doing better than the boys...Girls can do better, therefore it is a good thing that girls go to school.”

Scholars have advanced the notion that girls’ education is directly beneficial to the future health of their children. While this is true, participants in my study noted that education of girls also leads to an improvement in the lives of other family members apart from their future children. Benefits from education spill over to parents, siblings, extended relatives, and friends. Thus, educating girls has a spillover effect on the community as a whole. Jose of Kamu School noted:

I think that there are benefits of taking a girl to school. If a girl is doing well she can educate her sisters and brothers, help her father, assist the relatives as well as her friends. This group of people will live better lives and their living standards will improve.

Nellya of Lafama School had this to say about the importance of educating girls:

Girls’ education has not been considered to be very important before. I would like to say to the parents, and to the government that girls’ education is as important as the boys’ education...Educating a girl is like educating a whole community. She
will help many people, and she will also bring development to the home where she will get married, as well as to her parents. This is one reason why most of us have opted to withstand the problems that we face….Someday our education will bear fruit.

Girls realized that closely connected with benefits of education was the protective nature of the school as an institution on their lives—an important reason why many of them kept coming to school despite the many challenges that they faced. Being in school protected girls from the “negative” happenings in their neighborhoods during the school day. To some girls like Zena, the school provided a safe environment where they took refuge during the day. Therefore, they were able to persist in school because for at least eight hours of a school day these girls had “peace of mind” Zena states:

When I am in school I am very safe. I will go home at around five, and stay for two hours before I go to bed. When I am in school, I feel protected. Because in school, I cannot engage in “bad things.” But those of us who are just at home, and especially those who never went to secondary school, but only completed class eight, cannot be protected in the same way. Many of them have babies; others are currently pregnant, while others are married. But those of us in school are protected to a certain extent… Coming to school every day to get an education for the future is helpful to me. And what happens in the school, I mean the protection of the teachers, and the Principal has enabled me to stay in school and to keep coming….When I will complete Form Four and get a good mean grade, I want to go to college or university. Find a good a good job, and be able to take care of my family.
Even though the people in the neighborhood still had negative attitude towards the education of girls as noted earlier, those eight hours that the girls spent in school was very helpful in terms of cushioning them against the harsh realities in the neighborhood during the school day. As noted earlier (refer to the section of role of boys in the persistence of girls), a third of the in school sample at Lafama School expressed that the boys were very useful in the process of their academic resilience. A plausible reason could be due to the incidences of sexual harassment that in-school participants from Lafama School experienced at home. To such girls, school may have offered some sort of safety. Therefore, in as much as being in school may have been problematic, it was still better than their home and around their neighborhood at particular times during the day.

The urge to learn, and to acquire knowledge in certain subjects considered beneficial in the lives of the girls was motivation enough to continue going to school. They thought that such a knowledge base was hard to find outside the school setting. Thus, girls who persisted in school had the inner motivation to attain education, to learn about basic concepts and life skills from certain subjects offered in school. Such skills were going to be useful to them in their everyday lives. For instance, biology was a subject that interested a lot of girls because it fostered an understanding of their body functions. In addition, the knowledge base reinforced by counselors and the training they received on aspects of HIV and AIDS was seen as vital knowledge necessary for their everyday life. Sharona of Lafama School said:

I am better than them (other girls who have not continued with school). Because as you know, when you go to school, you get to know more that you didn’t know before. For example, I am taught biology, which makes me learn a lot about what
is going on in my body. A girl who does not get this far doesn’t know what is happening in her body. I appreciate being in school, because I get to learn subjects like biology. It equips me with the understanding about what I may be going through as a girl. In our school we have a counselor, who also helps by filling in information, and sometimes there is also training about HIV/AIDS. So, I get to know about HIV/AIDS while the girls who have dropped out miss a lot of this information…

In general, the benefits of education played an important role in girls coming to school despite the hardships they experienced. The teachers interviewed in this study were of the view that girls may have persisted because they too realized that education is the “passport” out of the economic and social problems in a country like Kenya. A teacher participant in Kamu School noted:

…education is believed to be the key to success. So, like in our country what happens is that without education you can’t achieve much. So, for that age between one year and eighteen years everybody knows you have to be in school. Even when there are problems, one will have to go to school and finish the course up to Form Four… Even if the girl-child is given a lot of work at home, they will have to struggle and still be able to go to school.

Non-Resilience of Girls

In this section, I present data obtained from those girls who dropped out of school. It seeks to establish why these girls did not persist in school. All the out of school
participants interviewed expressed that they dropped out of school because of lack of resources. These resources were financial and inadequate family support to continue with school. A few girls mentioned that there was no one in school—teachers or counselors who were available to listen to their needs and problems. School exit was also due to pregnancies and early marriages, sexual harassment and domestic work.

Lack of Financial Resources

Contrary to the experiences of girls in school, the experiences of the dropouts show that the mere absence of constant income during the period that they were in school meant an instant end to their schooling. From the sample of girls interviewed, the lack of money to pay school fees was either associated with the loss of a father, and the loss of a job by the father or by an older brother who had taken over this responsibility in the absence of the father.

Based on the accounts of girls who had dropped out of school, mothers of dropouts seemed unable to keep them in school once their fathers, who were often the breadwinners, had either died or lost a source of income. All the participants who had dropped out of school cited the absence of money to pay school fees as vital for their leaving school. For them, the end result of lack of financial support was “exit” from school. For instance, Wangie reported, “I stopped going to school in Form Two when my father stopped working” Ngina said, “my father was not able to pay school fees and it was my mother struggling. But when my mother fell ill, I had no one to continue to pay school fees. So, I got out of school to get myself a job to support my mother.”
In school girls who had not dropped out also shared the suffering they went through because of lack of school fees. Taqui of Kamu School explained the suffering she went through similar to what Beatrix describes. Taqui’s problem arose out of an old father who was not able to provide money for school when it was needed. She reported:

We are sent away for school fees. At home, there is no one to give you the money so that you can come back to school. We miss a lot when we are sent home for school fees. I have been brought up by a retired father who is out of work, and he has to look for money elsewhere, to pay my school fees. The school staff do not understand. You can talk to them today about your problem, and the following day they have forgotten. So, it means that you have to just go and stay at home…

_Giving Opportunity to the Siblings_

Girls dropped out of school because they had to give the opportunity to their siblings to get an education. The dropouts reiterated the fact that some of them opted out of school because the mothers would not take them back to school or they had to give room for their siblings to be educated. Berie, one of the dropouts said:

…I thought I would continue with my studies after that (referring to when my brother finished college). This was not to be. After I dropped out of school, I stayed home for three years. After my brother was done with college, I talked to my mother and told her I wanted to go back to school but she refused. I really longed to go to school because I saw other girls going to school. This was the end of my dream.
By looking down on their daughters, mothers blocked their daughters’ advancement in school and discriminated against their daughters at the expense of their sons. Interesting twists in this sort of discrimination were instances when girls opted out of school so that older siblings could continue with schooling. Beatrix a dropout reported:

My father was old. He did not have enough energy. Soon he lost his job. Since he was unable to provide for our needs, I decided to stop going to school in order to allow my siblings to go to school. I decided to look for employment which could be done using my hands. This was to support myself and my siblings who were in school at this time.

From the account of Berie and Beatrix, it is apparent that these girls suffered and sometimes gave up their schooling ambitions to favor their siblings. The in-school sample of girls termed it as mothers looking down on them, inadequate provision of financial support, and discrimination. In the case of mothers looking down on their daughters, Zena an in-school participant had noted:

…So many girls pass their exams in class eight but their parents and guardians do not appreciate the effort so instead of encouraging girls to continue with school, they leave them to get employed. I think that those parents and guardians should handle their children well even if they don’t have school fees.

This shows that even though the girls in school had not dropped out yet, they had a clue of what happened to their peers who seem not to have gotten as far as they did.

Vero paints a picture of the suffering she underwent because she had a brother whose fees were more expensive than hers were. Even though she was still in school, such a situation could have required her to give up school and drop out. She explained:
I was almost losing hope because in Form One…I had a brother who was also in Form One, so my dad was paying for both of us. So he got five thousand, I got two thousand for school fees. Because my fees were not paid in full, I began to accrue balances. After a while, the teachers started sending me home… everyday when I come to school, Monday I am sent home, Tuesday I am sent home, like that, like that, so I even lost hope, I was ashamed, I wanted to perform, but I could not because I was always going home. …This is not because the money wasn’t enough, no; it is because my dad felt he could not pay that much money for me like my brother.

**Pregnancies and Early Marriages**

Pregnancies and early marriages were mentioned as crucial factors that led to girls dropping out of school. When a girl got pregnant, she felt pressured to leave school. This pressure was often from the respective girls’ families. As Caro noted, “I got an accident, meaning I became pregnant. There was pressure from home. My father was harsh about the fact that I had gotten pregnant. So, I had no choice but to leave school.” Girls in school recognized that pregnancy made their peers drop out of school. On the issue of pregnancy, scores of girls in school concurred with the accounts of the girls who had dropped out of school. Sharona of Lafama School reiterated:

Even though a lot of girls drop out because of schools fees, some of the dropping out is because of pregnancy. I think these girls should be encouraged to go back to school. We should not find justification for them to end their schooling. I think
they should be encouraged to go back to school, because, what happened may have been an accident. They may have been raped. Therefore, the person should be forgiven, and may be encouraged to go back to school. Like in our church there is a program called *prolife* which helps such girls to go back to school.

Beatrix laments her situation and admits that early marriage is also responsible for her exit from school. She had this to say of her situation, “*when I look at myself I feel bad because I did not go on with my schooling. I got married early; my life is not the way I had wanted it to be.*” Beatrix realizes that her life is not to the standard that she expected it to be, suggesting that school has benefits that she did not harness for herself.

**Sexual Advances and Domestic Work**

Girls who had exited from school noted that there were other reasons why they could not continue with school. Among them were sexual advances from men as they went to school, domestic work in the households. However, one dropout admitted that despite all the challenges, when school fees were missed, it meant the end of school.

Gracie observed:

There were other challenges like work at home, men disturbing me as I went to school. But, I tried to persevere these ones. Fees became a problem because the school could not cope with my high fee balance. I knew I could not get it, and so I opted to leave.
**Presence of Teachers and Counselors**

Dropout girls also explained that one reason they made an exit from school was the absence of teachers and counselors to listen to them; girls were also unable to listen to the few teacher counselors that were present in school. Thus, some girls dropped out because they did not pay adequate attention to their teachers. Beatrix said:

…but, if I had listened to the few teachers who were advising us, I think that even my mother would have listened to the teachers and struggled more for me. But today, there are many teachers who are qualified in Guidance and Counseling, so the girls now are in a much better position to stay in school longer.

This comment suggests that Beatrix realized the importance of the role of teachers and counselors in girls’ ability to persist in school. On the absence of teachers to listen to their problems, Berie also a drop out said:

But probably had the schools been more lenient, and listened to our problems about fees, and allowed us to pay little by little, things would be different for some of us. I think a lot of us would be in school today if someone just listened.

For the dropouts the other challenges existed but to them inadequate fees to pay for school became the ultimate reason for them to exit school.

In sum, schooling was as important to the girls who had dropped out of school as it was to those who were still in school. The accounts of the dropouts show evidence of regret and missed opportunities that schooling should have brought into their lives. All
the ten participants who had dropped out identified with the importance of school, and the effect of education on their lives. Beatrix had this to say:

They have read, they have succeeded and they have good jobs… My friends have good jobs. I feel pain when I look at them. When I look at myself I feel bad because I did go on with my schooling, I got married early, my life is not good the way I had wanted it to be…

From the account of Beatrix dropping out of school is a phenomenon that impacted her greatly. The pain is great, the perceived benefits of schooling are lost and that girls paid dearly for their non-persistence in school.

In a nutshell this chapter presents data from my study participants. I began with those findings related to the first research question; what are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling. I found that girls in Kamu and Lafama were socially constructed. Social construction emanated from broader society, and found its way into neighborhoods, and households. It was further cemented by the entrenched negative values against women supported by a predominantly male dominated society. Apart from influencing the way parents treated their daughters in the households, the social construction effect was apparent in the other risks that girls experienced, namely negative attitudes, fear, sexual harassment and violence, work, and individual attributes of girls.

I also presented the findings that answered the question why girls persist in school despite the serious challenges that they face. The ability of girls to persist in school depended on whether the protective factors were present in the environments: individual attributes, the family, and the school (including peers in school). The non-persistence of
the dropouts is related to absence of school fees. This shows importance of poverty in school exit, in the absence of other support mechanisms in girls’ schooling.
Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I present the overall picture of my study. I begin with the synopsis of major findings regarding risks and protective factors for secondary school education among girls in this study. Thereafter, I discuss policy implications and recommendations that emanate from the findings. Next, I describe the limitations of the study, directions for future research and list possible testable hypotheses given the findings of the study. Finally, I present concluding remarks.

Synopsis of the Findings

Risks

Social Construction

Broadly, this study found that the way girls are constructed in Kenyan society influences girls’ educational experiences. That is, the way girls and their roles, obligations, rights, and opportunities were perceived was driven largely by traditional, historical, colonial, patriarchal influences, as described in this dissertation’s literature review (Chapter 2). The negative social construction that emanated from the broader society found its way into schools and affected teachers’ views of the girls (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Lloyd & Grant, 2005). Moreover, the negative constructions found their
way into the households and neighborhoods where girls lived. The extent of social construction was captured by this quote from Cynthy, an in school participant, “there is no place for the woman; the woman is only a companion for the man.” This construction affected the perceptions that others had about girls and influenced how girls viewed themselves.

This finding reinforces Schneider and Ingram’s (1993) views that constructions are reinforced by messages and ideas that are internalized by citizens and influence their adaptation and modes of participation. Different groups within populations will receive and internalize different kinds of messages. The authors further assert that the theory—social construction of the target population—refers to:

(1) The recognition of the shared characteristics that distinguish a target population as socially meaningful, and (2) the attribution of specific, valence-oriented values, symbols, and images to the characteristics. Social constructions are stereotypes about particular groups of people that have been created by politics, culture, socialization, history, media, literature, religion... Positive constructions include images such as ‘deserving’ ‘intelligent,’ ‘honest,’ ‘public spirited’... Negative constructions include messages such as ‘undeserving,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘dishonest,’ and ‘selfish’ (Schneider & Ingram 1993, p. 335).

Moreover, social construction helps to “explain why some groups are advantaged more than others…” (p. 334).

Since socialization is one way in which social construction of groups is perpetuated, it is important to understand the concept of socialization. At an individual level, socialization is the process by which an infant or child becomes a member of his [her] society. Being an acceptable member means that the child has to behave well, learn the language of communication, acquire the needed skills to survive in the community,
and embrace his or her society’s beliefs and attitudes (Harris, 1995). The author further argues that to be socialized, a child learns to imitate the parents, older siblings, other adults and children, and the personalities they see on television. On the other hand, Rowe (1994) argues that the socialization process extends to learning skills beyond merely imitating their parents.

At a societal level, socialization enables people to “decode the system” and to participate in the power relations in a given societal order. It also involves learning to interact with people in the mainstream of society who have control over its resources. Learning is a significant component of socialization because of its instrumental purpose of enabling people to understand the perceptions, dispositions, and the mechanisms by which the people in the mainstream accumulate and control the power in the mainstream (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Therefore, socialization and social construction are learned and internalized over time. Through socialization, individuals learn how they and others are socially constructed and how to interact appropriately given their own and others social constructions. In the context of this study, negative constructions about girls and women are learned via socialization and are enacted on a daily basis.

In this study, social construction influenced girls, their opportunities for school and the risks they faced going to school. For instance, girls were largely seen as undeserving of an education compared to boys. Lighte observed this, “I told you in African communities like mine, and I believe others too, most girls are household workers, and boys are given all the opportunities to do their studies. The girls have limited time to study....” This emphasized the role that culture plays in defining gender roles in a Kenyan community that glorifies patriarchy and male dominance over women.
The negative social construction of girls is as an overarching theme across all the major findings of the study.

**Girls Carry Negative Social Construction into School**

This study found that underlying the negative views about girls was social construction. Contrary to the findings of Mensch and Lloyd (1998) and Lloyd and Grant (2005), who claimed that negative attitudes about girls come from the broader society and affect the manner in which girls are viewed by their teachers, girls themselves carried negative views about themselves and about their education, impairing their ability to learn effectively. A teacher from Kamu School explained:

….One time a girl said, teacher why should I really struggle yet no one expects me to do well leave alone be anybody in society? I see what my mother goes through, and that is what is waiting for me.

Reba, an in-school participant observed, “so, they say girls just waste time going to school. Some ridicule the parents like mine, who still pay fees for me to come to school. Girls should be ignored, because they are not going to benefit from that education...”

While such views may baffle this student and one of her teachers, its explanation may lie in Schneider and Ingram (1993), who argue that the “weak” normally accept their construction by others. In this case, the negative views from the broader society trickled into families and neighborhoods, and indirectly inhibited girls from advantageously utilizing school resources. Thus, the negative views that girls carried into the school were because of the constructions (negative perceptions by their families, neighborhood, and
communities). What the teachers observed were effects of these constructions on the school environment through the girls’ behavior and experiences. These effects, in turn, contributed to the risks girls experienced in school.

**Sexual Harassment Happened Across Environments**

*The school as a risk factor for sexual harassment.* Most of the in-school participants had experienced one form or other of sexual harassment while they were in school. In this regard, the experiences of the girls in this study support the findings of Mensch (1998) that schools can reinforce gender inequality by subjecting girls to sexual harassment by their fellow students and teachers. Girls in this study attended school in an urban environment in a metropolitan city in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, being in school in an urban setting did not shield them from instances of sexual harassment. This finding concurs with what Webster (1999) found in Western Kenya, that sexual harassment transcends school type.

*The Perpetrators of sexual violence.* This study identified numerous perpetrators of sexual violence. This ranged from boys in the same school, boyfriends outside school, idlers, matatu touts (the young men who collect fares from the passengers when they enter the van), fathers, uncles, and “sugar daddies”. Hence, the study highlights that girls are at risk of sexual violence in school, travelling to and from school, and at home.

Girls experienced sexual harassment at the hands of the very people who should be the first line of protection—fathers and uncles, who are family members. This sexual relation in the homes was ongoing, and especially damaging because girls could not say
anything until someone—in most cases the teachers at school—detected that something was wrong. Although this sample is small and not randomly drawn, that four out of twenty girls (twenty percent) of the in school sample were either raped or experienced an attempted rape by fathers or uncles merits serious, further investigation.

*The interrelationship between social construction, poverty, and transactional sex.* The study also showed various reasons why girls succumbed to sexual harassment. This ranged from personal reasons (desire to have a boyfriend), to economic reasons (search for school fees, and girls trying to provide for themselves). In the latter category, some girls complied with those who had sexual relations with them in order to meet their basic needs. Sexual complicity resulted from social construction and poverty. In essence, poverty affected parental capacity to fulfill their obligations to their daughters, and social construction of girls made parents’ obligation less salient. In turn, this meant that girls’ needs ranging from basic sanitary supplies, food, lighting, to school fees, were often unmet. Transactional sex was one means some girls used to obtain these fundamental needs.

*Effect of sexual harassment on girls’ reproductive health.* As a result of sexual harassment and violence, and as a result of neglect due to social construction of girls and subsequent transactional sex, girls were unable to negotiate safe sex in their relationships. Their inability to negotiate for safe sexual relations put them at risk of early pregnancy and jeopardized their capability to stay safe and disease free. Girls in this study were still unable to use the information from their secondary education to “increase the chances of adopting self protective behavior” (Rihani 2006). Thus, it would appear that the amount of secondary education the girls had received this far did not necessarily cushion them
from sexual harassment. I can only speculate that Rihani may be accurate in asserting that after completion of their schooling, these girls had attained adequate knowledge to be able to withstand the advances of boys and men, and be in a position to negotiate for safer sexual relations as is advocated by Rihani (2006).

The coexistence of sexual and physical violence. Having experienced sexual harassment and physical beating, girls lived in constant fear, and constant thoughts of looming danger. This finding is similar to what (Mudege, Zulu, & Izugbara, 2008) found in the context of the schooling in the disadvantaged slum settings in Nairobi, that fear of violence (sexual and physical) is a hindrance to effective schooling of children in these slum areas. Therefore, within the slums physical and sexual violence coexist together.

Family Related Risks

This study highlighted numerous family-related risks which negated the potential positive effect of girls’ schooling. Worthy of mention is role of mothers influenced by social construction. The allocation of domestic and paid labor further diminished girls’ educational opportunities.

Role of mothers. Scholars have argued that when mothers are heads of households, they enhance the education of their daughters by investing money in the education of their children (Buchmann & Hannun, 2001). For the sample of girls in this study, there was a diminishing role of mothers both in terms of the general support for their daughters within the family, and providing their daughters with financial support for school. Some mothers in this study demeaned their daughters and discouraged them from
school while favoring their sons’ schooling. To this end, it can be argued that mothers influenced by social construction did not give their daughters a chance at navigating secondary education.

In certain cases, mothers refused to take their daughters to school, leading to school dropouts. In addition, some mothers in this sample were not able to invest in their daughters, contrary to what Lloyd & Blanc (1996, p. 288) have found. For instance, about one third of the sample of girls reported that their mothers demeaned them by prioritizing their sons’ education. Whereas this cannot be generalized to the whole population of girls in Kenya, the prevalence of 30 percent report of non-supportive mothers raises question worth investigating.

**Domestic and paid labor.** This study found that girls performed heavy domestic work in the respective households, before and after school. Girls in this study had their schooling progress thwarted because of domestic work they performed for their siblings, parents, guardians, and, relatives before and after school. The outcome of work on the in-school sample of Kamu, and Lafama, shows that in certain instances, it is not the number of siblings in the household (Fuller, Singer, & Keilley, 1992; Muganda-Onyando & Omondi, 2008) that jeopardized the schooling of girls. Rather, it was the sum total of the labor demands of the whole household.

Moreover, domestic work performed by girls reinforced discrimination towards girls in their respective homes. Girls worked because their education was viewed as being less important to their families compared to boys’ education. As such, gender inequity was reinforced in the households. This could explain why a few girls did not think that going to school was important. It is not surprising that such girls internalized this
negative attitude, and carried it into the schools they attended. The result was reduced motivation for school. The domestic tasks within the households were often tiring and took a toll on the concentration levels of girls in school. In some instances, girls in this study assumed the roles of their mothers. Thus, the girls’ heavy domestic work at home was in direct conflict with the institutional schooling.

Girls also helped their mothers to raise school fees for their brothers—which reinforced the importance that parents attached to their sons. This is congruent with the findings of Lloyd and Blanc (1996) who suggest that in many countries in SSA many families still give preference to their sons to go to school. This also reinforces the ideas that underlie the patriarchal societies like Kenya—males are more important in society than females.

**Poverty**

*School fees.* The data presented from the sample of dropouts in this study emphasize that the need for school fees was a significant hindrance to these girls’ schooling. Although there was the mention of sexual harassment and domestic work among the dropouts, this was not common to all of them. There is the possibility that these girls focused on what was most important to them at the time of their exit from school—absence of school fees. This finding reinforces the notion that financial resources are very significant for school attendance. For in-school participants, social construction of girls biased payments of school fees in favor of their brothers. Girls
received less school fees even though they could have received equal amounts with their brothers.

*Basic needs of girls are unmet.* According to the study findings, parents often did not provide the basics for their daughters, including, but not limited to, sanitary napkins. Girls had to absent themselves from school attendance because of the lack of sanitary napkins. If they did attend, they could hardly focus on their school work. Inadequate provision of these basics for girls may have resulted from poverty and limited parental resources (Blake 1981, 1989, & Downey 1995), especially in households with many children.

However, the evidence from this study suggests that unmet needs did not only affect children who shared a household with many siblings. Rather, family resources available to a girl depended on the concern, care, and attitude of the parents and guardians towards girls. This study underscored parental care and concern as important ingredients for girls’ successful schooling, which went beyond merely spending money.

In this regard, some girls in this study literally turned into beggars for their most central needs. On one hand, scholars may be right in their observation that resources within a family can be diluted (Blake 1981, 1989, & Downey 1995), thereby disabling a girl from frequently attending and completing school. On the other hand, there are certain requirements that are mandatory for the schooling process of the girls and their basic dignity that should be provided at all costs.

The problem of girls dropping out from school went hand in hand with absence of reinforcement from the families, or teachers in school acting as advocates. Whereas inadequate fees exposed in-school girls to irregular attendance of school, those who
dropped out were not able to attend school when schools principals were unwilling to listen to their pleas regarding lack of school fees. Overall, this finding reinforces what scholars have argued: that children who are more likely to be enrolled and stay in school are those that are born to families with greater financial resources (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996).

*Risks across the environments*

There were risks across the environments: broader society, neighborhood, the school, the family, and individual girls. And, the extent of risks differed across environments. For instance, a selection of girls from Lafama School were exposed to greater risk of sexual violence at home, while others from Kamu School experienced more sexual violence in school. Similarly, this study found protective factors to exist in the various contexts in which the girls operated. These protective factors include individual attributes, families, and schools (peers, and teachers).

**Protective Factors**

*School-Based*

For those who persisted, one environment compensated for the risks that were present in another context. For instance, where there were family risks, and individual risks, the school made the difference. In-school girls interacted with teachers, and obtained counseling from their class teachers and from the Guidance and Counseling Department. Classroom instruction, specifically biology, imparted the girls with vital
information that was important to understanding themselves as girls. Peers provided support for girls in school and the school provided safety for girls from the negative events in their respective families, and neighborhoods during a school day. Although there were risks within the school, the school also proved very protective to girls in various instances. While it is true that the school environment exposed girls to sexual harassment (Mensch et al., 1998), and instilled in them fear of being harassed (Mudege, Zulu & Izugbara, 2008), it still possessed a higher degree of protective factors for those girls attending school.

**Individual**

This study found a unique set of protective factors among in-school girls who participated. These girls possessed the motivation and a positive focus on the future. Such finding accord with other scholarly work of (Jessar 1993; Svetaz, Ireland, & Blum, 2000; Wang & Gordon, 1994). The motivation of in-school sample of girls came from the realization that there were already existing challenges in their environments, unique to them as girls. For instance, girls were aware of the odds against them in particular, and women in general, in the context of the Kenyan society. Those who persisted were determined to overcome these odds.
Family-Based

Girls’ persistence in school was fostered by family-based protective factors. For example, some girls were cared for by their grandmothers who were significant family relations in the absence of adequate support from their biological parents and other guardians. Such girls were able to withstand challenges and persist in school. For instance, the role of Vero’s grandmother shows that significant support from an adult was important in girls becoming resilient to the hardships they faced. Therefore, grandmothers can step in and fill the void created by absence of real parents.

Interplay of Protective and Compensating Factors

Presence of protective factors. In essence, girls who persisted showed how the protective factors in the other environments kept them from dropping out. Therefore, as I expected to find, girls from disadvantaged households—a risk factor—still had the capacity to “exhibit positive outcomes” despite the adversity brought about by poverty (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2004), domestic work, parental neglect, and sexual harassment. In each of the contexts (individual girls, families, schools) protective factors interplayed to compensate for the deficiencies and risks that girls experienced in another context.

For instance, when girls came to school tired, they found the teachers to talk to them, and to urge them on. When they came to school hungry, they were cushioned by the lunch program in their respective schools. Their hope for a brighter future, fueled by their motivation, enabled the in-school girls to surge on despite the hardships. In addition,
the significant others in some of their families proved important in their academic persistence.

Protective factors compensating for risk factors. The findings of this study suggest that for the sample of girls, their ability to persist in school depended on whether the protective factors found in their surrounding environments (individual attributes, the family, the school, and peers) outweighed the risks in these respective environments. Secondly, it also depended on how much the other “environments” compensated for the risks that the girls experienced from the various “environments.” For example, girls persisted in school because the school compensated for some of the adverse effects of their families.

For girls who did not persist in school, there seemed to have been inadequate compensation from the other environments once the school became a hostile environment because of absence of school fees. In the absence of other support mechanisms, poverty has a profound impact on girls’ schooling. Therefore, poverty, as an overarching societal phenomenon, requires a deep-rooted, far-reaching strategy for overall good performance of girls in school and school completion.

The Compromises Made By Girls

Finally, those girls who stayed in school made several compromises. These included safety, self esteem, values, and emotions. I argue that from the compromises, girls developed key aspects of resilience including and not limited to “self efficacy,
autonomy, and optimism” (Benard, 1995, cited in Arrington & Wilson, 2000, p. 225).

Jacy, an in-school participant, had this to say

…I know that there are different kinds of challenges that come with schooling… I have experienced some of them. When you come across a challenge, you are supposed to be strong, and persevere in school. …After school there are benefits. As a woman, I expect to reap the benefits of my schooling some day. I have to be strong to overcome the difficulties…

The ability to compromise when faced with adversity could be the initial stages of resilience. While these compromises may foster resilience, they also put the girls at risk. Yet, these compromises were necessary for most girls to continue their education. However, girls deserve to pursue their educational paths without having to make such risky and dangerous compromises.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study show that secondary school girls (in-school girls and dropouts) in the slum areas of Nairobi still face barriers to secondary education. Many of these barriers grow not just from poverty alone, but also from the social construction of girls. The social construction negatively impacts girls’ treatment within the family, family resource allocation, and sexual violence at home, in the community, and at school. Those who persisted in school made numerous compromises both to their safety and to the quality of their education. Those who did not persist exhibit how poverty and lack of
resources such as school counseling can be a powerful predictor of school exit in the absence of reinforcers from the other environments.

This study has significant policy implications for the education of girls in a disadvantaged urban Kenyan setting. It is important to highlight reasons why the Ministry of Education in Kenya, the Kenyan Government, and school principals should be concerned about the hurdles facing girls in secondary school in the disadvantaged slum neighborhoods of Nairobi. Specifically the concern will be due to:

- Barriers to girls’ education cause harm to themselves, their children, their communities, and national development
- Denying girls an education is an offense against the universal declaration of human rights.

Therefore, recommendations will focus on changing perceptions about girls and women, educating communities, advocating for the importance of girls education, tackling sexual violence, and eradicating poverty.

**Policy Recommendations**

In order to break down the barriers that prevent Kenyan urban girls’ from acquiring secondary education, key educational actors have to make concerted, coordinated, and sustained efforts. While acknowledging the limited generalizability of the qualitative findings presented here, I present policy recommendations that are important to consider. Recommendations focus on what the Kenyan Government, school principals, and the Ministry of Education can do differently to improve school attendance
for girls and prevent dropouts. These recommendations will tackle issues in the broader Kenyan society, in school, and out of school.

**Rationale for Directing the Recommendations to the Government**

My rationale for directing the recommendations to the government and not the International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is from the realization of the likelihood that reforms will be implemented if they take into consideration the local context. In this particular case, the recommendations to alleviate the hurdles that girls face can be tackled from “bottom up” rather than from “top down” strategies. For instance, the government has the institutional capacity to engage various international and the national NGOs to a planned action.

The Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Education, has the capacity to design implementation strategies that will maximize the control of the resources available to the Ministry of Education, and relate the policies to the local context of Kenyan girls. Richard Elmore (1983) argues that the power of the bottom up is more potent than the top down in reform strategies that are complex. Certainly, eliminating the social construction of girls, and thereby minimizing the risks they face in attaining secondary education requires more bottom up strategy. However, this does not rule out the participation of the Kenyan government in the international reform agenda with the NGOs to eliminate all forms of barriers against girls.
**Changing Perceptions about Women and Girls**

Changing perceptions of women and girls need to start within the broader Kenyan society. The Kenyan government will need to *increase campaigns from the grassroots*— *using both local chiefs and education officers* to educate people further on the importance of being committed to education of girls. Advocacy will help to chip away at the deep-rooted cultural attributes of communities that reinforce the negative constructions about girls and women. The general populace needs to be educated about the benefits of girls’ education, that alleviation of risks is important to their persistence in school, and that there is need for gender equity in the households as pertains to the apportioning of domestic work.

**Increasing Education of Communities and Community School Partnerships**

*Taking responsibility.* Policy efforts have been attempted by the government in the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, and Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008. These policy efforts have focused on alleviating the financial burden. Despite these efforts, the Kenyan government still needs to do more to achieve the ultimate goal of enabling girls to attain secondary education. The FPE and FSE policy initiatives have been derailed because of misappropriation of funds (Mackenzie, January 26, 2010). Thus, a change of strategy should involve *encouraging local people to take responsibility of ensuring accountability of how their local schools are run.* This will be beneficial in two ways: ensuring that funds that come into the schools—however little—are used efficiently, and that the extra costs that accrue to parents are reduced. In essence,
the local people will own the idea of financial sustainability of their schools, and in turn help keep girls in school by having less school levies to pay. In this way, the locals will slowly begin to appreciate the essence of educating their children—particularly girls.

This may take the form of a community participatory model, where the community is empowered to social action, thereby promoting the participation of the various groups of people, and the organizations within the community (Wallerstein & Bernstein 1988) to take up roles in improving education within the schools in the community. By taking responsibility in their local schools, the locals living in the vicinity of Kamu and Lafama Schools can be in a position to see the problems that negate their daughters’ education. In so doing, the locals will gain control over these circumstances, thereby being able to change the negative circumstances over time for the future generation of girls.

*Women being at the forefront of this action.* Community participation will be effective if women take up the responsibility of being at the forefront of owning the change and encouraging the participation in their respective communities. Women as agents of change have been effective in their communities in the negotiation of behavior change in HIV/AIDS prevention programs (Ulin, 1992). Their success in HIV/AIDS prevention programs indicates that their efforts can be harnessed to bring about changes in their communities that will enhance their daughters’ education.

Women can work with other stakeholders in the community such as community elders, to begin to change the mindset of people living in the community. By taking up leadership roles within the community and working with men as co-partners, the community will begin to see women in a different light and this will trickle down and
positively impact the perception of young girls in the community. With time, the negative perceptions will be replaced by positive ones, elevating girls’ status and increasing educational opportunity (Schneider & Ingram 1993).

*Bringing the community into the school.* In addition to calling the community to action, schools like Kamu need to *initiate open days, and open forums between the students, teachers, and parents and guardians.* Open days will provide an opportunity for students, teachers, and the parents to talk openly about issues affecting the students, especially girls. In this way, a lot of issues affecting girls can be addressed before they interfere with their attendance of school and completion of school. Open days and open forums will increase parental involvement in school.

Research has shown that when parents are involved in the schooling activities that their children attend, there is a greater school and community partnership (Chakvin, 1989; Rich, 1987; Pena, 2000). The advantages of parental involvement are even greater for low-income parents. Advantages include being more active, supportive, and developing healthier attitudes towards their children’s schooling (Pena, 2000); enhanced attention to and support of school activities and their children’s concentration in school (Epstein 1986); and developing an optimistic approach towards the teachers in the schools that their children attend (Bempechat, 1992; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991).

**Importance of Girls’ Education**

*The role of the class teacher in school.* In order to elevate the importance of educating girls in the school, the *role of class teacher should be strengthened* in the two
schools, and other similar schools. The class teacher is the advocate for the students in her /his class. As mentioned by Berie, “...I think a lot of us would be in school today if someone just listened....there was no emphasis on the class teacher, who could talk on your behalf. I think this could have helped.” The class teacher is girls’ initial point of contact. If their role is strengthened, class teachers can see the initial ‘red flags’ when girls starts struggling in school. This will reduce the amount of suffering for girls who continue with school, raise student achievement, and prevent dropouts. In this study, a quarter of girls expressed the importance of guidance and counseling to their persistence in school. Strengthening the roles of class teachers will also strengthen the Guidance Counseling Department.

_In-service of teachers._ School principals, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, and the Teachers Service Commission, should encourage _in-service training_ for the teachers. In-service training will help teachers to understand, and be sensitive to, the issues of the students in general and girls in particular. In-service training can involve systematically mainstreaming gender equality issues into teacher training, sensitizing teachers sensitive to their core responsibility as educators who need to challenge the stereotypes of girls in the schools, oppose the discriminative acts against both girls and boys, and eventually guarantee equal treatment between the two sexes in schools. In addition, the Teachers Service Commission should ensure that teachers who violate girls are dealt with in accordance to the guidelines set for disciplining errant teachers, and be handed over to the criminal justice system to be dealt with in accordance with criminal law.
Parents and Teachers Associations. Moreover, PTAs can work towards the overall sensitization of the importance of girls’ education in the slum neighborhoods can. The PTA meetings in schools can be used as a forum to sensitize parents on the benefits of keeping their daughters in school. This will then trickle back to their respective households, the neighborhood, and eventually to the wider community. The use of the PTA will enable a closer working relationship between the schools and the communities around the schools, for future ease of problems afflicting girls who attend the two schools in the neighborhood.

Sexual Harassment

In schools, principals should coordinate with the Ministry of Education to reduce the impact of sexual harassment as a persistent barrier that hinders girls’ secondary schooling. Initial effort must come from the Ministry of Education as the overall agency that directs the education fraternity in Kenya. Thereafter, the school principals can proceed with the implementation of policies in their respective schools.

Gender Policy in Education of 2007. For example, the Ministry of Education put in place a Gender Policy in Education Framework in 2007, but guidelines are yet to be put in place to provide for a standardized way of addressing gender issues in education (Ongeri, 2008). What has happened is the appointment of gender officers at the universities, government agencies, at the provincial and district headquarters (Ongeri, 2008). My findings support an intervention that goes beyond the mere appointment of gender officers at different levels of the government and educational hierarchy. I propose
that the Ministry of Education, with the help of the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), and with support of the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture, and Social Services strengthen the gender sensitive curricula within the school syllabi.

The KIE revised the syllabi in 2002 to make it gender responsive, but this has not translated into a gender sensitive education. For instance, the books that are used still in schools have gender stereotypes that portray women as a weaker sex (Kobia, 2009). Once the curricula are in place, the school principals can be helpful in the implementation while giving guidelines to the teachers in their respective schools. Gender sensitive curricula will serve to portray girls positively, hence reducing the negative labels that are attributed to them, in school and out of school.

Introduction of comprehensive sex education. Due to the many challenges that face girls as a result of sexual harassment and violence, the Ministry of Education should reconsider introduction of comprehensive sex education in all schools—especially schools in the urban slums. Currently sex education exists as pilot programs in selected schools around the country (Agbemenu, 2009). Research shows that sex education delays age at first sexual intercourse and increases the use of condoms (Alford, Cheetham, & Hauser, 2005; Berry & Noble, 2007, Agbemenu, 2009). If sex education is introduced in schools, girls will be able to learn communication and interpersonal skills, which will enable them as young people to explore their goals, values, and options (Mackeon, 2006). The communication skills, in addition to their secondary education will enable them to improve their negotiation skills where possible faced with difficult dangerous situations that characterize transactional sex or rape.
Furthermore, the introduction of sex education should start in primary schools to equip girls at a very early age with life skills to handle sex related issues. One intervention that is has proven successful in developing countries is the sexuality and relationships education (SRE). This type of education allows students and especially girls to reflect on long established gender norms that jeopardize their health and lay the foundation for fulfilling sexual lives latter in life (Rogow & Haberland, 2005). Primary schools in Kenya can introduce SRE this to teach girls these skills early in life. In secondary school, guidance and counseling programs can strengthen such skills.

Guidance and counseling. In secondary schools, like Kamu and Lafama, school principals should encourage the school counselors to step up counseling for both boys and girls on the importance of coexisting as members of the same school community. Almost all schools in Nairobi Province have established Guidance and Counseling Departments (GCD). Thus, the Ministry of Education through the Teachers Service Commission, in liaison with the school principals, need to strengthen the expertise of the teachers in the GCD for effective student counseling. Counseling will help girls who have been traumatized by sexual harassment to come to terms with the trauma, and thereby start the healing process. Counseling will make boys more accommodative to the girls in class and refrain from sexually harassing girls. Counseling will offer teachers increased chances to talk to all other students in class about academic and social issues. Such sessions were already identified by teachers in this study as being both “diagnostic” and “therapeutic” to the students.

Reporting mechanisms. School principals and the Ministry of Education Officials should establish confidential mechanisms by which girls can report the sexual violence
complaints that occur in and out of school. Instances of sexual harassment can be reported to counselors, or women who are “ombudswomen” who are not associated with the school administration, but can liaise with the police and the courts. The process should ensure the protection of girls’ identities, so that they are not liable to threats or coerced into not forwarding their claim (Action Aid International, 2004). It is only when girls report these acts of violence that the magnitude of the problem is highlighted, and action can be taken. It is important to report the cases to the “ombudswomen” and not directly to the school administration. Often, school administrators are known to obstruct the course of justice, by choosing to blame the victim rather than securing justice for the victim. This is usually done either to protect the image of the school, teacher (when a teacher is involved) or the image of the administrator (Collins, 2009).

Providing medical checkups. For girls who have been exposed in one way or other to sexual related violence, the principals will liaise with the city education and health unit to provide free medical checkup at least once a month during the school term. This will help alleviate the costs of medical checkup for many girls who are sexually molested. Medical checkup should be integrated with a component of general, and HIV/AIDS related counseling and testing. This will improve the general reproductive health concerns of affected adolescent girls.

Out of school, the Ministry of Education Kenya needs to coordinate with the school principals to reduce the impact of persistent barriers that hinder girls’ secondary schooling. Some of these efforts will involve the participation of the community members, empowerment of the girls themselves, involving the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and the Parents, Teachers Associations (PTA’s).
A walking school bus. In order to tackle issues of sexual harassment out of school, school principals in the affected schools, with the help of the community members, may initiate a “walking school bus” (WSB). This walking school bus will enable girls from the slum neighborhoods which are prone to sexual predators to be escorted to and from schools. A walking school bus has been used in the USA and other countries to promote safety among elementary school children. Recent research in New Mexico shows that WSB promotes a safe and supportive environment that enhances social interaction and physical exercise as the children walked to school (Kong, Sussman, Negrete, Patterson, Mittleman, & Hough, 2009). Although this WSB was meant to provide solutions to obesity among elementary school children, the safety and supportive components of WSB can borrowed to be an integral part of reducing instances of sexual harassment among adolescent girls from Lafama and Kamu walking to and from school.

Girls walking in groups. Another component of safety out of school will involve encouraging girls to walk in groups. This can be monitored through periodic visits to schools by the parents involved in the WSB, a section of teachers, and Ministry of Education officials. The Ministerial visits can be part of the regular inspection of schools done under the auspices of the Quality Assurance and Standards. Walking in groups will thwart efforts of potential predators by discouraging attacks on individual girls. In addition, girls can be encouraged to be in the company of their network of friends as they walk from school in the evening. This will shield them from sexual predators waiting along the routes in the evening. This can be done with the help of an adult teacher or community member to minimize girls becoming targets for groups of men.
Implementation of sexual offences act to cover sexual offences in school. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and the principals of the respective schools, through the Kenya Secondary Schools’ Heads Association, to push for full implementation of the Sexual Offences Act of 2006, to cover sexual offences in schools. The Sexual Offences Act was enacted by the Kenyan Parliament in 2006 to “make provisions about sexual offences, their definition, prevention and protection of all persons from harm from unlawful sexual acts, and for connected purposes” (Government of Kenya [The Sexual Offences Act] 2006, p. 4). This act can provide a legal framework for stepping up the crackdown on sexual harassers on school going girls. As it is now, the act does not provide specific remedies for sexual offenders who prey on school girls. The act should be applied without reservation or leniency for any sexual harassers/offenders.

Alleviating Poverty

Poverty intervention programs. In addition to all the initiatives involving the local people, there will have to be an increase in specially targeted poverty interventions for parents/guardians in low income neighborhoods. Poverty interventions could involve the provision of basics (food, paraffin, sanitary supplies) for their school going children, and especially girls. In addition to bursaries that have been given through the Secondary School Education Bursary Fund\(^\text{28}\); and the support the program has received through the

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\(^{28}\)The Secondary School Education Bursary Fund (SEBF) was established in 1993/4 through a Presidential decree. SEBF aims to shield the poor and the vulnerable populations from the increasing costs of attaining secondary education. This was meant to reduce inequality among the groups in Kenya. It was also aimed at
Constituency Development Fund (KIPPRA, n.d.)\textsuperscript{29}, the government needs to encourage small-scale income generating programs for the parents and guardians to increase income levels in the households in the slum areas. In this way, families will be able to generate income to provide these basics for their families. There is need for more accountability in disbursing these funds so that the needy students and especially girls can benefit.

Seek additional funds for poor students. In school, principals in liaison with the class teachers should identify the particular students who need additional support and seek extra funding beyond the tuition vote head provided for by the Free Secondary Education Program (FSE). This will enable girls who are more likely to dropout due to inability to pay school levies to stay in school. Additional support can be solicited from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) interested in education—a notable example being Forum for Advancement of Women Educationalists (FAWE)\textsuperscript{30}, and other individual donors who are willing to support education of girls. It is only when the plight increasing enrolment and completion of secondary school. The fund targeted orphaned children, girls, those from poor households and the disadvantaged. Students sent their applications through their respective school heads. However, SEBF is not based on a fixed share of the national budget. Allocations vary depending on the Ministry of Education’s annual allocations, number of students enrolled in secondary schools in each constituency, national secondary school total enrolments, and poverty indices.

\textsuperscript{29} The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was established in 2003 through the CDF Act in The Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 107 (Act No. 11) of 9th January 2004. The fund aims to control imbalances in regional development brought about by partisan politics. It targets all constituency-level development projects, particularly those aiming to combat poverty at the grassroots.

\textsuperscript{30} FAWE’s role “is to influence education policy in favor of gender equality. FAWE works closely with policy makers at all levels to ensure that policies address gender constraints in education and promote gender equality in access, retention and performance.” Retrieved February 23, 2010 from http://fawe.org/index.php/programmes.html
of girls in the two schools, and others with the same student population, are brought to the attention of such donors that help may be forthcoming for girls.

It should be noted that secondary education was officially made free in January 2008. (See the discussion in Chapter Two). Free secondary schooling is not a reality because of the levies that schools continue to charge. These “silent” levies charged in schools continue to bog down parents who are already burdened by other economic conditions. A year into the Free Secondary Education Program in January 2009, it was reported that parents were having a hard time keeping up with the skyrocketing levies charged in school. The following is an excerpt of the report on the state of free secondary education from a local daily:

Secondary schools have hiked their charges by figures ranging from KSh5,000 to KSh10,000, other “silent” expenses notwithstanding. School administrators cite high food prices, increased cost of learning materials and maintenance costs as among the key reasons for more charges. Public secondary schools show a wide disparity in the various charges for the services that they offer. Although in most of them the boarding fees has remained at a constant KSh13,034, details ranging from personal emoluments, medical fees, development and administration costs leave a lot to be desired as schools seem to outdo each other in skyrocketing the charges (Mwololo, 2009).

Even though the policy on paper affirms the declaration of free secondary education in Kenya, the reality on the ground is that girls who are poor continue to be excluded from attending school. Much as the government pays the tuition bill for each student, the schools continue to charge various other levies, which they justify with all
manner of expenses. If the poor urban girls are to stay in school, then seeking extra funding for poor students may not solve the problem in the end. The government should enforce strict measures to ensure that school principals adhere to fee guidelines.

Education costs need to be kept at reasonably affordable levels, to enable increased attendance in school. Extra levies continue to exclude the girls who are already faced with numerous risks.

Provision of sanitary towels for girls. Lastly, the Ministry of Education, in liaison with school principals, the NGO’s, the private sector, and other education stakeholders, should intensify campaigns to provide sanitary towels in schools for girls who cannot afford these basic necessities. Although, there have been numerous uncoordinated efforts to supply school girls with the sanitary supplies, it has not been sufficient. There is need for better coordination so that schools in the slum neighborhoods like Kamu and Lafama are targeted for supplies of sanitary towels.

In sum, there is still so much that the Kenyan government and its Ministry of Education in conjunction with the other stakeholders in education can do to reduce the risks to girls’ education. Educating the Kenyan population is key to changing its long held cultural attitudes that continue to negate girls’ education. The local populations around the schools also have to be directly involved in their children’s education. It is not enough to decree solutions; the effectiveness of these solutions depends on how well they are implemented.
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Limitations

The goal of the study was to explore the hindrances of educational attainment of girls and sources of resilience. Thus, the study focused on the experiences and perspectives of the adolescent girls attending Kamu and Lafama schools in Nairobi Province, and those who have dropped out of school. Interviews of teachers teaching in the two schools corroborated the experiences of these girls. In addition, teachers in the two schools provided significant insights into the problems that girls undergo in school. Therefore, the issue was documented from the girls’ and teachers’ understanding of the problem.

However, the perspectives of the boys were not accounted for. Thus this study does not explore the hindrances that are obstacles to boys’ schooling. Girl participants attending school were drawn from two mixed gender schools, in Nairobi Province. Therefore, perspectives of the girls in the boarding schools are not within the scope of this study. Moreover, perspectives of the girls in more affluent schools are also beyond the scope of this study because the focus of the study is on girls attending schools in the poor neighborhoods.

Whereas a comparison between the perspectives of the girls in the poor and more affluent neighborhoods would have been interesting, this study is limited to the adolescent girls in the poor neighborhoods to get a better understanding of the real life experiences that affect these girls. Therefore, I explained the situation of girls who were attending the two schools, and those who had since left school. The study is not one that
can be used to generalize to the situation of all girls, even in the context of similar slum schools. It does give insights into the situation of girls in these two schools and to girls who have dropped out from these schools. Beyond that, it raises hypotheses from these girls’ accounts as to the problems that hinder girls’ secondary education in other schools in urban areas of Kenya.

**Future Research**

The issues in this study were documented from the girls’ and teachers’ understanding of the problem. Future will expand the sample and look at a comparison between girls’ and boys’ experiences that are hindrances to their secondary education. Such a study would highlight what difficulties boys are experiencing and the similarities and differences that exist in the experiences of boys and girls in schools that are in a disadvantaged setting.

Because of the limited sample of girls (both in school and dropouts), and the teachers, future research should widen the scope of the study by collecting data on a larger sample of the population. A quantitative study with a larger, more representative sample will make the study generalizable to a bigger population. Such a study would account for household data and therefore be able to examine more variables relating to the difficulties that girls face in their attempt to obtain secondary education. Moreover, such a study would also examine urban and rural differences between girls’ educational experiences and establish the risk and protective factors in the two settings.
Future research should explore further the issues surrounding Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Using data from these two schools in Nairobi Province, research can explore the girls’ own perceptions of the solutions to these impediments. This study can look at policies that have been put in place, and establish what has worked and what has not worked. Finally, such a study should propose recommendations based on the areas of need as shall have been documented by the data from the girls and from the analysis of policies.

The findings of this study suggest possible testable hypotheses:

- Sexual harassment is a problem for girls both in the rural and urban schools in Kenya.

- Slum dwellings, by definition places of high poverty and population density, are related to sexual compliance and increased prevalence of sexual harassment among girls within the family.

- Increasing provision of basic necessities to girls will improve their high school attendance.

- Greater community involvement in school will increase school girls’ high school attendance.

- Government control over school levies will increase school girls’ high school attendance.
Conclusion

The goal of the study was to explore the experiences that hinder educational attainment of girls (in school and dropouts) in two schools in Nairobi. The research questions that guided this study were: One, what are the in-school and out-of-school experiences of adolescent girls that are obstacles to their secondary schooling? Second, why do some urban girls persist in school while others do not?

Among the many risks to this opportunity was negative social construction. This study established that girls in Kamu and Lafama were affected by the negative perceptions of others about them and how they viewed themselves as girls. The negative labels permeated into the families and influenced the way the parents treated their daughters. It influenced the treatment of girls in schools and in their neighborhoods in which they lived and through which they travelled to school.

The social construction and negative attitudes provided a fertile ground for sexual harassment that plagued girls attending Kamu and Lafama schools. Embedded in the context of sexual harassment was the experience of fear felt by girls as they walked to and from school every day. The study identified the consequences of sexual harassment on girls to be: risk of disease; reduced interest in learning; and psychological effects.

The study showed that risks existed across the different environments that girls operated in: Girls’ individual attributes, the family, the school, and the broader society. But, protective factors also existed in these very contexts. For those who persisted, one environment compensated for the risks that were present in another environment. For instance, the school cushioned girls from negative events in the households, and by
having the Guidance and Counseling teachers talk to them. Boy peers in school also
sometimes fostered in girls’ academic resilience, while the school lunch program enabled
them to keep coming to school.

Despite the schools having their own risks, the protective factors of the school in
certain cases were able to compensate for risks that were within the families, and the
neighborhoods of in-school sample of girls. Also, this study underscores the uniqueness
of the protective factors among in-school girls. These girls were motivated and
maintained a positive focus, characteristics that that proved to be useful in their
persistence. Overall, in each of the contexts (within the individual girls, families, and
schools) there were interplay of protective factors that compensated for the deficiencies
and risks that girls experienced in another context. From the perspective of the dropouts,
this study showed the importance of financial resources and counseling resources for
continued attendance of school.

In general, this study highlighted the challenges that thwarted girls’ effort to
attend secondary school. This study also presents heroic efforts of girls’ attempts and
success with persistence and demonstrates the interrelationship that must exist between
the different contexts for girls’ educational success. Finally, this study recommends
courses of action that the Ministry of Education, the Kenyan Government, and school
principals can take jointly and individually to alleviate the hindrances affecting girls
secondary education in disadvantaged settings of Nairobi Province.
References


Appendix A

The Original Interview Protocol for Girls

1. What is your name? Age? Where do you go to school?

2. How long a distance do you travel to your school in the morning?
   After school how long do you travel to your after school destination?

3. Please describe the general neighborhood where you and your family stay?

4. Tell me about your experiences travelling to and from school each day?
   4a) Think of a specific day you traveled to school and tell me what happened at
   various points on your way to school.

5. What have you experienced in traveling back and forth to school that is particular
   to female students?

6. What are some common negative comments do you hear often uttered by the
   people around your neighborhood about students in general?
   6a) What do you think or feel about these comments?

7. Please take me through your normal school routine?

8. During the school day what sort of experiences may be unique to the female
   students in the school?

9. How have these experiences that are unique to female students influenced your
   learning?
10 How would you describe the interaction between you and the male pupils in class?
Appendix B

The Revised Interview Protocol for Girls

1. What is your name? Age? Where do you go to school?

2. How long a distance do you travel do you travel to your school in the morning?
   After school how long do you travel to your after school destination?

3. Please describe the general neighborhood where you and your family stay?

4. Tell me about your experiences traveling to and from school each day?
   4a) Think of a specific day you traveled to school and tell me what happened at various points on your way to school.

5. What have you experienced in traveling back and forth to school that is particular to female students?

6. What are some common negative comments do you hear often uttered by the people around your neighborhood about students in general?
   b) What do you think or feel about these comments?

7. Please take me through your normal school routine?

8. During the school day what sort of experiences may be unique to the female students in the school?

9. How have these experiences that are unique to female students influenced your learning?

10. How would you describe the interaction between you and the male pupils in class?
11 What do you experience in your family on a daily basis that has negatively affected your schooling?

12 What happens in school that in your opinion is a form of sexual harassment to the girls?

13 Describe for me the relationship between you and the teachers. In your opinion what aspects of this relationship enhances your school experience, which one(s) do not?

14 Do you work? If so do you work in the house or outside your household?

15 Explain what kind of work you do?

16 Do you work before you go to school or after?

17 Is the work you do required of you on a daily basis?

18 Despite all that you experience what makes you keep coming to school?

19 How can your experiences in school be made better?
Appendix C

The Revised Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. How long have you taught in this school?

2. What is your qualification and teaching experience of the subject that you teach?

3. Please describe for me your roles in the school besides teaching?

4. In your opinion, what is it like to teach girls in a mixed school?

5. Take me through the interactions with the girls on a normal school day?

6. Describe for me the observations you make of the girls in class as you teach your subject?

7. What do you observe about the girls in school;
   a) When you are on school duty?
   b) When the girls are outside the classroom?
   c) When they are out for games and extra curricula activities?
   d) As a class teacher/head of form/guidance and counseling teacher

8. What in your opinion influences the persistence or non persistence of the girls in this school?
Appendix D

The Interview Protocol for Girls Who Have Dropped Out

1. What is your name? Age? Where did you go to school?

2. When did you stop going to school? What form were you that particular year?

3. In your opinion, what were some of the important experiences/ reasons that made you stop going to school?

4. What have been your experiences since you last attended school?

5. Compare the period that you were in school and now, what has changed? Do you have any regrets? If so why?

6. In your opinion what do you think would have helped you to stay in school?
Appendix E

IRB Approval

Date: June 8, 2007
From: Dolores W. Maney, IRB Administrator
To: Benta A. Abuaya
Subject: Results of Review of Proposal - Expedited (IRB #25751)
Approval Expiration Date: June 5, 2008
“Understanding Kenyan Girls’ Perspective on Obstacles to Educational Attainment”

The Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for use of human participants in your research. By accepting this decision, you agree to obtain prior approval from the IRB for any changes to your study. Unanticipated participant events that are encountered during the conduct of this research must be reported in a timely fashion.

Attached is/are the dated, IRB-approved informed consent(s) to be used when recruiting participants for this research. Participants must receive a copy of the approved informed consent form to keep for their records.

If signed consent is obtained, the principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed consent forms along with the IRB research records for this research at least three (3) years after termination of IRB approval. For projects that involve protected health information (PHI) and are regulated by HIPAA, records are to be maintained for six (6) years.

The principal investigator must determine and adhere to additional requirements established by the FDA and any outside sponsors.

If this study will extend beyond the above noted approval expiration date, the principal investigator must submit a completed Continuing Progress Report to the Office for Research Protections (ORP) to request renewed approval for this research.

On behalf of the IRB and the University, thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human participants.

DWM/dwm
Attachment
cc: Mindy L. Kornhaber

Please Note: The ORP encourages you to subscribe to the ORP listerv for protocol and research-related information. Send a blank email to L-ORP-Research-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu
VITA

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Our Lady of Fatima, Nairobi, Kenya
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Head of Department Humanities 1998-2006
Head of Form 2002-2006

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Ford Foundation International Fellow (2006-2009)
Population Reference Bureau, Policy Communication Fellow (2008)
Population Reference Bureau/Compton Foundation International Fellow (2009-2010)

Conference Presentations


