GIRLS' SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE IN FRANKADUA, GHANA: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

For the last three decades, girls' education has been at the forefront of international development discourse on education. Despite all the available evidence that underscores the gains that accrue to society from women's education, gender disparities in education still persist. Using a critical feminist lens, my research project explores qualitatively the elements that pose as barriers to gender equality for girls in the formal schooling system of Frankadua. My research project seeks to understand the causes of gender inequality and to engage in and with the literature to identify strategies that may be effective in reducing or eliminating them. By examining factors such as spatial dimensions, culture, and institutions in general and curriculum development, school structure and classroom practices in particular, my research emphasizes the need for initiatives to move beyond measuring parity to adequately address the issue of gender equality in primary schools throughout Ghana.

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List of Abbreviations

ERRC	Education Reform Review Committee
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationalist
GAD	Gender and Development
JHS	Junior High School
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IVHQ	International Volunteer Headquarters
MoEYS	Ministry of Education Youth and Sport
NDC	National Democratic Party
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPP	New Patriotic Party
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SSS	Senior Secondary School
WID	Women in Development

Chapter One
Overview of Thesis

As many have recognized, girls' formal education is not only a fundamental right, but it can also be an important catalyst for economic growth and human development (Oxfam, 2000). However, social, institutional, structural, and political barriers have systematically collaborated to perpetuate gender inequalities in education (Shabaya & Konadu- Agyemang, 2004). As a result of this collaboration, women represent 31 million of the 58 million children currently out-of-school[1] and two thirds of the world's 781 million illiterates (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2014).

The importance of educating girls and its effect on society as a whole has been well documented and extensively researched for many decades. It has been incorporated into global development frameworks, international commitments, and national strategic goals, which has led to improvements in girls' formal education as a whole. While the many landmark achievements of the women's rights movement should be celebrated, millions of girls continue to experience gender inequality in education (Plan International, 2015). Plan International 'State of the World's Girls' report outlines that 63 million girls currently do not attend formal primary and secondary schooling in the Global South (2015). While unequal access to formal education and experience through formal education among males and females appears to be widespread in the Global South, women in many countries throughout Africa tend to experience more gender discrimination compared to their male counterparts (Manion, 2007). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, women continue to notably contribute to the development and progress of their communities, yet most lack the formal education to improve their own condition, reduce their social barriers, and

[1] The term 'out-of-school' entails a wide range of realities and refers to children who: do not have access to a school in their community, do not enrol despite the availability of a school, enrol but do not attend school, drop out of the formal education system. (For more information see Global Partnership for Formal education)

release their economic burden (Egbo, 2000). In 47 out of 54 African countries, girls' prospects to complete primary school are less than 50 percent, whereas completion rates for boys are well above 70 percent (UNESCO, 2011). Similarly, of the 58 million children out-of-school, 31 million of them are girls and Sub-Saharan Africa continues to account for approximately 52% of all out-of-school girls (UNESCO, 2015). Especially in rural areas, there are a number of inequalities that account for these barriers. To address this issue, along with receptive African governments, non-state actors within Africa and throughout the international development community (i.e. NGOs and the World Bank), have assisted in setting out initiatives that target and promote universal access to basic formal education for girls. These initiatives have led to an increase in enrolments in basic formal education worldwide and a sharp drop in the number of out-of-school girls throughout the world (UNESCO, 2012). The total number of primary school-age girls not in primary or secondary school is estimated to have fallen by 21% between 2002 and 2005 compared to only 5% between 1999 and 2002 (Ibid). While these global targets have led to improvements in girls' access to formal education, these improvements have been limited to access and have not been accompanied by quality formal education. In other words, what girls and boys learn and whether they learn have not been the focus of global targets, which has resulted in strategies that promote high enrolment rates and yield low completion rates for girls (Plan International, 2015). While it is evident and internationally acknowledged that gender inequality with regards to access, retention and performance in formal education exists in Sub-Saharan Africa, not many studies engage in the causes of gender inequality or that identify strategies that may be effective in reducing or eliminating them.

Current literature (Mumba, 2002; Evans & King 1991; Evans, 1995; Odaga, 1995; World Bank, 1996) surrounding girls' formal education tends to solely focus on the issue in terms of

accessibility and creating solutions that increase access to formal education. This line of thinking results in policies and programs that address the issue of girls' formal education by abolishing tuition fees and implementing school feeding programs. While these initiatives are noble in their aim and have proven to increase girls' access to formal education, they fall short in promoting gender equality because they do not target sustained social transformation in gender relations (Manion, 2007; Stromquist, 1997). Much of this literature measures equality in girls education through the context of raising examination scores in literacy and numeracy, increasing girls participation in mathematics and science subjects, and having the same ratio of girls to boys in classrooms. However, few studies exist that define equality within the context of classroom structures: the messages that are transmitted, the values that are reinforced, and the norms that are implemented, all of which contribute to the lack of progress in girls' educational attainment. This study sets out to fill this gap in the literature through an exploration of the barriers to formal education for girls in Frankadua and an examination of whether structures *within* the classroom assist in removing the barriers or whether they perpetuate and reinforce those barriers. More specifically, this study uses a critical feminist lens to qualitatively examine the role and significance of various policy models and whether they move beyond parity to adequately address the issue of gender equality in primary schools.

Statement of Purpose and Significance

A concern with gender and the need to ensure that girls are given an opportunity to access formal education has become central to national and international arenas, and has come to occupy a key place in development discourse. Within this discourse, academics highlight that discrimination denies millions of children access to formal education, conditions to learn

properly, regular attendance, and progressing beyond a primary formal education. While parity has been attempted, nevertheless it tends to bring forth challenges for national and international educational policies to promote gender equality within educational structures. This difficulty reflects the assumptions embedded in the various ways both the government and international non-state actors frame gender in relation to formal education. The causal links created between girls' formal education, economic resources, and social development directly influence whether gender equality can be, in fact, actualized. Focusing solely on any one causal link of girls' formal education leads to policies that fail to examine and address the root causes of gender inequality, therefore, reinforcing gendered relations of power. In order to strengthen the causal link between formal education and social change, feminists' scholars highlight the need for policymakers to understand that girls' formal education does not exist in isolation from broader social, political, and economic forces. Therefore, policies must look beyond the issue of accessibility and towards methods that challenge gendered power relations inherent within the school structure and the educational experience (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005).

As a woman, education was very important for me, and my interest in improving conditions for girls' formal education began in 2009 when I first traveled to Benin, West Africa for a yearlong journey to teach English. I was a coordinator and teacher in a diverse range of educational settings: working in both urban, in rural settings, and in the private and public sectors. While teaching at the school, however, I could not help but realize I was the only female teacher in this specific private school. Although this may have not been true of Beninese schools in general, my experience in this private school piqued my interest to further understand the role of women in the formal education system. Similarly, as my time progressed, I began to notice there was a decrease in the presence of girls attending school and their visibility in higher-grade

classes in relation to their male counterparts. With this in mind, I decided to visit some of the homes of girls in my commune to inquire about their whereabouts at school and saw the majority were at home taking care of their siblings and cooking. To encourage their attendance, I decided to run programs that were inclusive to their schedules and relevant to their lives. Therefore, I spent my evenings conducting health awareness workshops for girls and mothers in the community followed by youth empowerment programs for the girls in the community. Through these programs, I noticed women only attending when the classes were at certain times of the day (due to their increased workload at home), girls only talking with others in the class who belonged to their commune, and girls attending classes with their younger siblings. At the time, I was 18 and could not fully comprehend the subtle gender, ethnic, and regional inequalities woven into the fabric of Beninese life. Nor could I understand why these inequalities took place in society in general and in the formal education system in particular or how we could advocate for change. However, my experience in Benin piqued my curiosity to better understand the barriers to formal education for girls and the possible role of formal education as an instrument to aid in the social transformation of society. This curiosity led to my current research project, which seeks to find reasons for girls' dropout rates in primary school and answers to their low enrolment.

Ghana represents an excellent research setting to explore the issue of gender equality in formal education. Ghana was one of the first countries in Africa to make girls formal education a priority and to promote women's advancement, and the Ghanaian government has extensive connections with global development partners, having worked closely with them to implement numerous reforms and policies to promote gender equality in formal education. Although Ghana has been a model country for their ability to almost achieve gender parity at the primary school

level, the same cannot be said for gender equality. World Bank statistics show that in 2014 the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary and secondary levels in public and private schools in Ghana was 0.98 (UNESCO, 2015). While statistically Ghana has achieved considerable success in the promotion of girls' access to formal education, these statistics do not provide a full picture of gender equality and the state of girls' in formal education. In other words, the figures do not account for the age girls enter school, the duration of their stay, or the courses they take while in school. My research seeks to investigate the experience of some rural Ghanaian girls' *within* the classroom to better understand the reasons why statistically the gaps have been narrowing, while social, economic and gender disparities continue to persist.

The lens this research will analyze through is that of the Critical feminist. Critical feminists tend to focus on the relations of power involved in knowledge production, negotiation, transformation, and distribution throughout society (Greene, 2009). I use this lens to examine whether classroom practices and administrative structures encourage girls to complete formal education or whether they are barriers that reinforce gender inequalities and promote drop outs.

This project's overarching objectives are two-fold: first, to assess the history of educational reforms in Ghana and their role in supporting positive change in the lives of Ghanaian women. Second, through a case study of a rural commune, my inquiry seeks to identify the barriers that underpin the lack of girls' success in completing formal primary education, in comparison to boys.

Interdisciplinary

My research project crosses disciplinary boundaries by merging the discipline of development studies, women's studies, and education to analyze the issue of gender equality in

formal education. Given the complexity of the issue, this research project cannot be adequately understood from one disciplinary perspective, but rather takes an interdisciplinary approach to problematize the issue and understand the elements involved in the barriers to girls' formal education. Through connecting various disciplinary approaches, integrating a number of useful methodologies and incorporating diverse perspectives this research project will be able to better address the issue of gender equality in Ghanaian formal education.

From a development studies perspective, my research explores the position of global state and non-state actors in 'promoting' the need for formal education as a development strategy to alleviate poverty. By creating a link between formal education and national development, this perspective allows for the outline of historical, economic, and political contexts within which to place the issue of gender and equality in Ghanaian schooling. Moreover, incorporating this perspective helps me to analyze how girls' formal education is framed in formal policy documents and how they have been implemented locally.

From a women's studies perspective, I have studied many women's movements that have promoted equality for girls and have engaged with various feminist frameworks to gain some insight on women's subordination in formal education. In so doing, I have found the critical feminist approach to be the perspective that provides the most suitable understanding for the root cause of women's oppressions. Therefore, I use a critical feminist lens to direct my research questions and to examine qualitatively the role and significance of various overt and covert classroom practices on gender equality.

From the perspective of education, my research seeks to understand how the classroom can be a cultural site that embodies conflicting political values, histories, and practices (Gore, 1992). Looking at the classroom as a site of power pushes me to understand how prevalent

practices in the classroom can reproduce and reinforce gender inequalities. Through educational theory I explore the debates that question the relations of power that govern formal education structures. Furthermore, my appreciation of these debates has guided my research to explore the educational policy models that underpin and promote girls' formal education.

While individually each discipline provides great insight on the issue of girls' formal education, it is in combination that I was able to adequately examine the root cause of women's subordination in formal education and a design a research project that analyzed the issue holistically.

Methodology and Research Design

"What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to…"(Geertz, 1973, p. 9)

In this section I detail the methodology used for my research, as well as the research design. I provide a detailed description of the research design, the procedures that I used to identify and recruit participants in the sample, and the tools I used for data analysis. Following a description of the research site, I provide the specific methods used for data collection, the limitations of this study and the ethical considerations that were involved in this research. It must be noted that this research project is based on my interviews with nine people and should not be overgeneralized. In other words, this case study should be considered within the limits of the nine interviews and cannot be considered a representation for all of Ghana or Frankadua as neither are monolithic entities. Hence, this research should only be considered as a case study bringing forth the voices and experiences of 9 Ghanaian women.

This research was conducted in three main phases. The first phase was the textual analysis of the various formal education strategic plans in Ghana. In this phase I completed a content analysis of past and present policy texts in Ghana relating to women, gender, formal education, and development. This analysis included a preliminary textual analysis of the Formal education Strategic Plan 2003-2015, strategy papers set forth by the Girls' Formal education Unit, and an analysis of the various educational reforms in Ghana. This phase set the foundation for the contextual framework of my research. The second phase involved fieldwork in Ghana. During this phase, I travelled to a rural community in the Volta region of Ghana, Frankadua, for seven weeks and conducted interviews with girls and school administrators concerning the barriers to girls' formal education, as well as their views on the key challenges in the promotion of gender equality in formal education. In the third phase, using a critical feminist lens, I analyzed the findings from the textual analysis against the gender equality reported in the fieldwork to understand the causes of gender inequality and engage in and with the literature to identify strategies that may be effective in reducing or eliminating them.

The Research Question

This case study explores the root causes of gender inequality in education for girls in Frankadua. I was interested in exploring and identifying major barriers that prevent girls from attending and completing basic formal education. This research investigates if factors such as spatial dimensions, culture, and institutions in general and curriculum development, school structure and classroom practices in particular, play a role in advancing gender equality in formal education. A critical feminist interest in relations of power guides my choice of research

questions on the actualization of global gender and education policy frameworks. The main question guiding this study was:

1. Why do some children, particularly girls in rural Ghana, fail to enrol and/or drop out of formal school during their primary education?

Several sub-questions were designed to support the answering of this main question. The first sub-question focused on understanding how various aspects of society can pose as barriers to girls' formal education:

2. What are the contextual (cultural, political, economic) and educational factors responsible for non-enrolment and drop out in rural Ghana?

The third sub-question focused on understanding the role of various stakeholders in promoting gender equality in formal education and whether individual initiatives exist to promote change from the grassroots.

3. What intervention strategies and agents of change can we identify at school and community level to help solve the problem?

Research Site

My fieldwork took place in the rural area of Frankadua, located in the Volta Region of Ghana, approximately two hours East from the capital, Accra. I chose to do my field research in the Volta Region of Ghana, because it best exemplifies a combination of both rural and urban characteristics. Frankadua is a small rural town with a population of approximately 5000 people. The vast majority of the population is Ewe and of Christian background. The main occupation of the local people in this area is farming or hunting. In Frankadua, there are four public schools, E.P. Frankadua Primary School (Evangelical Presbyterian), Baptist Primary School, R.C.

Primary School (Roman Catholic), and Freedom Orphanage School. Although three of the schools are associated with a specific church, children were free to attend the school closest to their home. All schools are within 20-minute walking distance from one another. Because of its proximity to my house, I chose to conduct my fieldwork at E.P. Frankadua Primary School with 197 students and 10 teachers.

Map of Ghana, Retrieved from http://mapsofcitys3.xyz/ghana-map/

Data Collection Procedures

I incorporated diverse means to collect data. I used triangulation to confirm and deepen my understanding by using multiple research methodologies to study girls' formal education. This included, document analysis, participant observation, and interviews in order to understand the barriers to girls' formal education in Ghana. Denzin defines triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (1978, p. 291). The reason I chose to integrate and incorporate different methodologies was to gain greater accuracy in my results, to validate my interpretation, and to acquire a holistic understanding of the situation. More specifically, by using various methods to study one phenomenon, I was able to draw conclusions from different perspectives and dimensions. For example, in my study on the barriers to formal education, I interviewed girls who were victims to school barriers, I observed these barriers, such as, teenage mothers not attending school, girls being treated differently in the classroom, and how social conditions played a role in a girls full participation in the school, and evaluated them against national statistical performance records. While the methodological approach varied, the focus always remained on the barriers to girls' formal education. In essence, triangulation allowed me to compare what I heard from the interviews and what I read in reports with what happened in the classroom and in the community.

Gaining access to the research site, in order to recruit participants, is one challenge I was anticipating. To overcome this challenge, I chose to volunteer in community development programs through the organization International Volunteer Headquarters (IVHQ). The program coordinator for IVHQ, Joe, was a school administrator at E.P. Frankadua three years ago. Through my association with IVHQ and my direct connection with Joe, I was able to gain immediate access to E.P. Frankadua School, where I observed various classes in the morning.

The day following my arrival, Joe introduced me to all the classrooms in the school and had me sit in on a few classes. I explained to Joe my research project and he discussed my research with the Director of the school. Fortunately, the Director did not object to my research and allowed me to conduct my research at his school.

It took approximately two weeks for me to settle in the community, to learn where the different spheres of activity were, to understand how to engage with locals, and to build rapport with the families in my commune in order to create a sense of respect and a degree of comfort to ask members to participate in my interviews. My courage to ask members of the community to participate in my interview was triggered by one specific night. On February 25, 2015 I had asked a couple of girls in the community to come over for cookies and tea in order to get to know them and for them to learn more about who I was and to build a friendship. That night as I was sharing with them my personal stories, many of the girls began to confide in me about family histories and their life experiences. The stories we shared with one another that night gave me the comfort to approach girls and request their participation in my research. I was interested in asking girls I saw around the community during school hours to participate, as I was curious to why they were not in school. I approached Elise[2], a girl I befriended when I first arrived and noticed that she spent her days wandering in the community. I explained my research to her and she agreed to participate and introduced me to her friends, all of which became the bulk of my study sample for my research.

All interviewees lived within a ten-minute radius of my house but frequented the area often as it was across the street from the town market. All the participants chose pseudonyms for the interview.

[2] For the purpose of this research project, all names used in this thesis are pseudo names.

Interviews

I incorporated semi-structured, open-ended interviews with school administrators and girls (see Appendix A). The latter, had either gone through primary school or had dropped out of school. The goal of the interviews was to gather broad information as it related to the life experiences of participants within the formal education system. In using open-ended interviews the goal was to encourage participants to define their own accounts of gender equality in formal education and to build a mutual trusting relationship. For all interviews, detailed field notes were hand and audio recorded during the interview and immediately following the interview. The interviewees consisted of nine girls (6 out of school girls, 3 girls in school) who were between the ages of 16-20. Each participant was asked to choose a venue for their interview that worked best for them. All nine participants chose the guest room in my house as the location for their interview. All interviews took place after school and were audio recorded. The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes, depending on the participant. I began each interview informing the participants that their identities would remain confidential throughout the whole research project and gave them time to pick a pseudonym. I explained to them the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their participation and then proceeded to ask them to sign the consent form. Once the forms were signed I began the interview. When the interview was terminated, I wrote down my personal thoughts and then transcribed the interview.

Prior to conducting my interviews, I had developed broad questions that would allow for the participants to engage with various topics regarding their experiences with the schooling system. I had allocated one hour for each interview. After the first couple of interviews, which lasted merely twenty minutes, I realized my questions were too broad and I assumed participants did not understand what I was asking. Although all participants were over the age of seventeen,

the majority had dropped out of school in grade three and had a literacy level of a seven year old. At first, I was under the impression that the participants did not understand my English and requested an interpreter. However, the only people that appeared fluent in both English and Ewe were male. Having a male in the room when speaking about sensitive issues was in itself problematic, as I felt the girls would have their guards up and not be open to share their stories. I decided I would not use an interpreter and instead I chose to change my original broad questions to very basic ones and use basic terminology. This also became problematic as the participants began using "Yes" or "No" to answer each question, which in turn left no room for me to develop follow-up questions nor probe based on their responses as is the goal of in-depth interviews. Although this was problematic in the interview, this also provided me with insight on the situation itself: the impact of dropping out at a young age on the analytical abilities.

In order to address the lack of in-depth response from the participants, I relied heavily on classroom observations as well as having casual conversations with different teachers and community members. It was through these casual conversations and classroom observations that I was able to gather most of my information on the experiences of children with the primary schools in Frankadua. Participant observation took place in a variety of settings including in and around E.P. Frankadua School, in the community, and through my interactions with the people in my commune. Over 200 hours in total were spent participating and observing at E.P. Frankadua School and engaging in conversations with local community members regarding girls' formal education. The first location where I engaged in participant observation was at E.P. Frankadua where I divided my time between three classrooms. I spent two weeks in each classroom, starting with grade six, moving to grade four, and ending with grade two. At first, no teacher wanted me to sit in their classroom, as teachers kept passing me over to another classroom. The Director of

the school instructed one of the teachers to take me into their class and set out a schedule for when I would visit the other two classes. Although all three teachers suggested I sit at the front of the class, I requested to sit at the back of the class to not be a source of distraction for the kids. While sitting at the back of the class, I was able to take field notes regarding classroom practices: how the teacher engaged with girl students in comparison to boys, what courses were taught by which teacher, how teacher time was used, how often the teacher was in the classroom, and the student classroom engagement. My field notes came from both the interactions observed during teaching, as well as interactions during recreational breaks. The classroom observations throughout the seven weeks provided me with an excellent opportunity to not only develop my field notes concerning the barriers to girls formal education, but also to triangulate data from the document analysis and interviews.

Prior to conducting participant observation in the classroom, I was concerned that teachers would be guarded in how they taught and in their actions because they were aware that I was observing. However, being at the school for seven weeks decreased the chance of teacher's being guarded in their actions, and after a couple of days of sitting in the classroom I witnessed teachers being more at ease and comfortable with my presence as they began to speak to me more informally, would ask me to supervise the class, and would request I teach some lessons. My participant observation at the school, some taking place prior to the interviews, gave me the foundation and background information required to ask participants questions that were relevant to their lives and made sense to their environment. For example, noticing the school schedule was between 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and then again between 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. helped me modify my questions to ask the participants how they spent the three hours they had during lunch hour. Moreover, gaining immediate access to the school was a great advantage for my research

as it gave me time to familiarize me with the school culture at E.P. Frankadua in order to better interpret the interviews and observations (Kawulich, 2005).

The second location where I engaged in participant observation was in the area surrounding my house. My house was located centrally between the four primary schools in Frankadua; therefore, a lot of children frequented the area. Through casual conversations with my neighbours, local community members, other volunteers, and those involved with the school, I gained great insight on how some members of the local community viewed the role of girls in the community, government initiatives for girls, and the educational system in Ghana. Moreover, through these casual conversations I was given responses and perspectives that aided me in interpreting my data and observations. The perspectives and insights of all those engaged in casual conversations were used to triangulate findings from the core interviews.

Data Analysis

I recorded and transcribed all interviews immediately after they were finished. Moreover, after each interview I wrote down my personal notes on the information discussed and critically reflected on the life experiences of the participants. When I arrived back to Canada, I reviewed all my field notes and began to write down key words or thoughts that stood out to me. I used the software NVivo to organize my research notes into the themes I found most prominent. Using this same software, I used word maps to see how many times certain key words were used and under what context. These word maps and analysis led to the development of four main themes: administrative, culture, gender, and economic. The research findings were organized through these emergent themes and are discussed in chapter six. In sum, by finding commonalities between participants and organizing the commonalities into themes, I was able to gain insight on

some of the barriers to education for girls in Frankadua, whose lives have been impacted by gender inequality in education. I would like to reiterate once again that Frankadua is not a monolithic area and these experiences cannot speak to all the experiences of girls in Frankadua. However, this case study can provide a glimpse to some of the barriers experienced by these girls and shed light on possible solutions that can mitigate these barriers.

Challenges of the Study and Ethical Considerations

A common challenge in conducting research, and one shared in this study, concerns the organization and interpretation of large amounts of generated data, both in terms of interviews, document analysis and field observation, but also in terms of the extensive personal notes accumulated during fieldwork and analyses phases. As mentioned before, I spent two months in Frankadua, participating and observing classroom practices, community occurrences, and engaging in conversations. I spent every weekday at E.P Frankadua School, and every weekend in the local community engaging with various members and talking to women in the community. With a notebook always in hand, I documented my observations and noted my thoughts during this journey.

While at first I thought it would be difficult and time consuming to go through this large amount of generated data, what proved to be more of a challenge was ensuring that I was consistently interpreting observations without self-contribution. Freire argues that in order to engage in a transformative process of learning, we must reflect on and recognize that our own assumptions and worldviews might in fact inhibit our ability to see how our actions can contribute to the oppressive conditions we set out to eradicate (2004). Drolet furthers Freire's argument by stating that fieldwork can reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic power dynamics

and inequalities between the North and the South: the stereotypes that it is imperative of the 'developed nations' to help 'underdeveloped nations' by producing knowledge in the North and then transferring this knowledge to South (2014). This is a key ethical concern for all qualitative researchers who set out to do fieldwork: to not treat communities in the Global South as laboratories to test their academic theories (Tiessen, 2014). In other words, researchers must be mindful of the potential harmful impacts of their actions in local communities and that "hegemony is inherent in our pedagogy, practice, education, and attempts at globalization" (Razack, 2002, p. 255). By acknowledging the power dynamics that exists in the field, the inherent assumptions that can pose a risk, and the cultural biases in our practices, we can promote a reflection process within us (Gray and Fook, 2004). This critical reflection of our actions, our presence, and our role is necessary to create dynamics of mutual respect and to understand indigenous methods of addressing local needs (Tiessen, 2014).

Vantage Point

In my research I incorporated multiple perspectives in order to learn about the types of barriers that exist in girls' formal education. Hence, I was conscious of the fact that my Canadian education was rooted in a Western perspective that influenced my ideologies and affected my values (Drolet, 2014). In many cases, the practices I observed in the classroom differed from my own social and cultural understanding of girls' formal education, based on my experiences in the Canadian context. This proved to be challenging as I found myself seeing actions as 'wrong' and interpreting what I saw based on my personal feelings. For example, during classroom observations, I witnessed corporal punishment against students and debated whether I should intervene or solely observe. Although I knew corporal punishment existed as a practice in many

countries, I was under the impression that teachers at E. P. Frankadua would be guarded in the classroom while I was present. It was during these situations I had to be mindful of my ideologies, biases, and reactions. I also realized I had to be mindful of my responses to teachers, school administrators, and participants of my research, to not insinuate my personal perspectives and to be open to learning from participants, even when their actions differed from my own. Similarly, when deriving meaning from my observations and interviews I made a great effort to be aware of my own biases of the situation and attempted to be an effective learner by differentiating between my perspective and the participants, and acknowledging my role as a participant in 'being with' the Frankadua community rather than being a 'spectator' (Drolet, 2014). In doing so, I learned common Ewe phrases and was able to greet the members of the community as well as individuals outside of the school environment in hopes of reducing the perception of an outsider. However, I must mention, I was constantly aware of my observations of gender inequality practices and my own experiences as a middle-class Canadian woman.

Ethics Approval

Originally, when I set out to do my research project, I had planned to critically engage with literature and to comparatively analyze policy documents in order to come to a better understanding of how the international community described and understood the barriers to girls' formal education. However, as I began to clarify the scope of my research and the specificity of my topic, I realized that I needed to listen and understand the voices of those experiencing the barriers to formal education and that fieldwork would be necessary to successfully accomplish this project. The aspect that I found most challenging with this decision was getting my ethics approval. It took many months, many meetings with different supervisors, and many proposal

drafts to finally receive approval to conduct my research. Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Office of Research Ethics at York University. A certificate of approval was granted to conduct interviews with voice recording and to provide honorariums to participants (see Appendix B). Considering the challenge it was to receive my ethics approval, I wanted to ensure every participant understood the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and what was required of them. I had an interpreter assist me in explaining the informed consent form and the details within it (see Appendix C). As a routine, I asked the participants if they understood the project and confidentiality of the procedure. Once they confirmed, participants signed the consent form and then I began my interview. At first, this was a challenge because of the time consuming nature of repeating myself to ensure the girls were aware of the dynamics of the interview; however, it was rewarding to know that the participants understood the context of the research and their role within it.

Their Story

As Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong argue, qualitative researchers are unique in their method because they do not simply ask participants to answer certain questions; rather, qualitative researchers enter the lives of their participants and ask them to provide the details of their life experiences (2007). Dickson-Swift et al further argue:

> It is so much more than just signing a form to say that they are willing to offer you information, they are actually allowing you into their lives, they are telling you personal information that might be quite hard, so you need to demonstrate a certain degree of discretion, of respect, of appreciation for what they are doing because the reality is that it is more than just words, it's more than just what you are going to analyze, it's their life, their experience and you need to make sure that you are aware of that (2007, p. 330).

By conducting in-depth interviews, I was able to have a glimpse in the personal lives of

my participants, their experiences, and at times even sensitive issues in their stories. With this in mind, I knew I had to be careful with how I presented myself and how I represented every girl I interviewed: to ensure I was true to their story during the course of my research. In other words, my interviews were not solely focused on asking certain questions, but as a critical feminist my focus was on really listening to what participants said – and did not say – and working together to provide them with the possibility of having a voice, moving a step closer towards gaining gender equality. My goal for choosing to conduct fieldwork was to observe the power relations at play, the structures that dominate interactions, and to understand how notions of gender are caught up in these messages portrayed in the classroom.

Organization of Thesis

In chapter one I provided an overview of my thesis, the significance of the study, stated my research questions, and outlined my research design and methodology. Furthermore, I described the research site and provided the techniques I used to gain access to the site and to recruit participants. I detailed the various research methods I used for the data collection such as; textual analysis, participant observation, interviews, and I described the important role triangulation played in my research. I used this chapter to highlight the problems I encountered during my study as well as the ethical considerations during fieldwork.

In chapter two I provide a summary of the various debates surrounding the issue of girls' formal education throughout the world generally, and specifically within Ghana. This chapter covers three of these broad debates: the mandate of formal education, the role of gender and development, and the role of the international community. I then describe the three formal education policy models used to analyze the issue of girls' formal education in Ghana: human

capital, human rights, and human capabilities. Furthermore, towards conceptualizing these debates, I use this chapter to define key concepts such as parity, and equality through formal education, empowerment, and marginalization. I end chapter two with a review of the evolving perspectives of gender and education in development literature by analyzing the shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD).

In chapter three, I provide background information on the evolution of formal education in Ghana and the role of the international community in pushing forward educational policies. The summary of the educational reforms in post-independent Ghana assists in the contextualization of my research.

In chapter four, I identify three Western feminist theories– Liberal, Radical, and Socialist– and describe their position on formal education. I explore the differences among these feminist theories and their influence on education policies. Following this explanation, I provide a critique of Western feminist theories through the lens of African feminism and problematize the lack of voice given to African women in debates that impact their lives yet barely touch on their experiences. I then situate my theoretical framework in this chapter and use this framework to guide the rest of my research.

In chapter five, I present my findings and data from my fieldwork. Further, I identify the various barriers to girls' formal education and categorize them in four themes; administrative, culture, economic, and gender. In this chapter I analyze the educational policies set forth in chapter two and whether they have, in fact, actualized. I analyze the various barriers through a critical feminist lens and examine how they reinforce gender inequalities within the classroom and, in turn, encourage girls to drop out.

In chapter six, I summarize the main findings and its relation to the dominant literature that informs this research. I discuss the significance of the study and the contributions it makes to our understanding of gender equality in formal education.

My last chapter brings forth the voices of nine Ghanaian girls and illustrates their aspirations for a formal education along with some observations that can assist in removing their barriers to formal education.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Mandate of Formal education

A question that initially guided this literature review was the role and purpose of formal education in society. Prior to commencing my literature review, I was under the impression that a consensus existed on formal education's transformative role in society. However, as I examined the literature surrounding the international promotion of girls' education, I quickly realized the differing views and paradigms concerning the extent to which formal education serves as a transformative instrument in society and its role in promoting national development (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009). One of the dominant views is the utilitarian perspective, which has portrayed formal education as an instrument that ensures each generation produces a productive population to safeguard the wellbeing of society (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009). Many have noted that educating girls assists in reducing child and maternal mortality, improving child nutrition, increasing economic productivity, and reducing early pregnancies between generations (UNESCO, 2012; Abu-Ghaida & Klasen, 2003; Floro & Wolf, 1990; Schultz, 1989; Summers, 1992; & Weale, 1992). A number of studies from Latin America have in fact found that infant mortality rate was three to five times higher for mothers with little or no education, then those with some university education (Shabaya & Konadu- Agyemang, 2004). On average, in Africa, children of mothers who receive five years of primary education are forty percent more likely to live beyond the age of five. Although these studies do not specifically concern Ghana, they help me understand how educated mothers reap the benefits of a greater understanding of health, sanitation, and nutrition (Summers, 1992). In most cases, educated women also have the tendency to choose to have fewer children than their non-educated counterparts (see Figure 1).

Therefore, from a utilitarian perspective, educating girls is the best means to ensure productivity and improve societal wellbeing (Manion, 2011). While this perspective is important in contributing to national development goals, it does promote formal education as a reproductive agent rather than a transformative one and fails to provide an equal stance for girls (Manion, 2011).

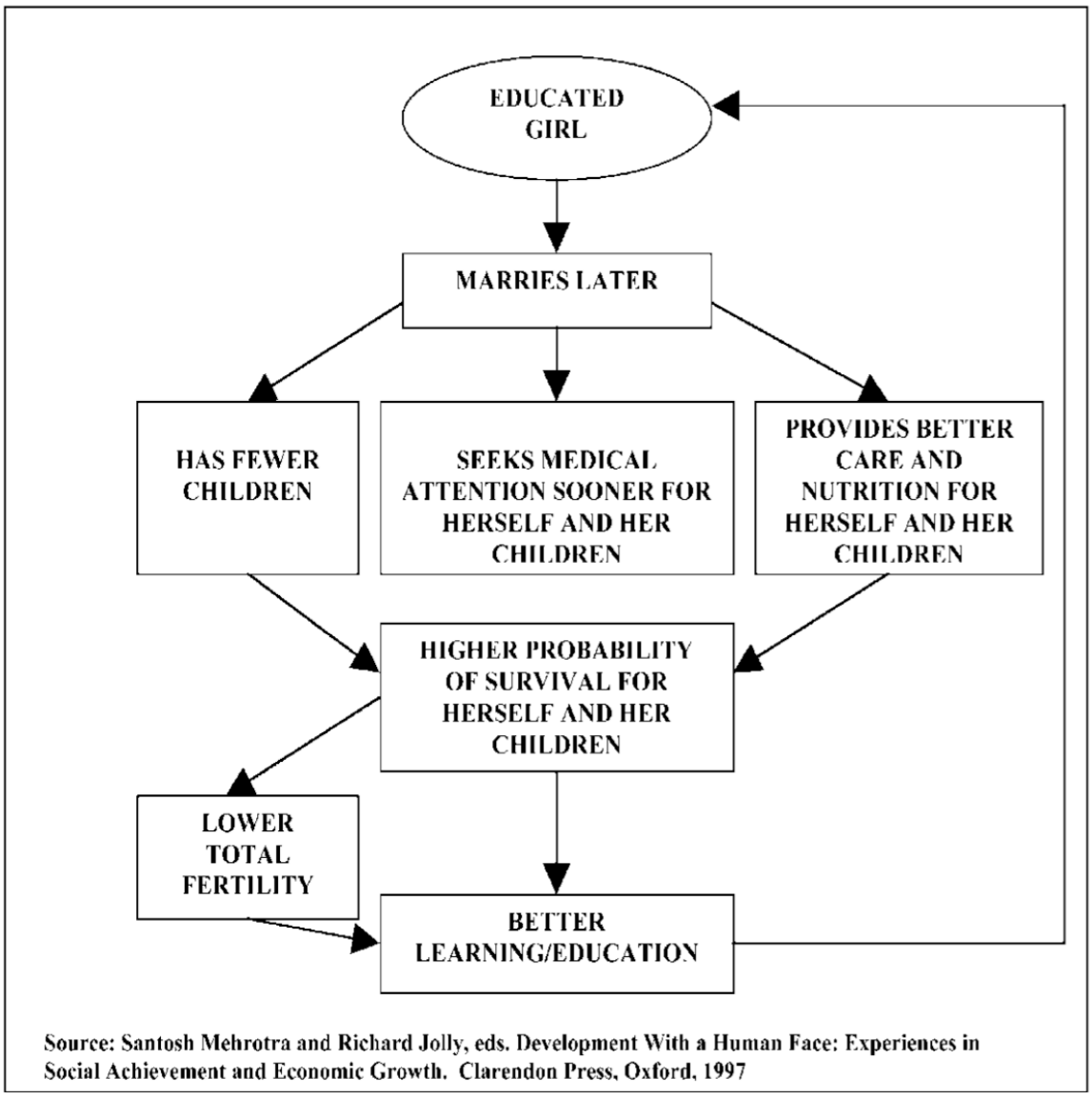

Figure 1: Generational impact of girls' formal schooling

From a critical theory perspective, the school is viewed as a site of power that symbolically reproduces and reinforces existing power relations (Bourdieu, 1976). This understanding is informed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's critical pedagogy, which suggests that schools are neither neutral nor merely a reflection of broader sets of power relations, rather they play a complex, indirect, mediating role in maintaining and enhancing those power relations (McLaren, 2009). For Bourdieu, schooling contributes to the maintenance of an unequal social system by privileging certain cultural heritages and reproducing existing patterns of class inequality rather than challenging them (McLaren, 2009). Contrary to this perspective, other debates view formal education as a means to transform the status quo by empowering citizens and providing them with the skills required to critically examine their environment and to challenge the injustices that exist within it (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009).

Education Policy Models

There are three normative accounts that underlie girls' formal education frameworks internationally: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities (Robeyns, 2006, p. 69). To various degrees, each of these formal education models has influenced the discourse on gender and how formal education policy is understood. However, these models differ greatly in their understanding of the purpose of formal education, the nature of the issue, and their method of approach (Robeyns, 2006). While my research will be framed by a critical feminist lens, I will also engage with human capital, human rights, and human capabilities frameworks to examine power relations throughout official forms of policy intervention that inform educational processes in Ghana.

Human capital perspectives, concerned primarily with efficiency considerations, dominantly frame girls' formal education as essential for national economic growth and poverty reduction (Manion, 2007). Coined in the 1960s by economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, the human capital theory conceives formal education as a form of economic investment and emphasizes economic growth as an indicator of human wellbeing (1971). As such, this theory focuses on the role of formal education as an institution that equips citizens with the skills required to perform better in the labour market; therefore, a national investment and exclusively instrumentalist (Robeyns, 2006). Thus, Robeyns argues that formal education is only valued and relevant so long as it creates skills that allow individuals to contribute to economic productivity and the needs of the labour market (2006). Moreover, the fundamental argument in support for the provision of equal access to formal education is to remove the limits to women's ability in order to maximize their potential to add to the market economy (Egbo, 2000). Egbo further argues that the human capital paradigm operates under the assumption that formal education serves to maintain social relations and should be treated as a resource open to everyone equally, regardless of class, race, and gender (2000).

While the human capital model can be seen as important, it is also extremely problematic. This model is based on an economic foundation, focusing solely on increasing the labour market and increasing national productivity; therefore underplays the significance of gender issues (Krueger, 1968). Solutions under the human capital theory involve inserting girls into a formula that is inherently bias towards them. By linking formal education to national economic growth rather than social justice, policies implemented fail to acknowledge the specificity of each country's social reality; therefore, maintain the *status quo* rather than undermine it (Manion, 2011).

With respect to girls' formal education, the human capital approach perceives this as a goal primarily focused on integrating women into the global capitalist economy and not as a means for effecting social transformation. As a result, the remedies proposed within the human capital approach tend to be affirmative rather than transformative in nature. This method of promoting policies equates gender parity in formal education with attaining gender equality; however, as Unterhalter argues, parity is an insufficient indicator and agent of social transformation (2007). Unlike a transformative approach that views formal education as an instrument to equip citizens and empower them to challenge systemic inequalities and injustices, policies founded on a human capital framework frame girls' formal education as the most efficient means of achieving increased productivity and economic growth (Manion, 2007). With this focus, the human capital model fails to account for issues of culture, gender, race, and other social dimensions of life (Robeyns, 2006). In essence, ignoring these issues, and understanding formal education solely through an economic lens has proven to be limiting and, in turn, damaging to girls' formal education (Manion, 2007).

In contrast to this model, the human rights approach views formal education as a right that should be guaranteed to every individual by their respective government (Robeyns, 2006). As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to formal education is a basic human right that lays the foundation for other rights-based change (1948). In recent years, the framing of formal education as a right has paved its path to the center of many international frameworks governed by the United Nations and the work of many organizations focused on global social justice. The push for the implementation of legislative framework on international human rights that safeguard gender equality has led to numerous advancements for the laws of many countries. For example, this movement for global social justice has led to the achievement

of guarantees of gender equality in 139 constitutions worldwide (OECD, 2012). While the rights-based approach to formal education is progressive and can be a catalyst for reform, it has not gone without criticism. The main limitations found throughout rights-based discourse are the fact that international law is not practical, not always binding, and implementation often lags behind legislation (Plan International, 2014). While many governments have signed legally binding contracts that ensure every child has a right to formal education, millions of children are continuously deprived of such a right (Tomasevski, 2003). The reasoning for this, Tomasevski argues, is that while international declarations on formal education are formulated based on rights based discourse, declarations fail to specify the actors responsible for granting these rights; therefore, no accountability exist for the implementation of these laws (2003). In light of the fact that rights based discourse prioritizes the intrinsic value of formal education, it works against the human capital model by arguing that every individual is entitled to a formal education whether or not it serves an economic purpose (Robeyns, 2006). Furthermore, a rights based approach to formal education is a more reasonable alternative to the human capital approach because it does not solely argue for the right of every child to have access to formal education, but rather to have access to decent quality education.

The third normative account that underpins educational discourse is the capabilities approach. This approach, while relatively new, is an alternative to human capital theory and has been made popular by the international development community. This approach, coined by Amartya Sen and furthered by Martha Nussbaum, is used to evaluate people's well being and their social arrangements (Robeyns, 2005, p.93). By taking this approach, Sen critiques other approaches and argues that what should be evaluated in terms of wellbeing is an individual's ability to achieve what they value, rather than economic indicators or particular outcomes

(1999). Hence, formal education is a necessity for the capability approach, as it is instrumental to the expansion of other capabilities. Having access to formal education allows a person to achieve a valued state; therefore, argued to be a valuable capability (Alkire, 2002). Whereas the human capital approach focuses solely on the instrumentalist function formal education can play, and whereas the human rights approach focuses on the intrinsic importance of formal education as a basic right, the human capabilities approach, as an interdisciplinary theory, accounts for the intrinsic, the instrumental, as well as the social role formal education can play (Robeyns, 2006). With regard to evaluating gender equality, both the human capital and human rights theory are limited in their approach. As individuals are educated under gendered social arrangements, a more complex frame of reference is required to capture the complexity of these social relations in development. This, the capability approach, does so by broadening the frame for evaluation and suggesting the need to examine more multifaceted aspects of developmental and institutional processes (Unterhalter, 2007a).

To summarize, all three approaches value different elements of formal education (Sen, 1993). For example, the human capital theory values the economic benefits that are expected to develop as individuals become educated and are added to the labour market. On the other hand, the human rights approach focuses on the inherent and foundational right of every person to have access to formal education and for that education to be of quality. However, the capabilities approach emphasizes the benefits of formal education to enhance individual wellbeing. By focusing on human development, the capability approach can better address the issue of gender equality in formal education.

Gender, Education, and Development

Over the past forty years, the renewed attention towards the purpose of formal education, its role in society, and formal schooling of children has emerged as a product of many influences, which include modernization and dependencies theories, international agencies, and colonial and post-colonial socioeconomic relations (Egbo, 2000). More specifically, the need to ensure that women are given requisite opportunities to access basic formal education has gained popularity in the field of international development, particularly in relation to poverty reduction approaches and 'women's empowerment'. These past decades gave rise to the Women in Development (WID) movement, which focused on the economic measures of integrating women into development processes (Moser, 1993). During this time, the analysis of women's subordination was at the core of the WID movement. This movement provided a rational to policy-makers for the formal education of women: to make them better mothers and more efficient producers of human capital (Unterhalter, 2007b). The WID assumption, conforming to human capital approach, was that including women in educational and administrative institutions and employing them in certain jobs could achieve gender equality. In essence, formal education was viewed as a means of providing women with the skills required to compete equally with men (Moser, 1993). Therefore, their solution to achieving gender equality in education was to get more girls into school so they can compete equally with boys. WID policy does not concern itself with the content of what girls learned, under what conditions they learned, or gendered classroom practices. Therefore, the WID approach succeeded in promoting gender parity, however, proved difficult to promote gender equality in formal education (Manion, 2007). International educational institutions tend to take a WID approach and focus on gender parity within the limits of accessibility and therefore, framing the issue as one of access. With this

framework in mind, the dominant global policies promoted and implemented have focused solely on abolishing tuition fees and providing free formal education rather than promoting gender equality in formal education. Furthermore, in their attempt to give women the same playing field as men, the WID approach fails to analyze women's subordination in relation to other social inequalities, such as, race, religion, and class, thereby viewing equal as one of quantity rather than quality and viewing women as recipients of change rather than active agents that seek change (Unterhalter, 2007b). In essence, the WID approach is insufficient to reach the desired result of gender equality because of its inability to promote sustained social transformation in gender relations and the status of women (Manion, 2007; Stromquist, 1997).

These limitations, along with feminist critiques of the relations of power that subordinate women, led to a shift from WID to GAD (Gender and Development) approach in the 1980s. While the WID approach challenged inequality by focusing on women and their integration into the economy, the GAD approach tackled inequality by focusing on the social, political, and economic relationships that exist between the sexes (Plan International, 2011). In other words, the GAD approach provides a broader perspective that challenges the very structures that give rise to gender-based inequality (Rathgeber, 1990). This approach was intended as a fundamental move away from working with women in isolation of wider social contexts, and a move towards understanding the conditions that sustain oppression and the underlying causes of poverty (Plan International, 2011). In other words, the GAD approach supports the claim that a process of inclusion cannot promote gender equality, rather what is required are political measures that focus on the social relations between men and women to challenge gendered structures of power (Moser, 1993). Therefore, by arguing that gendered relations of power exist at all levels society, scholars working from a GAD perspective insist that women cannot be merely integrated into

development programs that are inherently unjust to them, because their integration is based on gender roles that deprive them of equal opportunities (Kabeer, 2005).

With respect to formal education, a GAD approach calls for a complete change in the structures that govern power relations and to empower women to challenge the gender inequalities that govern their status. Unfortunately, current literature concerning girls' formal education tends to suggest that the most fundamental factors of gender disparities within the formal education system are economic factors and conditions of poverty (Sackey, 2007). Goetz, taking a GAD approach, examines gender and formal education in sub-Saharan Africa and emphasizes the need for research and policy to examine the varieties of children's educational experiences both in and out of school settings (1997). Furthering Goetz' examinations, Dei argues for the need to examine the power relations that sustain power hierarchies and construct gender roles throughout formal education (2004). Both writers, in demanding that we understand power relations, have been insightful and relevant to the discussion of educational access in Africa. These arguments direct this thesis to move beyond superficial solutions and understand how gendered relations of power govern the household, schools, the labour market, and the state. With this understanding, solutions can challenge structures of inequalities politically, rather than simply including women in systems inherently bias towards them.

Moving beyond 'Parity' to understand 'Equality'

Measuring progress in gender equality requires assessing both quantitative and qualitative data that underpin the rights of women and men to, within, and through formal education (Subrahmanian, 2005). Subrahmanian further argues, a challenge sustained by many academics, policymakers, and Government officials, is the interpretation and their ways of giving meaning

to data collection (2005). Much of this process relies on how gender 'equality' and gender 'parity' are defined. In debates about educational attainment, these terms are often used interchangeably, as though achieving gender parity is synonymous with achieving gender equality. I argue that using these terms synonymously is problematic as both terms are in fact associated with various assumptions and implications that must be understood separately to measure progress in educational achievement.

Gender parity in formal education, as it is conceptualized in many of the international educational frameworks, is defined as "achieving equal participation of girls and boys in all forms of education based on their proportion in the relevant age-groups in the population" (Subrahmanian, 2005, p. 2). When measuring the success of gender equality in girls' education, policymakers often use gender parity indices to indicate that initiatives have been successful based on net enrolment rates that depict equal proportion of boys and girls are enrolled in formal education. However, this approach is inherently flawed and problematic because these figures do not portray how factors such as poverty, ethnicity, gender, and geography influence the quality of education achieved. In fact, these numbers tells us nothing about real access to education or the quality of what is being taught and learnt.

Despite global progress in improving educational enrolment, many countries are far achieving gender equality in education, a goal that goes beyond gender parity and access to education (UNGEI, 2007). Behind the success of global parity in primary educational enrolment figures lies a crisis in the quality of learning, which cannot be captured in quantitative numbers. Achieving gender equality requires that women and men have equal conditions to achieve their full human rights, and to realize their potential, to contribute to and benefit from, economic,

social, political, and cultural development (Ibid). With regards to formal education, gender equality requires equality in the learning environment, the teaching processes, the quality of education received, and the opportunities available through education (Ibid). When viewed in relation to the obligations of gender equality in formal education, policies and initiatives based on gender parity prove to be mere stepping-stones in the goal to achieving gender equality in girls' formal education (Farrell, 2003). Furthermore, using gender parity to measure the progress of girls' achievement is insufficient and limiting because notions of parity are premised on an understanding of 'sameness' between men and women and not on 'fairness' (Subrahmanian, 2005). Looking at girls' formal education beyond parity indices and through the lens of equality will assist in understanding why girls are discriminated and will provide for more solid solutions in improving their current position. The next chapter will use this understanding of equality to discuss how schooling was historically developed in Ghana and how this historical development failed to promote gender equality.

Chapter Three
Educational Development in Ghana: Historical Overview

Ghana has been a model state with commendable progress towards the achievement of universal primary formal education since independence. In this chapter I will outline the rich history of Ghana's educational development through three main phases: the colonial era, the independence era, and the globalization era, with an emphasis on how girls and women's treatment in the educational system compared to that of boys and men. More specifically, in this section I will analyze how colonial and post-colonial belief systems have set up the systems that work against women's formal education. By exploring the educational development in Ghana, especially the insights they provide into girls' and women's positions in current formal education, this chapter will provide the historical context required to understand the research findings and analysis.

Formal education in the Colonial Era

Many African scholars, such as Antwi, challenge the contention made by Westerners that insist Africans had no form of education prior to the colonial intrusion of Islamic and Western formal education (1992). He further argued that although pre-colonial education did not follow the same structures and formality of those in Western societies, education still existed. Obeng argues that this form of education consisted of the transmission of culture and preparing girls and boys for their expected roles in the family and community (2002).

During the colonial era, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British opened the first formal secular schools in Ghana, to educate their own children as well as the children of wealthy Ghanaian merchants and traders (Obeng, 2002). During this time, educational development was focused on missionary work and the conversion of Ghanaians to Christianity. The curriculum of

these schools focused on basic literacy, arithmetic, and religion and the language of instruction was completely in English. It was during this era that the differentiation of women began and their future shaped (Biraimah, 1982). When the first schools were established under the colonial ruling, enrolment was reserved for boys. Bardley argues, by prioritizing the education of boys, colonial masters created a notion that women and girls did not require formal education; rather, their position was reserved for the kitchen and the fields (2000). This notion was further engrained on the occasion that girls were allowed in class, the subjects directed to them were English, Religion, and Home Economics (Obeng, 2002). In other words, the formal education provided to women was used to domesticate women and prepare them for a life in the home. C. Graham furthers this argument by stating that the aims and purpose of formal education of females in Ghana was to help turn out suitable wives for the European merchants who desired to marry African women. They were trained to be good housewives and mothers (1971). Furthermore, these schools socialized both men and women into their expected roles: women in the private sphere and men in the public. As argued by Assie-Lumumba, these schools introduced the concepts of women being confined to the home and economically dependent on their husbands into the African culture; therefore, recreating their tradition and enforcing European culture in colonized land, including Ghana (2000). This pattern of formal education and curriculum, replicated from Western educational systems, became the norm and was the standard used in formal education in Ghana. Moreover, the conditions and expectations set out during the colonial time did little to encourage the education of girls and worked against the matrilineal societies of Southern Ghana by promoting male domination.

While the Western-based formal education system did little to integrate the specificity of African realities into their curriculum, the missionary groups continued to freely open schools in places that were suited to their interest, thus expansion was sporadic, not structured, and highly concentrated in urban areas and areas with high economic activity. These sporadic and slow school expansions were confined to the South of Ghana and lasted until the 1940s. With the rise of different political parties and the end of World War 2, Ghana witnessed an increase and demand for primary schools (B. George, 1976). George states that the increase in demand resulted in local communities opening hundreds of primary schools without notification, assistance, or registration with Educational Units (1976). She further argues that local communities took on the initiative to address the needs of their people and open schools; therefore, these schools were unaided, lacked equipment, materials, and the presence of trained teachers (1976). According to reports conducted by the Education Department in 1945, the number of unaided schools in the South increased from 500 to 2000 in a five-year span (Ibid, p.27). She summarizes her argument saying, although both the increase in schools and the increase in the participants attending schools could be seen as a potential achievement, the unplanned and uncoordinated opening of these schools threatened the standard of formal education throughout the South of Ghana (1976).

The uncoordinated and unplanned opening of mass schools throughout the South of Ghana proved problematic because of the lack of consistency in curriculum, teaching methods, and practices across the schools. To address this problem, the central government replaced untrained teachers with trained teachers (George, 1976). According to George, this decision required an increase of public funds to support the salary of trained teachers; therefore, the central government put in place a taxation policy that taxed Native Authorities (1976). This

taxation assisted selected schools with equipment, trained teachers, and school materials. During this period, the central government opened several teacher-training colleges to support the expansion of schools in the South of Ghana. However, those admitted were predominantly men (Obeng, 2002).

In 1951, a new predominantly African government replaced the British controlled government. During this time, president Kwame Nkrumah, sought to put in place policies and structures to coordinate the mass schooling that was unraveling throughout the country, which also had a severe impact on the potential of girls. Despite these efforts, in 1957 at the time of independence, ninety percent of Ghanaian women were illiterate (UNESCO, 1989). Such level of illiteracy was contrary to national goals of building an economically stable and egalitarian society (Obeng, 2002). Therefore, Nkrumah set the stage for educational development by making it one of his highest priorities. Nkrumah's major objective was to rapidly expand public primary school so that every child had the opportunity to access school without paying tuition fees. This ambitious goal was followed by the formal abolition of tuition fees and the conversion of unaided schools to public schools (Osafo-Apeanti & Asiedu-Addo, 2014). Moreover, during Nkrumah's presidency English continued to be emphasized as the language of instruction and that schools were advised to stay away from teaching in their local language.

While enrolments doubled during the first year of this initiative, there were two challenges that unfolded. First, there were not a sufficient amount of trained teachers to support the large numbers of enrolled students, and second, there were barely any girls enrolled in these schools. In order to address the first issue and support the expansion of primary schools, the Ghanaian government selected numerous untrained teachers to staff the classrooms while teacher-training colleges were in the process of opening. While the government made progress

with the first challenge, it was not until years later that the second challenge was addressed because during these crucial years, the focus was on expanding and increasing enrolment. In other words, no attention was placed on improving the quality of formal education or on the discrimination that accrue, continuing the practice of their former colonial powers.

Free and Compulsory Primary Education

In 1961, Nkrumah implemented the Education Act, which was meant to ensure that every Ghanaian child would obtain free primary and middle school formal education (Obeng, 2002). This act outlined the responsibilities of Local Education Authorities and made primary formal education compulsory. The Nkrumah regime took responsibility for the textbook fees and provided free textbooks to primary school students (MacBeath, 2010). During this time, Ghana witnessed phenomenal growth in the public educational system both by absorbing formerly private schools and by opening new ones to support the mass entrance of children.

At the end of the Nkrumah years, formal education had become tuition free at every level of the public system. While this was seen as a great accomplishment, untrained teachers continued to make up sixty-five percent of the total teaching staff (MacBeath, 2010). The mass expansion of schools had both an economic and political toll on Ghana. In order to support the rapid growth of the educational system, the government had to incur much debt. This increasing debt eventually led to a nation-wide economic crisis, resulting in international intervention.

Educational Reforms and International Intervention

The need to reform Ghana's educational system had been recognized by the Ghanaian community since the mid-1970s when various political parties argued that the post-independence

educational system was not relevant to the needs of their community (Asiedu-Addo, 2014). In other words, the heavy focus on academic courses neither served the needs of individuals nor the nation at large (Dei, 2004). Furthermore, many were concerned that the educational reforms in Ghana shifted from focusing on domestic needs to meeting the needs of international trends (Unterhalter, 2007a).

Due to the disintegration of the Ghanaian economy during the 1970s, the government cut back on educational funding, which in turn led to the deterioration of school structures, lack of educational materials, and low enrolment rates. This limited financing coincided with two military coups and the exodus of qualified teachers to neighbouring countries, contributing to demoralization within the educational system. By 1983, following two failed reforms; Ghana's formal education system reached a state of crisis providing an opportunity for the international financial community to intervene. With the educational crisis placing a burden on the government's national budget, the Ghanaian government saw the introduction of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as an opportunity to implement educational reforms (Dei, 2004). Therefore, in their thirst to attract foreign aid, Ghana took part in educational reforms influenced by global financial institutions and their market-oriented thinking.

The introduction of SAP in Ghana was the first step taken to align Ghana's educational policies with the needs of the international financial community. In order to implement these policies, the World Bank and IMF, attributed Ghana's poor economic performance to their crisis in governance and the mismanagement of local policies (Britwum, Johan, & Tay, 2001). Therefore, the SAP aimed to privatize educational services and decentralize the government's role of financing the education sector. The SAP placed emphasis on improving the quality of the formal education system by implementing educational reforms that met the needs of the labour

market. In order to accomplish this goal, the Ghanaian government was advised to divide the financing responsibility of formal education by displacing this responsibility onto local communities (Britwum et al., 2001). By placing the financial burden of schooling on local community members, parents, teachers, and school administrators, SAP further exacerbated educational inequalities.

The imposition of the educational reforms in the 1980s not only had an effect on the nation at large, but also had a negative impact on girls and women in their efforts to achieve formal education. As the cost to send children to school increased, the number of girls accessing formal education decreased. Unfortunately, Ghanaian girls and women had to bear the burden of government cutbacks in the country. Many initiatives were theoretically implemented, such as, The Girls' Education Scholarship Scheme[3], and the School Feeding Programme[4]. However, according to Dei, none were successful in systematically responding to the needs of the community (2004). Since the World Bank Education For All Monitoring Report (2005), as well as their Education in Ghana Report (2010), equates gender equality with decreasing the gender gap in enrolment rates, Ghana's achievement in gender parity was recognized as a regional success story. These outcomes presented Ghana as a showcase for the success of World Bank and IMF policies in Africa and justified further intervention by the West.

In Ghana, along with other countries throughout Africa, SAP have never successfully addressed the requirements for social change nor promoted equality throughout the nation (Britwum et al., 2001). Rather than using formal education to address issues of social justice, SAP framed formal education as an aspect of human capital formation and a vital component in

[3] To read about Girls Formal education Scholarship Scheme, see Barriers to Girls' Formal education in Ghana (Bardley, 2000)

[4] To read about this initiative, see Ghana School Feeding Programme: A practical exploration of the 'behind the façade' approach (De Hauwere, 2008)

increasing the productive capacity of people. The World Bank and IMF set out policies to improve the quality of formal education by structuring the system to serve a distributive function and to meet the needs of the labour market (Blackmore, 1995). Throughout this period, both the World Bank and the IMF formally prioritized access to formal education in their policy reports, because formal education was viewed as the instrument to expand the pool of available resources for labour, which was crucial for national economic growth (Ibid). These priorities guided the educational reforms and were the underlying foundation for projects such as the Ghana Partnership for Education, which focused on increasing infrastructure to create access to formal education and gain more enrolment (Ibid). An evaluation of educational progress undertaken by the World Bank suggests that between 1988 and 2003 there was a twenty percent increase in enrolment in basic formal education, a reduction in dropouts, and an increase in girls' access to education (Dei, 2004). However, these reports fail to analyze how their policies have created economic barriers and hardships that are shouldered by the most vulnerable in Ghana: women and girls. As will be further discussed in chapter six, for any initiative or policy to be successfully implemented, it must put the needs of local recipients at the center of their focus.

Structural Changes of School

Since the 1960s, Ghanaian educational institutions have undergone numerous structural changes to reform the quality of formal education and the experience through formal education. Initially, the duration of pre-university schooling was seventeen years. Students in Ghana spent six years in Primary School, four years in Middle School, five years in Secondary schools, and two years in preparation for university. In other words, the total pre-university program was 17 years in duration and was deemed by many as developing skills that were not relevant to the

Ghanaian community (George, 1976).

In 1974, the Government decided to replace the 17-year program of general elementary education with a new 12-year program. This new program would consist of six years of Primary School, three years of Junior Secondary School, and three years Senior Secondary School. This reform was motivated by the pressing need for trained manpower in the Ghanaian community as well as reducing the cost for parents who could not afford to send their children for a long duration of time (George, 1976). In 1987, with the assistance of several development partners, Ghana was able to reduce the duration of their pre-university education and implement these new arrangements.

In 2002, the Educational Reform Review Committee (ERRC) was established with a mandate to review the educational system in Ghana and to make the system more responsive to the current challenges (Anyan, 2010). The work of the ERRC resulted in the implementation of a new educational structure in 2007. The structure adopted was two years of Kindergarten, six years of Primary School, three years of Junior High School, and four years of Senior High School (MoEYS, 2004, p.2). This new structure focused on including early childhood formal education and to increase secondary school to provide students with sufficient time to undertake the material required in order to write for the Certificate Examination (MoEYS, 2004).

Following the end of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) Government term, which sponsored the 2007 educational reforms, the successor government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) reverted the duration of the Senior Secondary School back to three years. This reversion severely impacted Ghanaian students, given that the four-year structure was only implemented for three years; therefore, students entering Secondary School did not complete one full cycle. This 14-year program is the current structure in Ghana. The Ghanaian government recommends

that a child enrols in Primary School at the age of six and if a child progresses through primary school, without repetition, then primary school would be completed at 12 years of age (George, 1976).

Ghana's colonial history has had an impact on the experience of Ghanaian children in postcolonial formal education, especially through the courses that were taught and language of instruction, which systematically reduced the role of women to the private sphere. The colonial rule not only altered Ghana as a nation state, but also left a permanent legacy with regards to gender relations and the attribution of women's power within society (Egbo, 2000). The legacy of colonialism set the stage for some of the barriers women endure in contemporary Ghana.

In the last fifty years the country has witnessed a period, both in structure and in content, of intense and unstable educational reforms. The instability of the educational structure during this time is attributed to the economic, political, and social crises throughout the country. Due to this instability, the educational policies and structures implemented in Ghana have been reformed numerous times to conform to global norms. Moreover, understanding formal education as a political phenomenon and the implementation of educational policies as politically motivated sheds light on the instability and constant reforms of formal education in Ghana. In other words, the politicization of formal education in Ghana, by various political parties, has led to Ghana's turbulent and unstable school system. Each political party in power has pursued different priorities in formal education, which has resulted in the inconsistency in structure, content, and duration of the Ghanaian school system (Poku, Aawaar, & Adomah Worae, 2013). However, I also attribute this instability with their indiscriminate importation of European educational models that did not reflect local realities: social, cultural, and economic. Moreover, the neglect of improving girls' formal education is a systemic flaw inherited from the colonial

era that has woven into the fabric of much of the current Ghanaian educational norms and practices. In the next chapter, I further explore the historical understanding of the place of women in the development of formal education throughout Ghana. I also discuss the role and mandate of formal education in Ghana using a feminist critique to analyze the position of women within this mandate.

Chapter Four
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Formal education has been seen as the key to developing the economic, social, scientific and political institutions of nation states (Weiner, 1994). While the formal education system is often deemed as a site for learning, advancement, and empowerment, it is in fact, a political-cultural site embodying conflicting political values, histories, and practices (Giroux, 1983, p. 37). Formal education and the classroom should thus be understood as a site of power that symbolically reproduces and reinforces existing power relations. This understanding is informed by Bourdieu's critical pedagogy, which suggests that schools cannot be viewed as neutral and impartial institutions that are isolated from the power relations that exist in society (McLaren, 2009). For Bourdieu, schooling contributes to the maintenance of an unequal social system by privileging certain cultural heritages and reproducing existing patterns of class inequality rather than challenging them (McLaren, 2009). Critical feminists have taken Bourdieu's analysis beyond class inequalities to include other forms of inequalities such as gender and race. My research project is informed generally by Bourdieu's understanding of cultural reproduction and cultural capital, and specifically by a critical feminist perspective on gender and formal education. With a critical feminist pedagogic framework, my research examines the relations of power within primary schools in rural Ghana and analyzes the ways in which existing overt and covert power relations embedded in the nature and structures of schools and society can be transformed (Gore, 1992).

Feminisms

Women's quest against gender subordination and discrimination dates back to the 17th century in some societies. This quest, to find the root cause of women's subordination, has

resulted in the development of various feminist perspectives, approaches, definitions, and strategies which has consequently led to the formation of diverse feminist schools of thoughts and theories (Derayeh, 2002). In other words, there is not one feminist perspective, but rather various feminist approaches to critical pedagogy that respond to their interpretation of the root problem of gender inequalities in formal education, employment opportunities, economic, social, and political spheres. However, while various schools of thought have prioritized different aspects of women's struggle against oppressive forces, their foundation remains the same: based on the core concepts of women, experience, and personal politics (Greene, 2009). The devotion to these core concepts and the concern that women are located unequally in social formations has led feminist interest in formal education: a site, argued by Gore, that offers knowledge and practices complicit in devaluing, exploiting, and oppressing women (1992). This understanding has led feminists to utilize critical pedagogy as a means to analyze the deep-seated cultural, institutional, and political barriers that serve to perpetuate the power structures, which maintain gender disparity in the educational system (Villaverde, 2007). I will consider the three main contemporary Western feminist theoretical frameworks: liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism, and their educational applications as critiqued against African Feminism. I do recognize that classifying feminist theory in terms of the mainstream perspectives can be problematic and limiting, as this form of classification does not capture every strand of feminism (Arnot, 2002). However, for the purpose of this conceptual framework, I will be using these three schools of thought as well as African feminism as lenses that shed light on the causes of women's subordination in formal education. I will analyze the adequacies and inadequacies of these schools of thought in relation to critical feminist pedagogy, and I will use the latter as the basis for my conceptual framework on gender and formal education.

Liberal Feminism

The liberal feminist analysis of formal education has become a base from which some of the work on the relationship of women and schooling has emerged. However, I will challenge this approach by demonstrating its limitations and shortcomings in its narrow-focus on texts and institutional structures. Informed by Bourdieu's understanding of critical pedagogy, I support a critical feminist approach that moves beyond simple gender binaries to expose the socio-cultural processes that reproduce hierarchy, differentiation and inequality (Greene, 2009). The main intent for liberal feminists in formal education is to secure equal opportunities for the sexes and to remove barriers that prevent girls from reaching their full potential. Barriers identified by liberal feminists are, for example, lack of women in positions of authority in formal education, girls situated in sex-stereotyped subjects (away from math and sciences), curriculum based on 'male knowledge', and textbook images of women in inferior positions. Within the classroom, liberal feminists problematize the learner and argue that female students have low self-esteem and take too few risks; therefore, their solutions entail teachers encouraging girls to behave in less limited ways and promoting girls to be less passive (Acker, 1987). In other words, for liberal feminists, solutions to break through barriers that subordinate women in the formal education system can be addressed within the current structures of formal education.

I must note that theorists working from the liberal feminist perspective have been extremely important in documenting, outlining and exposing the sexual biases in curricular materials and the sexism that underlies classroom practices. By identifying barriers to formal education as barriers that lie within the educational setting, strategies supported by liberal feminists involve altering socialization practices, empowering girls to compete, encouraging girls in science and math courses, rewriting curricular texts, and changing attitudes (Acker, 1987).

Yet, such theory does not address the roots of gender equality and fails to bring forth women's experiences and voices. Moreover, Weiler emphasizes that while these practices are strength of the liberal feminists perspective, the framework's lack of social or economic analysis limits its ability to explain the origins of these practices or the ways in which other structures of power and control affect what goes on within schools (2009). Arnot furthers this argument by adding that these theorists fail to place schools and schooling in the context of wider social and economic analysis; therefore, they fail to analyze the constraints under which the process of schooling takes place (2002). By doing so, I argue that liberal feminists limit the potential success of their strategies by not confronting or acknowledging the impact of patriarchy, power, and the systematic subordination of women on girls' unequal position in the educational system. It is this last point that distinguishes critical feminists from liberal feminist theorists. While liberal feminists position the solution of women's subordination in formal education within the classroom setting, critical feminists take Bourdieu's position that school systems are connected to broader relations of power. Furthermore, for change to actualize for girls in the educational system, policies must target the relations of power to restructure the economic and social order, rather than work within the current unequal educational structures that promote gender inequality. This argument will be further detailed with Bourdieu's understanding of cultural capital in the last portion of this chapter.

Radical Feminism

While in most instances the liberal feminist emphasis has been to problematize the girl child and for teachers to encourage girls to behave in less limited ways, the radical feminist problematize masculinity, and argue for the organization of schooling around 'feminine'

principles such as community building, nurturing, and cooperation. They consider patriarchy; the least noticed yet most important structure of inequality, as the main source of women's subordination (Connell, 1985). These feminists attribute inequalities in schooling to patriarchal forces and male-dominated power (Jackson, 1997). As Briskin argues, radical feminists criticize the androcentric liberal paradigm for attempting to integrate women in a patriarchal system that is inherently oppressive to them (1988). In other words, radical feminists do not seek to work within the current educational structures that perpetuate women's subordination, but rather promote the need for a fundamental change that eliminates male dominance and patriarchal structures (Jackson, 1997). A major concern for radical feminists, Acker points out, is the notion of the male monopolization of knowledge and culture (1987). She argues that radical feminists understand society's 'knowledge' as dangerously deficient, given that it is a record of decisions and activities governed by men, presented in the guise of 'human knowledge' (1987). Indeed, patriarchy is the current educational paradigm: the content of formal education is defined by the interests of men, the primary recipients of educational effort are intended to be boys, and the transmitters of knowledge are expected to be men (Acker, 1987). With this argument at the forefront of the radical feminist movement, theorists working from this perspective advocate for single-sex schooling based on girl-centered curriculum and practices. Single-sex schools would change the sexual politics of everyday life in schools by adapting the school curriculum to the needs of girls, valuing the input of girls, giving girls enough attention in the classroom through participatory teaching methods, and providing girls with the freedom from fear of harassment. In essence, radical feminists believe that formal education can be potentially liberating; however, not in its present state. They argue that formal education can only be transformative if shifts are made in the curriculum, school knowledge and educational culture from its male baseline. As

part of the overall feminist challenge to patriarchal forces, radical feminists view their role as one that re-educates society into non-male centered behaviours and practices.

Notwithstanding the limitations of a radical feminist perspective, some aspects do appeal to my research. For example, not working within a system that is structured around patriarchal principles and creating a classroom environment that supports and values 'feminine' culture is liberating. However, I must challenge this approach's narrow focus on patriarchy and its inability to critically engage with the various structures and relations of power that intersect to create an oppressive environment for women. This inability stems from radical feminists considering patriarchy as a continuing form of oppression throughout history, yet failing to question the origins and the reasons for its continuation. By ignoring these two aspects, solutions provided by radical feminists, such as single-sex schooling and girl-centered curriculum, fail to fully understand and address gender inequalities in formal education. Single-sex schools and girl-centered curriculum may address the effects of patriarchy in schooling and create an environment more conducive to learning for girls; however, I argue that this solution only targets one aspect of gender inequality and fails to address gender equality. I challenge the radical feminists perspective and agree with Stone arguing that patriarchy is not an isolated phenomenon that always existed throughout history, but rather emerged with the development of the state and private property; therefore, must be analyzed as a power structure connected to those relations of power throughout society (1994). As mentioned earlier, patriarchy is an important power relation to analyze within the educational paradigm, however, it is not the only power relation that governs what women learn and how women learn. With this being said, patriarchy must be understood as a structure tied to social relations of class and race, which together, contribute to the subordination of women. By adding the categories of race and class to that of gender, we can

begin to reveal the diversity and complexity of girls' experiences in schools and the power relations that exist among women (Stone, 1994). For critical feminist theorists, gender inequalities in formal education can only be targeted once we understand and analyze the specificity of women's lives, their identities, and the ways in which a woman can experience oppression in one sphere while being privileged or oppressive in another. By understanding the various identities that create individual women, such as class and race, we can then begin to understand the ways in which women face different inequalities and how schools are arenas that can reproduce these inequalities (Aronowitz, 2009). This understanding of class and its reproduction within the school will be targeted during my analysis of Bourdieu's work on critical pedagogy, and will be used to critique the radical feminist emphasis on patriarchy.

Socialist Feminism

As mentioned earlier, the strength of feminists working from a liberal perspective lies in their method of documenting gender discrimination and their analysis of sexist texts and practices throughout the school environment. Similarly, the strength of the radical feminist perspective is their understanding of the male monopolization of knowledge and their promotion of an educational system organized around 'feminine' principles. However, both perspectives have significant shortcomings when it comes to analyzing gender inequality in schooling. To begin with, both the liberal and radical perspectives omit a social or economic analysis, consequently limiting their ability to explain the origins of the oppressive practices they advocate against (Weiner, 1994). In other words, by failing to place schools in the context of wider social and economic analysis, both approaches fail to analyze the socio-cultural, institutional, historical, and political constraints under which the process of schooling takes place (Weiler, 2009). With a

social and economic analysis at the core of the socialist feminist approach, these feminists challenge the foundation of radical feminist theory by arguing that patriarchy is not the sole factor that contributes to women's oppression, but one of many interconnected factors (other factors include capitalism and racism). By considering both patriarchy and capitalism as sources of gender inequality, socialists feminist move beyond the limitations of the radical perspective to try to understand the construction of gender within specific historical and social sites. In the context of the school, socialist feminist advocate that these power relations are present and interconnect to govern what practices are emphasized and what learning is taught (Stromquist, 1990). In other words, socialist feminist advocate that schools are not neutral sites and view formal education and schooling as an arena in which wider patterns of social power and subordination are reproduced and sustained.

The second aspect that differentiates the socialist feminist perspective from other feminist theorists is their understanding of women as a group of people that have multiple positions in society based on an identity that embodies various intersections (race, class, sexual orientation) (Stone, 1994). This notion of an identity that embodies various intersections is essential in the socialist feminist understanding of women's subordination in formal education. In order to grasp the root cause of women's subordination within the context of schooling, socialist feminists argue for the need to view women not only as individuals described in terms of their gender but also viewed in terms of their class and race (Arnot, 2002). This point is a key concern for Brenner, a socialist feminist, who argues that girls with different class and race subjectivities will have different experiences in schools and will interact differently with subordination (1987; Stone, 1994). Brenner further argues that the increasing awareness of the complex ways that gender, race, and class interact to shape girls' lives in and out of school allows socialist feminists

to analyze the role of schools in perpetuating gender divisions and reproducing power relations (Quoted in Acker, 1987). Given that the key concern for socialist feminist is to analyze how formal education is related to the reproduction of gender divisions within capitalism, their major approach is to connect sexist practices in schools to women's subordination in wider society (Weiler, 2009). For example, their role is to analyze how positioning working class girls in certain domestic oriented courses to learn certain soft skills restricts girls to low-paid sectors of employment. Moreover, socialist feminist argue that schools do not create the gendered divisions, however, they reinforce the present arrangement of society by accepting the status quo in both class and gender terms (Ropers, 2011). In order to liberate women, socialist feminists want to see a fundamental change in the social structure, one that eliminates patriarchal capitalism. While socialist feminists provide a useful explanation for women's subordination in schools, by connecting their inequality to their oppression in society as a whole, I share Acker's position and find their educational writing to be mainly theoretical rather than practical. It is in strategies for educational solutions that socialist-feminist writing appears most limiting (1987). Given that their strategy, similar to that of radical feminists, requires the elimination of capitalism and patriarchy, they fail to provide concrete solutions to address gender inequality.

Arnot states, much of socialist feminist writing is influenced by the work of Bourdieu and his analysis of how schooling reproduces inequalities and power through his concept of cultural capital (2002). Bourdieu's concern with exploring the connections between class, culture, and power in society ultimately led him to study educational institutions. Indeed, Bourdieu views the formal education system as the primary institution that mediates in maintaining and enhancing broader sets of power relations through the production, transmission and accumulation of the various forms of 'cultural capital' (Aronowitz, 2009). Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'

refers to “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another” (McLaren, 2009, p. 80). In essence, cultural capital represents manners, values, practices, ways of knowing, talking, socializing, and tasting (Arnot, 2002). For Bourdieu, cultural capital in itself does not pose challenges, however, in the school environment, valuing and rewarding students that exhibit the cultural capital of the dominant culture is problematic. He further explains that students who subscribe to the subordinate class culture find that the cultural capital they inherit holds little value within schools that systematically devalue certain characteristics associated with their cultural capital (McLaren, 2009). Considering this, Bourdieu argues that schools have become sites that validate the characteristics of the ruling or professional classes, for example, the ability to understand and use ‘educated’ language (McLaren, 2009). In other words, schooling sustains an unequal social system by privileging the dominant cultural heritage and reproducing existing patterns of class inequality rather than challenging them. Moreover, Bourdieu claims that the formal education system presupposes the possession of a certain amount of cultural capital, which few students in fact possess (McLaren, 2009). Therefore, there is a great amount of inefficiency in teaching, where students simply do not comprehend what their teachers are trying to get across (Jackson, 1997). Furthering this argument, McLaren contends that teachers create unequal classroom environments by feeling more comfortable and relating more positively with students who display cultural capital similar to their own. In turn, teachers acknowledge these students more, spend more of their instructional time with them, and encourage them to work independently (Jackson, 1997). Henceforth arguing, through sets of practices and behaviours like these, schools have created an unequal playing field that legitimizes and reproduces the dominant culture.

Critical Feminism

Critical feminist theorists have taken Bourdieu's analysis beyond class inequalities to include other forms of inequalities such as gender and race. Critical feminists scholars agree with Bourdieu that schools are not a neutral site; however, argue that schools are sites that embody the elements of both domination and liberation (Gore, 1992). Therefore, schools become challenged environments rather than simple sites for reproducing dominant ideology (Gore, 1992). Within this environment, critical feminist scholars are concerned with how knowledge is produced, negotiated, transformed, and distributed throughout society (Greene, 2009). This interest is rooted in their understanding that knowledge produced in schools is never neutral or objective but rather rooted in certain historical contexts governed by various power relations. Therefore, the main strategy for critical feminist theorists is to find ways of working with students in an educational setting that enables them to redefine their knowledge and reframe their experiences (Greene, 2009). Critical feminist educators focus on women's experiences and its connection to power relations in society. By understanding lived experiences, and having students tell their stories, teachers are able to grasp how girls connect their experiences to dominant ideologies and how they define social relations of power as it relates to their life. For gender equality to be eliminated within the educational system and in turn, within wider society, critical feminist argue that teachers must reconsider and reframe the existing hegemonic understandings and definitions of knowledge, power, and equitable formal education (Connell, 1985). By reframing definitions of knowledge and understanding experiences in their historical context, the formal education system can become a tool that undermines the divisions between girls and boys.

Embedded in the universal understanding of schooling is the assumption that schools are apolitical sites where identity-less students gather, grasp the same information, and share the

same opportunities to succeed (Mansfield, 2011). With this understanding, the formal education system is deemed as a site of learning, advancement, and empowerment. However, in reality, critical feminists argue that schools are not neutral sites isolated from the power relations of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism that are deeply ingrained in wider society; rather, schools are sites that reflect and reinforce these relations (McLaren, 2009). I argue that those most vulnerable to subordination in these cultural and political sites are girls. While various feminist perspectives have attempted to provide strategies that allow women to overcome their subordination, their approaches have been limited in addressing the root cause of women's inequality (Thompson, 1994). Both theorists working from a liberal feminist and a radical feminist perspective have had an impact on formal education, however, their analysis of women's subordination have been inadequate. While the liberal approach to critical pedagogy exposes the sexual biases in curricular materials and the sexism that underlies classroom practices, their approach fails to connect schools to wider social and economic processes. Therefore, they fail to analyze the constraints under which the process of schooling takes place and continue to work within the current structures that are inherently unequal to women. In contrast to the liberal feminist approach, radical feminists advocate for a fundamental change in society that eliminates male dominance and patriarchal structures (Jackson, 1997). While patriarchy is an important power relation to analyze within the educational paradigm, it is not the only power relation that governs what women learn and how women learn. With this being said, the radical feminists perspective fails to understand patriarchy as a structure tied to social relations of class and race, which together, contribute to the subordination of women. While the socialist feminist perspective provides a more holistic understanding of women and formal education, their approach is limited in the strategies they provide. Socialist feminists connect the

inequality girls experience in schools to their oppression throughout society. Informed by Bourdieu's work, socialist feminists view the classroom as an arena that rewards the dominant culture and reproduces their values. In this space, gender, race, and class interact to shape girls' lives in and out of school. Although, socialist feminist provide a thorough analysis of women's subordination in schools, their writing does not provide concrete strategies to eradicate gender inequality, which constructs its approach as one that is theoretical and not practical.

African Feminisms

As a result of these feminist efforts, gender has become an important analytic category in research surrounding the affairs of the world. Gender research has advanced to the forefront of academic discourse and has shed light on the importance of understanding the gender dimension in prescribing any solutions (Oyewumi, 1997). However, these feminist discourses have been largely distilled from Western experiences and tend to assume a universal unity among women as a whole, based on their understanding of subordination (Mohanty, 1984). This deems problematic, as any serious scholarship on the place of gender in African realities must start in Africa. In other words, Western feminists cannot speak about, nor speak for 'African women' on the basis that their oppression is shared. African feminist, such as Maria Nzomo, view the practical applicability of Western feminism as more relevant to abstract situations than actual occurrences in Africa (1995). Feminists such as Nzomo, have issue with the idea of transplanting Western feminist notions of gender, related values, and solution to problems, into discourses that relate to African women because of their overgeneralization of African oppressions. Argued by various African feminists is the notion that meanings and interpretations should derive from local contexts and should be culturally specific (Oyewumi, 1997). Therefore, policies implemented

'concerning' Africa have failed to promote equality because of their inability to connect with local realities. As supported by Tedla, there is a need for grounding African formal education systems to African worldviews in order for Africans to reclaim their identity (1995). Moreover, I argue that Western feminists have reproduced a 'colonization of knowledge'. What I mean by using this term is that Western feminists and scholars use African women as instruments to collect raw data relative to their research and then use this raw data to manufacture knowledge (Nnaemeka, 2003). Therefore, to meaningfully explain the phenomenon of African feminism and to promote sustainable development, one must refer to the African environment and build a knowledge based on indigenous voice and experience (Nnaemeka, 2004). More specifically, African women must not be viewed as informants or case studies; rather they must be viewed as collaborators and storytellers. As Nancy Goldberger states: "stories are theories, and storytellers are theorists"(N. Goldberg, quoted in Derayeh, 2014). Hence, the difficulty of applying feminist concepts to express and analyze African realities is the central challenge of gender studies and shared by my research project. To overcome this challenge, I have paid attention to development priorities as local communities like Frankadua see them and have been conscious of my interpretation of knowledge.

What I observed and found problematic during my literature review was that when speaking to the status of women, the literature surrounding this topic, dominated by Western feminists and academics, consistently refers to women as 'marginalized' or at the 'margins of social hierarchy'. In fact, simply using the term 'African women' often assumes poor, powerless, and helpless group whose lives are different from those of the West. More importantly, the term homogenizes women with vastly different histories, cultures, and experiences, as though they are victims of 'their' cultures and share the same 'marginalization' (Mohanty, 1991). By defining

women with concepts such as marginalization, this literature insinuates that women are not major players in societal functions and are powerless. However, my research in Frankadua would criticize these designations and oppose these insinuations. Communicating with women that worked in the market, in the farm, or occupied their time in trading, revealed that hierarchies of power exist everywhere. While women are bound by their political, economic, and cultural circumstances, they do have power within their own realm. This point will be furthered in my discussion chapter.

While the various feminist approaches outlined in this chapter provide some insight on women's subordination in formal education, it is the critical feminist approach combined with an understanding of African feminism that provides the most suitable perspective for the root cause of women's oppressions and it is through this lens that I will analyze the barriers to formal education for girls in Frankadua. This combined approach views the classroom as a platform in which students and teachers can critically interrogate the basic assumptions about the relationships between power and knowledge, and the pedagogical relationship between culture, economy, and ideology (Weiler, 2009). This interrogation allows critical feminists to critique relations of power in ways that transform existing overt and covert power relations embedded in the nature and structures of schools and society (Gore, 1992). In the process of critiquing and interrogating these power relations, critical feminists problematize race, class, and gender, and the ways in which they intersect to create grounds for inequalities. By problematizing these stratifying characteristics, critical feminists are able to provide an agenda that helps transform the dominant knowledge production and provide a space for personal expression. In other words, critical feminists collaborating with African feminists can provide the conceptual tools required to give way to political action and structural transformation and provide women with an

opportunity to have a voice and hence be empowered. Through a critical feminist lens and a consciousness of the African feminist critique, I introduce the findings of my research and the result of my fieldwork in Frankadua.

Chapter Five
Findings

The focus of this chapter, therefore, is on the presentation of the main findings of my case study concerning the barriers to girls' formal education in Frankadua. Categorized under emergent themes, these findings shed light on the experiences of girls' efforts to attain basic formal education in rural Frankadua.

As I have mentioned in the methodology chapter, the data analysis process resulted in the formation of four emergent themes, all of which represent different but often-related factors that influence or pose as barriers to girls' formal education. I must first reiterate again that Ghana is not monolithic and consists of diverse societies. Within these diverse societies, women encounter different educational experiences. My research explores the educational experiences of only a small group of Ghanaian women and cannot be generalized to apply to all the experiences of Ghanaian women. Notwithstanding, my research brings forth the voices of nine participants and explores the barriers and opportunities they encountered. It must also be noted that one factor cannot be said to apply in the same way to each of the girls within this study. Each determinant of and deterrent to girls' potential or success will vary from participant to participant, since each individual has different experiences, resources, and interests. Furthermore, it is not possible to determine which factor acts as the most important determinant of or the most significant barrier to girls' participation in formal education. Figure 2 provides the characteristics of the participants in this research project.

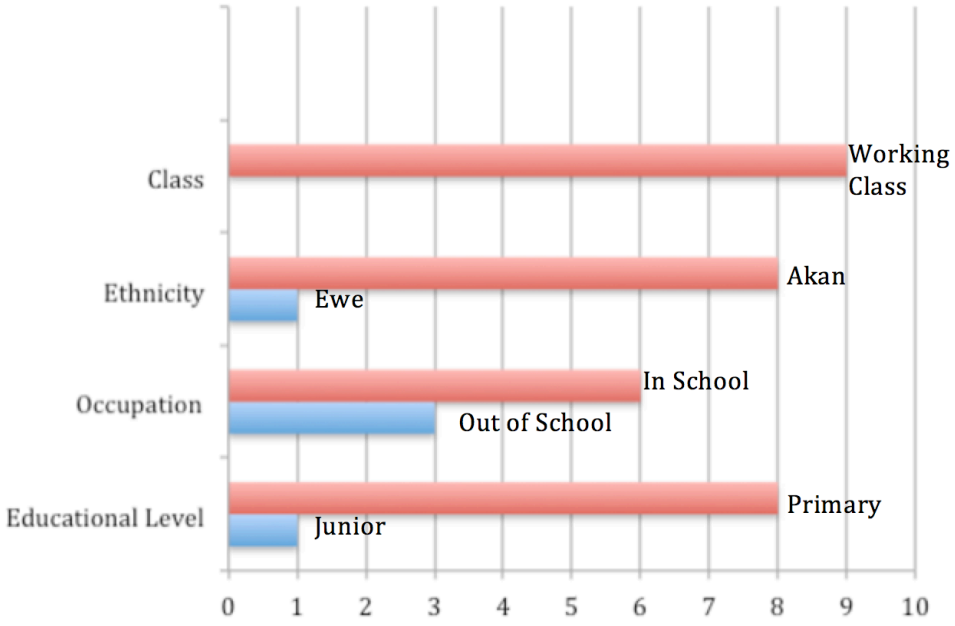

Figure 2: Characteristics of Participants

The Journey to School

Interviews with nine participants revealed that their journey to obtaining access to basic formal education were for the most part similar. An open-ended prompt asked the participants:

"Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic formal education."

This question was further simplified, when I realized many of the participants did not understand what exactly I was asking. Therefore I changed my question to:

"Tell me how you were able to go to school."

The three key areas that the participants responded to included: the amount of financial resources required to go to school, the cultural approval that was required from their community, and the support they received from their family.

The amount of financial resources required to go to school was one of the key findings shared by all of the participants in the interviews. When interviewing the participants, all of them – whether in school or not – mentioned they would engage in various activities to earn money.

Although every single participant mentioned that financial resources were a necessity, each of the participants approached this aspect differently. Four of the participants would either sell items at the market or help other women run errands at the market; two of participants would work at the farm, three of the participants would provide laundry services to the community members. Of this total, six of the participants would also engage in sexual activities.

All participants mentioned the lack of financial resources as a deterrent in attaining basic formal education. All participants also mentioned that they required financial resources to pay for school uniforms, school supplies, classroom fees, examination fees, and notebooks. Some of the participants, such as Yasmine, mentioned they would be sent home if their school fees were not paid. Yasmine further explained,

> I spent two years in the same grade level because I did not have the money to pay for my examination fee. The school kicked me out because my mother would not pay them for the fees. I would go to class everyday and the director would come to my class and tell me, in front of everyone, that I need to pay the money. He always said 'a little is better than nothing, go home and find a little'. (February 27, 2015, Frankadua)

I witnessed Yasmine's experience on my first day of observations in the school. I was sitting at the back of a grade six English class. While the teacher was explaining the lesson, a male teacher came storming into the class, approached a girl, and asked why she had not paid her tuition. The male teacher went on to slap the girl's desk with a cane and yelled at her saying "you must bring something, next time you won't be allowed in the classroom". He had not yet seen me sitting in the back and the female teacher was trying to hint at him that I was in the classroom. As the male teacher turned around to address another student, he saw me at the back of the classroom and said, "Oh I did not know you were here" and left the classroom smiling (February 17, 2015).

It must be noted that Yasmine's experience was different from the majority of the

participants. Although she did not have the funds to pay for her examination fees, Yasmine continued to go to school every day. Even though she would be sent home, she would try to go to school the next day. However, other participants such as Sonia, Amy and Beth, simply stopped going to school because they did not have money and did not want to be embarrassed. The majority of the participants in this research had approximately four years of formal education. However, it was found that all of the participants experienced a study gap due to socio-economic and cultural obligations. Sonia mentioned,

> I would go to school ten days in a month […] and spend the other days selling nuts in the market. Some days I didn't have items to sell so I would help other ladies in the market. I would be in the market the whole day. (February 28, 2015, Frankadua)

Six of the participants in this study mentioned that they engaged in sex trade in order to earn money and pay for school supplies, notebooks, and uniforms. Many narrated the financial challenges they faced and how they felt they could exchange sex for material gains. Due to the transactional sexual activities, all six girls were impregnated and were obliged, by the lack of financial support, to drop out of school shortly after.

> I was in the same grade for two years because I could not pay my examination fees... I needed money. Then this boy in my community voiced interest in me. He helped me pay for my examination fees and bought me things [...] then I became pregnant. (Mabel, February 28, 2015, Frankadua)

All six participants had children under the age of three. One of the participants, Cynthia, mentioned that she wanted to go back to school when her baby was older but did not think she could go back because she was too old and people would judge her for being old. Cynthia said: "I cannot go to school. Everyone is younger than me. I am too old to go to class and I am with a baby (March 02, 2015, Frankadua)".

In many of the interviews, participants mentioned they did not know they could become pregnant at their age and they did not know about the implications of their sexual activities. For

instance, Mabel said: " We had sex only once. I did not know I was pregnant until 6 months. We were both young (February 28, 2015, Frankadua)".

Another key finding mentioned by the participants, in regards to this section, was the fact that going to school required family support. More than half of the participants did not live with their immediate family members, did not have the support of both parents, or were caring for a sick parent. It must be noted that the majority of the parents/extended family of these participants were illiterate. These participants would spend their days in the community washing peoples clothes, at the farm helping farmers, or running errands for community members. In her interview, Amy mentioned: "My mother used to support me to go to school. My mother gave me money for lunch and gave me books and pencils. When my mom died, I had to support myself. I had to feed myself. Spent all my day finding work (March 05, 2015, Frankadua)".

Amy's experience was shared by other girls as well. Not having the support of the immediate family required the girls to be self-sufficient and spend their days looking for work as a source of income rather than being in school. One of the girls, Hannah, mentioned that after the death of her father, she lived with a boy in the community, both working on the farm in order to make ends meet. Hannah further mentioned that school was no longer a possibility after her father's death and that her immediate goal was to buy and sell at the market.

The next commonality that was brought to the forefront across all the participant experiences was the role of culture in influencing their decision to go to school. All participants unanimously mentioned that it is not the norm for girls to attend school and there is no motivation or encouragement for girls to attend. The girls mentioned when a hardship or difficult time would arise, the first thing that was dropped was school. One of the participants, Sonia, mentioned: "I help my mom read labels at the market […] but when my family needs help at the market, I am

the first one who stops going to school (March 01, 2015, Frankadua)".

All the girls mentioned that they were the first generation in their family to attend some schooling. Although they received some support, there was no cultural appreciation or encouragement for the girls to go to school. Being raised in a cultural environment that did not recognize schooling as a necessity for girls shaped the way the participants perceived their role in achieving basic formal education. Having no role models value formal education made it easy for them to not value formal education.

The Journey in School

The journey for girls in school was for the most part observed by my presence in the school as well as expressed through the following question that sought to prompt discussion on their unique experience:

"Tell me about your experience in school."

As the girls stayed silent during this question, I further simplified by asking,

"Did you like school?"

These questions did not prompt much discussion as participants provided very simple answers to both questions. Therefore, this section heavily relied on my observations in the school and casual conversations with various community members and teachers.

Although it was evident that the participants enjoyed going to school, the experience between those currently in school and those who dropped out was significantly different. However, a commonality shared among all the participants in this study, was the inconsistency in attending school. Gloria explained:

> "I did not go to school every day. Going to school was hard. I would go home [during class time] to find something to eat. I could not stay in the class when I was hungry. Sometimes I stayed at home because I did not want to go to school." (March 03, 2015, Frankadua)

For those participants who were in school, they mentioned that although they enjoyed classes such as Social Studies, Sewing, and English, they could not attend everyday. The participants mentioned that they could not attend school daily because their fees were not paid, they were working in the market, or they simply did not want to go to school. Many mentioned that the responsibilities at home prevented them from attending school everyday.

One of the key findings of this case study was the role placed on girls while they were in school. Observing three different grade levels, I witnessed within all classrooms, that girls were being consistently chosen to hand out exercise books, to clean teacher's desk, to bring the teacher food, to get classroom supplies, to refill the water basin, and to sweep the front of the classroom. This observation was supported by Cynthia's experience in school. Cynthia, an out of school participant, mentioned that she would not be going back to school. When asked why, she mentioned,

> "I do not want to go back to school because I do nothing in school. When I was in school I was always cleaning, washing, and fetching for the teacher or director. I was never in class. I was always around the school doing things for the teacher."

It was during these observations that I witnessed that girls were barely present in class, instead, were always wandering around the courtyards, going in and out of the classroom, performing duties in the classroom, and never focused on the lesson being taught. In essence, the classroom structures reinforced the domestic roles girls performed at home. While girls were out running errands, boys were situated in class, answering questions posed by the teacher, and dominating classroom lessons.

The classroom practices and structures of the school that subordinate the value of girls was a major theme that cut across this section of the findings. Although the majority of the participants stated that their teachers treated them fairly, my observations in the classroom suggested otherwise. I observed three classrooms for two weeks each. The first two classrooms (grade 6 and 4) had male teachers and the last classroom (grade 2) had a female teacher. I witnessed in the first two classrooms, the male teachers would on countless occasions degrade the work of the girls. In a couple of different situations, the teacher grabbed the exercise books of different girl students and went to the front of the classroom to use it as an example of how the exercise was done wrong and then threw their books on their desks.

Another instance of the degrading value of girls and their humiliation was when girls would forget their exercise books at home, the teacher would stand at the front of the class and announce "you knew we had grammar class today, why didn't you bring your notebook, is there something wrong with you?" The girls would then be kicked out of class to go get their notebooks, coming back an hour later, if at all. Whereas, I witnessed boys in the same class who also did not have their notebooks, and yet none were called upon.

During my classroom observations I also noticed that girls were, more often than boys, targets of corporal punishment and intimidation. I noticed on many occasions that the teacher's angry tone of voice and sarcastic nature intimidated girls from wanting to answer questions. Corporal punishment was the norm in all three classrooms and practiced daily.

The Journey After School

When I arrived in Frankadua, everyone in the community knew I was a volunteer with IVHQ (International Volunteer Headquarters). When making conversation with different

community members, they would all ask me what was my occupation. I would explain to them that I was a Masters student studying gender equality in formal education. Every person I talked to would reply with a laugh and then wish me "good luck". This was hard for me to understand at first, why every person laughed at my research topic. When I spoke to Joe, the program coordinator for IVHQ in Frankadua and a previous school administrator, he explained to me,

> Educating girls is a new phenomenon. Only twenty years old, not even one generation. The culture in Frankadua views woman as valuable only if they have kids. If women do not have children, they have no value, no matter how educated they are.

I realized that in fact this is true and that educating girls was a new phenomenon for many. Through my conversations with various members in the community I noticed there was a lack of connection between mothers and their daughters. As daughters go to school their reality had shifted and they barely related to their mothers, and vice versa. One of the mothers informed me: "I do not understand Christine anymore. She does not listen to me much. It has been hard to discipline her since she went to school (March 15, 2015, Frankadua)".

I also observed during my stay in Frankadua, mothers and women in the community did not play a role in formal education. The only time I saw women in that arena was during lunchtime when two women would sell porridge to the students. Other than those providing lunch, mothers in Frankadua were not involved in the school, did not engage in extra curricular activities, and because of the disconnect between them and their kids in school, did not converse much with their kids regarding school. At some point during my various conversations with the neighbours, the cook, and those working in the market, the women hinted that they believed the school was the place for the men not an arena for them to interact, provide input, or discuss about. These women truly felt that they were physically, emotionally, and mentally below men.

It is clear from the findings presented above that there are significant elements that contribute to the inequalities experienced by girls in all aspects of schooling. However, as will be explored in the discussion chapter, we must move beyond looking at barriers and move towards looking at more macro systemic issues.

Chapter Six
Discussion

This research has indeed demonstrated that there are many practices and regulations that pose as barriers for girls, in accessing formal education, in remaining in formal education, and after receiving a formal education. Although many girls in Frankadua would agree that many barriers exist in their journey to gaining a formal education, this research is aimed to take a closer look at what contextual (cultural, political, economic) and educational factors are responsible for non-enrolment and female dropout rates in Frankadua, which currently stand at thirty percent for girls in primary school, compared to twenty percent for boys (Government of Ghana, 2003). While the factors that pose as barriers are discussed separately in this chapter, it must be noted and emphasized that they are all inextricably linked to one another. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand why some children, particularly girls, fail to enrol and/or drop out of school during their primary formal education. More specifically, to understand the contributing elements that creates barriers on girls' formal education in Frankadua. I will reiterate here that Frankadua is not monolithic, but rather consists of very diverse people, with different experiences, histories, stories, and expectations. Hence, my research with nine girls should not be understood as the experience of all girls in Frankadua, but as a case study representing the voices of those interviewed.

Through looking at the influence of administrative barriers such as, school structures and classroom practices; the influence of culture in outlining the role of women in the community and its relation to formal education; the presence of a support system; the economic and financial risks in pursuing formal education; the gender-based violence that exists inside and outside school environments; and the stigma of being a girl and wanting to pursue formal education, this research scrutinizes major barriers in formal education to shed light on the underlying causes of

inequality for girls and seeks to inform policymakers of possible frameworks that address the macro systemic issues, decrease the vulnerability experienced by girls, and increase girls' participation in formal education.

In this chapter, I link the key findings identified in the preceding chapter with the broader emergent themes from the case study. Linking the findings back to the literature, I then draw conclusions concerning the study's finding and themes. Based on these conclusions, areas and questions for future research are identified. The chapter finishes with the identification and description of the study's limitations and more general observations and concluding remarks.

Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural norms throughout the Volta Region in Ghana are prevalent and require serious attention when they pose as barriers to girls' formal education. If plans for ensuring girls' formal education and gender equality are to be realized, these barriers must be fully understood and addressed. However, socio-cultural barriers remain difficult to measure and to generalize. While this section analyzes power, hierarchies, explicit and subtle discrimination, and the ways in which these factors inform how barriers operate and persist within the local context of formal education in Frankadua, these socio-cultural norms vary widely from region to region and country to country. Yet, within the limited research evidence on the socio-cultural demands in Frankadua, this chapter will discuss the socio-cultural barriers as they relate to formal education access, retention, and participation.

Teenage Pregnancy

This research project interviewed nine girls. Of these nine girls, six had been recently pregnant and eventually dropped out of school, five were not aware who fathered their child, and one dropped out of school in Accra and relocated to Frankadua when she found out she was pregnant. All six girls mentioned that although they wanted to be in school, they had not returned to school since their pregnancy. When asked why they did not return, all six unanimously mentioned they could not take their children with them to school and they had nowhere to leave them at home. They also all mentioned that they could not financially afford going to school while being a mother. All teenage mothers in this case study were concerned about dropping out of school and they all insisted on their desire to return to school to achieve their educational aspirations.

As discussed in Chapter two, there exist a rich literature concerning the issue of teenage pregnancy in Ghana and its strong relationship with poverty. The Girls Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service, in 2008, identified teenage pregnancy as one of the major challenges to girls' school retention. Similarly, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) also recognized the link between teenage pregnancy and school dropouts in Ghana in their 2001 report on the situation of girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, reports calculated by UNESCO estimate that one out of every three childbirths recorded in public hospitals throughout Ghana occurred to women under the age of nineteen and that the situation is further exacerbated in rural areas, which are often under-represented in hospital birth statistics (Xinhua, 1996). This persistent issue has gradually scaled down in Ghana over the last decade. In 1994, teenage pregnancy affected 17.9 percent of teenage girls, whereas in 2012 a smaller 12.7 percent of Ghanaian teenagers became pregnant (Annicchiarico, 2013). However, in spite of this decline,

teenage pregnancy remains an issue that generates poverty, poses health risks, and limits access to formal education. Table 1 depicts the percentage of women age 15-19 who have had a live birth or who are pregnant with their first child in Ghana and disaggregates between geography, class, and education received. It also demonstrates that the proportion of teenagers who have begun childbearing rises rapidly with age. More specifically teenagers residing in rural areas (17 percent), those living in the Brong Ahafo, Central, and Volta regions (21-22 percent), those with no education (23 percent), and those in the second wealth quintile (21 percent) tend to start childbearing earlier than other teenagers. This table is based on a nationally representative survey of 9, 396 women.

Background characteristic	Percentage of women age 15-19 who: Have had a live birth	Are pregnant with first child	Percentage who have begun childbearing	Number of women
Age				
15	1.0	0.9	1.9	380
16	6.3	0.7	7.0	359
17	8.0	3.1	11.0	272
18	14.0	5.7	19.7	327
19	31.4	4.7	36.1	287
Residence				
Urban	9.0	2.5	11.5	822
Rural	13.7	3.2	16.9	803
Region				
Western	10.1	2.6	12.7	197
Central	14.4	7.0	21.3	153
Greater Accra	5.6	2.6	8.3	248
Volta	18.0	4.1	22.1	122
Eastern	15.0	1.8	16.8	151
Ashanti	10.2	1.7	11.9	307
Brong Ahafo	17.5	3.8	21.3	167
Northern	7.9	2.2	10.1	146
Upper East	8.0	1.7	9.7	89
Upper West	9.3	0.6	9.9	47
Education				
No education	19.8	3.4	23.2	69
Primary	15.7	3.3	19.0	368
Middle/JSS	11.0	3.0	14.0	906
Secondary+	4.5	1.6	6.2	282
Wealth quintile				
Lowest	12.2	2.9	15.1	342
Second	17.3	3.7	21.1	351
Middle	12.3	3.4	15.6	320
Fourth	9.5	2.7	12.2	305
Highest	4.2	1.5	5.7	307
Total	11.3	2.9	14.2	1,625

Table 1: Teenage Pregnancy by background characteristics, Ghana 2014

Source: Ghana Demographic and Health Survey – Key Indicators 2014

The findings in this case study support the facts in this table as well as the contention made by numerous authors of the strong association between teenage pregnancy and poverty (Keller, Hilton & Twumasi-Ankrah, 2004). All of the teenage mothers in my research mentioned they were experiencing economic difficulty when they engaged in transactional sex and they would do anything for material gain. All the participants mentioned that their parents were not supporting them; therefore, they would look for a boy who would give them money for food and

for school and that this money was never without association to sexual favours. While the participants engaged in transactional sex to make ends meet, they were not aware that these sexual activities would lead to their pregnancy. Many of the girls interviewed stated they were shocked when they found out they were pregnant. This finding is shared among the existing literature on the lack of sex education courses throughout primary school (Konadu-Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2011). Many of the participants stated that they did not know pregnancy would be the result of their transactional sex. Even more alarming is that many of the girls could not recognize the signs of maturity during their pregnancy and did not know they were pregnant until six months into their pregnancy. While many authors have argued that sexual education courses in primary school could significantly prevent teenage pregnancy, maternal deaths, and malnutrition, the government of Ghana has failed to implement these courses in the formal education system (Salami, Ayegboyin, & Adedeji, 2014). Without any formal knowledge on the topic concerning sexual activity and without any support or family guidance, all of the participants entered their pregnancy without being aware of the risks involved in engaging in sexual activities, the complications of pregnancy, and the options available to prevent these risks and complications.

In the literature, many authors argue that school dropouts, as they relate to teenage pregnancy, are a result of the stigma that exists with becoming a teenage mother and the difficulty this causes in re-entering school (Grant, 2006 & Hallman, 2006; Keller et al. 1999). These authors argue that the main reasons for dropping out of school and not re-entering is the public shaming and teasing that takes place against teenage mothers both inside and outside the school environment. In some countries, there are policies that expel pregnant schoolgirls from school or exclude them from actively participating in school activities (Atuyambe, 2008). Where girls pursue their formal education or return after giving birth, they "face continuous gender-

based violence in the form of bullying and verbal abuse by classmates and teachers" (UNGEI, 2015). While these authors suggest that teenage mothers are stigmatized and are likely to experience violence from the community, and this may be true in more religiously dominated areas, this was not the case of the girls interviewed in Frankadua. On the whole, this assertion was not supported in this study. Although there were examples of members of the community being disappointed when hearing about girls becoming pregnant, both participants and various community members mentioned that becoming pregnant had become the norm for girls in their community. They also mentioned that no respect was lost for girls who were pregnant or those who engaged in transactional sex because it was a very common situation and the community relatively tolerated the acceptance of teenage pregnancy.

Furthermore, participants in this study mentioned that they did not experience community stigma during their pregnancy and the only reason they were embarrassed to return to school after their pregnancy was because they were older than everyone in their grade not because of the fact that they were now teenage mothers. In other words, all of the participants who dropped out of school during their pregnancy dropped out after childbirth and failed to return to school after their children were stable due to the large amount of time that had elapsed since their pregnancy. They also emphasized that they would have returned to school earlier had there been family and economic support. In Frankadua, all of the participants lacked family support; therefore, not having anyone to watch their child as they continued their schooling. In all cases, the participants either lived with only one parent who was sick and required a caregiver, or lived without their parents living in the same village. Without family support, these teenage mothers had to find ways to financially support both themselves and their newborn child, thus leading to dropping out of school to find work in the farm or market and to make ends meet.

Many studies have been conducted to understand the issue of teenage pregnancy in Ghana and to understand its influence on girl dropout rates in formal education. The majority of the literature that exists surrounding this issue tends to provide generic solutions in order to decrease teenage pregnancy. The solutions involve: teaching students about abstinence, public shaming students who engage in sexual activities, fining the families with pregnant teenage mothers, and providing protection materials to limit the risks involved in sexual activities. In other words, the literature focuses on addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy at the surface level. However, my concern from a critical feminist perspective is questioning why the participants engaged in sexual intercourse and why the participants felt they had no choice but to drop out of primary school. This is the understanding that is currently lacking in literature. Many girls engage in sexual activities and drop out of school due to the lack of government services available to them. The Ghanaian government currently has no program in place that provides social assistance or services to support teenage mothers to ensure their ability to remain in school and develop their capability to live a life they value. Without these services, teenage mothers are forced to fend for themselves and their children, which results in them leaving school to find work that would financially support them.

Gender

What it signifies to be a woman is not a static idea but rather a fluid, dynamic, malleable, and variable concept bound by time and space, linked to hierarchies of power, and reflective of societal values (Unterhalter, 2007a). These gendered relations that govern society are shaped by the intersection of class, race, and culture; and significantly alter the ways in which girls experience schooling. The implication of gender as a form of exclusion was noticeable, not only

shown in this research but in previous studies, where girls (more often than boys) failed to regularly attend school, were negatively affected by learning conditions, and did not progress beyond a few years of instruction.

One of the main themes and concerns analyzed in this research project was the role of gendered social relations in creating barriers and in implicating forms of exclusion which have denied millions of children the ability to achieve equality in schooling. To this end, this research analyzed the ways in which women in Frankadua viewed themselves and were viewed by others, the gendered division of labour, and the role of mothers in providing a voice in their children's formal education.

The interviewees in this study, as well as many examples found in substantive body of literature, explained that the community only valued a woman's worth based on the amount of kids they have for their matrilineage and not on the formal education they received. In fact, the main future role of girls is considered to be that of a mother and any route that detracts from that future was not encouraged. The understanding was that as girls got older, their time became more valuable as labour for their family and as spouses. In other words, staying in school for too long was viewed as delaying their important responsibility of being a mother.

This finding was congruent with Obeng's argument that above all, Ghanaian women should not be barren, since childbirth is a girl's major life goal (2002). In other words, those women who delay childbirth to accommodate a protracted educational career were not valued. Many of the participants mentioned that there was pressure on them from members of the community to begin a family, to have kids, and to continue the family line. This finding helps us understand why teenage pregnancy was not frowned upon in Frankadua, and was in fact quite expected and accepted. The pressure experienced by girls in Frankadua, to become mothers, combined with

their needs to be financially stable, has resulted in a situation where teenage pregnancy has become the norm and girls being able to attend junior high school a rarity. By situating the need for a formal education as secondary to the need of becoming a mother, any minor obstacle to gain a formal education becomes sufficient grounds for girls to drop out.

The participants in this research project mentioned that the constant reminder of being valued only as a mother made them truly feel that they were economically, emotionally, and culturally subordinate to men. They further mentioned that their actions exemplified this feeling of subordination and that their personhood was valued in relation to how they provided for the men in the community. This feeling of a subordinate status of women is significantly addressed in feminist literature. One argument outlined in this literature and confirmed by this case study is the absence of women from decision-making bodies concerning curriculum, learning, and teaching. Rural Ghanaian women, even when they are knowledgeable, are expected by society to mute their voice and let men make decisions (Obeng, 2002). This practice was observed both in the schooling system and throughout the community, where women did not have the opportunities to participate in the decisions about their own lives. For example, at E. P. Frankadua School there were 12 teachers who taught grades 1-6, of which only two were female. These two female teachers taught grade 1 all day and sewing class for the older grades once a week. Female students were encouraged to actively participate in these sewing courses taught by female teachers, in essence taking subjects that did not result in a change of their life circumstance but rather subjects that further confine them to their home. Moreover, I observed that female teachers had differentiated responsibilities at E.P. Frankadua based on their gender and were insufficiently represented at the top of authority structures. I noticed that the two female teachers at this school were responsible for office cleaning and overseeing classrooms,

whereas male teachers dominated senior and management positions. During my observations, rarely did I see male and female teachers interact. These practices have maintained the gendered form of institutions and have reproduced gendered relations of inequality and frame the way girls grow up to be women (Unterhalter, 2005).

While women were expected to cater to the private sphere, this expectation trickled down to women not having a space to consult about schooling issues or in fact being informed at all about issues related to the school. In Frankadua, parents associations exist to create a forum for 'parents' to bring up matters regarding the school, school improvement, and school structure. However, this 'parents' association was dominated by males and had very few, if any, female attendance, despite the fact that women outnumber men in Frankadua. On the two occasions that I sat in on these parent association meetings, two women were present, both of which did not say a word during their time at the meeting, but engaged in simply nodding their head. As I observed, these women who attended did not voice any of the concerns of women in the community and did not play a role in the decision-making process. This lack of involvement of women in decision-making bodies is problematic, as men do not always understand the specific problems associated biologically and socially with being a girl. The insights provided by women are key in any solution that seeks to remove the elements that pose as barriers for girls throughout formal education. This point will be detailed in my last chapter.

Administrative Barriers - Classroom Practices

As mentioned earlier, much progress has been made around the globe to ensure girls' are given the opportunities to access formal education. However, the global efforts do not suffice, as girls continue to be subject to practices that pose as barriers to their academic achievements. It

must be noted that efforts to educate a girl are a recent phenomenon, with only one generation of growth. Communities in all corners of the world are slowly becoming acquainted with the importance of educating girls and the implications of this act.

During my fieldwork in Frankadua, I spoke to many teachers and administrators asking them about the efforts of their community in increasing gender equality in their school. Many men I spoke to mentioned that their school acknowledges the importance of educating girls and they have implemented strategies that are more inclusive to girls in the classroom. On one occasion, I was discussing the situation of girls with an administrator of E.P. Frankadua and he mentioned that teachers implement a gender responsive framework by calling on girls first during a lesson and then calling on boys. This discussion took me by shock and filled me with much excitement prior to beginning my observations in the classrooms. With this discussion in mind, I expected E.P. Frankadua to be a role model for gender responsive pedagogy and an example of teacher's consciously making efforts to remove barriers for girls. On my first day in the school, as I stepped into the first classroom, I noticed the classroom walls decorated with posters that advertise increasing the number of girls in school. As I waited for students to arrive, I was excited to observe a progressive gender inclusive classroom. To my dismay, after a couple of hours of observation in the classroom, I realized the only strategy used to 'address' the issue of gender equality was choosing on girls before choosing boys. Many teachers thought that by choosing girls before they chose boys, they were creating an equitable environment for girls. However, as observed in this study, classroom structures and interactions not only sustained gender norms but also reproduced power hierarchies. This section will further describe and provide meaning to my observations of classroom practices and school structures at E.P. Frankadua School.

Value of Time

One of the main themes outlined in current literature and further understood in this research project is the opportunity cost of sending girls to school. For those girls who are born in a larger family with limited funds, sending boys to school is the priority. Similarly, literature outlines that many of these families pull girls out of school when they are at the age where they are able to support household chores, take care of younger siblings, and essentially take on the role of the mother while she is at the market. In other words, with each year that girls' progress through school, the ways in which their families rely on them shift, and at adolescence girls begin to disappear from the school classroom (Plan International, 2015). While reading this literature in Canada, I could not comprehend why girls were discouraged from attending school and were instead encouraged to spend their days in the market. However, as I spent time observing classroom practices, I understood the rationale behind this encouragement: the limited respect for classroom time.

When I arrived in Frankadua, a fellow housemate told me that the children in the community would be going to school tomorrow after being off for three weeks. When I asked why they had missed school for three weeks, she informed me that there was a soccer tournament in Frankadua and all the teachers were attending the tournament and watching the games. I could not understand how a tournament was allowed to shut down all schools in that community for three weeks. With this in mind, I was under the impression that teacher's would attempt to make up for lost time and fill their days with long lessons. However, after the first couple of days of classroom observation, I realized how little classroom time was valued.

I spent thirty school days in the classroom and for all thirty school days teachers were either late by over forty minutes, simply did not show up, or were out of the class for over forty

minutes. Similarly, as my attendance became regular and teachers adapted to my presence, the rate of teachers not showing up to class increased. On many occasions, teachers would come to class late, ask me to teach and then leave the classroom, leaving me with 10 minutes to prepare a four-hour lesson. As this became a regular occurrence, I began planning lessons ahead of time in preparation for them not attending. It must be noted that my presence did not help the situation either. While I was in the classroom, teachers found it easier to not attend, as they knew I would be in the classroom to provide a lesson or to work with the children. Although I did not have access to curriculum materials, I used materials I brought from Canada to prepare classroom lessons.

On one specific occasion, I came to the school after lunch break and sat at the back of the classroom. After half an hour of sitting in the classroom without a teacher, and the children sitting around talking amongst themselves or making bracelets, I heard someone from the back of the classroom yell "quiet down". As I looked, around I did not see where that voice came from, until I spotted the teacher lying on the floor, tossing and turning, trying to sleep. After another half an hour passed, a teacher from another classroom came to our class and forcefully woke up the teacher. Eventually, the teacher woke up, and asked me to teach, as he went back to his desk. These practices exemplified the lack of respect teachers had for the students and the lack of value they gave to their time.

The emphasis on teacher absenteeism in this study is warranted for many reasons. One of these reasons is that teachers are entrusted with the mandate of being the transmitters of knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes to the community members (Alhassan & Adzhalie-Mensah, 2010). The standard that is portrayed in the school and throughout the classroom is the standard reproduced and practiced in the community. Teacher absenteeism plays a significant

role in what students learn, how often students attend class, their participation in class, and their respect for the schooling system. In a study of primary school teacher absenteeism in six countries, (Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda), an average of 19 percent of teachers were absent on a given day (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2010). Unsurprisingly, teacher and student absence rates are much higher in rural areas or areas with larger numbers of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Bonnet, 2008). For example, school directors interviewed in five countries throughout West Africa (Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), reported that the four common reasons given for teacher absenteeism were: health, family-related issues, strikes, and time to receive salaries (Plan International, 2015). While these studies were done for other countries, they also shed light on my research by demonstrating the commonality of this issue among countries in the Global South.

Throughout Frankadua, teachers' absenteeism was widespread. On the sporadic occurrence when teachers would attend class, they would not make use of the eight hours of teaching available to them. While students spent eight hours a day in the classroom, I witnessed on average only three hours of teaching a day. The other six hours were wasted in lack of punctuality, teachers not being ready, teachers marking notebooks during class time, teachers assigning reading and leaving the classroom, teachers speaking to people outside, and teacher absenteeism. Only on one occasion did I witness teacher's making use of all the classroom time available to them and that was three days before the national exams. Using a copy of the national exam booklet, teachers spent three intense days on exam material to teach students the material they should have been taught during the whole semester. This form of teaching demonstrates why girls do poorly on these exams, as they are given three days to learn all the material and are expected to go home and study the remainder of the material not covered in the classroom.

However, since girls are expected to share the household responsibilities with their mother's role when they are at home, no studying is done, leading to failing exam scores.

Although the lack of value for classroom time was not targeted at girls specifically, and had an impact on the learning of both girls and boys, it provided sufficient grounds for girls to refrain from coming to school. Observing the lack of value teachers had for students' time, made it easier to understand why parents supported boys attending school and valued girls staying home and helping with household errands. If six hours a day is spent sitting around, making bracelets, or waiting for a lesson, those six hours could be used more efficiently working in the market, bringing home an income.

Teacher absenteeism and the lack of respect for student's time, has both short term and long-term implications for students and the community. The finding that was highlighted in this research was that students replicate the teacher's attitudes towards schooling. Excessive teacher absenteeism induces parallel student absenteeism and sets the standard for the school. More specifically, the long-term implications of these practices involve the prospects of future individual and national development. However, it is too easy to look at these findings and blame teachers for not attending school, because the statistics and observations do not tell us why teachers are absent. More research is required to understand the root cause of teachers' absenteeism, how we can improve their attendance, and how teachers can be motivated to provide quality education.

Gendered Space- Classroom Structures

In all classrooms throughout E.P. Frankadua, the implicit and explicit organization of the school day and structures was one of gender. When observing the physical space of the

classroom, I noticed the classroom seating arrangements did not demonstrate the typical pattern outlined in literature of girls sitting at the front while boys occupied the back seats. In fact, what I observed is for the most part girls and boys sat in mixed groups and a large number of girls took half the space at the back of the classroom. This observation was not congruent with the literature that specified the dominant pattern of seating was for girls to sit at the front and boys to sit at the back and along the sides, as if surrounding and 'entrapping' or 'controlling' the girls (Obeng, 2002). Literature on this topic argues that boys tended to determine how space was organized in the classroom and teachers rarely intervened in these gendered seating arrangements. While the latter was observed in this study, the former was not. In all three classes observed, the teachers allowed students to choose their seats, only rarely intervening as a discipline strategy ('noisy' students would be moved to another seat next to a classmate of the opposite gender). However, I began to question why boys did not choose to dominate the back of the classroom and soon realized that the teacher's desk was located at the back of the classroom where many of the girls sat. These girls, who sat near the teacher's desk, at the back of the classroom, were the ones who were on call to run errands both in the classroom and throughout the school. Their physical distance from where the teacher was teaching (at the front of the classroom) had an effect on their participation and discipline in the class. While these girls spent the majority of their classroom time running errands, the time they did spend in class they were occupied making bracelets and not engaged with the lesson being taught.

Another observation made during this study was the lack of physical space that supported a girls' experience. For example, during my second week of observations, in the last period of the day, I noticed suddenly all the boys taking off their school uniform, wearing their sports clothes, and running outside for gym class. As I continued to look around, I notice the girls

sitting awkwardly in class and looking at each other. Two girls attempted to change into their gym clothes by hiding behind four other girls, while all the other girls did not try and simply sat around in class. Eventually all the kids went outside and I noticed all the girls (but two) were sitting by the classroom watching the rest of the class. I asked the girls why they are not participating, they informed me because they are not wearing their gym clothes. I then asked why they were not wearing their gym clothes and they mentioned that they had no place to change or they did not bring a change of clothes. The lack of physical space to support their needs essentially segregated and constrained them from participating in educational activities. In other words, the physical arrangement and structure of the classroom space maintained gendered boundaries and reinforced gender inequalities.

Although the classroom seating arrangements were mixed between girls and boys, boys managed to maintain their domination of both the physical and verbal space. In all classroom observations, boys were the most vocal in the class. Classroom observations revealed that, in common with the other case studies, the way in which students interacted was highly gendered, with boys monopolizing the classroom space and maintaining gendered boundaries. While girls would raise their hands to answer questions, boys frequently made attempts to dominate lessons by shouting answers to the teachers and constantly intimidating girls. Boys actively discouraged girls who participated by snapping their fingers and waving their hands to attract the teacher's attention. In the majority of cases, boys were impatient when girls sought to answer questions and actively interrupted and distracted them to demand attention. For example, on numerous occasions, a girl would be reading the lesson text out loud and as soon as she hesitated on the pronunciation, a boy would take over the text and continued reading the lesson, without the teacher intervening. Secondly, if girls answered questions incorrectly they would be ridiculed

and disgraced for their attempt. On many occasions I observed girls attempting to answer a mathematical formula on the chalkboard and when they took too long to answer, a boy would walk up to her, grab the chalk, and finish the answer. My observations noted that these distractions and interruptions always worked to discourage girls from participating in lessons and from confidently voicing their answers. Moreover, I noted that the teacher's lack of effort in controlling the use of verbal space reinforced the gendered dynamic of the classroom. In other words, by failing to intervene, teachers normalized gendered classroom practices and subconsciously reinforced an inequitable learning environment.

Informal Structures

Alongside their command of physical classroom space, boys also dominated the space surrounding the classroom both implicitly and explicitly, creating a gendered environment. These gendered patterns were evident during break time, morning arrival, assembly occasions, and playing field. On my first day, during recess, I noticed the boys playing soccer on the courtyard and all the girls sitting near the classroom walls. I asked one of the girls why she is not playing soccer with the boys, she said to me that the girls were not allowed to play. To my dismay, I asked the girl why were they not allowed to play and she mentioned they had their own section at the back of the school where they could play handball. As I walked to that section of the school to see where they could play, I noticed how dirty their 'section' was and understood why no one was playing in that environment. In other words, the section designated for girls to play was not conducive to an enjoyable experience; therefore, forcing them to be segregated and to sit with other girls on the periphery of the boys playing field.

Culture of domesticity

My observation of the classroom structures in Frankadua brought me to understand the reasons why many families refrain from sending their girls to school. One main finding that supported this understanding was the culture of domesticity that was reproduced in the schooling system. From the moment girls entered the school in the morning until the moment they left, they interacted and re-enacted the social expectations of masculinity and femininity. As part of their school routine, students performed daily maintenance duties that were socially deemed appropriate for their gender. The girls were responsible for sweeping the floor, filling up the buckets of water, cleaning the desk, and bringing food for the teacher. For boys, their responsibility included ringing the bell during breaks, cutting the trees in the yard, and organizing the classroom furniture. These routine practices within the school were fundamental processes in the social construction of gender divisions. In other words the gendered division of labour, which governs social relations in society, was clearly represented at the level of the classroom. These structured gendered practices represent the introduction to a particular form of life and serves to prepare students to fit in the dominant and subordinate positions of society. Moreover, by normalizing these specific forms of gendered interactions, the schooling system was in fact constructing gender inequality.

Similarly, the explicit gendered duties of girls and boys were observed during various assembly lines and occasions. While girls were mostly on the periphery of these occasions, boys were dominating the space. For example, during the morning formality of the rise of the Ghanaian flag, boys were responsible for pulling the cord that raised the flag, while girls stood around and observed. In other words, boys were responsible for administrative leadership initiatives, while girls were the audience and simply observed them in their initiative. Moreover,

the inequitable practices experienced in the school, reinforced the gendered identity formation and affirmed the dominant societal patterns. Not only did these practices fail to challenge the gendered standards of the status quo but they also constrained the educational opportunities and capabilities for all girls to move beyond what society expected them to do.

What was documented in all three classrooms was the fact that girls were constantly walking in and out of the classroom and would not be present for the whole lesson. Those sitting at the back of the class would run errands for the teacher, bring him food, cold drinks, chalk, and notebooks. The girls who sat at the front would be responsible for replenishing the water bucket. Their lack of involvement and presence in the classroom explains why many girls had to repeat grades and why they would not attend class for long period of times. The classroom practices observed did not challenge stereotypical gender patterns but in fact reinforced dominant forms of masculinity and femininity, and normalized the social expectations of unequal gendered roles, which underlies "broader macro-social setting in which the participation, voice and representation by gender is unequal" (UNESCO, 2012). This finding is consistent with Bourdieu's conceptualization of the school as a field of struggle, where power structures are imposed on and incorporated in individuals, where gender, cultural, and social inequalities are legitimated, and where hidden practices and symbolic interactions reproduce gendered identities (1998). Being a critical site where these forces are created, integrated, and reproduced, the school should be the central focus of any social policy seeking to challenge inequalities. In essence, the school site is an important starting point for change and policymakers should understand the relationship between micro level interactions at the school and their impact on macro level relations in the community.

Culture of violence

Over the last two decades, the growing concern for girls' lack of representation in formal education has been combined with a shift away from understanding formal education as an economic investment and a move towards understanding formal education as a human right. It was during this shift and within this recent debate that the issue of school-based violence emerged. It must be noted that the issue of violence is defined differently, takes on different forms, and evolves based on circumstance. However, regardless of terminology, definition, and conceptualization, violence always tends to have a gendered dimension. This gendered dimension presents itself both implicitly and explicitly in the school environment.

While explicit gender-based violence was not observed during this project, but is an area that needs to be further researched, implicit violence was witnessed daily. Implicit gender-based violence includes actions that are less visibly and directly gendered, and arises from everyday school practices that reinforce gender differentiation, gendered roles, and gender biases (Leach & Mitchell, 2006). These practices may in themselves be violent, as in the case of corporal punishment, or they may indirectly encourage violent acts. Speaking with Joe, the program coordinator and previous schoolteacher, about classroom practices and the role of teachers, Joe explained to me that the kids at E.P. Frankadua are really naughty, mischievous, and always give problems. At one point, when explaining the role of discipline, Joe mentioned: "oh man, they are so bad in class, we have to penalize them, just so they listen and take us seriously (February 16, 2015, Frankadua)". With this mindset, Joe explicitly believed that children were inherently bad and inherently out to make trouble. This mindset was crucial for understanding why teachers made use of corporal punishment and the role of discipline in school environment.

The incident of corporal punishment I observed in the classroom environment can also be interpreted as an act of violence on girls, often instigated by some teachers. One reason for this is that the girls are socially expected to be obedient and passive; therefore, when girls do not behave according to this norm, they are penalized more heavily than are boys (Reay, 2001). In other words, violence in schools reflects underlying social norms regarding authority and expected gender roles and is reproduced in the classroom to reinforce those social norms. Moreover, schools can be analyzed as an expression of the wider organization of society, where the classroom represents the stage where social norms and forces are reproduced. Bourdieu furthered this point by arguing that the school life could not be isolated from the rest of the community and that the violence in schools could not be divorced from violence in the home and in the community. For example, when children are young and at home, the violence directed towards girls and boys are equal. However, as children get older, the violence at the home becomes more targeted towards girls. The reason observed for this was that girls were more visibly around and had more contact with their mothers. Spending more time helping their mothers with housework, at the market, and running errands with them increased their vulnerability to violence at the home. This violence experienced at the home is then reproduced at the classroom level and reinforces the gendered hierarchy that exists in society. Therefore, the school, alongside the home, is a prime site for the construction and reinforcement of gender relations built on socially sanctioned inequalities and much work is needed in order to change these socially accepted norms.

Although the Ghanaian government has restrictions on the extent to which violence can be used in the classroom, these restrictions are never met. Outlined in the numerous Ghanaian laws that protect children's rights is the restriction that corporal punishment cannot be used for poor

performance and cannot exceed four strokes. While theoretically this may be the case, corporal punishment in the classroom is unregulated and used without restrictions because it often goes unreported and unpunished. During my fieldwork at E.P. Frankadua School, some corporal punishment was observed in the various classrooms, which supported the numerous research that suggests that nations all over the world struggle to keep school girls safe from harassment and violence (Plan International, 2015). Plan International's recent research entitled 'unfinished business of girls' rights' speaks profoundly to the issue of violence and the fear of violence that currently pose as one of the biggest challenges for girls to achieve their potential in the school (2015). Tackling gender-based violence in and around the school will substantially enhance the quality of children's formal education, increase school attendance, improve learning outcomes, encourage girls to participate in the classroom, and support an environment conducive to learning. In order to eradicate gender-based violence, change must address the underlying common cause of gender violence: the powerlessness of women in patriarchal societies and their lack of voice in policies that affect their lives. Rather than being a site of socialization that reproduces existing patterns of gender inequality, the formal education system and the schooling institution should be used as the primary instrument that seeks to transform societal norms and challenge the status quo.

Economic Barrier

The past two decades of international conferences, debates, and campaigns for girls' formal education have raised awareness and consciousness for parents all over the globe on the importance of providing a formal education to both girls and boys. Although more parents are aware of this importance, their economic situation continues to pose as a barrier to sending girls

to school. These cost include both direct costs of school and indirect cost of sending girls to schools.

The costs of schooling are actual funds spent on formal education, which includes: uniforms, supplies, transportation, examination fees, registration fee, and contributions to funds for school maintenance. The costs associated with formal education were cited by all the participants in this study as one of the main reasons they could not fully participate in school and one of the many causes that influenced their decision to drop out. As observed at E.P. Frankadua School, school administrators would enter classrooms and demand money from those students who had not fully paid their administrative fees. Those who failed to pay these fees would be sent home. In all the cases observed, girls were the targets of these confrontations. In one specific case, when the student stated that her mother had not given her any money, the administrator yelled: "any amount is better than no amount (March 02, 2015, Frankadua)" and proceeded to send her home. Some would not return to school for the week, while others were more persistent and would attempt to sit in class the following day. Although this persistency was observed among some students, attending class in a state of fear was not an environment conducive to learning. Similarly, all the participants in this study mentioned that they had missed at least one of the national exams because they did not have the funds to pay for the examination fees. For many, missing these national exams led to them having to repeat the same grades, in turn influencing their inability to reach their ultimate potential. Moreover, having to attend school in an environment of intimidation and harassment resulted in many girls engaging in transactional sex in order to financially support their schooling. As mentioned earlier, this transactional sex resulted in pregnancy for the majority of the girls and eventually led them to drop out of school to find work to financially support their expected child; therefore, reproducing

a cycle of poverty and strengthening the existing relationship between household poverty and poor educational access. Understanding how this cycle of poverty is reinforced by the current schooling system and how the financial demands of formal education reproduce conditions of poverty rather than challenging them is the underlying issue policymakers need to address. Policies and projects must be implemented in such a way that they actively intervene to break through this vicious cycle of poverty that currently dominates the lives of Frankadua women.

As mentioned earlier, direct costs are actual, out-of-pocket fees, related to attending school, and are amounts that can be measured and quantified. However, these are not the only costs associated with sending children to school. Alongside these direct costs, families heavily reliant on child labour for financial support also incur opportunity cost in sending their source of labour to school. These opportunity cost relate to the loss of children's time in performing household activities, helping in the market, looking after their sibling, or contributing to family income. For example, Hunt's research on fertility and schooling in Ghana has shown that each additional younger sibling significantly increases the probability that an elder girl will drop out of school, especially if younger siblings are under the age of six (2008). In countries, such as Ghana, where girls are responsible for the majority of household activities due to the gendered division of labour, the cost of sending girls to school is significantly higher than the costs associated with sending boys to school.

Despite the pockets of growth in the industrial and service sectors surrounding Accra, a large number of Ghanaians live in rural areas characterized by low income-generating opportunities, labour-intensive, and high levels of poverty. In this context, the availability of food and water is central to survival, and obtaining them absorbs most of the time and energy of community members, leaving minimal time and resources for formal education. In other words,

in regions such as Frankadua, the majority of families were concerned with food security and this was given priority over formal education. As per my observations, girls in and around my commune spent most of their time selling ice water and fishing, than being in school. Through my conversations with community members, in regards to income-generating activities replacing school enrolment for children, many parents did not consider the work children did as child labour but rather saw these activities as informal education and a sufficient replacement of formal education due to the immediate revenue generated.

As mentioned earlier, due to the gendered dimensions of child labour, families under financial stress are prone to withdrawing girls from participating in school in order to meet domestic responsibilities (Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose, & Tembon, 2003). These affect girls disproportionately and put them at a higher risk of not successfully completing basic formal education. Understanding how opportunity costs can negatively affect girls is key to ensuring gender equality is achieved. With this understanding at the centre of analysis, projects cannot entertain policies that simply focus on removing direct costs and initial fees associated with attending schools. In order to create opportunities that are equitable to both genders, policies must look beyond numbers and integrate an understanding of life experiences, conditions of poverty, and power relations into projects in order to undermine inequality ingrained in societal structures.

Although most countries throughout Africa, including Ghana, have subscribed to various initiatives, put in place numerous policies, and promoted many projects that describe basic formal education as free, schooling continues to be associated with many costs, most of which are exacerbated in rural areas. In fact, I argue that the real purpose of these initiatives, policies, and projects are to decentralize the cost of formal education from a government expense to a

community burden. While families are the unit that bear the burden of cost shifting, it is in fact girls who suffer most. During my stay in Frankadua, I spoke to various school administrators about the economic burden that specifically affected rural families and inquired whether any government programs were in place to target the needs of rural families. Joe mentioned that currently there were no social service programs that support rural families in their area; however, many scholarships exist for those who live in Accra. He further mentioned that in 2013, school feeding programs were implemented in three of the schools in Frankadua, where girls received school meals and take-home rations, all of which was conditional on their attendance in the classroom. Joe went on to explain the success of the school feeding program and the positive impact it had on their community as it encouraged and provided a practical motive for girls to attend school. Research done by Lambers on the school-feeding program in Ghana, supports Joe's claims as it notes that the program has had a huge impact on girls' enrolment, which surged by 46 percent in one year alone (2009). Although the school-feeding program initiative focused on getting girls into school and increasing enrolment rates, rather than gender equality as a whole, it was a progressive starting point. However, Joe mentioned that due to cuts in government funding, these school-feeding programs came to a sudden halt last year. The lack of consistency in government programs has an immediate impact on the quality of formal education provided and the outcome of educational practices. This inconsistency supports the inequalities experienced by the gendered dimension of labour, schooling, and economic wellbeing. The bottom line surrounding access and active participation in formal education is poverty and policies need to reflect this need, particularly in rural areas, rather than rewrapping costs between societal domains.

Chapter Seven
Conclusion and Observations

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance" (Kofi Anan, UN Secretary General)

This research project aimed to fill the gap in existing literature by exploring the elements that contribute or pose as barriers to girls' formal education. In this process, it explores the gender dynamics of households, schools, and economic relations that intersect to reproduce gendered relations of inequality (Unterhalter, 2007a). Building on this knowledge, this research addressed the barriers and bottlenecks surrounding gender disparities as parts of a whole. In other words, these elements could not be diagnosed separately but rather holistically in order to address the macro issue of gender discrimination. Moreover, throughout this thesis, I have sought to problematize the use of gender parity indicators as an adequate measurement for gender equality, on the basis that such an approach does not go far enough in addressing the systemic barriers to girls' formal education. Although many scholars view Ghana as a role model for its increase in girls' access to formal education, my research project seeks to demonstrate that increasing access to formal education does not signify gender equality in educational attainment. By equating gender parity with gender equality, these indicators do not consider the structures and power relations that take place in the classroom. More specifically, gender parity indicators do not adequately evaluate the age at which girls enter school, the number of times they repeated grades, nor the interactions that take place at the school. This research sought to move beyond parity, as it has been mostly achieved, and put on a new lens for equality.

To address the macro systemic issues that prevents girls from enjoying the privileges of schooling, this research analyzed four domains: culture, administration, gender, and economic. Within these four domains, this research focused specifically on family support, female mentorship, teenage pregnancy, classroom practices, female voices, culture of violence, culture of domesticity, and government-assisted programs. These multiple elements overlap and build on each other to exacerbate the status quo that works against girls attaining a just educational experience. Policy-makers must go beyond surface level solutions to understand that these barriers are real forces that work in complex ways to prevent girls from achieving their full capability. In other words, simply directing resources at girls, adjusting curriculum material to include girls, or fitting girls into structures that are inherently working against them is not enough to address the challenge of educating girls and does not make for sustainable changes towards gender equality. The reality of most countries in the Global South is that gender inequality is only one of the obstacles that they encounter, poverty, ethnicity, religion, and geography are all powerful factors that determine if girls get educated. Where poverty and gender intersect with geographical isolation and being a member of a minority group, disadvantages are magnified.

For girls, enrolling in school is only half the struggle, succeeding through school and overcoming the power dynamics that dominate the classroom interactions is the other half. The biggest challenges that girls currently face are related to attitudes, practices, and ideologies that conspire to prevent change and that are deeply rooted in the traditions and social norms of each country. In term of formal education, policies must be implemented to challenge these dominant norms; therefore, the school must be understood as a cultural site where societal forces interact to promote certain political values, which reinforce the status quo. It must further be understood

that the classroom setting cannot be isolated from the forces that dominate wider society. It is in this classroom that social and political structures work together to normalize unjust interactions that formally and subtly exclude girls. Fieldwork in Frankadua provided insight on how structures and practices fill the day with explicit and implicit norms, symbols, and procedures that serve to regulate gendered roles and reproduce inequitable gender relations. Unfortunately, unlike policies focused on parity, advancing gender justice requires a transformation of unequal gender power relations; therefore, improving the condition and position of girls in society and changing how they are valued. For this social transformation to take place, the consistent effort of both genders is required to reject notions of masculinity and femininity that contribute to the imbalance of power. Unless boys and men work alongside girls and women to challenge unequal power relations, equal rights for both genders will remain a distant dream. As discussed, a new perspective of gender is required that deconstructs the dominant norms that govern society and reconstructs power relations in ways that benefit both sexes. Schools, teachers, students, and institutions are active participants in the production of these gendered relations and must work together to resist and challenge classroom practices, ideas, and norms that promote an inequitable terrain for girls.

Girls journey to equality and their ability to exercise power over their own lives can only be sustainably achieved when accompanied by consistent efforts across the various institutions that influence their lives (the political, legal, and social). While initiatives such as school construction, teacher training, and progressive pedagogical approaches are all important tools that can improve the position of girls in the formal education system, these initiatives in isolation and without an overarching plan will only reach a limited number of children. In other words for

any initiative to be sustainable, action is necessary at all levels of society and must be systematically organized.

Observations

To summarize, I can put forth five broad observations concerning the various stakeholders in Ghana based on my inquiries findings and analysis. I must also emphasize various constituent groups to address the same issue should demonstrate the underlying need for a holistic approach towards gender equality.

Policy Makers

First, I observed a need for policy makers to pay attention to the necessity of yearly teacher training courses and workshops which include strong elements of gender awareness that move beyond simply calling on girls first in the classroom. These mandatory training sessions should provide teachers with the strategies to consciously acknowledge gender imbalances in the formal and informal curriculum and to acquire the tools to actively address these imbalances. Similarly, ministries should provide training for school administrators to develop school-specific policies, monitoring and strategies on gender equality.

I also observed a need for ministries to create a stronger link between policy initiation and its implementation at the local level in order to maintain consistency and sustainability in school projects. Through school-level review and support for school administrators to enforce existing policies, ministries can create a source of accountability. Similarly, to avoid creating policies that are not relevant to local contexts, school communities would benefit from gender education units: a committee derived from women in the community, working within the school,

and reporting to ministries. This framework can avoid the normative top-down approach, where decisions are taken at the center and expected to meet the needs of the local. In the case of Frankadua, this report would acknowledge and request support to implement daycare services for teenage mothers who cannot attend school because of their need to care for their children.

Moreover, ministries tend to undermine the particular difficulties of recruiting and retaining female teachers in rural areas, so as to attempt to increase the amount of female role models available in rural schools. Therefore, teacher training schools must also be made more flexible to encourage female students to participate and to graduate. In other words, extra training and support should be provided to female candidates who do not meet the standard for entry requirement.

School Administrators

Quarterly school reviews could be beneficial in order to allow for reflection on the classrooms gendered nature and to initiate projects that reconstruct school routines in more equitable ways. Governments should consider raising teacher salary, especially in rural areas, in order to address teacher absenteeism. Similarly, school administrators cannot turn a blind eye to what happens in the classroom. Clear policies needs to be developed on school violence and corporal punishment as well as disciplinary strategies to regulate the violence that takes place in and around the school.

Teachers

Third, teachers tend to undermine the role the classroom and school environment play in reproducing gendered behaviour. It appears there is a need to reflect on teachers' own practices in the formal and informal curriculum, which unconsciously reinforces gender inequalities.

Teachers should promote mixed activities and group works where female and male students work together on school projects. Moreover, classroom and school duties should be made as gender equal as possible, where both girls and boys are fairly allocated to perform various duties and tasks.

Communities

It appears that parents, especially mothers, need to be encouraged to become more involved in the school performance so that their presence in the school system could create a more accountable and transparent school management system.

I also observed women's input in the community in general and on their children's formal education in particular was missing in Frankadua. Although women have always contributed to social development, they lack the power to put themselves in a position to institutionalize and legitimize their role (Egbo, 2000). The implementation of a Mother's Association in Frankadua, for instance, as successfully executed in Mali and Benin, would significantly assist in removing barriers to formal education while also creating a participatory inclusion of all members in the community. While I am sure Mothers Association exists informally in various communities, they should be organized systematically, politically recognized, and funded. Egbo states educational institutions in Sub Saharan Africa (including Ghana) are steeped with male values and do not allow for voices of women to be heard (2000). Due to this suppression of voices, women become

acculturated into the prevailing male-dominated systems rather than transforming them (Ibid). Implementing Mother's Association can assist in providing an arena for their voice. The collective power of women is essential to bring about transformative change (Plan International, 2014). While legislation and policy change has some power, it is when communities organize themselves at the grassroots that will bring about change and gender equality (Ibid). Ideally, within these Mothers Associations, mothers would work with families in their community to understand their formal education needs and why children are not going to school. Once they have a general understanding of the current issues they would work on implementing projects to remove those barriers. It is key to note that these Mothers Associations would create an environment where women can speak openly about the schooling concerns of their children but they would also work with the Parents Association to successfully implement projects and to prevent the creation of rivalry between both committees. This framework, working locally and addressing local needs, would promote sustainable formal education and would create a sense of ownership for community members while also empowering women and creating equitable dynamics.

Final Thoughts

A child's successful experience through the formal education system and their ability to use their schooling as a tool to socially transform their lives emanates from their relations between government initiatives (policies, strategies, programs), schools (practices, facilities, materials), families (household errands, gendered roles, caretaking), and communities (expectations, culture, support). It cannot be overstated the necessity for a fundamental restructuring of educational policies and classroom environments in order to breakdown the

above mentioned barriers and create arenas conducive to learning. With this being said, quality education and gender equality is best addressed through the combined and systematic efforts of ministries, school administrators, teachers, and their local communities. Their collaborative efforts need to foster more gender-sensitive conditions that recognize and validate women's contributions. In essence, all stakeholders must pay greater attention to sustainability issues in policy planning and work together to find pathways that support girls' education and the achievement of gender equality in formal education. If action is not taken to institute policies and program initiatives that address barriers such as gender distribution in teacher training, student enrolment, subsidies for schooling, teenage pregnancy, as well as gender-sensitive teacher training, the prevailing conditions will not be altered.

This thesis has focused on these various elements that pose as barriers to girls' education to provide a holistic analysis of how gender inequalities are continuously reproduced in all domains of society. The findings speak to the challenges and opportunities facing girls, women, and feminists in formal education and beyond. The findings support the need for more substantive and sustained engagement of women at the local level to remove the elements that contribute to the inequalities of girls in Frankadua. Moreover, the story this thesis tells helps shed light on the complexities involved in translating the message of 'gender equality' in national policies into practical solutions at the local level.

I like to end my thesis by stating that based on my research and observations, it is problematic to overgeneralize and state that women are marginalized and are in the periphery of society. Indeed, I observed that some women occupy power within their own realms. Hierarchies of power exist everywhere and literature must refrain from assuming women are passive bystanders in their own future. Understanding these hierarchies of power that exist in various

realms, such as in the home and at the market, could be the tool required to give women a voice in finding solutions to their barriers and to implement policies that can remove their barriers. I hope my research would open up possibilities for further research on this topic.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

2. Have there ever been barriers to accessing education or being in school? If so, which ones?

3. Have you ever stopped going to school? If so, why?

4. What subjects do you take at school?

5. What does a day at school consist of?

Appendix B: Certificate of Ethics Approval

YORK
UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS (ORE)

5th Floor,
Kaneff Tower,
4700 Keele St.
Toronto ON
Canada M3J 1P3
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Memo

To: Leva Rouhani, Interdisciplinary studies - Graduate Program

From: Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics
(On behalf of Denise Henriques, Chair, Human Participants Review Committee)

Date: **Friday, October 10, 2014**

Re: Ethics Approval

Gender in Ghanaian educational policy: parity or equity

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: or via email at:

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LLM
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,
Office of Research Ethics

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Study name
Gender in Ghanaian educational policy: parity or equity?

Researchers
Researcher name: Leva Rouhani
Master's Candidate
Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies

Purpose of the research
The purpose of this research is to explore whether the Ghanaian educational policies address the educational needs of rural Ghanaian women. In particular, I am interested in exploring the extent to which factors such as regional differences, traditional beliefs, and religion contribute to the contexts of gender equity in the education system. The research will be conducted through a set of interview questions and will then be reported in a final research thesis.

What you will be asked to do in the research
The role and responsibility of the research participants will be to take part in an interview and answer the questions. The participant will choose the venue of the interview and the interview will not surpass one hour. Participants will be provided with an honorarium for their participation. Note however, that participants will have the right to withdraw without penalty - including financial penalty.

Risks and discomforts
While this research does not anticipate any risks, participants can exit the interviews at any time, pseudo names will be used, the data will be securely stored and only accessible by the researcher, the interview will take place in a location where the participant is comfortable and can speak freely so as to minimize any discomfort, in the event that participants believe there are possible risks because of their negative feedback about the educational system. I will inform each interviewee about that possibility prior to conducting any public or private interview with them. This research has been reviewed and approved for compliance to research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Subcommittee (HPRC) of York University.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you
This research presents promising opportunities to be published and the anticipated impact of my proposed research is to provide a guideline for policy makers and Non-Governmental Organizations to consider when implementing educational polices in Ghana. Although this research does not have direct benefits to the participants, the research hopes to benefit the Ghanaian population as whole as it hopes to improve the status of women in the educational system.

Voluntary participation
Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff or the nature of your relationship with York University either now,

or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study
You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality
All participants will choose pseudo names to protect their identity. The data will be collected through handwritten notes and audiotapes. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet and documents on the computer will be password protected. All identifiable data will be given to the head supervisor of this project, Professor Derayeh, and will be secured in a locked room. The data will be destroyed no later than one year after the study. Digital file shredding will destroy hard copy research data will be destroyed by shredding and audiotapes.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions about the research?
If you have any questions about the research in general or your role in the study, please contact me directly or my head supervisor.

Also, you may contact the graduate program office or the Office of Research Ethics.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

Legal rights and signatures:
I, , consent to participate in "Gender in Ghanaian educational policy: parity or equity?" conducted by Leva Rouhani. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Participant

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Principal Investigator

Optional: Additional Consent:

I, _____, consent to have my interviews be recorded by an audiotape.
My signature below indicates consent.

Signature _____ Date: _____
Participant

Appendix D: Transcription of Interviews

February 27, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

Participant 1: I am not in school.

Leva: Why are you not in school?

Participant 1: I got pregnant.

Leva: Oh, okay, when did you stop going to school?

Participant 1: I was in JHS 1. I stopped going last month because it hurt too much to sit in class all day.

Leva: Did you like going to school?

Participant 1: Yes.

Leva: What class did you enjoy most?

Participant 1: Social Studies.

Leva: You are 16 right now, why were you in JHS 1 and not in Senior Secondary?

Participant 1: I did not have money to go to Senior Secondary.

Leva: What part of school did you have to pay for, uniforms, textbooks, supplies?

Participant 1: No I didn't have money to pay for the exams to go to the next grade. Each exam is 100 cedis and I didn't have it so I didn't go to school everyday because my mom wouldn't pay the fee. I spent two years in the same grade level because I did not have the money to pay for my examination fee. The school kicked me out because my mother would not pay them for the fees. I would go to class everyday and the director would come to my class and tell me, in front of everyone, that I need to pay the money. He always said 'a little is better than nothing, go home and find a little'

Leva: How much did you have to pay in total fees?

Participant 1: 100 cedis for exams. 20 cedis to the school. Sometimes they just keep asking for more money.

Leva: Do you get help from the father of the baby?

Participant 1: No.

Leva: When did you find out you were pregnant?

Participant 1: Late. I didn't know I could get pregnant so quickly. I thought it took time.

Leva: So, what did you do when you didn't go to school?

Participant 1: I go to the Akpapa market with my mom. My mom sells at the market and I help her.

Leva: Do you live with your family?

Participant 1: Yes. I live with my mom, dad, and grandmother. My dad is sick so just me and my mom work in the market.

Leva: Does anyone in your family go to school?

Participant 1: My sister goes to school.

Leva: Is she younger or older?

Participant 1: Younger. I help her in school when she has difficulty. I am the only one that went to school.

February 28, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

Participant 2: I like going to school. I want to go back to school and become a nurse for Frankadua. I like learning to read and write and I did that at school that's why I want to go back.

Leva: When did you stop going to school?

Participant 2: In grade 6.

Leva: Why did you stop going to school?

Participant 2: I got pregnant.

Leva: How old were you when you got pregnant?

Participant 2: I was 15 years old.

Leva: Was it difficult to go to school when you were pregnant?

Participant 2: No, I just didn't have money, so I didn't go to school often.

Leva: Did you have financial support from your family when you went to school?

Participant 2: No. I live with my mother but she didn't always have work. Before I got pregnant, I had a friend, and he would give me money for school, but then I got pregnant, and he stopped.

Leva: He doesn't give you money anymore?

Participant 2: No.

Leva: How do you support your baby?

Participant 2: In the market I work.

Leva: When you went to school, how often would you go?

Participant 2: I would go to school ten days in a month, when I was hungry I would go home or when I was bored. I would go home and spend the days selling nuts in the market. Some days I didn't have items to sell so I would help other ladies in the market. I would be in the market the whole day. I help my mom read labels at the market because I am the oldest one in my family to go to school, but when my family needs help at the market, I am the first one who stops going to school. My younger sister and brother still go to school, but I have to go to Akpapa.

Leva: Did you like going to school?

Participant 2: Yes. Can you help me go to school?

Leva: I would love to and I will see what we can do. Are you the only person in your family to go to school?

Participant 2: I was the first, but my brothers go to school now and I help them.

February 28, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

Participant 3: I do not go to school.

Leva: What stopped you from going to school?

Participant 3: Money. I was in the same grade for two years because I could not pay my examination fees. I needed money. Then this boy in my community voiced interest in me. He helped me pay for my examination fees and bought me things so I could go to JHS 2 but then I became pregnant. Now I have to pay for my baby. Once I got pregnant, I stopped going to school because I could not afford to pay for pencils and chalkboard. But once the baby becomes older, I want to go back to school.

Leva: At what grade did you stop going to school?

Participant 3: I left in JHS 2.

Leva: Are you getting help from the baby's father now?

Participant 3: I know the father but he says he is not responsible for anything.

Leva: What do you do during the day?

Participant 3: I take care of the baby and sometimes I can do laundry for people and make money.

Leva: Do you live with your family?

Participant 3: I live with all my family. All three of my brothers go to school and one of my sister goes to school right now. I stay home to take care of my baby and help my mom prepare things for the market. My mom wants me to help in the market more.

Leva: What course did you enjoy when you were in school?

Participant 3: I liked English and reading.

Leva: When did you find out you were pregnant?

Participant 3: I did not know. We had sex only once. I did not know I was pregnant until 6 months. We were both young. I didn't think we get pregnant so young.

Leva: Did they teach you at school about sex or pregnancy?

Participant 3: Not when I was in school. I just saw in Frankadua people were pregnant and I learned from what people said.

March 02, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

Participant 4: I went to school when I was younger and stopped going to school in JHS 2.

Leva: Why did you stop going back to school?

Participant 4: I got pregnant.

Leva: How old were you when you stopped going to school?

Participant 4: I stopped going to school when I was 16 years old.

Leva: Was anything difficult about going to school?

Participant 4: No.

Leva: How old is your baby?

Participant 4: She is one year and a half.

Leva: Will you be going to school when your baby is older?

Participant 4: No.

Leva: What is stopping you from going back to school?

Participant 4: I do not want to go back to school because I do nothing in school. When I was in school I was always cleaning, washing, and fetching for the teacher or director. I was never in class. I was always around the school doing things for the teacher. They always picked on me to do everything. Also, I am not married and I do not have money to go to school and pay for my baby. I am also too old now. I can't go back to JHS 2. They will all be so young.

Leva: Does the father of the baby support you with money?

Participant 4: No. I do not know who is the father. When I was 16 I had different partners that helped me go to school. When I got pregnant none of them helped me.

Leva: What do you do during the day now that you are not in school?

Participant 4: I go to the farm to work in the day.

Leva: Where does your baby go when you are at the farm.

Participant 4: I take my girl with me.

Leva: Does anyone in your family help support you and your baby.

Participant 4: I live with my grandma. Sometimes she can take the baby. But she is always with me.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 4: No. Thank you.

March 03, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education.

Participant 5: I am in grade 6 but I do not go to school every day. This year I have to write the entrance exam but I do not know if I can.

Leva: What is stopping you from writing the entrance exam?

Participant 5: I did not go to school every day. Going to school was hard. I would go to find something to eat. I could not stay in the class when I was hungry. Sometimes I stayed at home because I did not want to go to school.

Leva: Why did you not want to go to school?

Participant 5: It was hard.

Leva: What was hard about it?

Participant 5: I did not have money to go to school every day and being in class was hard for me.

Leva: Were the lessons hard?

Participant 5: No. Just being in class was hard. My mom used to help me go to school, but she died and now I do not have money. My dad is sick so I have to help him at home.

Leva: How many times a month do you go to school?

Participant 5: 15.

Leva: What do you do on the days that you do not go to school?

Participant 5: I clean clothes for the volunteers. Two volunteers give me their clothes to clean.

Leva: How much does it cost to go to school.

Participant 5: each term they want 100 cedis from us and the entrance exam is 40 cedis.

Leva: What courses do you enjoy at school?

Participant 5: Sewing and Social Studies.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 5: No. Thank you

March 05, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education

Participant 6: I am in school now. I started school when I was 9 and then stopped going to school when I was 12. After one year I went back to school but had to go to grade 4.

Leva: Why did you stop going to school in grade 12?

Participant 6: My father died. After he died it was difficult to go to school. We are 4 girls and 5 boys and most of us do not go to school. We work in Frankadua.

Leva: Why did you start at 9?

Participant 6: Because I helped my dad in the farm and did not have time.

Leva: Do you live with your family?

Participant 6: No. I will with a boy. We both work on the farm to get money. Every Wednesday I take stuff from the farm and sell it in the market.

Leva: Do you think you will be able to go back to school?

Participant 6: No. When my father died it was hard. Now I have to buy and sell at the market.

Leva: What did you enjoy about going to school?

Participant 6: I liked English class and reading. I liked using the chalk to write on the board.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 6: Will you come to the farm this week?

Leva: Yes. Absolutely.

March 08, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education

Participant 7: I am in school in grade 5 but I stopped going to school when I was 14 years old. I stopped for two years. I just started again this year.

Leva: Why did you stop going.

Participant 7: My father died two years and it was hard to go to school. I did not have money and my family does not support me.

Leva: What did you do during the two years you took off?

Participant 7: I helped people in the market. I worked with my neighbour. I would go to the port some times and sell fresh water. I tried to get money to go to school. Just walk around see who needs help and you can give me money.

Leva: Was it hard to go back to school after two years?

Participant 7: Yes.

Leva: Why was it hard?

Participant 7: I was older and bigger than everyone in my class. I was in grade 4 but I was too old. I was scared school would not let me go back to school because I was too old.

Leva: Does your family support you?

Participant 7: I live with a boy. He supports me sometimes but not enough to pay for exercise books or school uniform.

Leva: What subjects did you enjoy in school?

Participant 7: Social Studies.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 7: No. Thank you.

March 11, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education

Participant 8: I am not in school right now.

Leva: When did you leave school?

Participant 8: I was 12 years old when I stopped going to school. I was in my last year of primary school.

Leva: Why did you stop going to school?

Participant 8: No one could help me go to school. Teachers kept asking me for money and I could not give it to them. My mother used to support me to go to school. My mother gave me money for lunch and gave me books and pencils. When my mom died, I had to support myself. I had to feed myself. Spent all my day finding work.

Leva: Where would you find work?

Participant 8: I would go to the farm and help people wash clothes. But I can only do that sometimes because of my baby.

Leva: How old is your baby.

Participant 8: She is three years old. I was 15 when I had her and now I spend my days taking care of her and trying to support her.

Leva: Were there any barriers for you in school?

Participant 8: It was hard to go to school and to pay for school. I had boys help me go to school but I got pregnant.

Leva: Do those boys help you now?

Participant 8: No.

Leva: What did you like about school?

Participant 8: Making bracelets and sewing.

Leva: Do you think you can go back to school?

Participant 8: No?

Leva: What makes it hard to go back to school?

Participant 8: I have a baby and no one can watch my baby. I can't go to school with a baby.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 8: No.

March 11, 2015 – Frankadua

Leva: Tell me about your journey to obtaining access to basic education

Participant 9: I went to school in Accra and lived there until I was 16 years old. I was in JHS before I left. After I got pregnant, I came to Frankadua to get help from my mom. Now I don't go to school because I do not have money and I have a child.

Leva: How was your experience with schooling in Accra?

Participant 9: It was hard. Students who are better in class would get chosen more. I didn't get chosen because reading was hard. I passed the entrance exam but reading is too hard.

Leva: Did you receive support from your family in Accra?

Participant 9: No. I had to support myself. I didn't go to school every day. Sometimes I would leave class to go and find something to eat. Sometimes I would help in the market to get money for school supplies. But not always was there jobs I needed school supplies and different people offered me school supplies. I had sex with them and then I got pregnant.

Leva: Does the father help you now?

Participant 9: No, I do not know with who I got pregnant, that's why I am in Frankadua, to get help from my mom.

Leva: So what do you do when you don't go to school?

Participant 9: I stay home with my baby or help my neighbour.

Leva: Do you think you will go back to school?

Participant 9: No. Reading was too hard, I won't be able to do second exam. So I will stay home.

Leva: Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 9: No.