# The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents in Ghana: Gender and Possible Selves

Bonjeer Tamilka



Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education Institute for Educational Research Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

October, 2017

The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents in Ghana: Gender and Possible Selves

© Bonjeer Tamilka

September 2017

The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents in Ghana: Gender and Possible Selves

Bonjeer Tamilka

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

# Abstract

This study sought to understand how the educational expectations of adolescent boys and girls are shaped in Ghana, drawing on interviews with students in the final year of junior high school (JHS). The expectations of boys were found to be higher than that of girls. This was in line with the finding in Bofah and Hannula (2015) about students' expectations in Ghana.

The norms, values, and expectations of the study area, concerning the possible selves of boys and girls in most social domains, do not permit them to forge equal academic possible selves focused on similar educational attainments. For girls, the massing of their expectations around diploma attainments was the result of what they hoped to become or avoid becoming in domains that are family-related. Within similar domains, the possible selves of boys did not delimit they education they could have. They, therefore, had academic-focused possible selves and those who reported doing well in the class were inclined towards university level attainments. They usually linked their academic performances to future educational institutions and programmes.

Girls mostly had possible selves focused on vocations and hoped to complete school early; engage in less demanding vocations; get married, and spend more time on family-related activities. This led to the massing of their expectations around diploma attainments because some educational attainments, such as university degrees, were perceived by them to lead to occupations that have demands that could alienate a person from the family.

The influences of 'significant others' on adolescents' expectations took a gendered pattern. And, the differences in expectations between boys and girls reflected inequalities existing in those patterns and in favour of boys. Within the family, the models for adolescents' expectations were parents and siblings of the same sex; within the school, female teachers encouraged girls to work hard so that they could in the future enrol in tutorial colleges just as they did; girls had shared expectations with their peers, and role models outside of their families were important to them; on the contrary, shared expectations were not present in boys' peer groups, and there were lesser influences of role models outside of boys' families on their expectations. It was suggested that interventions to increase girls' expectations should focus on the family and the school, by encouraging norms that emphasise the importance of higher education for all young people irrespective of gender.

# **Acknowledgments and dedication**

I am unremittingly grateful to God for how far He has brought me in education and the writing of this thesis in particular. To my supervisor, Professor Fengshu Liu, I doff my hat to your patience and guidance for everything that has to do with this thesis. I couldn't have asked for more.

I am equally thankful to all my research informants and the teachers of the school from which they were drawn. I was much humbled when you received and treated me as a staff member and gave me access to every educational information and assistance that facilitated the conduct of the interviews.

To the Dubik's of Nakpanduri, it would be a restrained statement to say that 'I owe you an elephantine gratitude' for your role in every facet of my life. Like my cousin, Bugnaab John Ayibani, I salute every emotional, material and spiritual support you gave me up to date.

I am also indebted to the families of Elijah Kombat, Foam Napoleon, Ali Peter and Silim Yandam for the warm reception I had from you since I arrived in Oslo. I have always felt at home anytime I visited you and in many of the 'get-together's,' you have always organised.

Many thanks also go to my siblings for all your prayers and support in everything that I do. I know you have always believed in me and have high hopes that I would contribute immensely in affecting every condition in our lives. I surely will!

What shall I say to my lovely wife, Felicity? I applaud you for enduring the long nights, the cold and warm weather without me. To my mother, Madam Laari, I only ask that God grant you good health. I would not want to recount what you have done for my siblings and me. Such an attempt would mean that they are countable. To my late father of good memory, who saw me start this programme but departed just months before I could submit this thesis, I only say rest if perfect peace.

# DEDICATION

To my son, Yennuguut Jed. May you and your generations grow to love God and to treasure wisdom and knowledge.

# **Table of contents**

ABSTRACT	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DEDICATION	6
ACRONYMS	10

Contents	page
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Research Questions	
1.2 The research District (context)	
1.3 Nominal years of selected educational institutions in Ghana	
1.4 Selected tertiary educational institutions	
1.5 Chapter summary and organisation of thesis	
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	
2.1 Introduction	
2.2 The nature and focus of research in educational expectations	
2.3 Parents and adolescents' educational expectations	
2.4 Teachers, peers and adolescents' educational expectations	
2.5 Returns on education and adolescents' expectations	
2.6 Gender, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, and adolescents' education	nal expectations
2.7 Theoretical Framework: The Possible Selves Theory	
2.8 Studies in possible selves	
2.9 Chapter summary	
Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 My standpoint	
3.3 The quantitative-qualitative debate	
3.4 Basic/generic research design	
3.5 Data collection method- Semi-structured interviews	
3.6 Sampling of participants	

R	eferences	. 99
С	hapter 5: Summary and Conclusion	.91
	4.6 Chapter summary	. 89
	4.5 Adolescents' peers, role models and their educational expectations	. 85
	4.4 Adolescents' schooling experiences and their educational expectations	. 79
	4.3 Gender roles and the marriage market returns in education	. 66
	4.2 The family and adolescents' educational expectations	. 59
	4.1 Introduction and adolescents' baseline expectations	. 55
C	hapter 4: Findings and Discussion	. 55
	3.12 Chapter summary	. 53
	3.11 Validity and reliability	. 52
	3.10 Data analysis procedures	. 51
	3.9 Ascertaining adolescents' expected higher education	. 50
	3.8 Researching your community	. 49
	3.7 Gaining access to the research site and participants	. 48

# List of tables

<b>Table 1</b> . Selected educational institutions and their nominal years	.16
<b>Table 2.</b> Selected tertiary educational institutions and their number (s)	17
Table 3. List of participants	46
Table 4. Adolescents' expected education	58

# List of figures

Figure 1. Adolescents	' expected education (reconstituted)59	9
-----------------------	--	---

# Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview guide	113
Appendix 2. Consent form	114
Appendix 3. Letter to district director of education	116

# Acronyms

GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
JHS	Junior High School
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
NTC	Nursing Training College
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SHS	Senior High School
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WAEC	The West African Examinations Council

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Adolescents' educational expectations are said to have been studied for many years now (Trusty, 1998). According to Jacob and Wilder (2010), though expectations have become less predictive of students attainment for some years now, it is still the strongest predictor of educational attainments in comparison with any other determinant of schooling. Its links with students' achievement have been identified by numerous studies (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Arora, 2012; Bofah & Hannula, 2015; Marjoribanks, 2005; Reynolds & Burge, 2008; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Sanders, Field & Diego, 2001). Examining how expectations develop from childhood to adulthood would, therefore, provide details on why males and females differ in education and occupation (Mello, 2008) and consequently employability, earnings, and social mobility.

Numerous studies show that more girls expect higher education compared with boys (Turley, Santos & Ceja, 2007; Perez-Brena, Delgado, De Jesús, Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2017; Mello, 2008; and, Tynkkynen, Tolvanen & Salmela-Aro, 2012). But research shows that this is a new trend (reversal). Reynolds and Burge (2008) for instance found that the rise in educational expectations contributed to the progression of girls in higher education in the USA. They reported that except for black American boys, boys in the USA had higher educational expectations and were more represented in higher educational institutions compared with girls in the 1970s. But in the 1990s, this was reversed due to a corresponding reversal in expectations in favour of girls.

The family of origin of adolescents and its influence on expectations has been extensively studied. Parents as 'significant others' are found to exert a powerful influence on the expectations of boys and girls. The characteristics of parents that are often studied are their socio-economic status (SES), and it is often proxied with education and occupation (Reynolds & Burge, 2008; Trusty, 2002; Rimkute, Hirvonen, Tolvanen, Aunola & Nurmi, 2012). However, study findings have been inconsistent on the effects of SES on boys and girls. SES has been found to be positively related to boys' expectations but not related with girls' (Trusty, 2002). Higher maternal education has been found to be more important for daughters, and higher paternal education is related to sons' expectations (Kleinjans, 2010). Boys' expectations are found to be more influenced by their fathers' professional status, but the

desires of both mothers and fathers are taken into consideration by girls when forging their educational plans (Scabini, Marta & Lanz, 2007). Also, parental encouragement has been found to increase girls' educational expectations above boys' (Reynolds & Burge, 2008).

The school is another context within which the expectations of adolescents are shaped. Within the school, the academic achievements of adolescents have been widely studied (Trusty, 2002; Anders & Micklewright, 2015; Reynolds & Burge, 2008; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005). But because academic abilities are subject to change, some students, irrespective of gender often change their expectations as their academic performances change (Jacob & Wilder, 2010; Park, Wells, & Bills, 2015). Academic self-efficacy (Trusty, 2000) and self-esteem (Davis & Pearce, 2007; Scabini et al., 2007) have also been studied, and differences in these domains between boys and girls have been found to affect their expectations. Other aspects of the school that have been studied are teachers' expectations (Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011) and adolescents' peers (Kiuru, Aunola, Nurmi & Vuori, 2007).

The norms, values, and beliefs of societies could define what is essential and should be sought for by boys and girls. This could affect how young people are brought up and consequently the choices they have make. Because societies differ in the composition of their values and beliefs, the choices boys and girls make could vary across cultures. Researchers have therefore examined how gender socialisation and the accompanying gender stereotypes and ideologies young people are exposed to affect their educational expectations. It has been found for example that when young people are raised in contexts where household obligations are shared between a man and a woman, they tend to have egalitarian views and higher expectations (Davis & Pearce, 2007).

There is now a movement away from identifying the determinants of educational expectations and their relationships with various social groups towards interventions to improve young people's educational aspirations and expectations. This is because of the recognition of the impact of expectations on other aspects of life. In the UK for instance, *Aimhigher* is focused on increasing the aspirations, attitudes, and expectations of young people, because it is believed that it can raise the educational attainments of disadvantaged groups which has positive spiral effects on other aspects of life (Rampino & Taylor, 2013).

Despite the numerous studies and a shifting focus towards practical strategies to improving 12

the educational expectations of different social groups, students' expectations are still understudied in developing countries (Beutel & Anderson, 2007; Forste, Heaton & Haas, 2004; Yuping, 2014). Given the importance of expectations and its contextual nature, there is the need for more research in expectations in developing countries. This will allow for the creation of a wealth of knowledge unique for adolescents in developing countries. This is because the challenges the youth face as they enter the adolescence phase are decidedly unique and it is not appropriate to rely on western literature to understand them or to respond to them (Kabiru, Mojola, Beguy & Okigbo, 2013).

Like other developing countries, educational expectations are yet to gain currency in educational discourse and research in Ghana and knowledge about it, and its relationships and potentials are therefore limited. This is a testament of the assertion by researchers that it is understudied in developing countries. Attempts were made to find out the extent to which adolescents expectations have been studied in Ghana. This consisted of vigorous searches which involved the entering of relevant keywords 'expectations' and 'aspirations' in Google, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ERIC as well as search in the University of Oslo library were conducted. However, these searches uncovered little research outputs on educational expectations in Ghana.

Three studies were found on educational expectations in Ghana. One was Morley et al. (2010). In Morley et al. (2010), expectations and aspirations were only mentioned in passing as enablers and barriers to higher education. Even so, it was conducted among students who were already enrolled in universities, and the concepts were casually treated. Another was Ansong, Wu and Chowa (2015). They tested the relationship between parents and students' savings and students' expectations for university education. The other was Bofah and Hannula (2015). They analysed the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and reported that the expectations of boys were higher than that of girls in Ghana. This was not the case for the other countries, not even for the other African countries that were part of the analysis.

The study by Ansong et al. (2015) was limited in scope and lacked many details that could adequately illuminate our understanding of students' expectations in Ghana. For example, though they found a strong relationship between parents' savings and students' expectations,

we still do not know how savings interact with gender and expectations and how savings work to influence expectations in their study. Also, in Bofah and Hannula (2015), there is no account of how the gender differences they reported came about. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to understand how the educational expectations of adolescent boys and girls are shaped in Ghana. This is a comparative study which draws on interviews with students in lower secondary school (students in final year of junior high school- JHS 3). This study, will therefore, contribute to filling the gap in research knowledge in educational expectations are shaped and by extension, why differences in educational expectations may exist between boys and girls in Ghana.

# **1.1 Research Questions**

To help understand how the educational expectations of girls and boys are shaped in Ghana, three research questions are proposed to guide the study.

1. How do the 'significant others' of adolescent boys and girls in Ghana mediate their higher education decisions?

2. How do cultural norms, expectations and values, regarding the role of males and females in Ghanaian society mediate the decisions of adolescent boys and girls regarding higher education?

3. How do the schooling experiences of adolescent boys and girls in Ghana mediate their decisions regarding higher education?

## **1.2 The research District (context)**

This research was conducted in Nakpanduri. It is located in the Bunkprugu-Yunyoo district of the northern region of Ghana. In a few paragraphs, I present some facts about the district that have a bearing on the research questions that were explored. It is important to provide such information because, ...in undertaking the study of gender differences in psychological variables...one should examine the socio-historical contexts within which individuals develop. Only then,...would an understanding of the causes of gender differences be revealed, rather than a mere description of these differences (Anthis, Dunkel & Anderson, 2004, p. 151).

The Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo district is one of the 26 districts that make up the northern region of Ghana. It was established by the Legislative Instrument (C.I) 1748 in August 2004. It is a predominantly agricultural district as 86.3% of persons employed are in the agricultural sector (GSS, 2014). The administrative capital is Bunkpurugu. As of 2010, its population stood at 122, 591, representing 4.9% of the total population of the northern region. Out of this, 60,240 are males, and 62,351 are females (GSS, 2014).

The literacy rate of the district is below the national average. This could partly be attributed to the late introduction of formal education in the district. The first primary school in the district was established in 1950 and in the town where this research was conducted, Nakpanduri, in 1951 (Fant, 2008). The literacy rate of persons 11 years and above is 43.9%, and the national rate is 74.1%. The literacy rate for males is 54.8% against 80% of the national. The rate for females is 34.1% against 68.5% of the national. There is a large gap in the literacy rate between urban and rural dwellers in Ghana of 84.1% and 62.8% respectively. Since the district is mainly rural, the rates for males and females should be contrasted with the rates for rural Ghana in general. But there is still a disparity because the rate for males in rural Ghana of 69.9% and females of 55.94% are higher than the rates for the district (GSS, 2013; GSS, 2014).

The post-secondary and tertiary educational attainments of residents of the district are low. As of 2010, only 14.1% of males and 3.4% of females had attained tertiary educational qualifications. Those who were currently enrolled in tertiary educational institutions in 2010 were 1.1% of males and 0.3% females (GSS, 2014).

Of persons aged 15-29 years, about 18.95% of males and 46.57% of females are married (GSS, 2014). This shows, though not surprisingly, that females enter into marriage earlier than males, and are more likely to start thinking about marriage in mid and late adolescence more than males. This is evident when one looks at the marriage rate for persons aged 15-19

years. At these ages, whereas 6.8% of males are married, about a double of females, 13.8% are married (GSS, 2014).

## 1.3 Nominal years of selected educational institutions in Ghana

Table 1 below shows some selected educational institutions and their nominal years. This is not exhaustive as it, for example, does not contain all the "tutorial colleges" in Ghana.

	Institution/qualification	Duration
	awarded	
Primary school		6 years
Junior High school		3 years
Senior High School		3 years
Tutorial colleges		
Teacher training colleges	Diploma	3 years
Nursing training colleges	Diploma/certificate	3 years/2 years (Cert)
Polytechnics	Higher National Diploma	3 years
Universities	Bachelor's degree	4 years, 2 years (if top-up)
	Master's degree	1 or 2 years
	PhD	3 years
	Medicine/surgery/dental surgery	6 years

 Table 1: Selected educational institutions and their nominal years in Ghana (source, Nuffic, 2015).

# 1.4 Selected tertiary educational institutions

The list of tertiary educational institutions reported below in Table 2 is not also exhaustive as it consists of only institutions that the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) collected data to prepare a report for 2012/13 academic year. It is only to give an overview of the types of higher educational institutions found in Ghana and how spread they may be. It is to show that adolescent boys and girls in Ghana have a wide range of institutions to enrol in after high school and their reported educational expectations in this study would consist of some of them.

Type of institution	Number
Public universities	9
Polytechnics	10
Public colleges of education	38
Public specialised institutions	8
Private tertiary institutions	51
Private colleges of education	3
Colleges of agriculture	3
Nurses training colleges	11
TOTAL	133

 Table: 2 Tertiary educational institutions and their numbers (source, NCTE, 2014)

## 1.5 Chapter summary and organisation of thesis

Many factors affect the educational expectations of adolescents, but how these factors are related to gender is not straightforward, and this has been pointed out in this chapter. Also, whereas "students' expectations" are well studied in the developed world, and there is now a shift towards practical strategies to improve the expectations of disadvantaged groups, very little is known about students expectations in Ghana. Ghana, therefore, offers a unique context to study students' expectations.

Basic statistics about the research area that have bearings on education were presented with the understanding that the reader would be acquainted with 'what is going on' in the area. The duration and spread of the various educational institutions in Ghana were equally presented.

The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows: chapter 2 is a review of the literature on students' expectations for higher education. It begins with a description of the nature and definition of expectations. It then discusses the determinants of expectations. The possible selves theory that will be used to analyse the data from the field interviews is also outlined in this chapter. Chapter 3 is the methodology, and it shows how this research was designed and conducted. It presents and justifies the research design and strategy, the data collection method, sampling of participants and the challenges involved in researching your community

and how I negotiated it. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings of the research. In chapter 5, I summarise the study findings and present the conclusion of the study. Suggestions for future research and policy interventions are also suggested in this chapter.

# **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section is dedicated to the review of literature in educational expectations. It begins by outlining the nature of educational expectations and some major areas of research involving expectations. This will be followed with an exploration of the determinants of expectations. These will be followed by the theoretical framework that will be used to make sense of the data from the field interviews.

## 2.2 The nature and focus of research in educational expectations

It is important to disentangle expectations for higher education from aspirations for higher education. This is because these two concepts are often used interchangeably (Trusty, 2002), and, while some would argue that "they are not conceptually similar" (Khattab, 2015, p. 734), others think "aspirations and expectations are conceptually similar" (Bohon, Johnson & Gorman, 2006, p. 208). This distinction is necessary as expectations for higher education is the thrust of this research.

Reynolds and Pemberton (2001) defined educational expectations as "individuals' subjective probabilities that an event, such as receiving a college degree, will occur sometime in the future given available information and preferences at the present time" (p. 704). On their part, Azmat et al. (2013, p. 98) define aspirations as "the notion of desire and longing; a 'dreaming' or 'wishing' semantic element linked to personal ambitions or goals". What distinguishes them is that expectations are outcomes that are likely to happen after realistic assessments of the circumstances that surround the individual and aspirations are desires or hopes or dreams which individuals have regarding the future (Jacob & Wilder, 2010; Bohon et al., 2006).

Expectations for higher education are often looked at in terms of low and high expectations. OECD (2012) delimits high and low students' expectations by designating high expectations to educational attainment of a university degree and low expectations to the ending of formal schooling after the completion of upper secondary studies. This study takes a similar line. Students who expect a university degree and more would be considered as having higher expectations. Students who expect qualifications less than university degrees (for example, diploma, higher national diploma, and certificates) would be considered as having lower expectations.

Expectations are also often looked at in terms of whether they are stable or not (Beal & Crockett, 2010; Park et al., 2015; Trusty, 2000). Most studies show that the expectations of individuals are not immune to changes. They are malleable in response to the receipt and processing of new information (Morgan, 1998). Jacob and Wilder (2010), for instance found that over 60% of students update their expectations at least once in various levels of their educational endeavour which is somewhat based on the acquisition of new information, notably, ability.

The relationship between academic achievement and expectations has been explored (Mullis et al., 2012; Bofah & Hannula, 2015; Marjoribanks, 2005; Reynolds & Burge, 2008; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005) and the direction of their correlation is sometimes debated. Though achievement significantly influences expectations, research findings are not consistent on whether the original (earlier) expectations of adolescents can be varied by changes in their performance. In a longitudinal study involving two cohorts of students, Trusty (2000) found that most students had stable expectations though their performance had dropped down. There was a decreased effect of achievement on individual changes in expectations, it was not much because of related changes in performance. But in another longitudinal study, improved performance was found to be strongly and positively related with changes in expectations (Park et al., 2015).

The relationship between teenage pregnancy and educational expectations has received attention. Hockaday et al. (2000) looked at educational expectations and adolescent pregnancy among black and white females in the United States. They found that pregnant adolescents were more likely to have lower educational expectations and adolescents with lower educational expectations were more likely to be pregnant. Beutel (2000) had similar findings: adolescents with low educational expectations are more likely to have non-marital pregnancy or birth than adolescents with high expectations. In addition, adolescent girls were found to

reduce their educational expectations following "non-marital pregnancy or birth" (Beutel, 2000, p. 297).

Delinquency and violent behaviours among adolescents have been studied alongside educational expectations. Joseph (1996) looked at the relationship between school variables and delinquency of African-American youth. In this study, African-American males with higher educational expectations reported lower levels of delinquency. A parallel research also examined the relationship between overall school functioning and frequency of violent behaviours among (Birnbaum et 2003). young adolescents al.. А negative relationship was also found between positive school functioning and violent behaviours for adolescents with higher educational expectations. For adolescents with lower educational expectations, there was no relationship in their positive school functioning and violent behaviours. Also, parent-reported behavioural problem predicts parents' expectations for their children which intend influence children's educational expectations (Rutchick et al., 2009); increased alcohol, cocaine and marijuana use is associated with lower expectations (Sanders et al., 2001); and, negative school behaviour (suspensions) is associated with lowered expectations (Trusty, 2002).

Research in educational expectations has also been focused on ethnic/racial minorities and majorities. In the USA, African-American youth, Latinos, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans have been the focus (Wood et al., 2007; Jacob & Wilder, 2010; Carpenter II, 2008; Bohon et al., 2006; Kao & Thompson, 2003). In the UK and Australia, respective dominant racial/ethnic groups have been the focus of studies (Marjoribanks, 2005; St Clair & Benjamin, 2011; Azmat et al., 2011; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). In most of these studies, the minority ethnic/racial groups are often reported as having higher expectations in comparison with the dominant groups (Reynolds & Pemberton, 2001; Jacob & Wilder, 2010; Johnson & Reynolds, 2013). Differences in expectations among minority groups also exist. However, research findings have not been consistent. For example, Mello (2009) reported that African-Americans have the highest expectations in comparisons with other groups in the USA, but Asian American students were found to have the highest expectations among all minority groups by Cheng and Starks (2002).

## 2.3 Parents and adolescents' educational expectations

The socioeconomic status (SES) of parents, proxied with education and income influence the expectations of adolescents. Past research on students' expectations is concentrated on this (Sanders et al., 2001; Kleinjans, 2010, p. 125; Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2014; Zhan & Sherraden, 2011). However, partly because of different contexts, research findings have not been consistent on the effects of SES on gender. Kleinjans' (2010) study of young people in Denmark, for example, revealed that girls' expectations were not affected by parental income, but boys' expectations were significantly affected. In а different context. Mexico, Attanasio and Kaufmann (2014) found that higher parental income was more important for girls than boys in the decision to attend college.

Though it is apparent that across countries, parents' SES could have different effects on the expectations of boys and girls, not much is still known about how it happens. It is therefore suggested that "research is needed to disentangle possible explanations" (Kleinjans, 2010, p. 127). Most of these studies were also conducted in contexts where even if parents' incomes are low, there could be other interventions like scholarships or higher education could be tuition-free. That could compensate for any perceived financial disadvantage that works against progression in education. But studies in such contexts still report that parental income is an important determinant of expectations. Based on this, research in contexts of no form of financial protection to compensate for any financial disadvantages would, therefore, be more revealing. There are also contexts where parents have never experienced formal education too. Understanding how the SES of parents on adolescents' expectations is shaped in such contexts is likely also to generate revealing findings.

Parents' expectations for their children have received considerate attention from researchers. It is believed that expectations are more powerful when communicated by specific family members such as fathers and mothers (Perez-Felkner, 2013). But expectations from parents have equally generated inconsistent results about gender, though most studies show that mothers' expectations have the greatest effect on all children's expectations and it is likely to be the result of the amount of time children spend with each of their parents (Sanders et al., 2001). Trusty (2000) found that mothers' expectations influence children's expectations more than fathers. Also, maternal expectations more than paternal expectations explain better the

educational plans of adolescent boys, but girls' take into consideration the wishes of both their fathers and mothers when forging their educational plans (Scabini et al., 2007). Girls who perceive their parents as having high expectations for them have higher expectations (Schmitt-Wilson, 2013) and such girls usually invest more time in school work, perform better and report higher expectations than boys (Carranza, Chhuon & Hudley, 2009). And, for boys, in deciding on which college to enrol in, mothers' expectations are not important to them (Zhan & Sherraden, 2011).

There are many ways in which parents' expectations influence adolescents' expectations. Parents sometimes expect children to either achieve something equal or more than what they have achieved (Rutchick et al., 2009). Thus, parents with bachelor's degrees may either expect their children to attain bachelor's degrees or masters or Ph.D., and it is explicitly communicated and picked up by children. A fundamental question that could be asked about these findings is: what happens to the expectations of children in contexts where their parents have not had a formal education? How would their expectations look like in comparison with their peers in the same context whose parents have had a formal education? It is also apparent in the literature that there is some gendered transmission of expectations influence boys' expectations. An important question that needs answers in is: what happens if a boy and a girl have the same parents and those parents do not have equal educational attainments? Should we expect different expectations from the boy and the girl?

Parental involvement in adolescents' life trajectories have been conceived in a number of ways. And, they have effects on the expectations of boys and girls. Trusty (1998), for example, showed that career control is associated with higher expectations. However, extremely low and extremely high parental control over adolescents career decisions were found to affect college attendance decisions negatively, and it suggests "that firm-but not extreme- control regarding decisions about job, money, and education affects educational achievement" (p. 269). Home-based parental involvement also indirectly increases boys' educational expectations, but it is weakly related with girls' expectations (Trusty, 2002). Parental encouragement also increases girls' expectations more than boys (Reynolds & Burge, 2008). These aspects of parental involvements such as encouragement are about the positive attitudes of parents towards adolescents. But negative parental attitudes could affect

adolescents' expectations. If by letting a girl know that you expect her to excel in education, and she then tends to forge higher expectations (Schmitt-Wilson, 2013), then what happens if you send out messages to a particular child which suggest that you do not think he or she would excel in education? Unfortunately, these kinds of parental attitudes apparently are under-examined.

# 2.4 Teachers, peers and adolescents' educational expectations

Teachers' expectations for students affect their expectations. The basis of teachers' expectations is largely from their perceptions of students' abilities (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Siegle & Reis, 1998; Tiedemann, 2000; Upadyaya & Eccles, 2014) and on ethnicity/stereotype (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). When teachers' expectations are based on students' abilities, in most cases they tend to be accurate. This is largely because teachers "tend to possess accurate knowledge of children's learning and development" (Gill & Reynolds, 2000, p. 409). Because of the potency of performance itself on expectations, the predictive power of teachers on students' expectations is questioned (Weinstein, 2002). What most of these studies tend to give less attention to is the gender of teachers: whether male and female teachers differ in the kinds of expectations they communicate to students, and whether there is a gendered pattern, where for example, female teachers have expectations for only girls and not boys.

Peer groups are demonstrated to influence the educational expectations of adolescents, and such influence is usually reciprocal (Davies & Kandel, 1981). Reynolds and Pemberton (2001) found that adolescents who reported that about 50% of their peers plan to go to college were more likely to expect a college degree than those who had less than 50% of their peers intending to go to college. Kiuru et al. (2007) also investigated the extent to which members of peer groups share similar expectations about their future education. Their findings led them to conclude that peer groups form important contexts for the formation of educational expectations. They found that members of boys' peer groups were similar regarding their expectations. This was also the same for girls' peer groups. In a stratified educational system like in Germany, adolescents' peers were found to have a stronger impact on students' expectations, significantly more than even their academic performance (Roth, 2017).

When young people change schools and make new friends, their educational expectations could also be affected. This is because they would make new friends and also lose old friends. The changing and making of friends come with new influences, challenges, and expectations. Andrew and Flashman (2017) examined changes in peer environments and its influence at 8th-to-9th-grade transition. They found that students who graduate from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a majority of their peers from 8th-grade report decrease expectations or they do not revise their expectations significantly. However, when their 9th-grade class has a majority of students from other schools, their expectations increases and girls are the most affected and it "suggests that female students' educational expectation formation is more sensitive to the re-organization of close peer ties" (Andrew & Flashman, 2017, p. 229). They also found that, unlike boys, girls who perceive themselves as being academically better in school than their friends report higher expectations.

Researchers define peer groups by gender and then try to see how for example, boys are influenced by other boys. But it is possible that being of the same age and in the same class, interaction among students may not necessarily take a gendered pattern which means there could be significant cross-gender influences which are often ignored in research. It would, therefore, be important to understand from adolescents whether cues from classmates who are not of the same gender with them matter to them as far as the choices they make are concerned.

## 2.5 Returns on education and adolescents' expectations

Returns on education have been found to shape students educational expectations. In a longitudinal study, Morgan (1998) for example observed that the educational expectations of white high school seniors were lower than that of blacks. This phenomenon was linked to corresponding changes in economic returns in education for blacks and whites. Blacks in the 1970s were mostly employed in low paying jobs, and this resulted in lower educational expectations for blacks because returns on education were not encouraging. But in the 1980s, the returns on education increased, causing increased educational expectations by blacks. Goyette (2008) also found that expected returns on education had the most effect on the expectations of students in the 1980's than students in the early parts of 2000. Gender analysis also shows that expected economic returns in education and perceived risk of unemployment

greatly influence boys' college enrolment decisions but does not have an effect on the college expectations of girls (Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2014; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2016).

The reliance on labour market information and rational calculations to inform college attendance decisions could discourage the formation of higher educational expectations, particularly in countries with mass unemployed graduates. And should educational systems encourage the formation of high expectations in such instances? Or are low educational expectations by students justified? Studies in contexts where graduate unemployment is higher than the present contexts where earnings and employment guide young people's educational expectations are likely to generate more revealing findings. It is equally important to know why expected economic returns on education influence boys expectations more than girls. Most of these studies tend to ignore this question. Understanding this is important because it is possible that some important factors precipitate this, and girls and boys probably do not relate the same way to these factors.

The marriage market plays a vital role in shaping adolescents expectations in education. This appears to be a new area of research among the determinants of educational expectations. Attanasio and Kaufmann (2016) used two proxies for marriage market returns in education to determine their effects on college attendance decisions: (1) "the ratio of unmarried men to women in the locality of residence to capture the availability of partners"; and, (2) "the ratio of unmarried men to women with a certain level of schooling, if the suitability of the partner depends on having a similar (or higher) education level" (p. 2-3). Their findings show that for girls, the marriage market plays a vital role in their decisions to attend college. Girls' expectations were high because they perceived that by going higher in education, they could increase their chances of becoming more attractive to potential partners. For boys, the marriage market had a negligible effect on their college attendance decisions. Because they did not use direct questions in this study, they pointed that the findings should be treated as 'suggestive and subject to some caveats.' It will be useful to, therefore, understand this phenomenon better by hearing directly from boys and girls and in other cultural contexts.

Once married, it becomes difficult for some individuals to realise their expectations. Depending on the time individuals want to marry, knowledge of marriage as an encumbrance on continuing education could, therefore, affect their expectations. McClelland (1990) studied young people's educational attainment and occupational expectations with a focus on the effect of marriage on their attainment of their expected higher education and occupations which they reported seven years earlier. It was found that early marriage was associated with lower odds of attaining a bachelor's degree. This was more pronounced among women and more especially among those from the nonprivileged background. Single women and men more than their counterparts acquired bachelor's degrees and were more likely to be found in high-status jobs. The academic abilities of women in this study were higher than that of men. However, years after high school, most of those who were married could not achieve their expectations which means that "even the possession of a positive trait does not protect women against the experience of a negative event," and, marriage was regarded as a negative event, a "transmitter of cumulative disadvantage, both for women and for those from nonprivileged social origins" (p. 10-114).

There may be some ways in which marriage 'depresses' the educational attainments of individuals. As members of the community, adolescents may be exposed to some complexities related to marriage that culminates into 'cumulative disadvantages' (McClelland, 1990) and that could inform their educational expectations. Therefore, by getting close to adolescents, our knowledge of "what" and "how" of relationships and marriage on their expectations could be enhanced.

# 2.6 Gender, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, and adolescents' educational expectations

Explicit gender comparisons of expectations exist. Research findings consistently show that girls expect more education than boys. This persists even in minority groups. For example, African-American girls consistently report higher expectations than boys (Wood et al., 2007; Turley et al., 2007); Mexican-origin girls in the USA have higher expectations compared with their boys counterparts (Perez-Brena et al., 2017); and, among the most socially underprivileged groups such as young people in foster homes (Kirk, Colvin, Nilsen, Brown & Lewis, 2012) and youth in 'out of home care' (Melkman, Refaeli, & Benbenishty, 2016), girls

are found to have higher expectations compared with boys.

Gender stereotypes also affect educational expectations. It is shown that boys and girls usually make stereotyped choices. According to Favara (2012), for example, the choices boys and girls make are not based on gender differences in abilities, because even when they both show equal academic performance, they still make different choices and in accordance with their gender stereotype. However, the impact of gender roles on educational choices is stronger on girls than boys, and the effects on girls' choices start as early as age fourteen or the beginning of secondary school.

Gender also affects the pre-tertiary educational courses that boys and girls pursue. It also affects the vocations they chose and that affect the expectations of boys and girls. Buchmann and Park (2009) for example, showed that students in vocationally-oriented schools compared with students in academic-oriented schools were less likely to expect to complete college. However, girls were found to be more likely to be enrolled in academic-oriented schools that lead to the university, but boys were more likely to be in trajectories that do not allow a transition to higher education or only allow an indirect enrolment in universities. In such educational systems where particular educational trajectories do not allow a transition to the university be compared with their peers in the other paths? Or in cases where particular vocations do not require higher degrees, would it be possible to talk of low and high expectations, without some distinctions of the type of school and vocation?

Gender ideologies (Davis & Pearce, 2007) and gender socialisation (Fraser & Eccles, 1995) explain the stereotyped choices of boys and girls. Davis and Pearce (2007) theorised and tested the relationship between an aspect of gender ideology they called "work-family gender ideology" and the educational expectations of adolescents. According to them, how boys and girls envisage the future families they would construct and their roles within it together with their partners in managing incomes and in care-giving have effects on the kind of education they expect. Their results indicate that educational expectations of adolescents are significantly related with their work-family gender ideology. In particular, it was found that, though adolescents with egalitarian views have high expectations, the effects of increased

egalitarianism are more significant on girls than on boys.

Self-esteem is also found to have an association with educational expectations. Davis and Pearce (2007) found a positive relationship between self-esteem and educational expectations of adolescents. In their study, adolescents with high self-esteem were found to have a high likelihood of expecting to attend college. Scabini et al. (2007) in their study did not find any relationship between self-esteem and boys' expectations. In contrast, the self-esteem of girls was found to be one of the predictors of their expectations.

Academic self-efficacy accounts for how the expectations of boys and girls are shaped. It is an "individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions" (Schunk, 1991, p. 207). It contributes to children's motivation and academic achievement more than academic abilities; determines goal setting and commitment to academic tasks (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). And it "better predicts actual performance" (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003, p. 28).

Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) measured academic self-efficacy by assessing the certainty or confidence of students in obtaining specific grades from a range of grades in a given subject. Students confident more confident of obtaining higher grades have high efficacy beliefs and those less confident of obtaining high grades have low academic self-efficacy. Trusty (2000) examined the stability of educational expectations from grade 8 to 2 years after high school. It was found that academic self-efficacy for post-secondary attainment predicts stable educational expectations for both girls and boys. However, the effect was stronger on females than on males which mean increased self-efficacy benefit girls more than boys.

It is apparent that there is an interlocking array of factors that shape the educational expectations of young people. Each determinant of educational expectations is a product of the interaction of some factors. For instance, parental expectations affect young people's expectations in education. But parental expectations are also mediated by other factors such as the gender of the child, race, household income, grade and current grades of the child (Child Trends, 2015). This results in high and low expectations for youth at different times, places, and circumstances.

#### 2.7 Theoretical Framework: The Possible Selves Theory

Because expectations pertain to events in the future, a framework with a future outlook of individual motivations, choices, actions, and goals was considered to be appropriate to guide the study. In this regard, the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) was found to be suitable. The possible selves theory was also chosen because studies of educational expectations from that perspective were found to be uncommon, and this study wants to contribute to filling that gap.

The central proposition of the theory is that, possible selves "represent specific, individually significant hopes, fears, and fantasies". They are composed of "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they will like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). When put side by side with the definition of expectations, possible selves appear to be the same as expectations. But it will be too narrow a definition because expectations are merely aspects of 'a more general phenomenon', possible selves, (Erikson, 2007, p. 351).

According to Markus and Nurius (1986), the areas of analyses where the possible selves theory can be applied include interpersonal relationships and decision-making. People differ in interpersonal relationships because different possible selves guide them. As socially conceived disparate groups, the interpersonal attributes of girls and boys could therefore vary. This difference could, therefore, affect how they relate with others in their social environment and how they interpret feedback from others and eventually the choices they make. This is important for this study because feedback is essential when people are to make decisions and whether or not to go higher in education involves decision-making.

Two significances of the theory are elaborated by Markus and Nurius (1986). First, they are incentives for future behaviour: individuals' knowledge of what they can become, what they hope to become, what they are afraid they may become, what they fully expect they will become; or their fears, goals, threats and hopes provide them with the means-ends patterns for new behaviour; helps them to frame their behaviours and to guide their course; and, it helps them to select future behaviours. This means that what adolescents hope or fear to become in the future in some other domains either than education could affect how far they hope to go in education. The second significance of the theory is that it has evaluative and interpretive

functions. That is, this type of self knowledge helps individuals to make sense of their actions, attributes and abilities because it comes with benchmarks for the evaluation of outcomes.

The theory posits that the nature of possible selves and how they are valued by the individual; the intensity and extensiveness of its "cognitive and affective elaboration"; the association of such selves to categorical "plans and behavioural strategies"; all are determined by where a person finds themselves in life (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 958). Thus, they are influenced by one's gender, family, school, country, and culture. This means that giving two people of the same parents; their educational expectations could vary just because one of them is a boy and the other is a girl. Or, expectations of adolescents of the same gender could differ because while some of them would be coming from the rural areas, others would be coming from the urban areas. Oyserman and Fryberg (2006), summed this by asserting that,

Possible selves are tightly connected to racial, ethnic, gender and cultural identities, and perceived in-group norms. Individuals learn not only who people like them can become, but also who people not like them can become, creating both a series of possible 'me's' and a series of 'not me's', selves one does not strive for or actively tries to avoid (p. 21).

According to Oyserman & Fryberg, (2006, pp. 21-22) through the social context, individuals learn what is possible for them and what is valued. And when the social context lacks images of possible selves for a group within a given domain, there are chances of complete absence of possible selves within that particular domain. This means that if a group, such as boys or girls also have specific images in a given domain such as higher education, their possible selves could be massed around that.

Markus and Nurius (1986) posit that possible selves are the result of previous social comparisons in which the thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviours of people are matched up with those of 'salient others'. It is therefore argued to be personally created, yet 'socially determined and constrained'. That is, the individual is free to create any possible selves for themselves. However, the pool of possible selves from which they create their possible selves "derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences" (p. 954).

Past selves (past experiences) shape possible selves if they define the individual again in the future. For instance, a person could develop a successful possible self-based on the fact they once performed well in class (Markus & Nurius, 1986). On the other hand, past failure in a particular domain can make it difficult for a person to develop successful possible selves in that domain (Lee & Oyserman, 2012). It is contended that the impact of past selves in the construction of future identity is possible only when the individual maintains a graphic memory of the past and assimilate the same into their present identity (Strahan & Wilson, 2006).

Gender is a source of possible selves partly because the information relied on to form possible selves differ by gender (Knox, 2006). Also, Oyserman & Fryberg (2006, pp. 29-31) aver that gender is a determinant of possible selves since boys and girls differ in self-esteem, sensitivity to social context, and in cognitive and social development.

Girls are deemed to have lower self-esteem compared with boys and are therefore more doubtful of attaining their possible selves and more certain of the occurrence of negative possible selves. The implication of this is that girls can easily give up on possible selves, especially those that are perceived to be unattainable.

With regards to sensitivity to social context, girls are more responsive to contextual influences than boys, leading them to adopt the success and failures of related others. In this case, they are more likely to for instance, either 'shift up' or 'shift down' their academic possible selves at the thought of someone of their gender who is either succeeding or failing in school respectively. Unlike boys, the 'hoped for' and the 'feared' possible selves of girls are therefore formed by incorporating the hopes that other people have for them and the negative views of others respectively into their inventory of possible selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

Finally, girls compared with boys develop faster on numerous social and cognitive measures such as self-awareness, self-reflection and abstract reasoning. One of the consequences of this is that the integration of future work and family roles becomes their preoccupation even as early as in mid-adolescence. Concerning possible selves in education, the differences in cognitive and social development could put girls in a quandary. For example, faced with choosing between school and family-related possible selves, they find themselves in the

awkward situation of either pursuing their personal desire for academic excellence, and their belief that they are expected to be good family members (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). That is, when traditional gender roles are assimilated into the self-concept, the possible selves that boys and girls envisage tend to differ (Knox, 2006).

#### 2.8 Studies in possible selves

The relationship between possible selves and academic outcomes has been studied. It has been shown that adolescents with well-elaborated possible selves about success in the future do well academically (Leondari, Syngollitou & Kiosseoglou, 1998). Through intervention programmes, it is also demonstrated that improved academic performances are possible when elaborate academic possible selves function as self-regulators- eight grade students from low-income families were found to have improved grades, increased the time they spend doing homework, spent more time doing homework, and participated in class more, when academic possible selves served as self-regulators (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry & Hart-Johnson, 2004). However, studies about possible selves and students expectations are not common. This study would like to examine it by looking at students perceptions of their performances and their academic possible selves.

Studies that seek to understand the nature of the possible selves of boys and girls also exist. It has always been found that girls and boys differ mainly in the content of their feared possible selves. Knox et al. (2000), for example, sought to describe adolescents' possible selves and to know if boys and girls differed in different aspects of possible selves. They found that gender disparities existed mainly in the category of feared possible selves. Girls were found to have feared selves related to relationships and/or interpersonal functioning. Boys had feared selves related to occupation, general failure and inferiority. Anthis et al. (2004), also, found that boys and girls differ on feared interpersonal possible selves, with females generating significantly more (M= 1.12) feared interpersonal possible selves than males (M= 0.67). These findings are consistent with earlier findings by Fraser and Eccles (1995). In their study, girls mentioned more possible selves about wealth/poverty and job success. However, what is not known much is how these relational and non-relational contents of the possible selves of boys and girls affect their educational goals.

Possible selves have also been applied in studies of identities. It has been described as "identities under construction" and "anticipated identities" (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001). And, most studies show that they are important for identity formation. Aspects of identity widely studied are career, marriage, dating relationships, and parenthood (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001). And, according to Dunkel and Anthis (2001), after exploring possible selves, people become committed to their hoped-for, but not feared, possible selves. But if identities are interdependent (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001), by not committing to feared possible selves, it means that the individual would not only succeed in avoiding a feared possible self, but he or she would probably forgo some possible selves that were tied to the feared self. Equally likely is the fact that by committing to hoped-for possible selves, the individual may also be compelled to seek or attain some possible selves that are tied to that desired possible self.

What most studies do is to report the hoped-for, and the feared possible selves of adolescents. But other related possible selves that could be sought for by adolescents for committing to a hoped-for self and what they equally sacrifice so that they could avoid a feared self are not often examined. This will be highlighted in this study. It will be done by looking at how possible selves regulate adolescents' educational expectations.

## 2.9 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review literature on educational expectations and to outline the theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the empirical data from the field.

It was found that there is a consensus on what shape students' educational expectations, for example, family socio-economic status and academic performance. How these operate to result in different expectations for boys and girls are inadequately explained. Hence many researchers recommend further studies that require the utilisation of a different approach rather than the predominant quantitative approach to understanding better the processes generating differences in expectations.

There was also found an important area of research, the marriage market returns in education that is said to be under-researched (Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2016). It could help in our understanding of the educational expectations of boys and girls. One would expect the college

attendance decisions of young people to be influenced by the opportunities they envisage higher education to bring into it. And that should have attracted a great deal of research attention, but "to this date, there is little empirical evidence on whether marriage market considerations play a role in educational decisions" (Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2016, p. 1). This study sees this as a gap in research that needs to be filled.

Some important questions that most of the studies reviewed failed to answer included: why boys more than girls are motivated by employment and salaries which then influence their expectation? Is there a gendered pattern of teacher-student communication and encouragement of expectations? And, how does parental SES work to influence adolescents' expectation? These questions are considered worthwhile and would be investigated.

In the review, I only came across three studies in educational expectations done in Ghana and the critical questions of why the expectations of boys are higher than girls in Ghana and how such expectations are shaped were not addressed by them. This was not surprising since there is a consensus in the literature that students' expectations are under-researched in the developing countries.

The possible selves theory which would guide the study was equally elaborated. It was found suitable because of its future-oriented outlook of the self; and, the centrality of the social environment in how the self is perceived and modelled. In the next chapter, I delve into the methodology which will show how this research was designed and conducted.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section (methodology) has several components, and all components affect each other. According to Walter (2013), what constitutes these components is not straightforward. So in this section, I will be showing how the research project was conceived, designed and conducted. This will consist of my philosophical standpoint as a researcher, the research strategy that was adopted, the design, data collection method, participants' selection, analysis method, the challenges of researching people whom you know and validity and reliability.

## 3.2 My standpoint

According to Firestone (1987, p. 20), "There are...a number of reasons for selecting a methodological approach, but one's decision often expresses values about what the world is like, how one ought to understand it, and what the most important threats to that understanding are". Walter (2013) calls this researcher's 'standpoint,' and it refers to "the way we see the world and our position in it in relation to others and society" (Walter, 2013, p. 11). The methodology in this research is influenced by my standpoint which is guided by the philosophical assumptions regarding epistemology, ontology, and human nature. In the next paragraphs, I present these and they are based on Burell and Morgan (1979).

**Epistemology:** This tries to answer the question, "what are the grounds of knowledge?" "How do we understand the world and communicate such understanding to others?" "What type of knowledge can we obtain and how do we disaggregate what we consider as 'true' knowledge from 'false' knowledge?" "Is knowledge acquired, or it is something that has to be experienced by a person?" (Burell & Morgan, 1979, pp. 1-2).

These questions give rise to two positions which researchers may align themselves with: positivism and anti-positivism. Positivists' epistemologies centre on the formulation, verification, and falsification of a hypothesis. They are therefore objective in outlook. For the anti-positivists, "the social world is essentially relativistic," and we can only understand issues from the perspectives of the individuals we are studying (Burell & Morgan, 1979, p. 5).

They are therefore subjective in outlook.

**Ontology:** This tries to answer the question, "what is reality?" is the 'reality' to be investigated external to the individual, or it is the outcome of individual consciousness? Is 'reality' "given 'out there' in the world or the product of one's mind?" (Burell & Morgan, 1979, p.1).

These questions also give rise to two positions which researchers may align themselves with: nominalism and realism. The nominalists believe in the externality of the social world to the individual. For them, there is nothing concrete about the social world to which names, concepts, and labels refer to. They are therefore subjective in outlook. The realists, on the other hand, are objective in perspective. They believe that the social world external to the individual is concrete, whether the individual is aware of it or not. One is therefore born into a social world which has a reality of its own. Hence, names, labels, and concepts refer to things that are 'out there' (Burell & Morgan, 1979).

**Human nature:** It also tries to answer the question, "what is the relationship between the individual and their societies (environment)?" Are people and their experiences products of their environment? Or do people create and control their environment?

These questions also give rise to two positions which researchers may align themselves with: voluntarism and determinism. For the determinists, the environment where individuals find themselves determines their activities. People are therefore regulated by their environment. They are therefore objective in outlook. The voluntarists, on the other hand, are subjective in perspective. They believe that people are autonomous, have free will and thus control their environment (Burell & Morgan, 1979).

The brief explanations above (epistemology, ontology and human nature) are crucial in determining the way a researcher attempts to "investigate and obtain 'knowledge' about the social world" or the methodology (Burell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2).

**Methodology:** it also tries to answer the question "how can the enquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). A distinction is made between ideographic and nomothetic approaches. The ideographic approach is subjective in outlook. It believes that the best way of understanding the social

world is for the enquirer to get close to the subjects under investigation and to hear directly from them. It emphasis 'getting close' and 'getting inside' the subjects that one investigates to know more about their background and 'life histories.' The nomothetic approach is objective in outlook and therefore emphasise the methods and approach of the natural sciences. That is, it involves "testing hypotheses in accordance with the canons of scientific rigour" (Burell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6).

From the foregoing discussions, this study is situated in the subjective dimension of the objective-subjective divide of the philosophical assumptions. Ontologically, it is nominalistic; epistemologically, it is anti-positivism; human nature, voluntarism; and methodology, ideographic. The reason is that I am interested in the subjective accounts of adolescents on how their educational expectations are shaped. I believe that the best way of understanding a phenomenon is to get close to those individuals who are directly affected and let them narrate their experiences. This has informed the design of the research and the methods to be used to collect and analyse the research data. Thus, in the next paragraphs, I discuss the research design or strategy and methods which agree with my standpoint. To justify their suitability, I contrast them with other alternative designs and methods.

## 3.3 The quantitative-qualitative debate

A qualitative research strategy "emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data and...The ways in which individuals interpret their social world; and....a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation" (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). Quantitative research strategy referred to as "empirical studies" or "statistical studies" is one "where control variables, randomisation, and valid and reliable measures are required and where generalisability from the sample to the population is the aim" (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 10).

With qualitative research, data is collected from participants, analysed inductively starting from "particulars to general themes," and interpretation of the data by the researcher. For quantitative research, the researcher seeks to test theory deductively, buffer themselves against bias, "control for alternative explanations," and to generalise and replicate findings (Creswell, 2013, p. 4).

The two approaches differ in their assumptions about the world, purpose, approach and the researcher's role (Firestone, 1987, pp. 16-17). Purpose: quantitative approach seeks to explain changes in social phenomenon through objective measurement and quantitative analysis. The qualitative approach is more interested in understanding a social phenomenon and related changes from those affected. Approach: quantitative researchers employ experiments, and correlational designs whiles qualitative researchers make use of ethnography to investigate a social phenomenon. Researcher role: quantitative- detached researcher and qualitative, immersed researcher.

They differ on persuasive strategies. Quantitative studies try to present conclusions as valid by demonstrating that specific procedures have been religiously followed. Qualitative studies achieve this through 'rich depiction' ('thick description' by Bryman, 2012) comprehensive enough to show that conclusions add up. This strategy helps to overcome the abstraction nature of the quantitative method through the use of "quotations and descriptions" that convey the perspectives of those investigated (Firestone, 1987, p. 20).

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 106) argue for a "reconsideration of the utility of qualitative data." By so doing, they show the weaknesses of the quantitative approach and the strengths of the qualitative approach. One weakness of the quantitative method is the exclusion of meaning and purpose. They point out that one cannot understand human behaviour and explain it without relying on the meanings and purposes which they attach to their activities. This is one area the qualitative method derives its strength.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) also refer to "context striping" to limit the quantitative approach. Because this approach uses control and randomisation, some variables which otherwise could have exerted some influence on findings by altering it are prevented from interfering. These exclusionary measures, they argue, affects the "applicability or generalisability" of the findings because similar environments are required before one can generalise findings. By providing contextual information, the qualitative approach restores such imbalances. Even when it is possible to generalise, there is still the question of applicability of individual cases. For example, if 'X%' of people with particular symptoms has 'Y' disease, it is still not conclusive that an individual, 'Z,' with such symptoms has 'Y' disease. This uncertainty is avoided with qualitative data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106).

The qualitative method is also not without weaknesses. It does not allow for generalisations to be made from the sample to the entire population. Generalisations, if they are to be made, can only be made on the subjects that were studied (Borland, 2001, p. 8). This means that where the research aims to make generalisations of a large scale, the quantitative method may be a more qualified approach.

There are other views which reject there being any exclusively dichotomous relationship between these two approaches to studying a social phenomenon. What is important is that the process should be systematic and in tune with the scientific method since that is the most important factor that determines the quality of any scientific knowledge produced (Borland, 2001, p. 5).

From the foregoing discussions of the qualitative and qualitative research strategies, it is clear that the qualitative research approach is appropriate for this study. This means, for example, that the findings in this study should be interpreted by taking into account the context where it was carried out- a rural district of the northern region of Ghana.

## 3.4 Basic/generic research design

Basic/generic qualitative approach also called general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) would be employed in this study. According to Percy, Kostere and Kostere (2015, p. 78), this method investigates "people's reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences, of things in the outer world." With this approach, data analysis involve the use of concepts derived from the theoretical framework, identification of recurrent patterns, categories or "factors that cut through the data and help to further delineate the theoretical frame" (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2013, p. 3). The generic design thus qualifies as a qualitative strategy of inquiry, and it is therefore chosen to guide this study. There are other alternative or more traditional qualitative designs, for example, phenomenology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, case study, and ethnography. However, they are not appropriate for this study because they have emphasis and characteristics which are not in tune with the purpose of this study.

Discourse analysis, for instance, is "concerned with talk and texts as social practices and their rhetorical or argumentative organisation,...[and] descriptive account of multiple meanings in

text" (Thomas, 2006, p. 241).

Phenomenology focuses on rich detail description of how a subject experienced a phenomenon, devoid of any assumptions the researcher may have concerning the phenomenon he/she is investigating (this refers to 'epoche' or 'bracketing') (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). The final report (findings) of phenomenological study is in the form of a "coherent story or narrative about the experience" (Thomas, 2006, p. 241) that reveals the 'essence' of the phenomenon that is studied (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Ethnography also "focuses on the investigation of the network of social groupings, social customs, beliefs, behaviours, groupings, practices, etc., which define a "culture" (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015, p. 76). The researcher achieves his/her purpose by throwing themselves up in a group for a stretched period, doing amongst others, the following: observing behaviour, listening to conversations and asking questions, and obtaining further data through interviews and gathering of documents (Bryman, 2012, p. 432).

This study cannot be carried out using any of the qualitative designs described above. Ethnography is not suitable because this study is not intended to be carried out over an extended period. Because it is not also interested in the 'essence' that underlies 'experience' with a social phenomenon, phenomenology is also not a good way of doing this study. Discourse analysis is not appropriate because this study is not about 'texts' and the meanings that underlie them. This study is only interested in the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of boys and girls and their educational expectations and it is intended to be carried out within a short period- a period that is short but allows the purpose of the research to be achieved.

#### 3.5 Data collection method- Semi-structured interviews

Initiating and sustaining conversations with people on an issue or array of issues and making sense out of such conversations by researchers constitute interviews. It allows the interviewer to get to better grips with peoples' "biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings" (May, 2001, p. 120).

There are some ways in which interviews could be conducted. The researcher can choose to control an interview by putting forward precogitated questions which guide respondents to

respond to questions in keeping with the interview schedule (structured interviews). Alternatively, the researcher may allow respondents to respond to questions in their ways (unstructured interviews) (May, 2001, pp. 121-123). These two ways of conducting interviews apparently could be said to be at the extreme ends of a continuum. In this case, the advantages associated with one at one end become the disadvantages of the other at the other end.

The researcher can choose to "...utilise techniques from both" (May, 2001, p. 123) thereby benefiting from the advantages of these two types and also minimise the shortcomings associated with using any one of them by operating at the midpoint of this continuum- by conducting semi-structured interviews.

With semi-structured interviews, the researcher will have prepared questions to ask the participants. Because of its flexibility, the researcher can "...probe beyond the answers and thus enter into a dialogue with the interviewee" but is cautioned to be mindful of the content of the interview and to record its nature and the manner in which the questions were asked (May, 2001, p. 123). Besides the advantages associated with this method, it is suggested that a generic qualitative research should make use of semi-structured interviews (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015).

This study made use of semi-structured interviews to collect data from adolescents in lower secondary schools in Ghana. This was done on a face-to-face basis with the participants. I had a set of prepared questions written down in English. But depending on their responses, I was able to ask probing questions. English was not the language in which the interviews were conducted because the participants could not have responded well because they were poor in English and, it will have likely affected their willingness to participate in the research. Since I spoke the same local language as the participants, I only referred to the set of questions and presented them in the local language to them (the local language is Moar or Bimoba). There was, therefore, no need for a translator or to translate the interview questions into the local language in a written format.

I had three audio recording devices which I used to record the interviews. The participants were initially informed about this, and they agreed to be recorded. I also had a field book which I took note of participants interviewed. I also used it to note down questions which

emerged from interviews so that I could explore such questions with the next participants to be interviewed. At the end of the interviews, I generated and explored questions that were not part of the set of prepared questions that guided the interviews. However, these questions were relevant and consistent with the purpose of the study.

I did not write down the names of participants in the field book. I had given them identification names (see participants selection for this). So anytime they appeared before me for interviews, they only mentioned such names. I used that as an opportunity to assure them that their identities were protected and they should feel free to express themselves.

## 3.6 Sampling of participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants for this research. They were drawn from the JHS3 classes (there were two separate classes for JHS3). This type of sampling involves the selection of people and organisations by considering the research questions. That is, the research question determines who or what to select to explore the research questions. However, the researcher ensures that the sample is as varied as possible so that members are different from each other on some attributes that are important to the research questions (Bryman, 20112, pp. 416-428).

This research, as indicated already looks at how the educational expectations of adolescent boys and girls are shaped from a comparative perspective. Thus, in looking for participants to explore this, young people who are in school and not more than nineteen years became my target population because a purposive sampling technique requires that a researcher "...exercises their judgment or knowledge of a population and the aims of the research to select a sample" (Tranter, 2013, p. 111). I considered students in JHS because they qualify as adolescents and also because the previous findings on students' expectations which showed that boys expect more higher education than girls in Ghana by Bofah and Hannula (2015) were based on data collected from students in JHS in Ghana as part of the 2011 TIMSS.

In recruiting the participants for the interviews, I was also guided by four criteria set out in Travers (2013) which are necessary to be present before interviewees make up their mind to take part in such a voluntary exercise. They include the following:

- 1. They must learn about the research project and its need for participants
- 2. They must be interested enough in the topic or the project to agree to participate
- 3. Participation must be practically feasible

4. They must be motivated enough to take the time and trouble to follow through with the interview (Travers, 2013, p. 234).

To meet the criteria outlined above, I first went to the JHS 3 classes where I intended to recruit my participants. I was given ample time to explain to the students what I came to do. I explained my research topic to the classes and the fact that it was an academic exercise. I informed them that I needed volunteers to conduct interviews on the topic and such interviews were to be held in the local language. This was to make them feel comfortable to participate. The time for the interviews, early morning before classes begin and after school was communicated to them. The reason is that I was instructed by the district directorate of education not to let the interviews affect teaching activities in the school. Also, some of the students came from adjourning communities and time was more than important to them that anybody who was not comfortable with the time suggested and the place (the school) could appoint any place and time for me to meet them for the interviews.

After having explained my purpose in all the classes, I passed round 'participants recruitment forms' which I created so that those who were interested in participating could put down their names. The information required on the forms was participant's name, age, and education and occupation of parents. In all, twenty boys and nineteen girls filled and returned the forms. I was aware that not everyone might turn up for the interviews. So I needed a significant pool of voluntary participants so that if some decide not to take part in the interviews, I would still have enough volunteers to fulfil the number I was expecting: fifteen boys and fifteen girls. The information about parents was to allow me to select participants from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In the end, I was able to achieve my target of fifteen boys and fifteen girls. I did not appoint participants that would be interviewed on a given day. The interviews were conducted on a first-come-first-served basis. Most often, participants approached me and fixed the time they would be available the next day. And they always showed up as promised.

Each participant was given a unique name or ID. This was alphanumerical. Girls had 'G' and a number attached to it as their ID's. Boys had 'B' and a number attached to it as well. The numbers started from '1'. So I had G1 up to G20 and B1 up to B20. Any participant who came to me only mentioned the ID, and we had the interviews. But I had their names and parents' information already, and these ID were on the forms which contained such information. This was done with the mind that anytime there is the need to use such information to help in making sense out of the data of a participant I could easily refer to the forms for them. It was also done so that when analysing the interviews and presenting findings, I would be using the ID's and not real names. This was explained to the participants before they agreed to take part in the interviews. I told them that when my research work is completed, only the ID's would appear and not their names. And since nobody knew these ID's apart from them, their identities were protected. This made them feel free and actively participated in the interviews. However, when I started to write the report, I felt that using pseudo names was better than the IDs as I initially intended. The pseudo names are therefore reported here and not the IDs. I intend to inform the school and the participants about this change after the report is completed. This is to make further the data anonymous.

Table 3 below is the list of participants which includes their ages and parents' socioeconomic status (education and occupation). The majority of participants reported that their parents were not educated and were engaged in farming. Parents who were said to be in formal employment were those who were educated. This explains why in the table below there is no information about educational attainment.

Boys	age	Father's	Mother's	Girls	Age	Father's	Mother's
		SES	SES			SES	SES
Baba	13	Teaching	Teaching	Suguru	15	Farming	Business
Sammy	16	Nurse	Farming	Luayal	14	Coordinator	Farming
Laari	15	Farming	Farming	Laat	16	Farming	Farming
Suuk	16	Farming	Farming	Ceci	13	N/A	Farming
Kimi	16	Farming	N/A	Joy	13	Farming	Farming
Yennu	14	Farming	Farming	Banle	15	Farming	Farming

Table 3: List of participants (Source: field data).

Kombat	13	Farming	Farming	Mary	13	N/A	Nursing
Konlan	14	Farming	Farming	Ediata	17	Farming	Farming
Duut	16	N/A	Farming	Kamitu	15	Teaching	Midwife
Ali	16	Farming	Farming	Edith	15	Nurse	Nursing
Dafulka	19	Teaching	Farming	Ajara	14	N/A	Farming
Loom	14	N/A	Farming	Asibi	13	Business	Business
John	16	Farming	Farming	Teni	15	Teaching	Farming
Jack	13	Teaching	Business	Talata	14	Farming	Farming
Tommy	13	Teaching	Farming	Rukaya	15	Farming	Farming

The background information of adolescents in table 3 is similar to that of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students who took part in 2011 TIMSS in Ghana. The average age for eighth grade students who took part in the 2011 TIMSS in Ghana was 15.8 years, and such students were in the second year of junior high school (JHS 2) (Mullis et al., 2012, p. 431). In this study, the average age for boys was 14.93 years, and that of girls was 14.47 years. There were attempts to select students from JHS 2 (8<sup>th</sup>-grade) to correspond with the grade of those who took part in the 2011 TIMSS. But they were found to be less interested in the study. What I was looking for was willing participants, and since students in JHS 3 showed greater interest in it, I decided to recruit informants from their classes.

There is a difference in ages among students of the same class. The oldest boy in the interviews was 19 years, and the youngest boy was 13 years. The oldest girl was also 17 years, and the youngest girl was 13 years. In principle, students in JHS 3 are supposed to be 15 years. This shows that some students are older than the class they are in and others are younger than their classes. Some reasons accounted for this. The school and most schools practice what they call "promotion and demotion," where a student is repeated a class or made to stay in the same class for another year if they are not performing well, and some students were victims. This, the teachers said, was to encourage students to be serious about studies. Other students also started school late. Though education is said to be free and compulsory, there is no enforcement of this, and some parents send their wards to school by themselves and not by their parents. For example, one of the girls told me she lost her father when they

were in southern Ghana. When they came back to the north, she was asked to learn dressmaking. By that time she was already 12 years and had not been to school. She did not like the idea of becoming a dressmaker and decided to rather go to school just like the other children in her new home. She started class 4, and now at 17, she is in JHS 3.

#### 3.7 Gaining access to the research site and participants

The research school is in Nakpanduri which is in the Bunkprugu-Yunyoo district of the northern region of Ghana. Because the school is a basic school, the authorities of the school could not allow access to the school and students without the permission of the district directorate of education. Permission for access had to be sought from the district directorate of education. I, therefore, sent an introductory letter from the University of Oslo to the district directorate of education in September of 2016. I also added a summary description of my project.

On arrival in Ghana, I made a follow-up to the district directorate to further introduce myself and my project. It was after this that a letter permitting me to access the school and students were given to me. This letter was then sent to the head of the school. The head of the school called a meeting of the staff members of the school, and I was introduced, and my purpose in the school made known to them. With the assistance of one of the teachers, I went round the classes to also explain my purpose to the students.

The head of the school signed the consent form on behalf of all students. This was after consulting the students. Since most parents were not educated and could not sign, this was thought to be convenient, and it was said to be a common practice. Parents could have thump-printed for students but getting ink for all the thirty participants was not practical. The head of the school, therefore, acted on behalf of parents. However, students were told to inform their parents about the exercise, and any parent who did not want the child to take part in the exercise could inform the head of the school for such a student to be excluded.

The interviews were successfully carried out. Participants were on time for the interviews. In general, girls were more enthusiastic and expressed themselves more than boys.

#### 3.8 Researching your community

Researching a community where informants already know you could be challenging. Being a native and coming from abroad as a student I anticipated how I would be perceived by informants and what that meant for my research work. As a researcher, it is therefore important that I "incorporate a reflexive account into their [the] research product and thereby describe to readers 'what is [was] going on' while [I was] researching" (Koch & Harrington, 1998, p. 889).

I first had to create the atmosphere that could break the perceptions informants had about me as coming from abroad. I realised that I was looked at as someone they could not get close to. It became my responsibility to let them know that I was like any other person in the community. This I did by always sitting on the cemented terrace of the school block which most students did when they have lunch a break. I was often offered a comfortable seat to sit on whiles they sat on the terrace. But because I knew the implications of this on our relationship, I often preferred the terrace like them. Because I had to stay in the school until it closed for the day, I bought and ate food which was sold on the school compound. This was normally patronised by students and not teachers considering the quality. The school had a reservoir where rainwater is harvested and stored for use by students. I shared this with the students which the regular staff members of the school would usually not do. All these meant a lot to the students, and I could see it usually generated chitchats among students who happened to pass by and a feeling that, 'he is just like us.' This was helpful in getting informants to open up for the interviews.

Informants also knew that I was pursuing a master's degree. And I was asking them questions about how far they think they would go in education. Ensuring that informants were as realistic as possible was a primary task for me. Dealing with this as I expected was a bit challenging. For example, I realised that I could be an inspiration for some of them and they could start to talk about master's degree and abroad. The question I asked myself was what do I do in this case? It was not my duty to interfere with informants' expectations because as a researcher I was supposed "to assert the interests of those studied" (Koch & Harrington, 1998, p. 888). My understanding of 'expectations' as 'what is likely to happen' helped me to deal with this challenge. That is, dealing with this depended on how I asked my interview

questions. After building rapport with informants, I usually let them know that there are dreams and wishes, but what I was interested in was what they know they are likely to attain. After this, I would give them time to think before they respond to interview questions. This was helpful in getting informants to try and be as realistic and honest as possible with their responses.

I also decided to teach the JHS 3 classes where my informants were from. I thought this was a way of building and sustaining good rapport with the students and to change their perceptions about me. This was with the permission of the head of the school. I was given social studies to teach since I was a teacher before I took a break for studies. In this way, the students saw me as one of the teachers in the school, often called me 'master' as they called the other male teachers in the school. I knew the impact this could have on the interviews, but I was much interested in the advantages associated this. For example, because the students saw me as one of the teachers, they started to relate with me on that terms. This was good as it helped to change their perceptions of me as someone from abroad and then felt free to have conversations with me.

I also knew that the teacher-student relationship would not always be beneficial. I knew it could have created a situation where students would intentionally try to meet my expectations by responding to questions they way they think I wanted them to. While I always reminded myself of my ethical obligations, I tried as much as possible to be indifferent to the responses and emotions of informants. I showed equal interest in every issue that was discussed and avoided body languages that would indicate that I was interested in some issues but not others. I did this so that to some extent, it would not be possible for informants to determine whether or not I wanted them to give me specific answers to questions or information which they thought I might be particularly interested in.

## 3.9 Ascertaining adolescents' expected higher education

The expected higher education of boys and girls are reported in the findings chapter. But in this section, I show how they were obtained.

Informants knew more about their expected occupations than institutions of higher learning. Only a handful of them could mention the corresponding institutions accurately. But even those who could name institutions, when they were asked to take their time and think about their family background, their performance in school and their gender before they say what they think they are likely to attain, they changed the institutions in many cases. I had to in most cases tell them the higher educational institutions and their durations so that they could assess themselves and report their expectations since some of them had little knowledge of the alternative entry points of institutions. The case of Mary below illustrates how informants' expectations were ascertained and it also shows how I managed to get informants to be realistic as much as possible as talked about in the immediate preceding section.

Mary first reported that she would go to the university after high school and do nursing (degree in nursing). But I realised that she lacked knowledge of the entry points to nursing. I then told her about the alternative entry points and their duration and asked her to take her time and think about her family background, gender and performance in class and tell me what she expects. I had to supply some of this information because "expectations are developed on the basis of information garnered by the individual from external sources" (Azmat et al., 2013, p. 99). Mary then sat for a moment and said, "As I told you that I want to go to the university, I said it, but I don't think they [parents] would want to see me through the university. I know that it is the 3-year [diploma in nursing] that they would see me through. But what I want is the university. So I know it is the 3-year [diploma in nursing school] that I will go". In the case of Mary, her expected education was captured as a diploma in nursing and not a degree in nursing.

#### 3.10 Data analysis procedures

According to Travers (2013), "in a qualitative project, the key issue is not the number of interviews, but what you do with the interview material you have collected" (p. 233). Such interview material because they are in the form of "unstructured textual material, they are not straightforward to analyse" (Bryman, 2012, p. 565).

Transcription immediately followed the data collection. This was the most cumbersome task. What made the transcription of the data more difficult was the fact that it had to be done in English, though the interviews were conducted in a local Ghanaian language. It was difficult and time-consuming in finding equivalents of local expressions in English. There were attempts at the initial stages of the transcription to transcribe the data *verbatim et literatim*. When I realised that this was time-consuming, I then decided not to transcribe the parts of the interviews that were unrelated to the research questions, the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework. At this time, I had sufficient understanding of the theory and literature on this topic, and it became possible to do this.

The analysis of the data started from my listening of the audio recordings and by the transcription of the data. As I engaged in this exercise, I could discern parts of the conversations that addressed the research questions and how they are related to either known literature or the theory that would be used to analyse the research data. What I did in such cases was to highlight such portions as I transcribed.

With the research questions, literature and theoretical framework in mind, I followed the transcribed data of each participant carefully, looking for ideas that were important. Their importance was determined by how they could help in answering the research questions. After this, I grouped ideas that were similar among participants. This was also important in creating themes and categories. The task of analysis was not complete at this stage. The themes and categories were meaningless without a frame to view them and make meaning out of them or literature to compare them and make sense out of them. They were thus woven together in a single chapter, the findings, and analysis chapter.

## 3.11 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are considered as important means of ascertaining the quality of research output. It is mostly associated with quantitative research. Their application in qualitative research is contested, and they are increasingly adopted, and equivalents for them devised for use in social research. For example, credibility parallels with internal validity, dependability parallels with reliability and transferability parallels with external validity (Bryman, 2012, p. 390).

To ensure validity (credibility and transferability), there is the need for the research to be conducted according to the 'canons of good practice'; respondent validation; triangulation; and 'thick description.' To also ensure reliability (dependability), there is the need for all records that relate to the research to be kept- problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, among others and to be accessible (Bryman, 2012, 390-392).

To ensure dependability (reliability), the measures outlined above are detailed in related sections in this methodology chapter. In analysing and presenting the data, the practice of 'thick description' was followed. In most cases, claims made were buttressed with as adequate narratives in the words of participants as possible. Respondent validation at this stage was constrained because of the gulf in the distance between the researcher and the participants. Attempts were often made after every interview to listen to recordings and seek clarifications from participants when necessary.

Because the interviews were with only students, triangulating the data was challenging. But a practice that was carried out during the interviews was the nature of the questions posed to participants: each gender in some instances was asked questions about the other gender. For example, for questions that bothered on gender roles, girls were asked about the roles they think boys would be performing when they are adults and vice versa. Thus, by not relying on other sources such as parents, it was still possible to ascertain whether the data each gender reported could be relied on.

#### **3.12 Chapter summary**

This chapter sought to explain how the research was designed and conducted. It highlighted some philosophical assumptions that underlie my standpoint as a researcher. Based on those assumptions, the qualitative method of inquiry was selected. However, it was contrasted with the quantitative method to justify its suitability for this research. The generic research design which was used in this study was also elaborated and justified.

How access to students was gained and rapport with them created was also presented. Researching with informants you are familiar with has challenges, but they are surmountable if such challenges are envisaged from the outset. How this was dealt with on the field was equally elaborated in this chapter. This was followed with how the reliability and validity of the research findings were ensured.

In the next chapter, I present the findings of this study.

# **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

### 4.1 Introduction and adolescents' baseline expectations

The purpose of this study was to understand how the educational expectations of adolescent boys and girls are shaped in Ghana, drawing on interviews with students in the final year of junior high school (JHS). The expectations of boys were found to be higher than that of girls. This was in line with the previous finding in Bofah and Hannula (2015). The differences in expectations were found to be the product of the gendered nature of the possible selves of boys and girls in the domains of academics, family, and professional life.

The study found that the differences in expectations between boys and girls reflected inequalities in educational attainments that existed between male and female members of the family. Boys and girls tended to see fathers, mothers, and siblings of the same sex as their primary models and expect to accomplish equal or more than they did. But male members of the family were found to have better attainments and control over resources, thereby influencing higher expectations in boys compared with girls.

The gendered-nature of their possible selves and the gendered distribution of domestic chores influenced their expectations. Boys currently engage less in domestic activities, have more time for studies and are challenged to go higher in education because of that. Also, they anticipate to be less constrained by future family and professional roles and would like to continue their education even after marriage. Girls, on the other hand, engage more in domestic activities, have lesser time for school activities, and hence have comparatively lower expectations. Also, relatively higher educational attainments such as undergraduate degrees were perceived by girls to have adverse effects on the marriage market returns in education and family life. This affected what they aspire to, and consequently their expectations.

While boys had school-focused possible selves, girls had possible selves focused on vocations. Adolescent boys who reported doing well in the class were, therefore, inclined towards university level attainments. They linked their academic performances to future educational institutions and programmes. They also had school-focused possible selves partly because their possible selves in the other domains were perceived not to interfere with their educational pursuits. Girls were more focused on vacations because they rather would

want to complete school early, start work (less demanding work), and build a family (marry).

Within the school, female teachers became the principal models for girls. They encourage them to study hard so that they could go to college as they also did. This affected the expectations of girls because, colleges award certificate and diploma qualifications, which are less than university degrees. There was no significant teachers' influencing role on the expectations of boys. Other role models outside of girls' families, as well as their peers, were important for their expectations. But this was not the same with boys because of the influence of their immediate family on their expectations, which reflected the importance of commitment to family values.

These points are elaborated in the next sections. But before I turn to them, I will continue to present the adolescents individual educational expectations briefly; and, also explain why such expectations indicate that every adolescent hopes for education that is not less than secondary school attainments.

The increasing recognition of the instrumental role of education, especially for the poor and the developing countries is said to have aroused the global espousal and commitment to widening participation in education for all children irrespective of gender (Hill & King, 1993). At the national level, the importance of education and the need for boys and girls to persist throughout the school is acknowledged in Ghana. The constitution of Ghana, for example, considers education as a human right and the removal of barriers to access for all groups is emphasised. Together with the international charters and declarations that Ghana has ratified, ensuring that all children start and complete school with employable skills has been a major policy objective of governments.

At the micro level, families and communities in Ghana progressively acknowledge the importance of making sure that all children irrespective of gender attain at least an upper secondary education. In this study of a rural community, it was evident that parents, teachers, and students themselves recognise the importance of attaining at least an upper secondary education. It was apparent that there is a change towards making sure that children go to school and acquire employable skills. In principle, with a minimum of an upper secondary education, one would have acquired some necessary capacities for meaningful living. This is because, in addition to preparing young people for higher education in Ghana, secondary

schools are also to give them skills that would make them employable in some sectors of the economy (Leyendecker, Ottevanger & van den Akker, 2008). A boy, for example, explained why his father is trying to make sure that he completes at least secondary school as,

My father always will tell us that 'now things have changed.' That 'it is not like in the olden days where fathers acquired and reared animals as properties for children to inherit.' That 'the money he is putting in our education is our inheritance.' So if he is not alive today, but he has already given each child his inheritance.

The narratives of boys and girls showed that parents, siblings and other extended family members who struggle to cope with the modern social and economic challenges admit to their children that, their conditions are because they missed out on formal education. This then becomes a justification for both boys and girls to get at least an upper secondary education. From the perspectives of the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), one could say that these family members have become 'to-be-avoided selves' in the eyes of adolescent boys and girls. For example,

Because they are suffering [parents], they don't want us to end up suffering like them. It makes me more serious in school. Some of our parents have barely any money to spend in a day. So that is why they are always on us to be serious in school so that we don't become like them in the future.

It is only farming that my parents do. At times, they can farm and would not get anything from it. When we are asked to pay school fees, and I tell them, they would have to go to somebody who is well to do and borrow money. If they go to borrow and later do not pay back on time, they always insult them. That is why I want to go high in school. I don't want to be like them.

It could be seen from the foregoing that both boys and girls hope for some education that is not less than secondary school attainments. However, fewer girls compared with boys expected university degrees. Girls mostly preferred tutorial colleges. Such colleges and universities in Ghana are all classified as tertiary educational institutions. It could then be put that both boys and girls expected tertiary educational qualifications, but in comparison with girls, more boys distinct themselves by expecting university qualifications. These

Boys	Expected education	Girls	Expected education
Baba	Bachelor's degree	Suguru	Diploma, nursing
Sammy	Medicine	Luayal	Diploma, nursing
Laari	Diploma in nursing	Laat	Diploma, nursing
Suuk	Medicine	Ceci	Degree, nursing
Kimi	Certificate in nursing	Joy	Diploma, nursing
Yennu	Medicine	Banle	Diploma, nursing
Kombat	Diploma, nursing	Mary	Diploma, nursing
Konlan	Diploma, nursing	Ediata	Certificate in nursing
Duut	Bachelor, education	Kamitu	Diploma, nursing
Ali	Secondaryschool(wants to be a policeofficer)	Edith	Diploma, nursing
Dafulka	Professional school	Ajara	Diploma, education
Loom	Medicine	Asibi	Medicine
John	Degree nursing	Teni	Diploma, education
Jack	Degree nursing	Talata	Diploma, nursing
Tommy	Degree nursing	Rukaya	Diploma, nursing

expectations of boys and girls are captured in tables 4 and figure 1 below.

Table 4: adolescent boys and girl expected education (source: field data).

The various expected education of adolescents are constituted into lower and higher expectations for each gender in figure 1 below. University level expectations are put together to constitute higher expectations and qualifications lower than that constitute lower expectations.

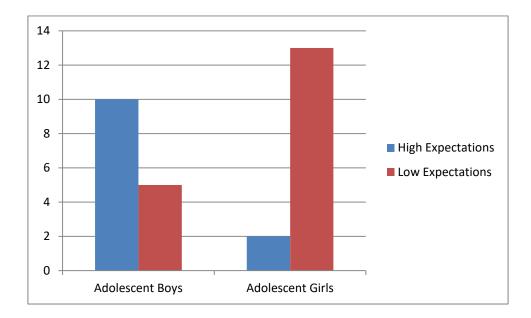


Figure 1 Adolescents expected education (source: field data)

## 4.2 The family and adolescents' educational expectations

Individual members of the family<sup>1</sup> take part in the shaping of the expectations of boys and girls. This is not surprising because in some cases, what a person thinks he or she can become could be "rooted in what important others believe one [they] should become" (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006, p. 19). Individual members of the family are able to do this because they have access to vital resources that could affect the expectations of young people such as information about higher educational institutions, programmes, and occupations. They are also the ones who in most cases and in Ghana bear the financial cost associated with the education of young people. This is also underscored by Roth and Salikutluk (2012) who posited that parents have information regarding higher educational opportunities and are likely to relay such information to their children.

The narratives show that these resources needed by young people to make educational choices in most cases are not uniformly distributed across families. It also shows that within families too, these resources are not also uniformly distributed among fathers, mothers and other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> There were no interviews with family members. Information pertaining to them is therefore from the reports of adolescents.

significant others. This has to do with the fact that within Ghanaian family structures, members occupy different positions in the power structure and have historically and culturally had unequal access to both resources and education. The influence of each member of the family on the expectations of boys and girls in this study therefore varied because of differences in the amount of resources, access to resources, and their position in the power structure. These inequalities also affected the possible selves boys and girls imagined for themselves in a similar state in the future. And, it affected their expectations because while boys attached importance to going higher in education, girls saw the need to make sacrifices along the way.

Though the family expect both boys and girls to go beyond secondary school, the expectations of boys were still higher than that of girls because of a gendered tendency, where adolescent boys want to do better than their fathers, and girls, to do better than their mothers. This reflected the assertion that, sometimes, "children develop by taking the parent of the same sex as their principal reference" (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008, p. 281). Because in most cases fathers were more educated than mothers, the expectations of boys and girls tended to follow that line. Because fathers, also, have greater control over productive resources, even where both parents are not educated, boys are still expected to go higher because, in the discharge of resources for children's education, they stand to be favoured more than girls. Thus, growing up in family or environment where education, power and resources are patterned by gender (between mothers and fathers), it creates a situation where the aspirations and motivations needed to forge concrete expectations are also fashioned that way, between male and female children.

The attainments of fathers' became indexes for adolescent boys' attainments and consequently their expectations. A similar finding is reported in Scabini et al. (2007). They found that boys' expectations were more influenced by their fathers' professional status. It is apparent that some boys even see it as almost unacceptable to not do better than a father. Baba and Tommy for example respectively said,

I want to go higher than my father. Because it is not proper that your father gives birth to you and what he is doing on earth here you would end up not able to do that, or you are not able to exceed that, or you end at where he ended. My father is a teacher. Where my father has gotten to, it is good. People have always said that you have to give birth and the children would grow and get higher in life than you. So where my father has reached, I want to grow and get higher than that.

This gendered relationship created a situation where fathers are more likely to influence the expectations of boys through the occupational trajectories which they explicitly communicate to them. This finding is similar to what is reported in Trusty (1998). In Trusty (1998), career control was found to be associated with higher expectations. A similar finding is also reported in Rutchick et al. (2009). According to them, parents expect children to either achieve something equal or more than what they have accomplished. Whenever fathers were reported to have involved in deciding the future careers of adolescent boys, their educational expectations usually changed. Such changes often resulted in them having higher expectations. Baba's case illustrates this.

Baba said he had always wanted to be a nurse. However, his father, who is a teacher with a bachelor's degree, said he wants a lawyer in their family. He said he had heard a lot of things about lawyers which makes him dislike the law profession. However, according to him, the suggestion of his father is inviolable, and this was compounded by the fact that he is the first child and 'only son' of his father. He said, "But I would have to stick to what my father says. Because, whatever your father says, if you don't take it, it is disobedience. But it is nursing that is in my mind". Perez-Felkner (2013) asserted that expectations are more powerful when communicated by specific family members such as fathers and mothers. This assertion apparently applies to boys in this study.

The case of Baba like other boys does not only show how fathers influence the expectations of boys. It also shows why they have higher expectations for boys: parents are usually concerned about who would take care of them in the future. The position of Baba in the birth-order even makes his case more unique. He frequently used, "the only son", and that was to put across that he is highly valuable in the family, relative to his siblings who are girls. A similar expression from a girl does not convey a similar message of invaluableness, at least in the patrilineal societies of northern Ghana. His father's expectation for him, therefore, reflected families' expectation of older children, especially boys, to serve as 'coparents' as far as family responsibilities are concerned. Such expectation of boys leads to a

situation where parents are willing to invest more in their education than in girls' (Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, 1993, p. 299).

According to Markus and Nurius (1986), individuals' goals and hopes provide them with means-ends patterns which determine their actions. The 'means' could be the type of higher education and occupation, and 'ends' could be the role of 'co-parents', which are expected mostly of boys in the future. Given the significance of such 'end' which even encompasses the enduring conception of children as a source of security in old age because of lack of effective social welfare in place (Twum-Danso, 2009), the investment decisions of parents could also be conceived in terms of 'means'. This could explicate why parents may be more willing to invest more in boys than in boys, especially in cases of scarce resources.

By identifying with these 'ends', boys may want to go higher in education and to be interested in high paying jobs since that could be a 'means'. This was certainly the case for boys. For example, Tommy said he was confident of obtaining a degree in nursing. He was aware of the other categories of nurses, but he was specific on degree nursing because, according to him, that would allow him to earn good salaries to achieve his goal of improving his family's welfare. He said,

Having a degree in nursing...the one which is four years...I know I can get there...They said that one is better than the one in Nalerigu<sup>2</sup>. I am praying, I know I will be able to complete that one and become a big nurse so that I can take care of family members well.

Salary motivations affecting boys' expectations have been documented by many studies, though in most cases, they do not explain why salaries are so important to informants. In a study of children of immigrants in the USA, Feliciano and Rumbaut (2005), for example, reported that men cited salaries as the motivation for being physicians. Other studies have equally shown that expected returns on education and perceived risk of unemployment greatly influence boys' college enrolment decisions but do not have an effect on the college expectations of girls (Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2014; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Attanasio & Kaufmann, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> There is a nursing Training college in Nalerigu, 18 miles away from their town. It awards only diplomas and certificates.

Culturally, it is conceived as not possible for girls to be useful like boys in this role expected of older siblings in the family since they would marry and may eventually lose touch with their family of birth. That could explain why investment decisions in education do not favour them the way it does for boys. With that in mind, girls' motivation and aspirations could be affected. Edith, for example, was asked why she is interested in diploma in nursing and not a degree in nursing. She partly attributed it to the relatively lesser interest of her father in her education. She said that,

My father says that the education of a girl is not important because they can easily go wayward and with time when you need them, they would not be there. But my mother always would say that it is not all girls who are like that. She usually says that some girls go to school and even go higher than boys and can take care of their parents better than a boy.

The gendered relationships within the family did not promote the same expectations for girls as it did for boys. To achieve more than their mothers or to avoid being like their mothers in the future entailed attaining some higher education. All girls therefore expect and are expected by families to go beyond secondary school. But unlike boys, this did not translate into some of them wanting to pursue, for example, university education partly because the attainments of mothers and even female siblings, in general, were lower. While a boy like Baba had his father having a first degree in education and Baba then hopes to achieve something similar or higher, there was no instance of a mother with a first degree.

The case of Kamitu illustrates that every girl wants to rise above the mother which entailed going beyond secondary school. Her expectation was a diploma in nursing, and she said it was good that she go to school more than her mother. According to her, "My mother is a midwife. She went to their school, midwifery. So she is not a big nurse. I also want to go to school like she went. I want to go higher than her". According to her, her father is a teacher with a diploma qualification. If it was her aspiration to be a teacher like her father, and to attain more than her father, it is possible that she would have had at least a bachelor's expectation, since that is the next highest qualification after diploma in Ghana.

Unlike boys whose fathers' could suggest to them where to go after secondary school, girls usually received 'prayers' and encouragement from their mothers in particular, but they were

restricted to higher educational and occupational choices which they made known to them. Previous studies show that parental encouragement affects the expectations of boys and girls. Reynolds and Burge (2008) for example, found that parental encouragement increases girls' expectations more than boys (Reynolds & Burge, 2008). But in this study, encouragement from mothers did not translate into specific expectations either than what girls' made known to their mothers in particular. Laat, for example, said, "My mother once asked me of what I want to become in the future, and I said, a nurse. So every day she is praying that I would become a nurse. But for my father, he doesn't know. He doesn't sit in the house". This encouragement for girls to excel in what they decide for themselves suggests that there is apparently the recognition for girls to get education, but parents seem to be content as long as such education could give them employable skills.

The relatively lesser interference by parents in girls' education is also heightened by the incidence of teenage pregnancy. The reason is that education truncated by teenage pregnancy amounts to already scarce resources being wasted. Teenage pregnancy also reduces girls' chances of completing school, finding jobs and extending helping hands to their parents in the future. This affects not only the girl who became pregnant but also other younger female members of the family. For example, according to Edith, her father is also not concerned much about her education because her elder sister became pregnant and could not complete secondary school. According to her, "they always say that what happened to my sister may equally happen to me. It is my father who always says that".

Older siblings who have experienced higher education were also found to influence the expectations of adolescents. Unlike girls, the expectations of boys were partly affected by their siblings because in most cases they determined their educational trajectories which were usually higher than what boys initially had. This is similar to the influence of fathers on boys' expectations, and it equally reflects concern for improving the SES of the family and boys' role in the family.

Through daily interactions between older and younger siblings, they often ask younger ones about what they want to become in the future. This is always an opportunity for older siblings who have experienced higher education to know how their younger siblings currently perform in school; the subjects they are good at; the courses they want to do in high school; and, the higher educational institutions they wish to attend. As posited by Lloyd and Gage-Brandon (1993), they are seen as parents and are expected to direct their younger siblings. They are seen as infallible and as repositories of higher education information because, as a boy said, "they have gone higher in education and know how it is. So they can sit with me down and tell me what will help me or what will be easy for me".

It is part of a deep-rooted cultural phenomenon that younger siblings "defer to the older sibling[s] in everyday social interaction solely on the basis of age" (GSS, 2013, p. 87). Because of this, after obtaining their high school leaving examinations results, some of them usually take them to their older siblings for advice on where to go next. A boy, for example, said, "When I complete high school, I would tell my brother because he is almost taking care of me so that he would look and tell me the school to go". And indeed, some of the boys who have not yet gone to the secondary school had their brothers deciding what they should do or become.

One of such boys was Dafulka. He reported that he would do general arts in secondary school so that he could become a journalist in the future. When asked why he wants to be a journalist, he said, "A brother of mine told me to become a journalist. He went to their school [school of journalism] and did that programme. He said it is good and that I should do the same thing". This paralleled with previous studies that show that older, same-sex siblings are important for the identity of "later-born counterparts" and they do not "differentiate from one" another but rather identify with each other (Wong, Branje, VanderValk, Hawk and Meeus, 2010, pp. 680-81). When Dafulka was asked what he would have been thinking of doing if journalism was not suggested to him, he said, "I would have done science at the secondary school and later go to the nursing training college or become a soldier. One of these two".

Girls differed from boys on this because they approach older siblings with their own occupational and educational choices. In almost all such cases, as the narratives show, there are no attempts to change the preferences of girls by their siblings. Because of this, the role of siblings like their mothers was limited to the offering of advice and encouragement. Advice and encouragement are important. They suggest approval of the choices of girls. It is not known what the nature of advice would have been if girls reported university aspirations to their siblings. But if siblings have different aspirations for their younger ones who are girls,

one would expect them to communicate such aspirations to them equally. Laat for example said,

I will go to nursing training college. When we were in primary school, whenever they asked us to write letters, to describe the work we want, I usually wrote about nursing. I have told my brother I am living with. One of my brothers, they said he should be a soldier because he is a boy. But for me, if we are in the house, he would tell me that since I said I want nursing, I should work hard and go to Bawku or Bolga nursing training college. He doesn't say any other thing.

#### 4.3 Gender roles and the marriage market returns in education

This section discusses how the future expected roles of boys and girls affected their expectations. Such roles include those implied in their sexes and the socially-framed. Unlike boys, the anticipated roles of girls were more diverse and caused them to have lower expectations. In the later paragraphs, I would be discussing how the marriage market returns in education affected their expected education. Some educational attainments were perceived by girls to have adverse effects on their chances of marriage. This caused them to tend to consider relatively lower educational attainments. Boys on their part were indifferent to the marriage market returns in education and could forge higher expectations. It is concluded in this section that the local norms relating to the possible selves of boys and girls in these domains, do not emphasise the importance of education equally for boys and girls. And, this has led to them having different educational expectations in favour of boys.

It is within the social environment that people are provided with "...advice and direction with respect to 'how to be' and 'how not to be'..." (Oyserman & Markus, 1993, p. 192). It could be added that young people do not only receive advice on 'how to be', but they practically learn 'how to be'. However, being a boy or a girl means learning what is appropriate for your gender because society usually condition the roles of boys and girls differentially; and also, it assigns different values to them with those to be performed by boys having the highest value (Nurmi, 2004).

As boys and girls take part in domestic chores as a way of learning the roles associated with their genders, it affects their participation in school and consequently their educational expectations. Because most domestic chores are gendered in Ghana, the time boys and girls spend on their respective chores therefore differ. Participation in school and expectations especially in rural areas with strong gender norms, to some extent, also assumes a gendered pattern.

Some activities boys and girls reported being engaged in included farming, washing of dishes, running errands and cooking. The laws of Ghana acknowledge the carrying out of these kinds of duties by children for their parents. It is said to "correspond to the right to maintenance", a child is obligated to perform some duties for the parents, an obligation which "is then reciprocated by the parent by care and maintenance" (Mensa-Bonsu & Dowuona-Hammond, 1996, p. 15).

Whether legally or culturally sanctioned, the narratives show that girls compared with boys are more involved in the activities that are assigned to their gender. Adolescent girls were of the view that there was the need for them to learn to cook, to be respectful and to go for firewood because if they do not start that now, it will be challenging for them to become perfect at them at a later age. When a girl learns and becomes good at cooking, she assumes the responsibility of doing that for the entire household. They see it as a sign of disrespect for them to hang around while their mothers go for water or do washing in the house. Though there is an emphasis on girls to go to school like boys, they are still expected to stick to their roles. They therefore daily have to combine the demands of the classroom and the home. Because of this, most of them said they sometimes come to school late and in some cases skip classes to either assist their mothers or attend to domestic activities as if they were adults. Joy, for example, said that,

I know I am a girl, if you are idle and don't do anything and you finally get married, you may not be able to cook or even do the dishes. You would get [to the house], and, the compound would be dirty, and the dishes would be dirty. But you cannot do it. Because of that, for me, I can do the dishes. I cook, and I sweep the compound. There is nothing; there is no work in the house that I cannot do now. Boys on their part reported being less involved in domestic activities because, in comparison with girls, there are fewer chores that they are expected to carry out. What boys reported doing at home were helping their parents on the farm during farming seasons, attending to animals, and running errands. They, therefore, participated in school more than girls, and thus expected different outcomes in school. According to OECD (2012), inequalities in opportunities to learn transform into inequalities in performance which in turn leads to inequalities in expectations. Talata, whose expectation was a diploma, like many girls, for example, did not see herself making it to the university. She attributed 'going higher' in education, which means going for a bachelor's degree and higher, to boys and not to girls, because, like other girls, she does not have enough time to dedicate to studies and to prepare herself for university education. She said,

A boy is supposed to go higher in education than a girl. They have time for books, but girls do not have. Why I said that is that a girl can do a boy's work when the boy is not around. But a boy cannot do a girl's work. They would not even want to do it. But for us, we do a lot of work in the house

What Talata said represents how the performance of the roles which are not traditionally associated with a given gender is perceived in the Ghanaian society. For example, girls assist their parents on the farm in weeding and harvesting, but boys seldom cook for the family or take grains to the mill for grinding. In practice, the distinction in gender roles is strictly followed by boys than by girls. When girls even perform what is traditionally considered as boys' work, they are praised and admired. But when a boy performs girls' work, like going to the mill with grains, he could be ridiculed. This has led to an increase in the daily workloads of girls, and for a girl like Talata, it affects their studies which she called 'books', and consequently how far she thinks she can go in education.

Apart from boys having the advantage of more time for learning which invariably improves performances, they expressed that by not engaging in domestic activities in the same way as girls, they feel challenged to do well in school and to go higher in education. They feel they have to account for their relatively minor engagement in domestic chores educationally. It is important to note that, this view of boys is held by many people, especially in Ghanaian societies with strong gender norms. It is not uncommon for parents or siblings to reprimand a boy for not doing well in school, and the common remark could be something like, 'you don't do anything in the house', implying that boys have more time for studies in comparison with girls and should, therefore, do well. Baba for example, was sure that he would go higher in education than his other siblings who are girls. And, the reason was that,

A girl doesn't get chance to study because she cooks for the house, goes for water and washes the dishes. It is only once in awhile that we go for water. But for them, they go for water every day and wash dishes and cook for us. But for you a boy, what is your work? Yours is to study. And if she ends up achieving more than you, you have not done well.

It is obvious that the chore that boys and girls practically engage in is to prepare them for a future where they are supposed to be independent and responsible. These roles in that future independent and responsible state (future possible selves) meant a lot for their future education- people pursue different higher educational qualifications at different times in their life cycles.

Both boys and girls showed the tendency to enrol for different higher educational qualifications at different times. In most cases, they said they would get married after obtaining initial higher educational qualification, and later an upgrade such qualifications. This is what most people do in Ghana. After obtaining an initial higher educational qualification, such as a diploma, it may take some years before they go back to school to pursue, for example, an undergraduate degree. It was, therefore, important to examine adolescents' expectations by including such future educational pursuits because the roles which boys and girls are expected to play could have an impact on such future educational pursuits and consequently their overall expectations. But before I turn to how they thought their future roles would affect their expectations, I would first show the educational opportunities that exist for people to upgrade their qualifications and why it may be important for some people to do that at one point in time.

At any time in people's lives, those who are not content with their educational qualifications may want to improve upon them. Others too may wish to improve upon their skills to either keep abreast with emerging trends in their professions or to simply strategically position themselves for developing opportunities in a fast-changing world. Tertiary educational institutions in Ghana, like in other places, recognise this desire of people to upgrade their skills at different times in their careers and the opportunities for upgrading educational qualifications are numerous. Such expansion in opportunities for everyone willing to learn irrespective of age and career could also be accounted for by the global espousal of lifelong learning, a learning that "encompasses both continuity (stability) and dis-continuity (change) in learned capacities over time as a result of interactions with the man-made environment-culture" (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako & Mauch, 2001, p. 6). There are therefore 'mature entrances,' distance, and sandwich programmes in universities and colleges for people to upgrade their educational qualifications and skills.

Notwithstanding the opportunities and the tendency for people to upgrade their qualifications, boys more than girls reported to have higher chances of doing so because of the nature of their expected future roles. For example, they always expressed that marriage would not be a hindrance to their re-enrolling to upgrade their qualifications at some point in time. The cost associated with the upgrade of qualifications was seldom seen as a hindrance because, unlike girls, the importance of upgrading one's qualifications was seen to cancel out the associated cost.

Other roles associated with childrearing (parenting), for example, were not also seen as having effects on boys' future occupational and educational endeavours since they were (and are) even not considered as their duties. This is not a recent phenomenon, and it has for a long time been attributed to the role of socio-cultural forces. Archer (1989) for example, showed that boys do not perceive a conflict between family and career, and do not even see parenting role as their problem. This makes it possible for them to forge higher expectations. Duut, for example, said he would be a "degree teacher" (a teacher with bachelor's degree) by the time he is like his older brother whom I knew. It suggested that he would not go to the university straight after secondary school. So I asked him whether he expect to be hindered in any way, since he has to go to the college, teach for some time and enrol again. He replied that, "Look at master [referring to one of the male teachers]. He is still going to school at his age. They say school has no end. So he still goes to school again."

Perceived inter-role demands accounted for girls' lower expectations. According to Bussey and Bandura (1999, p. 703), "the effects of juggling dual roles are typically framed negatively on how competing inter-role demands breed distress and discordance". This has led to a situation where women who engage in formal careers face the challenge of reconciling their roles as mothers and workers because the two have conflicting demands (Brown, 1996). Adolescent girls, therefore, believed that the more education one has, the more likely they would be engaged in jobs that require much of their time which would negatively affect their performances of domestic responsibilities. Other previous studies support this finding. Teachman and Polonko (1988) for example found that women more than men were more likely to enrol in two-year colleges and such colleges were preferred because they lower the "barriers that inhibit enrolment for individuals with family responsibilities" (p. 521). This inter-role conflict was vividly summed in the narratives of Kamitu. She described her future expected responsibilities which she said would work against her future educational pursuits and hence her reported expectations, as,

My duties are: by 5:30 am or 4:30 am, I should be out of bed to prepare food. If there are children of school going age, I will prepare them for school. So by 6:30, let's say I have a motorbike or a car, I would drop them at school and then go to work. Maybe if I am to go for lunch at around 2 or 4 pm and it is time for the children to go for a second break, if I had prepared their food, I would go for it for them. After work, I would pass by and pick them.

When faced with competing inter-role demands like Kamitu, individuals would have to make choices. One of the reasons is that it is difficult to be effective simultaneously in all domains of life because "the activities involved in different selves conflict" (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006, p. 18). In comparison with boys, Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) posited that at mid-adolescence, it is girls who often are pre-occupied with the challenge of making a choice between possible selves in education and possible selves in family-related domains. This, they attributed to their faster development on self-awareness, self-reflection and abstract reasoning. Whatever girls choose to pursue at the end of the day, must, therefore, be crucial to them relative to those sacrificed. And, they should have some well-informed reasons for their choices. Adolescent girls' concept of the 'respect' of a woman in this study illustrates what is more important and valued by girls, such that they would rather not seek some educational

attainments.

Girls have been raised to believe that a woman earns her respect in the home and not outside the home. Some of them assigned secondary importance to undergraduate degrees and master's because they felt that with such degrees come some occupational or professional demands which could affect their roles in the home and consequently their respect in the society. 'The respect of a woman', as said by girls, was in line with what Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus and Suzuki (2004) called, the "culturally sanctioned aspects of the self", which may include, "competence and efficacy"; and "positive appraisal" (527). They showed in their study that, these are important to the extent that people achieve them by sacrificing some other goals. This was not different in this study. Talata, for example, was of the view that higher education was more important to boys than girls. She was told she stands to benefit the same as a boy when she earns a university degree- good job and salary-but she did not see them as important relative to what she is socialised to value by the time she is an adult. According to her, what she has learnt both in the school and the home is that, "If you are a woman, what is good for you to be doing is going for firewood, keeping the house neat so that even if people don't respect you outside your home, they will respect you when they come to your house".

Adolescent girls saw themselves becoming helpers in the future. It is posited that in Ghana, because it is a man's responsibility to provide for the household including the needs of the wife, even if a woman is economically well-to-do and can meet her own needs, she is considered as helping her husband because he could then divert any money that would have been used to provide for the woman to meet other household obligations (Brown, 1996). Markus and Kitayama (1991) might have contended that a role such as becoming a 'helper' should not necessarily be seen as being the inferior in the relationship. Rather, it "can be a highly valued end state" (p. 247).

However, it would mean that even for girls who are performing well in school, as long as the 'helper possible self' is a 'valued end state', they would still not be motivated to optimise their academic abilities by going higher in education despite the numerous opportunities for continuous education. When Suguru whose expectation was a diploma, was told about master's and doctorate degrees, and whether she could attain any of them in the future, she said she was not interested in pursuing any of them, and it was not even necessary that girls are educated to such levels. According to her,

There is no problem with that [with a girl having a lower qualification]. There is nothing wrong with that. In the end, you could be a good supporter to the man you will marry. I know that a girl can go higher in education like a boy, but for me, that is not good. To have a higher degree than a boy, no!"

The 'helper role' does not only downgrade girls' motivations and aspirations and consequently their expectations, but it also affects the amount of financial resources they envision to commit in that regard, and what could be saved to upgrade their qualifications. It should be noted that people pay for higher education in Ghana. In most cases, people who want to upgrade their qualifications work for some years and accumulate money before they can do this. The cost of schooling was, therefore, an important concern to girls because they expect larger responsibilities that even encompass those that are culturally ascribed to men. The cost of upgrading qualifications was not much of concern to boys because in the first place there was a high motivation to go higher in education such that any expenditure in education was considered justifiable.

These financial responsibilities some girls talked about are only against commonly known cultural prescripts, and not what could be a standard role of all parents irrespective of gender. Though this to some extent has changed, it is still viewed as an additional responsibility. In a study of women in some selected developing countries including Ghana, Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch (2000) found that women's financial contributions in discharging family obligations have increased. However, the women in their study still felt "overburdened with having to add or increase livelihood responsibilities on top of their household chores" (p. 110). Adolescent girls recognised this and reported that it would make it difficult for them to save money for the pursuit of any higher educational goals. By probably seeing their mothers carry out some of these responsibilities at home, a girl like Luayal whose expectation was a diploma explained why she is not likely to go to the university in the future to improve upon her qualification as,

You cannot continue with school because the money you would be getting, you would be using it to look after your children. For instance, if you want to go to school and the school fees is 1000 Ghana cedis, and you also earn 1000 Ghana cedis a month. If you take 500 Ghana cedis and pay the children's school fees, the remaining amount cannot pay your school fees...You know, there are some men, if they earn salaries and their wives earn salaries too, they don't give money to the woman. The man is supposed to take care of the children, but it is the woman who takes care of the children more than the man in most cases.

Girls did not see themselves from a cultural perspective as being capable of taking decisions and acting on them independently. This means that even if a girl like Luayal who saw the cost of education as a barrier to her university education after marriage, can save money for the upgrade of her qualifications, her chances of doing so would still be dependent on the approval of such decision by a man. This is partly because of the relational content of their self-concepts (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006); or because they are socialised to refrain from decision-making (Ampofo, 2001, p. 201), and "are taught to be less active, more restrained in manipulating their world" (Elliot, 1988, p. 54).

Another cultural basis for this decision-making dynamics is partly in the ages at which men and women usually enter into marriage in Ghana. It posited that men are generally older than their wives and because culturally younger siblings defer decision-making to older siblings, it causes women to also defer decision-making to their husbands (GSS, 2013). It is also said that the decision-making power of women in Ghana has improved with joint decisionmaking witnessed in some families. But this appears to be on matters such as family planning (Brown, 1996).

Because of this decision-making dynamics, whenever adolescent girls who said they would go to the college after secondary school were asked whether they would improve upon their qualifications in the future, some of them were not certain, and it reflected the difficulties some women encounter in Ghana when they want to go for further studies. It is said for instance, that some men could put off the lights in the house with the pretext that they want to reduce the energy consumption of the house and hence lights bill. Others either threaten to take additional wives or do take extra wives if their wives insist on going to school to upgrade their qualifications (Tanye, 2008). Because of this, some girls reported lower expectations because they could not bring together any possible future educational pursuits and what they are likely to attain immediately after secondary school. Teni, for example, said that,

What I will say is that I will marry after teacher training college, but after that, I cannot tell you what will happen. You already know, a boy can continue going to school after school. But a girl, she can go like two steps but time would be due for her to marry. She has to stop there and get married. Later on, she can continue. But if the man she marries to refuses that she should go, it means she cannot go. She has to stay in the house. So, I don't know.

The reproductive (childbearing) function of women also accounted for girls' lower expectations. It was viewed as a religious, cultural and moral duty by girls. The infusion of religious and cultural values into it makes it more restraining on educational goals.

There are some cultural values and expectations in childbearing that affect women in some domains of life in Ghana. First, fecundity is highly cherished in Ghanaian culture. Girls are thus expected to marry early in some cultures, partly because it is believed that a woman's chances of conceiving reduce with age (GSS, 2013). Second, the stability or instability of marriages in Ghana depends to some extent on the presence or absence of children with the likelihood of divorce diminishing as the number of children a woman gives birth to increases (Takyi, 2001, p. 92).

Because of this childbearing role and the effects of not fulfilling it the way society expects them to, girls were hesitant about educational goals that are of a longer duration. They are not only expected to give birth but to do so as soon as possible. This suppresses the realisation of higher educational goals because one would have to stop school, give birth, and enrol again and it is not all girls who can do this. It was found in the USA for example that girls who chose to marry early before continuing their education had "lower odds of earning a bachelor's degree" (McClelland, 1990, p. 116). Even girls who are doing well in school showed the tendency to complete school early and give birth because they are told that girls have a limited time to give birth. This affected their expectations because they tended to see two or three-year colleges as favourable to this reproductive function. Rukaya, whose expected education was a 2-year certificate in nursing, and Teni, whose expected education was a diploma in education, respectively said,

A girl is to stop somewhere...you know, we have a time that a woman will not be able to give birth. So she has to stop somewhere and look for a man and marry. I would want to stop somewhere, but the man I would marry can continue going to school. I would not be happy if I am the one continuing education and not him.

My mother got married and gave birth to me. I would also try and give birth for her. My father told us a story, that when God created human beings, he created them to give birth before they die...If you refuse your mother's wish, she can curse you. So as a girl you should end at where you can get a job and get a man to marry and look after children.

It could be seen from Teni and Rukaya that the timing of marriage was important for girls. For Teni and others, the time spent on education does only affect childbearing, but it also affects one's chances of being married at the time one wishes. This suggested that they make use of information regarding the marriage market returns in education in Ghana. And, such information equally regulated how far they hoped to go in education. In the next paragraphs, I elaborate how the marriage market returns in Ghana affected adolescents' expectations.

Knowledge of marriage market conditions plays a vital role in informing the educational decisions of adolescents because education could affect marriage- both the quality and the chances. The images of educated and uneducated people who are in marriage are therefore important in informing the educational choices of adolescents and hence their expectations. For example, it is reported in Takyi (2001) that in Ghana, women with more higher education are more likely to report divorce than women with lower and no education; and marriages that end in divorce are higher among women who work in professional settings than those who work in nonprofessional settings. Girls also said similar things about women whom they termed 'highly educated women.' They expressed that they are incapable of making good homes. "They don't usually have stable homes. They don't live well" (Ajara).

By having a conception of what they are afraid of becoming and what they want to become in the future, these images could have an impact on the educational expectations of adolescents because it could lead to them having to decide either pursuing a university education or a college education. When they prefer one of these and not the other because of perceived advantages or disadvantages in the marriage market, they will be adopting "procedures and behaviour that feel identity congruent" (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1019). An educational attainment such as master's degree, for example, could be identity congruent or incongruent depending on how it is perceived to affect a person's chances of success in the marriage market. If it is perceived to enlarge one's chances, it is identity congruent, and the person may be more inclined to consider doing a master's degree in the future and would consequently have higher expectations. On the other hand, if it is perceived to lower a person's chances, it would be identity incongruent and the person would not include master's degree in her future educational plans and would also have lower expectations.

Some previous studies support the above propositions. Attanasio and Kaufmann (2016) in their study in Mexico found that girls' educational expectations were high because they perceived that by going higher in education, they could increase their chances of becoming more attractive to potential partners. The image of educated women in marriage in this study in Mexico was that more educated women had better marriages and vice versa. Thus, by hoping for a better marriage, girls were motivated to go higher in education leading to them having higher expectations. However, they found that the marriage market had no significant influence on boys' expectations.

Unlike the findings in the study in Mexico, it is apparent that the marriage market returns in education work differently for girls in Ghana. According to most girls, they have seen that 'highly educated women' have difficulty in getting married. This perception made it hard for some adolescent girls to foster university expectations. This was in keeping with the proposition that some adolescents may find it hard to foster positive, realistic possible selves that are focused on school as the conduit to "adulthood unless these possible selves are fostered in a social context that creates local norms highlighting the relevance of academic achievement" (Oyserman, Terry & Bybee, 2002, p. 314).

Various reasons were given accounting for why 'highly educated women' may find it difficult to get married. And, that regulated their expectations. Teni, for example, said she has never thought of going to the university before. She expressed that as long as what she hopes for (diploma in nursing) can get her employed, she is content. One of the advantages of having a diploma, according to her, was that "boys [men] would not fear you like if you have a big degree". Laat, whose expectation was a diploma in nursing, also had similar reservations and said that if a girl is pursuing a master's degree, it will become difficult for a prospective man to marry her because that person would need a similar or higher qualification before he can marry her. And according to her, "by the time the boy would reach you [have similar qualification as the girl], he would say that you are old and he will not marry you. So you can wait for him, and he would get a different girl and marry. And you would be left without a man to marry".

Adolescent boys did not expect negative feedback from their social environment concerning higher educational attainments and one's chances of marriage. They were therefore not restrained from having higher educational ambitions which affected their expectations. They expressed that it is almost unacceptable for a boy to be in a relationship with a girl who is more educated than him. Because of this, unlike girls, they attached vital importance to higher education. This means that higher educational attainments as a conduit to adulthood in this study area are supported by local norms. Dafulka whose expectation was a professional qualification (journalism) for example said,

You know these days' girls when they are ahead of a boy in education, they bluff that they got 'this' and 'that'. That they went 'here' and 'there'. Don't you see that that is very bad? That is the problem of us boys, and we always have to go higher in education than girls.

A similar finding of males desiring to be higher than females in a relationship is reported in Kurban and Weeden (2005) in the USA. They found that in dating, though the education of a woman is not the most important thing for men, men who go for highly educated women were still usually slightly more educated than the women. This could be partly attributed to the fact that, "male self-concepts are associated to a significant degree with their individuating achievements and their independence from others" (Josephs et al., 1992, p. 399).

Individuating achievements (Josephs et al., 1992) may be important to boys partly because they come with emotional benefits. Markus and Kitayama (1991) contended that the act of "standing out are often intrinsically rewarding because they elicit pleasant, ego-focused emotions such as pride" (p. 246). In Ghana, because of the tendency of men to want to dominate or exercise greater control over women, it could be added that boys may want to be more educated than girls because that would enhance their power to do so. Tommy, for example, said, "you yourself [referring to the researcher] know that a boy is supposed to be more educated than a girl". According to him, this was important because,

Your salary and her salary will not be the same. She will go for a small salary, and you will go for a big one. Because of that, she will respect you. When you are more educated than her, you can even speak English and use words which she will not understand. She will know how to speak English, but she cannot understand the words you use and she will respect you. You see? That is why I said it is good for a boy to go higher in education than a girl.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the local norms, values, and expectations concerning gender roles and the marriage market do not permit boys and girls to forge equal possible selves focused on similar educational attainments. It is apparent that for girls in particular, how far they intend to go in education is regulated by what they hope to become or avoid becoming in other domains. Such fears and hopes have led to the massing of their expectations around diploma attainments.

# 4.4 Adolescents' schooling experiences and their educational expectations

This section shows teachers' perceptions of the academic abilities of boys and girls and how that affects their expectations as well as how female teachers communicate diploma and certificate qualifications to girls. I will also be showing that boys' expectations were partly the result of the fact that they had academic-focused possible selves. An attempted is also made to show that, girls' expectations were probably because some of them had school possible selves focused on failure. This is represented by them seeing the need to re-take the most crucial secondary school leaving examinations in Ghana.

The educational expectations of young people are not immune to the influence of the school, and in particular, their teachers. The role of teachers in the shaping of the expectations of adolescents is therefore profound. Their expectations of students have been found to be better predictors of students' enrolment across many types of educational institutions than even the expectations of parents (Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011). This could be because they tend to "possess accurate knowledge of children's learning and development" (Gill & Reynolds, 2000, p. 409).

In this study, teachers<sup>3</sup> attributed the success of boys and girls to different factors and therefore expected different outcomes from them. Teachers attributed boys' achievements to abilities and girls' to hard work. This was in line with most studies (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Siegle & Reis, 1998; Tiedemann, 2000; Upadyaya & Eccles, 2014). This affected how they interacted with students and the messages they send to them about their future educational and occupational endeavours.

The study found that teachers make known to girls that their abilities are below boys' and that they always need to work hard before they can make an impact, not only in school or particular subjects but also in other spheres of life. "They always talk to us, especially we the girls. That we should work hard. You know, for the boys, they can farm. We the girls, we cannot do anything" (Ediata). This could be seen as encouragement to a girl like Ediata to be serious with studies. But it equally sends messages to them that their excelling in any field depends on hard work and not sheer abilities. Even if this is encouragement, it could be interpreted differently. For example, when teachers praise girls for the quality of their work, it could be understood by them as limited abilities (Siegle & Reis, 1998).

With these different conceptions of the abilities of girls and boys, female teachers specifically communicated 'college expectations' to girls. According to the girls, the female teachers have always told them that if they work hard, they would one day go to the college as they did. By 'college', they are referring to tutorial colleges such as teacher training and nursing training colleges. Colleges are quite many in Ghana. Their admission requirements are usually lower than that of universities. They have shorter durations, for example, 2 years for some certificate programmes in most cases and 3 years for diplomas. Graduates of colleges are usually placed in employment after graduation by the government, though this is changing now; and their fees and related charges are less than that of universities, though some of them could be more expensive.

 $<sup>^{3}</sup>$  There were no interviews with teachers. Information regarding teachers is therefore based on the reports of the students.

Notwithstanding the advantages associated with enrolling in tutorial colleges, it is important to note that they limit individuals' eventual educational attainments. It is, for example, found that more than half of students who enrol in two-year colleges never complete four-year degrees (Fry, 2002). Unlike boys, girls' lower expectations were partly a product of the "college" mantra from female teachers that apparently characterised most of their narratives. For example,

The madams have been talking to us girls to work hard. I have seen that they are always telling the truth because they have tried and gone to colleges and have seen how it is and they are now saying it. So I have to try and work hard like they did so that I can also go to nursing training college.

Madam said that the way I have been performing since I came to form one, always passing my exams, if continue to work hard up to secondary school, in the end, if I want to go to the college it would be easy for me.

According to Oyserman and Fryberg (2006), when a group lacks images in a given domain, there are chances that they would not have possible selves in that domain. By extension, if it also has particular images in a given domain, there should be several possible selves for the group in that domain. It should be noted that females are more represented in tutorial colleges, outstripping boys in nursing training colleges in particular (NCTE, 2014) than in four-year degree awarding institutions in Ghana. It could, therefore, be argued that girls have more college-focused possible selves than university-focused possible selves.

Though both male and female teachers attend colleges and later upgrade their qualifications, there is a sense in which female teachers could be said to be reinforcing gender-stereotyped choices, causing girls to persist in making different choices from boys even if they show similar performances in school (Favara, 2012). In the study school, female teachers brought their babies to school, and anytime they were engaged in class, the other teachers who were not engaged took care of them. The school like other schools in Ghana also closed for the day at 2:00 pm. This means that they would have more time to attend to domestic activities. These points to the flexibility of tasks performed by those with college qualifications and for females who are teachers, for example, it possibly allows them to be effective in dual roles: family life and teaching. These specific assertions were not pursued in this study, but the

narratives of girls in gender role-related domains elaborated in earlier sections appear to support it.

School-focused possible selves (or academic-focused possible selves) describes the "expectations and concerns regarding one's school success and academic attainment, including images of oneself "passing" or avoiding "failing" (Oyserman, Brickman & Rhodes, 2007, p. 481). Adolescents with "passing" images of themselves, or those who see themselves as being "successful in the future in academics may see the need to endorse performance-approach goals" (Anderman, Anderman & Griesinger, 1999, p. 13). Such goals could entail higher educational institutions, vocations and programmes that require more top performances in, for example, pre-tertiary educational programmes (secondary schools, for example). It is evident that academic achievements guide the formation of academically focused possible selves. But some people can still form academically focused possible selves, though their performances in school may not be good. For instance, by believing that the obstacles to higher academic goals are surmountable, some youth can forge possible selves focused on school irrespective of their academic performances (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

Adolescent boys who reported doing well in the class were inclined towards university level attainments. They usually linked their academic performances to future educational institutions and programmes, when asked how far they think they could go in education by looking at their performances. Most of them appeared well-informed about their academic abilities and wished to go to school as far as those abilities allow. This, it could be argued, shows that boys had school-focused possible selves and their performances were central in determining that. For example, John and Tommy said respectively,

When we started school, I have not been performing well at maths. But for science, I have been doing well. That is why I said when I complete here I would go to Walewale and do science. After finishing high school, I will go to university and do nursing...In my class, at the end of term exams, if I don't come 4<sup>th</sup>, then it is 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. I don't go beyond that.

I would go to the university after GHANASCO...Through the grades, I would get and through my performance in SHS...My performance is good. My grades and my position in class are good...Having a degree in nursing. I know I can get there. On the other hand, when asked about their performances, adolescent girls usually mentioned that it would lead to them getting the vocations they want. This was in direct contrast with how boys usually conceived their performances and their expectations. Girls' possible selves were therefore focused on vocations and perceived academic abilities mostly increased their confidence of getting their desired vocations. For example, "My performance is good. I look at the way I am performing, and I believe I would be a nurse" (Laat). And, "When we do exams, I perform well. When they post our results, I am always first among the girls. Looking at my performance, I can go to school and finally get a job. Like the one I said I want [nurse]" (Suguru). These vocation-focused possible selves probably because are of their possible selves in other domains previously discussed.

By relating performances to schools and programmes, it could be argued that boys who perceive themselves as good in the class would have academically-focused possible selves, which means they would like to go to the university, for example. By doing this, they are endorsing performance-approach goals (Anderman, Anderman & Griesinger, 1999) and by extension, they would have higher expectations. This apparently was the case for boys. It was also apparent that, unlike John and Tommy, some boys probably did not have well-developed school-focused possible selves and that was because of their performances. Equally evident was the fact that, when such boys perceive improvements in their academic performances, they would similarly forge school-focused possible selves like John and Tommy. For example, Konlan who currently expects a diploma in nursing said,

I have seen that, when I came to junior high school, my mind has opened more. Because, the position I was in primary school, I have moved forward and not backwards....looking at my performance, I know it will take me far in education if I continue that way. I will go high in school.

Oyserman, Bybee and Terry (2006, p. 200) contended that in addition to possible selves focused on school success, like John and Tommy for example; there are also some possible selves that are focused on failure. Should we expect adolescents with such possible selves to have lower educational expectations? The narratives of girls allow for some explanations to be attempted. Their narratives concerning the need to take remedial classes and to re-write the examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) makes this possible.

Some girls saw themselves taking part in an examination commonly referred to as NOV/DEC or 'private'. To graduate from high school to any higher educational institution, all students write a common exam conducted by WAEC. It is the last and highest examinations students in high school take, and it is grades obtained here that students use to apply to various institutions of higher learning depending on their performance (grades) and interests. However, those students who failed in some subjects or got lower grades in some subjects have an opportunity to re-take the exams. This exam is popularly called NOV/DEC or 'private'. It is called NOV/DEC (November/December) because it used to be written in these months. It is also called "private" because those who write the exams are not affiliated to any high school and are referred to as 'private candidates'.

People usually do not take the 'private' if they know that their grades can guarantee them the higher educational institutions and programmes they want. Other reasons why people would probably not want to re-take exams as 'private' students are: it is expensive to write exams as a 'private' candidate because students pay little to write high school leaving exams, but 'private candidates' pay more for registration to sit for the exams; some students attend remedial programmes and pay for tuition; because the centres for the 'private' are few, mostly in the regional capitals, young people need to relocate to where these centres are and therefore pay for accommodation and other living expenses. Also, in selecting students by tertiary educational institutions, schools consider the number of attempts a person made before obtaining the desired grades. This means that grades obtained after multiple attempts as a 'private candidate' can lower a student's chances of being selected into competitive schools and programmes.

Given the conditions outlined above, students who have possible selves focused on school success, which means those who are confident of passing the exams organised by WAEC in their first sitting would most likely not conceive writing exams as 'private' students. However, in this study, girls' tended to see a need to take the 'private' long before the WAEC. Kamitu, for instance, said she wants to go to nursing training college after high school. When she was asked of how she would get enrolled in nursing training college (NTC), she said, "It would come from my passes after secondary school. What I mean is that, if

complete senior secondary school and go to sit for NOV/DEC and pass well, I can buy the form and apply." Luayal, whose expectation was a diploma, also said she would take the 'private' after secondary school before she could continue with her nursing ambition. She was sure that her parents would register her to take part in the 'private', because, "If a girl completes secondary school, they will let her write 'private'. But for a boy, parents do not register them to write 'private'".

We could infer from the foregoing that Kamitu and Luayal had relatively little optimism about coming out of secondary school with good passes. But they still expected diploma qualifications. It could be that in comparison with boys, they (girls) perceive that they need more support in their academic lives, from family, teachers, and peers, for example, to succeed. A study of adolescents' possible selves by Leondari, Syngollitou and Kiosseoglou (1998) appears to support this. They coded the possible selves of boys and girls into seven content categories, and a significantly larger number of girls more than boys chose the category that made "reference to failure but with some hints of optimism, supportive environment" (p. 220). It could be that Kamitu and Luayal see failure in WAEC to be temporal. This is possible because the existence of the 'private'/NOVDEC itself suggests that failure in WAEC is temporal or inevitable by some students, and they can overcome it through extra tuition and special classes, which is always the case for most students.

It is equally possible that girls who expressed their intention of writing or show knowledge of 'private' have no idea of who writes this exam. They could consider it a normal school transition programme, and that means it may not be the case that they have school possible selves that are focused on failure. Because this was not extensively explored, it has not been able to establish how writing the 'private' affects expectations, apart from the fact that, those girls who expressed writing it did not have expectations for university degrees.

# 4.5 Adolescents' peers, role models and their educational expectations

The choices of young people are not immune to the influence of their friends. Kiuru et al. (2007) for example investigated the extent to which members of adolescents' peer groups shared similar expectations about their future education and concluded that peer groups form

important contexts for the formation of educational expectations. Roth's (2017) study of adolescents in Germany also found that the influence of peers on the future college decisions of adolescents was stronger than even their academic performances. This influence of peers has sometimes been explained in terms of their inclination to feel belonged to groups (Sánchez, Colón & Esparza, 2005) which then leads to them conforming to group's interests and desires (Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar, 2000). However, this need to conform to group's demands declines with age (Brown, Eicher and Petrie, 1986).

Adolescents in this study thought of their peers in terms of those who were of the same gender as them. They also tended to rate themselves relative to others of the same sex. They reported having peer discussions of higher educational ambitions and preferences. For girls, such discussions often led to them conforming to the group's expectations concerning vocations and schools. Mary whose expectation was a diploma in nursing, for example, said, "Anytime I told my friends that I want nursing, they always say that that is good." Joy whose expectation was also a diploma in nursing said,

We are three girls. We even sit on the same desk. We always talk about what we want to become in the future. I have always said that I want to be a nurse. The others always said the same thing too. I have told them that I would go to the nursing training college after high school. That is what they say also.

It is not far-fetched to say that by knowing that their friends like nursing, it gives Mary and Joy reasons to stick to their desires of becoming nurses. It could make them feel that their choices are right. In line with Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) assertion, because most girls preferred nursing, it could also be said that Mary and Joy were trying to meet that gendered standard, thereby subjecting their educational expectations to that gendered standard.

Meeting a gendered standard or conforming to group's standards is not necessarily bad. There is a fundamental question on the nature of those standards critical to understanding the type of educational expectations young people could forge from it: whether the standard would lead to one attending a two or four-year college or university. In the case of girls, it was found that the nurses they want to become are those who perform bedside functions and therefore require relatively fewer years of higher education. This explains why most of them tended to consider certificate and diploma nursing.

The case of boys was different. There was no indication of conformity to their groups' expectations. They reported having peer discussions of higher educational ambitions and preferences. But unlike girls, such discussions do not lead to shared expectations concerning vocations and schools. This could be attributed to the influence of the family on their life choices. For example, Suuk had his expectation being medicine. His father influenced this, and he has always made this choice of medicine known to his friends. However, it was apparent that he has hardly gotten his friends to consider doing medicine in the future. It was also evident that he was not influenced by his friends either. He said,

We talk about where we will go after here, and we are now tired of talking about it. We always talk about secondary school. Where each of us wants to go and the results each of us wants to come out with when we complete secondary school. That is what we talk about. Everybody is praying to God to come out with good results, something between 6 and 20. Nobody should exceed that. They always said the same thing. It is the same thing each of us says. Nobody has tried to change mine.

Apart from their friends, the educational expectations of adolescents could also be influenced by the educational and occupational attainments of other people in their social environment- role models. Role models are important because people who achieve excellence in a given field could cause the fostering of 'positive possible selves' in other people who are currently considering joining that field. On the other hand, a negative experience by a person in a given field could create a 'negative possible self' and thereby discourage others from joining that field (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955).

With the revolution in the electronic media and given the impressionability of adolescents, one would begin to think that they would not look within their families for models, or they may even struggle to choose who to become. This is because such revolution has brought almost every image capable of being imitated into easily accessible devices. Family members, therefore, may not be necessary when it comes to who an adolescent wants to be like in the future. However, this was not the case for boys in this study. Boys mostly had wishes concerning who they want to be like in the future. They were wishes in the sense that whenever they were explicitly asked who their role models were, they mentioned people who they at different times wished they would be like in the future- police officers,

journalists, and soldiers. However, their educational trajectories in most cases were not geared towards preparing them to become like such people.

The overarching reason for the negligible influence of individuals in the media and outside of boys' families on their expectations, or why boys mostly had wishes was that what most of them expected were influenced by their family members. Family members, therefore, served as role models for boys in most cases. This shows that the possible selves of boys were more regulated by the family, and so were their educational expectations. This reflected Oyserman and Fryberg's (2006) proposition that people at times fear to disappoint groups they belong to, "by failing to attain group norms and standards" (p. 21) and that affects the type of possible selves developed by the individual. A boy for example said,

There was a certain boy in our house. Now he is a soldier. He had always told us that being a soldier is good. So I wanted to be a soldier after secondary school like him. But what my brother told me is what I have to do now. He said I should go to their school so that I can also become a journalist. If he had not changed, it is the soldier I would have wanted to become.

Girls had the same educational trajectories as their role models. Role models are therefore important for the expectations that girls forge. There were indications that some of them probably had lower expectations because they lacked people with some higher educational attainments (girls with university education). This could be attributed to the rural setting of the study area and the under-attainments of females in the area. In the study district, as of 2010, only 3.4% of women had attained tertiary educational qualifications. Those who were currently enrolled in tertiary educational institutions were 1.1% of males and 0.3% females (GSS, 2014).

The case of Ceci, one of the two girls whose expectations were up to first degrees illustrates that role models are essential in informing girls' expectations. She had a sister who attained her secondary education in Kumasi where one of the biggest public universities in Ghana is situated (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology- KNUST). According to her, her sister has always talked about the university and universities in general. However, she did not understand much about universities from her sister, which probably could be because her sister was not a university student and did not have rich information to

convey properly what university entails. Following the visit of a girl, a former student of their school who was now in KNUST, she became more enlightened about universities and got attracted to KNUST in particular. She said,

When she used to talk [Ceci's sister], there were certain things I understood. But there were other areas I didn't understand. The girl, she was once an assistant girls' prefect, she came and talked about the goodness of the school [KNUST]. She gave us books and advised us to be serious with our studies so that one day, one time, we can also be like her. I was very happy, and I said when I complete secondary school I will go there.

## **4.6 Chapter summary**

The presentation in this chapter indicates that the instrumental role of education is recognised, and attaining at least an upper secondary education is expected of, and by all adolescents irrespective of their gender. But in comparison with girls, more boys expected university attainments. Such unequal expectations reflected prevailing inequalities between males and females in adolescents' families.

Boys and girls had different possible selves in school, family and professional life. The possible selves of girls in these domains were more diverse and repressed higher expectations. Overall, local norms relating to the self in the future in some domains do not emphasise the importance of education equally for boys and girls. And, this has led to them having unequal possible selves in education which favoured boys.

The school was another space where a gendered transmission of expectations was observed. Female teachers were reported to implant tutorial college expectations in girls and it affected the expectations of some of them. Peers and role models outside of adolescents' families were found to affect girls' expectations and not boys.

In the next chapter, a detailed summary and conclusion of the study is presented.

# **Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how the educational expectations of adolescent boys and girls are shaped in Ghana, drawing on interviews with students in the final year of junior high school (JHS). The expectations of boys were found to be higher than that of girls. This was in line with the previous finding in Bofah and Hannula (2015). The differences in expectations were found to be the product of the gendered nature of the possible selves of boys and girls in the domains of academics, family, and professional life.

Both boys and girls expect and are expected by their families to go beyond secondary school. The principal reasons as their parents often tell them were that the world has changed, signifying that, unlike before, almost everyone everywhere is now embracing education. And, that attaining an education with relevant employable skills was necessary so that one could escape the dissatisfied social and economic conditions of their fathers and mothers, which they (parents), attribute to their missing out on formal education. This was in keeping with the possible selves theory which sees the images and models provided by one's social context, such as the family, as affecting what they hope to avoid or become. Such images also cause the individual to adopt relevant strategies so that they could avoid what they fear, and become what they desire (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Though the images and models of adolescents immediate social environment provided them with no reasons to not go beyond secondary school, gender differences in expectations still existed because each gender tendered to see the parent of "the same sex as their principal reference" (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008, p. 281). It was found that, if the parents of an adolescent are educated, the father would be more educated than the mother. A boy or girl could have a father with education, and a mother without education. This appears to be the case in most families in Ghana, partly because of the inequalities in educated attainments in the general public, and also probably because of the tendency of men to go for those they are more educated than. But there was no case of a child with an educated mother and an uneducated father. Adolescent boys most forcefully stressed the expectation of achieving more than the parent. This could be because of the "individuating achievements" (Josephs et al., 1992, p. 399) that characterise boys' self-concepts. And because fathers' had the most education, the expectations of boys and girls then followed that dimension.

According to Oyserman and Fryberg, (2006, p. 19), what people think they can become could be grounded in what "important others" suggest to them. In comparison with girls, this assertion was more applicable to boys and their expectations. While boys' educational and occupational choices could be explicitly directed by their fathers and older siblings, which in most cases led to them having higher expectations, the same could not be said of girls. Girls mostly reported receiving encouragement from their mothers and older siblings, concerning their occupational choices which they make known to them. But this was usually after they ask them. Encouragement is positive, and it suggests approval of choice made known. It could be that, as long as girls' choices are above secondary school attainments, which are the hopes of families for younger ones these days, the family is satisfied and would not further suggest educational institutions and programmes. What is not known is what these family members would have done if the choices of girls usually entailed university qualifications. But the question is, why do they make suggestions to boys? If they equally have specific expectations, why don't they communicate to them?

It was apparent that the family suggest programmes and schools to boys because of their potential roles as breadwinners in the family. Children for a very long time have been viewed as a source security, especially in old age, and such function is regarded as a moral obligation in Ghana (Mensa-Bonsu & Dowuona-Hammond, 1996), and partly because of lack of effective social protection for the aged (Twum-Danso, 2009). Boys appear to be able to fulfil this function better than girls, though it may not be the case these days.

As reported by some girls, their fathers' comparatively lesser interest in their education is predicated on the fear that they would eventually leave the family. This fear is even elevated when the family records teenage pregnancy. It was therefore apparent that investment decisions regarding the education of children tilted in favour of boys because of this expectation from children. As pointed by Zhu, Tse, Cheung and Oyserman (2014, P. 437), children who perceive their parents as "providing pragmatic and socio-emotional support will have a secure base from which to explore their future". This means that those who lack such support might not develop possible selves focused on school. Unsurprisingly, a girl like Edith came to believe that the education of boys was more important than that of girls because of what her father always said about girls' education.

The anticipated future selves of boys also influenced their motivations for higher level positions in the health profession. This means that, unlike girls who expect to enrol for diploma qualifications in nursing, boys preferring similar vocation as nursing would want to enrol at the degree level. In the end, both boys and girls could aspire for the same vocation, but because of the differences in their motivations, their educational expectations could differ. The primary motivation of boys was salaries, and this was similar to what is showed in other studies. In Feliciano and Rumbaut (2005) for example, men cited salaries as their reasons for being physicians.

Greene and DeBacker (2004, p. 92) contended that the very agents and forces of socialisation, that are "responsible for sex role prescriptions and commonly observed gender differences might operate to produce gender differences in both the content of future goals." While the preceding description of a major gender role of boys as breadwinners and their expectations did not depart from this, the gender roles of girls which are also socio-culturally framed did not depart from it either. However, in contrast, because they were more diverse, partly because girls have a more varied set of cognitions and expansive range of life domains to consider more than boys (Curry et al., 1994, p. 147), they impeded the forging of higher expectations. The diverse nature of their roles is even a problem because, "the activities involved in different selves conflict" (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006, p. 18).

Similar to the proposition of Greene and DeBacker (2004) is Oyserman, Terry and Bybee (2002) assertion that, some adolescents may find it hard to foster positive realistic possible selves that are focused on school as the conduit to "adulthood unless these possible selves are fostered in a social context that creates local norms highlighting the relevance of academic achievement" (p. 314). The possible selves of girls concerning career, marriage, children and divorce, which are frequently listed by girls more than boys in other studies (Segal, DeMeis, Wood & Smith, 2001); and their resulting expectations, were in keeping with these propositions.

Girls expected inter-role demands in the future which they said would make it difficult for them to improve upon their educational qualifications after marriage. It is important to point out that, it is a common trend that people re-enrol in higher educational institutions in Ghana to improve upon a previously acquired higher educational qualification. The hiatus between two qualifications could be the result of marriage in many cases. And marriage, according to them, would affect them because of their perceived difficulty in finding a balance in family life, professional life, and further education. Given this complexity, most of them tended to prioritise family life. This was similar to the case where girls imagined a future where they would be full-time parents if their spouses earned more than them, and they rated the satisfaction to be derived from care role at home as equal to that of engagement in a formal career (Curry et al.,1994).

Girls would prioritise family life over further education because it is within the family that they expect to derive their respect. Respect for the self which is very important reflected what Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus and Suzuki (2004) called the, "culturally sanctioned aspects of the self," which may include, "competence and efficacy"; and "positive appraisal" (527). They believed that the more education one has, the more they are alienated from the family through engagement in more demanding occupations. Because people mostly would like to adopt approaches that are identity congruent (Oyserman & Destin, 2010), some of them were of the view that they may not improve any educational qualifications they take into marriage.

University education was not also considered as necessary by some girls. Some of them believed that a woman is to play a helping role in a family. This helping role, some of them believed, is anti-further education because even if they wanted to improve upon their educational qualifications, they would be constrained from doing so due to perceived constricted resources resulting from this helping role. It is possible that, because they would instead engage in less demanding occupations, which likely could be less paying jobs, they then imagined, like Luayal, who said it is women who spend more these days on necessities, that, they cannot save much money for any further education.

The childbearing role of women was also envisioned to affect the number of years they are willing to spend on education. Because of the religious and cultural values associated with childbearing in Ghana, they tended to prefer educational institutions of shorter durations. They would do this because fecundity is highly cherished in Ghana (GSS, 2013), and they have always been told that a woman has a short time within which to give birth.

The marriage market also played an important role in modelling the expectations of girls and not boys. As asserted by the possible selves theory, images and models are important in the construction of adolescents' future possible selves, both to be avoided and hoped-for. According to girls, women with some degrees which society labelled as 'highly educated,' face challenges in the marriage market. It begins with them finding it difficult to be in a relationship, because of public ridicule if they end up with someone who is more educated than them. Then, they are seen as not able to make good homes and are less attractive to men. Remaining unmarried or being married late is a feared self. And if education increases the risk of becoming a victim, the relevant desired identity strategy is cued (Oyserman & Destin, 2010), and this entailed going for relatively lower educational qualifications.

Boys were indifferent to the marriage market returns in education. This was because it is mostly men who select who to marry in Ghana, and it is seldom the case that men go for women who are more educated than them. One of the reasons men would do this is their tendency to want to exercise greater control over women. Boys identified with this pervasive trend of men in the general population and attached greater importance to going higher.

The media is said to consist of a pool of possible selves, exposing different possible selves for young people to choose from (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Following the democratisation of many countries, it is not farfetched to say that young people now have substantial liberties in deciding what they want. When combined with the revolution in the electronic media, and the impressionability of adolescents, one would begin to think that they would not look within their families for models. One could also imagine that they may even struggle to choose who to become since such revolution has brought almost every image capable of being imitated into easily accessible devices. But as it has been shown previously, the influence of the family was high that it barred boys from making use of these recent developments. This pointed to the power of local culture on boys' possible selves. Where such power is high, people could people fear to disappoint their families, "by failing to attain group norms and standards" (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006, p. 21). Though the same could be said of girls, there was still the evidence that models outside their families are important for their future selves.

Inferring from the relationship between the expectations of adolescents and models external to their immediate families, some compelling explanations for why girls more than boys could draw on images beyond their families can be made. As it was shown earlier, there is a gendered pattern of modelling, where the principal reference of boys is their fathers and older siblings, and girls, their mothers. Because of gender differences in attainments within the family which favour males, boys may, therefore, have educationally relevant models within the family, and such models, as it was made apparent, have reliable information for boys to depend on. In compliance with this argument, it means that girls had limited reference within their immediate families, and the educationally gender relevant models outside their families could be drawn on. This is likely the case, especially when one looks at the case of Ceci, one of the two girls who had university expectations. Her sister, who knew about universities because she only visited one of them, could not enlighten her much about universities. It was when a female student from the university visited their school that she reasonably understood what they entailed, from then on, she forged university aspirations. Still in keeping with this line of thought, one could speculate that girls in the urban areas where females with higher attainments are likely to be many would have relatively higher expectations than those in rural areas like Ceci.

Conforming to a group's possible selves is important for "social acceptance and affiliation" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 961). Almost every girl had a nurse possible self and would want to attend one nursing institution or another. However, "not all nurses have similar training or educational experience" (Nursing.org, July 2016, p. 4). The nurse possible selves girls hoped for usually perform clinical and bedside functions and the type of education required is generally below a first degree (Nursing.org, July 2016). Girls reported having peer discussions about nursing, and almost everyone always agreed that nursing is good. This suggests that such peer affirmation of nursing as good, gives them reasons to stick to their desires of becoming nurses and peer groups are therefore important for their professional and educational expectations. But given the type of nurse possible selves they had, their expectations were mostly less than university degrees. Conformity to group's standards was not witnessed in boys' peer groups, though they reported having peer discussions about future goals.

The role of teachers on the expectations of adolescents was also examined. Some studies show that teachers' expectations of students are better predictors of students' enrolment across many types of educational institutions than even the expectations of parents (Sciarra &

Ambrosino, 2011). Teachers were reported to have different perceptions about the academic abilities of boys and girls, assigning hard work to the success of the latter. There was no unique teachers' attitude explicitly associated with boys' expectations. However, female teachers were found to implant college expectations in girls. They encouraged girls to work so that they would one day also go to the college as they did. Colleges award qualifications that are lower compared with undergraduate degrees- diplomas and certificates. This was similar to the situation where girls' expectations were modelled with their mothers as primary references.

The expectations of adolescents were also explained regarding whether they had school possible selves focused on success, vocations, and failure. Boys were found to have school-focused possible selves, and because such adolescents usually endorse performance-approach goals (Anderman, Anderman & Griesinger, 1999), it resulted in boys having higher expectations. It was also found that, for boys who may not have school-focused possible selves at the moment, they would forge one, following improvements in their academic performances. Girls mostly had possible selves focused on vocations, and it resulted in them having lower expectations because of the educational requirements of such vocations. Rather than their academic performances causing them to forge academic-focused possible selves like boys, it instead increased their confidence of attaining their desired vocations. Girls' intentions of taking part in the 'private' were used to show that some of them had lower expectations probably because they had school possible selves that are focused on failure. Though this was not extensively explored, the only explanation has been that such girls did expect to go beyond secondary school, but not up to the university.

From the preceding summary of the study findings, it could be stated that the gender norms, values, and expectations of the study area, concerning the possible selves of boys and girls in most social domains, do not permit boys and girls to forge equal possible selves focused on similar educational attainments. For girls, the massing of their expectations around diploma attainments was the result of what they hope to become or avoid becoming in domains that are family-related. Within similar domains, the possible selves of boys did not delimit they education they could have.

This study was carried out in a rural part of the northern region of Ghana with much rigid

cultural values. It would be significant for a similar research to be done in a less traditional and urban centre where modernity might have diluted attachment to cultural values that define boys and girls including their roles as separate. In such a setting, it would be possible also to find parents of similar educational status so that we can fully understand how mothers and fathers take decisions about children's educational pathways. Carrying out a similar study with parents with similar higher educational attainments may generate insightful findings.

It was apparent that role models are essential for girls' expectations. But they lacked models with relatively higher educational attainments. It is essential to do a similar study in an urban centre where girls are likely to interact more frequently with women who have attained university degrees so that we can fully understand how gender differences in educational expectations are pervasive in Ghana.

The findings suggest that interventions to increase girls' expectations should focus on the family and the school, by encouraging norms that emphasise the importance of higher education for all young people irrespective of their gender. Teachers and counsellors could also be targeted so that they discuss all educational trajectories available in Ghana and not only what they previously attended. The use of female teachers as role models to increase girls' participation in school should also be carefully promoted so that it does not lead to girls having lower expectations since the qualifications of such role models could influence the type of higher educational institutions girls aspire to.

# References

- Ampofo, A. A. (2001). "When men speak women listen": Gender socialisation and young adolescents' attitudes to sexual and reproductive issues. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 196-212.
- Anderman, E. M., Anderman, L. H., & Griesinger, T. (1999). The relation of present and possible academic selves during early adolescence to grade point average and achievement goals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(1), 3-17.
- Anders, J., & Micklewright, J. (2015). Teenagers' expectations of applying to university: how do they change?. *Education Sciences*, 5(4), 281-305.
- Andrew, M., & Flashman, J. (2017). School transitions, peer influence, and educational expectation formation: Girls and boys. *Social Science Research*, *61*, 218-233.
- Ansong, D., Wu, S., & Chowa, G. A. (2015). The role of child and parent savings in promoting expectations for university education among middle school students in Ghana: A propensity score analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 58, 265-273.
- Anthis, K. S., Dunkel, C. S., & Anderson, B. (2004). Gender and identity status differences in late adolescents' possible selves. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(2), 147-152.
- Archer, S. L. (1989). Gender differences in identity development: Issues of process, domain and timing. *Journal of Adolescence*, 12(2), 117-138.
- Attanasio, O. P., & Kaufmann, K. M. (2014). Education choices and returns to schooling: Mothers' and youths' subjective expectations and their role by gender. *Journal of Development Economics*, 109, 203-216.
- Attanasio, O., & Kaufmann, K. (2016). Education choices and returns on the labour and marriage markets: Evidence from data on subjective expectations. Work. Pap., Bocconi Univ., Milan.
- Azmat, F., Osborne, A., Le Rossignol, K., Jogulu, U., Rentschler, R., Robottom, I., &Malathy, V. (2013). Understanding aspirations and expectations of international

students in Australian higher education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(1), 97-111.

- Beal, S. J., & Crockett, L. J. (2010). Adolescents' occupational and educational aspirations and expectations: Links to high school activities and adult educational attainment. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(1), 258-265.
- Beutel, A. M. (2000). The relationship between adolescent non-marital childbearing and educational expectations: A cohort and period comparison. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 41(2), 297-314.
- Beutel, A. M., & Anderson, K. G. (2007). Race and the educational expectations of parents and children: The case of South Africa. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *49*, 335-361.
- Birnbaum, A. S., Lytle, L. A., Hannan, P. J., Murray, D. M., Perry, C. L., & Forster, J. L. (2003). School functioning and violent behaviour among young adolescents: A contextual analysis. *Health Education Research*, 18(3), 389-403.
- Bofah, E. A. T., & Hannula, M. S. (2015). TIMSS data in an African comparative perspective: Investigating the factors influencing achievement in mathematics and their psychometric properties. *Large-Scale Assessments in Education*, 3(1), 1-35.
- Bohon, S. A., Johnson, M. K., & Gorman, B. K. (2006). College aspirations and expectations among Latino adolescents in the United States. *Social Problems*, *53*(2), 207-225.
- Bong, M., & Skaalvik, E. M. (2003). Academic self-concept and self-efficacy: How different are they really?. *Educational Psychology Review*, *15*(1), 1-40.
- Borland, K. W. (2001). Qualitative and quantitative research: A complementary balance. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2001(112), 5-13.
- Brown, C. K. (1996). Gender roles and household allocation of resources and decisionmaking in Ghana. In E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.), *The Changing Family in Ghana*. (pp. 21-41). Ghana Universities Press: Accra.
- Brown, B. B., Eicher, S. A., & Petrie, S. (1986). The importance of peer group ("crowd") affiliation in adolescence. *Journal of adolescence*, 9(1), 73-96.

Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Buchmann, C., & Park, H. (2009). Stratification and the formation of expectations in highly differentiated educational systems. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 27(4), 245-267.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis (Vol. 248). London: Heinemann.
- Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological Review*, *106*(4), 676-713.
- Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as Mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(2), 1-13.
- Carranza, F. D., You, S., Chhuon, V., & Hudley, C. (2009). Mexican American adolescents' academic achievement and aspirations: The role of perceived parental educational involvement, acculturation, and self-Esteem. *Adolescence*, 44(174), 313-333.
- Carpenter II, D. M. (2008). Expectations, aspirations, and achievement among Latino students of immigrant families. *Marriage & Family Review*, 43(1-2), 164-185.
- Cheng, S., & Starks, B. (2002). Racial differences in the effects of significant others on students' educational expectations. *Sociology of Education*, 306-327.
- Child Trends (October, 2015). Parental expectations for their children's academic attainment: Indicators on children and youth.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Curry, C., Trew, K., Turner, I., & Hunter, J. (1994). The effect of life domains on girls' possible selves. *Adolescence*, *29*(113), 133-150.
- Davies, M., & Kandel, D. B. (1981). Parental and peer influences on adolescents' educational plans: Some further evidence. *American Journal of Sociology*, 87(2), 363-

387.

- Davis, S. N., & Pearce, L. D. (2007). Adolescents' work-family gender ideologies and educational expectations. *Sociological Perspectives*, *50*(2), 249-271.
- Dunkel, C. S., & Anthis, K. S. (2001). The role of possible selves in identity formation: A short-term longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 24(6), 765-776.
- Eddles-Hirsch, K. (2015). Phenomenology and educational research. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, *3*(8), 251-260.
- Erikson, M. G. (2007). The meaning of the future: Toward a more specific definition of possible selves. *Review of General Psychology*, *11*(4), 348-358.
- Fant, E. K. (2008). Education and girl-child empowerment: the case of Bunkpurugu/Yunyoo district in Northern Ghana (Master's thesis, Universitetet i Tromsø). Retrieved from <u>https://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/1541/thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=</u> <u>y</u>
- Favara, M. (2012). The cost of acting "Girly": Gender stereotypes and educational choices. Discussion Paper No. 7037.
- Feliciano, C., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2005). Gendered paths: Educational and occupational expectations and outcomes among adult children of immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(6), 1087-1118.
- Firestone, W. A. (1987). Meaning in Method: The rhetoric of quantitative and qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, *16*(7), 16-21.
- Forste, R., Heaton, T. B., & Haas, D. W. (2004). Adolescents' expectations for higher education in Bogotá, Colombia, and La Paz, Bolivia. *Youth & Society*, *36*(1), 56-76.
- Fraser, K., & Eccles, J. (1995). Sex, hopes, and fears: Gender differences in adolescents' possible selves. In: *Meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development*.
- Fry, R. (2002). Latinos in higher education: Many enrol, too few graduate. Washington.
- Gill, S., & Reynolds, A. J. (2000). Educational expectations and school achievement of urban

African American children. Journal of School Psychology, 37(4), 403-424.

- Goyette, K. A. (2008). College for some to college for all: Social background, occupational expectations, and educational expectations over time. *Social Science Research*, 37(2), 461-484.
- Greene, B. A., & DeBacker, T. K. (2004). Gender and orientations toward the future: Links to motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*, *16*(2), 91-120.
- Grotevant, H. D. (1987). Toward a process model of identity formation. *Journal of adolescent research*, 2(3), 203-222.
- GSS (2013). 2010 Population and housing census report: Women and men in Ghana. Accra.
- GSS (2014). 2010 Population and housing census: District analytical report: Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo district.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2(163-194), 105-117.
- Hill, M. A., & King, E. M. (1993). Women's education in developing countries: An overview. In E. M. King, & M. A. Hill (eds.), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policies* (1-50). Washington: The World Bank.
- Hockaday, C., Crase, S. J., Shelley, M. C., & Stockdale, D. F. (2000). A prospective study of adolescent pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23(4), 423-438.
- Jacob, B. A., & Wilder, T. (2010). Educational expectations and attainment. NBER Working Paper No. 15683. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
- Johnson, M. K., & Reynolds, J. R. (2013). Educational expectation trajectories and attainment in the transition to adulthood. *Social Science Research*, 42(3), 818-835.
- Joseph, J. (1996). School factors and delinquency: A study of African American youths. *Journal of Black Studies*, *26*(3), 340-355.
- Josephs, R. A., Markus, H. R., & Tafarodi, R. W. (1992). Gender and self-esteem. Journal of

*Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 391-402.

- Jussim, L., & Eccles, J. S. (1992). Teacher expectations: II. Construction and reflection of student achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(6), 947-961.
- Kabiru, C. W., Mojola, S. A., Beguy, D., & Okigbo, C. (2013). Growing up at the "Margins": concerns, aspirations, and expectations of young people living in Nairobi's slums. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 23(1), 81-94.
- Kao, G., & Thompson, J. S. (2003). Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 417-442.
- Kerpelman, J. L., & Pittman, J. F. (2001). The instability of possible selves: Identity processes within late adolescents' close peer relationships. *Journal of adolescence*, 24(4), 491-512.
- Khattab, N. (2015). Students' aspirations, expectations and school achievement: What really matters?. *British Educational Research Journal*, *41*(5), 731-748.
- Kirk, C. M., Lewis, R. K., Brown, K., Nilsen, C., & Colvin, D. Q. (2012). The gender gap in educational expectations among youth in the foster care system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(9), 1683-1688.
- Kitayama, S., Snibbe, A. C., Markus, H. R., & Suzuki, T. (2004). Is there any "free" choice? Self and dissonance in two cultures. *Psychological Science*, *15*(8), 527-533.
- Kiuru, N., Aunola, K., Vuori, J., & Nurmi, J. E. (2007). The role of peer groups in adolescents' educational expectations and adjustment. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(8), 995-1009.
- Kleinjans, K. J. (2010). Family background and gender differences in educational expectations. *Economics Letters*, *107*(2), 125-127.
- Knox, M. (2006). Gender and possible selves. In D. Curtis & K. Jennifer (Eds.), *Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications*, (pp. 61-77). New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Knox, M., Funk, J., Elliott, R., & Bush, E. G. (2000). Gender differences in adolescents'

possible selves. Youth & Society, 31(3), 287-309.

- Koch, T., & Harrington, A. (1998). Reconceptualizing rigour: The case for reflexivity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(4), 882-890.
- Lee, S., & Oyserman, D. (2012). Possible selves theory. The Gale Group.
- Leondari, A., Syngollitou, E., & Kiosseoglou, G. (1998). Brief report: Academic achievement, motivation and possible selves. *Journal of Adolescence*, *21*(2), 219-222.
- Leyendecker, R., Ottevanger, W., & van den Akker, J. J. H. (2008). Curricula, examinations, and assessment in secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa (No. 128). World Bank.
- Lloyd, C. B., & Gage-Brandon, A. J. (1993). Women's role in maintaining households: family welfare and sexual inequality in Ghana. *Population Studies*, 47(1), 115-131.
- Marjoribanks, K. (2005). Family background, adolescents' educational aspirations, and
   Australian young adults' educational attainment. *International Education Journal*, 6(1), 104-112.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. American Psychologist, 41(9), 954-969.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*(2), 224-253.
- May, T. (2001). *Social research: issues, methods and process* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McClelland, K. (1990). Cumulative disadvantage among the highly ambitious. *Sociology of Education*, 102-121.
- Medel-Añonuevo, C., Ohsako, T., & Mauch, W. (2001). *Revisiting lifelong learning for the 21st century*. The Philippines: UNESCO Institute for Education.
- Melkman, E., Refaeli, T., & Benbenishty, R. (2016). An empirical test of a model of academic expectations among youth in residential care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 67, 133-141.

- Mello, Z. R. (2008). Gender variation in developmental trajectories of educational and occupational expectations and attainment from adolescence to adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(4), 1069-1080.
- Mello, Z. R. (2009). Racial/Ethnic group and socioeconomic status variation in educational and occupational expectations from adolescence to adulthood. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30(4), 494-504.
- Mensa-Bonsu, H. J. A. N., & Dowuona-Hammond, C. (1996). The child within the Ghanaian family. In E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.), *The changing family in Ghana*. (5-20).
- Morgan, S. L. (1998). Adolescent educational expectations rationalized, fantasized, or both? *Rationality and Society*, 10(2), 131-162.
- Morley, L., Leach, F., Lussier, K., Lihamba, A., Mwaipopo, R., Forde, L., & Egbenya, G.
  (2010). Widening participation in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania: developing an equity scorecard: An ESRC/DFID poverty reduction programme research project. *Centre for Higher Education Research and Equity, University of Sussex.*
- Mullis, I. V., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Arora, A. (2012). TIMSS 2011 international results in Mathematics. *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement*. Herengracht 487, Amsterdam, 1017 BT, the Netherlands.
- Narayan, D., Chambers, R., Shah, M. K., & Petesch, P. (2000). *Voices of the poor: Crying out for change*. New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- NCTE (2014). Basic statistics on tertiary education institutions in Ghana 2012/13.

   Retrieved:
   18/04/2017.

   http://www.ncte.edu.gh/images/pdf/tertiary%20education%20institutions.pdf
- Newman, I., & Benz, C. R. (1998). *Qualitative-Quantitative research methodology: exploring the interactive continuum.* SIU Press.
- Nuffic (2015). The Ghanaian education system described and compared with the Dutch system.

- Nurmi, J. E. (2004). Socialisation and self-development: Channelling, selection, adjustment, and reflection: In. R. M., Lerner & L., Steinberg (eds). *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* (2 eds). Pp. 85-123. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New Jersey.
- Nursing.Org (July, 2016). The state of nursing 2016. White Paper.
- OECD (2012). Grade expectations: How marks and education policies shape students' Ambitions. PISA, OECD Publishing.
- Oyserman, D., & Destin, M. (2010). Identity-based motivation: Implications for intervention. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *38*(7), 1001-1043.
- Oyserman, D., Terry, K., & Bybee, D. (2002). A possible selves intervention to enhance school involvement. *Journal of Adolescence*, *25*(3), 313-326.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., Terry, K., & Hart-Johnson, T. (2004). Possible selves as roadmaps. *Journal of Research in personality*, *38*(2), 130-149.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(1), 188.
- Oyserman, D., & Fryberg, S. (2006). The possible selves of diverse adolescents: Content and function across gender, race and national origin. In D. Curtis & K. Jennifer (Eds.), *Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications*, (pp. 17-39). New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Oyserman, D., Brickman, D., & Rhodes, M. (2007). School success, possible selves, and parent school involvement. *Family Relations*, *56*(5), 479-489.
- Oyserman, D., & Markus, H. R. (1993). The sociocultural self. *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, *4*, 187-220.
- Park, S., Wells, R., & Bills, D. (2015). Changes in educational expectations between 10th and 12th grades across cohorts. *Social Psychology of Education*, 18(3), 561-583.
- Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., and Kostere, S. (2015). Generic Qualitative Research in Psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 76-85.

- Perez-Brena, N. J., Delgado, M. Y., De Jesús, S. A. R., Updegraff, K. A., & Umaña-Taylor,
  - A. J. (2017). Mexican-origin adolescents' educational expectation trajectories: Intersection of nativity, sex, and socioeconomic status. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 48, 14-24.
- Perez-Felkner, L. (2013). Socialization in childhood and adolescence. In J. DeLamater, & B.
  A. Ward (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, (pp. 119-149). Springer: Netherlands.
- Rampino, T., & Taylor, M. P. (2013). Gender differences in educational aspirations and attitudes (No. 2013-15). ISER Working Paper Series.
- Reynolds, J. R., & Burge, S. W. (2008). Educational expectations and the rise in women's post-secondary attainments. *Social Science Research*, *37*(2), 485-499.
- Reynolds, J. R., & Pemberton, J. (2001). Rising college expectations among youth in the United States: A comparison of the 1979 and 1997 NLSY. *Journal of Human Resources*, 36(4), 703-726.
- Rimkute, L., Hirvonen, R., Tolvanen, A., Aunola, K., & Nurmi, J. E. (2012). Parents' role in adolescents' educational expectations. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(6), 571-590.
- Roth, T. (2017). Interpersonal influences on educational expectations: New evidence for Germany. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 48, 68-84.
- Roth, T., & Salikutluk, Z. (2012). Attitudes and expectations: do attitudes towards education mediate the relationship between social networks and parental expectations?. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(5), 701-722.
- Rubie-Davies, C., Hattie, J., & Hamilton, R. (2006). Expecting the best for students: Teacher expectations and academic outcomes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(3), 429-444.
- Rutchick, A. M., Smyth, J. M., Lopoo, L. M., & Dusek, J. B. (2009). Great expectations: The biasing effects of reported child behaviour problems on educational expectancies and subsequent academic achievement. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(3), 108

- Sánchez, B., Colón, Y., & Esparza, P. (2005). The role of sense of school belonging and gender in the academic adjustment of Latino adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34(6), 619-628.
- Sanders, C. E., Field, T. M., & Diego, M. A. (2001). Adolescents' academic expectations and achievement. *Adolescence*, *36*(144), 795.
- Santor, D. A., Messervey, D., & Kusumakar, V. (2000). Measuring peer pressure, popularity, and conformity in adolescent boys and girls: Predicting school performance, sexual attitudes, and substance abuse. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *29*(2), 163-182.
- Scabini, E., Marta, E., & Lanz, M. (2007). *The transition to adulthood and family relations: An intergenerational approach*. Psychology Press.
- Schmitt-Wilson, S. (2013). Social class and expectations of rural adolescents: The role of parental expectations. *The Career Development Quarterly*, *61*(3), 226-239.
- Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3-4), 207-231.
- Sciarra, D., & Ambrosino, K. (2011). Featured research: Post-secondary expectations and educational attainment. *Professional School Counseling*, *14*(3), 231-241.
- Segal, H. G., DeMeis, D. K., Wood, G. A., & Smith, H. L. (2001). Assessing future possible selves by gender and socioeconomic status using the anticipated life history measure. *Journal of Personality*, 69(1), 57-87.
- Siegle, D., & Reis, S. M. (1998). Gender differences in teacher and student perceptions of gifted students' ability and effort. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 42(1), 39-47.
- St Clair, R., & Benjamin, A. (2011). Performing desires: The dilemma of aspirations and educational attainment. *British Educational Research Journal*, *37*(3), 501-517.
- Strahan, E. J., & Wilson, A. E. (2006). Temporal comparisons, identity, and motivation: The relation between past, present, and possible future selves. In D. Curtis & K. Jennifer (Eds.), *Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications*, (pp. 1-15). New York: 109

Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

- Takyi, B. K. (2001). Marital instability in an African society: Exploring the factors that influence divorce processes in Ghana. *Sociological focus*, *34*(1), 77-96.
- Tanye, M. (2008). Access and barriers to education for Ghanaian women and girls. *Interchange*, *39*(2), 167-184.
- Teachman, J. D., & Polonko, K. A. (1988). Marriage, parenthood, and the college enrolment of men and women. *Social Forces*, 67(2), 512-523.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246.
- Tiedemann, J. (2000). Gender-related beliefs of teachers in elementary school mathematics. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, *41*(2), 191-207.
- Tranter, B. (2013). Sampling. In W. Maggie (Ed.), *Social Research Methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (pp. 99-118). Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Travers, M. (2013). Qualitative interviewing methods. In W. Maggie (Ed.), Social Research Methods. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (pp. 227-253). Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Trusty, J. (1998). Family influences on educational expectations of late adolescents. *The Journal of educational research*, *91*(5), 260-271.
- Trusty, J. (2002). African American's educational expectations: Longitudinal causal models for women and men. *Journal of Counselling and Development: JCD*, 80(3), 332-345.
- Trusty, J. (2000). High educational expectations and low achievement: Stability of educational goals across adolescence. *The journal of educational research*, 93(6), 356-365.
- Turley, R. N. L., Santos, M., & Ceja, C. (2007). Social origin and college opportunity expectations across cohorts. *Social Science Research*, 36(3), 1200-1218.
- Twum-Danso, A. (2009). Reciprocity, respect and responsibility: The 3Rs underlying parentchild relationships in Ghana and the implications for children's rights. *The*

International Journal of Children's Rights, 17(3), 415-432.

- Tynkkynen, L., Tolvanen, A., & Salmela-Aro, K. (2012). Trajectories of educational expectations from adolescence to young adulthood in Finland. *Developmental Psychology*, 48(6), 1674.
- Upadyaya, K., & Eccles, J. (2014). Gender differences in teachers' perceptions and children's ability self-concepts. *Gender Differences in Aspirations and Attainment. A Life Course Perspective*, 79-100.
- Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2008). The reversal of gender inequalities in higher education: An on-going trend. *Higher education to*, 2030(1), 265-298.
- Walter, M. M. (2013). The Nature of Social Science Research. In W. Maggie (Ed.), Social Research Methods (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (pp. 3-24). Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Weinstein, R. S. (2002). Reaching higher. Harvard University Press.
- Wong, T. M., Branje, S. J., VanderValk, I. E., Hawk, S. T., & Meeus, W. H. (2010). The role of siblings in identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(5), 673-682.
- Wood, D., Kaplan, R., & McLoyd, V. C. (2007). Gender differences in the educational expectations of urban, low-income African American youth: The role of parents and the school. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(4), 417-427.
- Yuping, Z. H. A. N. G. (2014). Educational expectations, school experiences and academic achievements: a longitudinal examination. *China: An International Journal*, 12(1), 43-65.
- Zhan, M., & Sherraden, M. (2011). Assets and liabilities, educational expectations, and children's college degree attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(6), 846-854
- Zhu, S., Tse, S., Cheung, S. H., & Oyserman, D. (2014). Will I get there? Effects of parental support on children's possible selves. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(3), 435-453.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Bandura, A. (1994). Impact of relf-regulatory influences on writing course attainment. *American Educational Research Journal*, *31*(4), 845-862.

## **Appendix 1:**

## **Interview Guide**

We are going to have a conversation about education. I know that people usually have in mind the amount of education they know they would likely attain after they leave high school or by the time they are adults. I would like you to take a minute and reflect on how far you think you can get in education.

- 1. Please tell me where you want to go after secondary school.
- 2. Tell me what you want to be in the future? And why?
- 3. Reflect on the status of each of your parents/guardians (mother/father) their education, financial standing, and household responsibilities they each perform. How has these affected your future educational plans?
  - a. If you were of a different sex, do you think you would have had different educational plans, based on the status of your parents/guardians? Can you explain why?
  - b. Do you have siblings? What is their role in your education?
- 4. Growing up as a child, have there been people whom you wish to be like them one day? Why?
- 5. Growing up as a child, have there been people you did not want to be like after you leave SHS? Why?
- 6. What has been you relationship with your teachers since you started school?
  - a. How helpful are your interactions with your teachers?
- 7. Do you discuss your educational plans with your peers?
  - a. Tell me what they usually say.
  - b. If the reaction you normally receive were different, how would it make you feel about your plans?
- Please describe your academic life from the start of primary school up until now. Notably your performance (abilities) in class, learning challenges and how you were able to cope in school.
  - a. How far do you think you can go in education, based on this?

- 9. How is education important when it comes to getting married or building a relationship?
  - a. When do you think you would get married?
  - b. Please describe your likely role in your future home.
  - c. Please describe the likely role of your future partner in that future home.
  - d. How did you learn about these responsibilities?
  - e. Considering the roles you are likely to play in a future home, do you think you can still go to school after marriage? Please tell me why?

# Appendix 2

### **Consent for Participation in Interview Research<sup>4</sup>**

#### The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents' in Ghana<sup>5</sup>.

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Mr. Bonjeer Tamilka** from the University of Oslo.

I understand that the project is designed to gather information about adolescents' expectations for higher education in Ghana. I will be one of approximately 30 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thoughtprovoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher from University of Oslo. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Adapted from NCPI-

https://fronter.com/uio/links/files.phtml/1985228782\$479714107\$/EDU4301/sample+informed+consent.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This has now changed to read: The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents in Ghana: Gender and Possible Selves.

interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from the University of Oslo will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

7. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature (parent/guardian/teacher) for student----- Date----- Date------

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of the Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

For further information, please contact: Bonjeer Tamilka, University of Oslo, Faculty of Educational Sciences [tamilkab@student.uv.uio.no]

# **Appendix 3:**

The District Director Ghana Education Service Bunkprugu-N/R. 12th September, 2016.

Bonjeer Tamilka Olav M. Troviks, Vei 48, H0103 0864- Oslo, Norway. Dear Sir,

#### Summary of Field Work and Request for Access to [Name of school], Nakpanduri

I write to give an overview of the research I intend conducting in Nakpanduri from October to November and to acknowledge that the attached letter from the University of Oslo and its contents pertains to me.

**Project Title:** The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents' in Ghana<sup>6</sup>.

**Purpose of Research:** To understand how the educational expectations of boys and girls are shaped in Ghana. This comparative study, it is hoped, will help explain why the educational expectations of boys are higher than girls.

Current research reveals that more boys expect higher education than girls. This is contrary to what pertains in most countries of the world. This current research which is to fulfil the requirement of a master's programme in Comparative and International Education is to understand how the expectations of both boys and girls emerge resulting in the differences in expectations.

**Method of Research:** It is a qualitative study which involves interviewing of students at the junior high school level.

**Research Site:** Nakpanduri. I speculate that as a native of the town, the participants (students) will be more at ease and more willing to share their experiences in the research processes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This has now changed to read: The Shaping of Higher Education Expectations among Adolescents in Ghana: Gender and Possible Selves.

I would be grateful if you could grant me access to this school and its students to conduct this research.

I would equally be grateful if you could direct your reply to this request to: Kombian Babotin, Presby Church, Nakpanduri.

Yours faithfully, Bonjeer Tamilka.