SUCCESS STORIES: BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES OF THREE WOMEN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN KENYA

By

Damaris Moraa Mayienga

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

K-12 Educational Administration – Doctor of Philosophy

2013

ABSTRACT

SUCCESS STORIES: BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES OF THREE WOMEN SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS IN KENYA

By

Damaris Moraa Mayienga

Studies indicate that women are poorly represented in school leadership across the various regions of the world particularly in developing countries. Most studies explain this underrepresentation in terms of external or institutional factors that have impeded women's advancement onto school leadership. Such factors include women's lack of preparation for school leadership, discriminative hiring procedures, hostile work environments, and familial demands on women's time. Studies of this nature tend to shed little light on the personal or internal factors that hinder or enhance women's attainment of school leadership. By internal factors I mean variables such as self-image and attitude towards leadership.

My study focuses on the interaction between personal and institutional factors in shaping the experiences of women school leaders in Kenya. Using the biographical approach the study examines the impact of gender socialization (at home, school and in leadership) on the self-image of three successful high school women principals in Kenya and how their self-image contributed to their ascension onto school leadership. Alongside gender socialization and self-image, this study highlights the role of protective family capital that contributed to the women's development of self-discipline; a virtue that enabled them to sail above the constraints of the patriarchal society in which they grew up. Findings from this dissertation will complement studies that explain women underrepresentation in school leadership. Moreover, this study shows how gender relations interact with personal and institutional factors to shape women's experiences in Kenya.

DEDICATION

To my loving parents Ezekiel Mayienga and Elizabeth Mayienga who sent me to school against all odds. I will forever owe my academic achievements to you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor and dissertation director, Dr. Susan Printy, for her commitment to mentoring me. Her cheerful spirit at all times, promptness in giving me instructive feedback at every stage of my work, patience with my last minute submissions/requests and her expertise in school leadership research are all qualities than any advisee would pray for. Her concluding remark "the end is in sight" in most of her emails to me energized me to go for that end that seemed far but reachable. This dissertation would not have been possible without her dedication and guidance.

I am earnestly thankful to my committee members Dr. Kristen Renn and Dr. Reitu Mabokela whose research expertise on marginalized groups in higher education inspired my work. Their input in shaping my proposal and availability was a huge asset in the completion of this study.

I am equally grateful to my other committee member Dr. Peter Youngs whose thorough feedback uplifted the quality of this dissertation. The attention he gave me as my instructor and committee member always made me feel as if I was his only student.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my loving and caring husband, Jonathan, for disregarding the patriarchal values of my community that see women as homemakers. He has encouraged and supported my dream to pursue education to the highest level. I am greatly indebted to him for the sacrifices he made, besides his own academic endeavor, in order that I may devote time to my studies. The shared responsibilities in cooking, babysitting and many more did not go unnoticed. I will be forever grateful. I thank God for our lovely daughters, Dorcas and Elisabeth who have patiently waited and prayed that one day mommy and daddy will stop going to the library and

spend quality time with them. They have been my motivation to work harder to complete my program. I love and will forever love them!

I cannot forget to thank my mother-in-law, Yunes, for taking care of our children while we spent long hours at school. It is her love for education that has contributed to her patience. I also thank my sister in-law, Callen, for encouraging me to keep hanging in there under all circumstances. Her words have been inspirational. I would also like to say thank you to my brother in-law, Charles, and sister in-law, Truphena, who have gone through this path ahead of me and assured me that it is doable. They have been my role models. To my parents, Ezekiel and Elizabeth, and to my siblings: Ezra, Evelyne, Orpha, Perpeture, Abigael and Obadiah, I sincerely say thank you for cheering me on throughout my academic journey. I simply could not ask for any better family.

Above all I thank our almighty God for life and good health. I believe that it is through His grace that I have come this far. Surely "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are notable disparities between the number of men and women in school leadership in most societies across the globe. Yet, empowering women and promoting gender equality is the key to attaining human development, eradicating poverty, and developing economically in the African continent (The Sixth African Development Forum Report, 2008). One way to empower women is to provide them with opportunities to get education so that they may realize their full potential. However, women and girls in most regions in Africa and other developing countries have limited access to opportunities to education and employment. In such regions various societal factors seem to hinder women from accessing opportunities that would enable them realize their dreams. This study examines the problem of women's underrepresentation in school leadership in Kenya. The study is important in that the prevailing gender roles in Kenya undermine women's access to education and employment thus curtailing their contribution to society in general. Thus exploring ways through which women enter positions of school leadership is crucial as this will inform us how best to involve women in public matters and the challenges women face in the process.

Statement of the Problem

Research on women underrepresentation in school leadership has extensively examined external or institutional barriers that have impeded women's advancement to school leadership. Such factors include lack of, or poor, preparation for school leadership, family demands on women's time, oppositional work environments, and discriminative hiring procedures. Studies of this nature tend to focus on external constraints and shed little light on personal - or internal - factors that impede women's advancement to school leadership positions. Internal factors refer to

attributes such as low/high self-image and attitude toward leadership. These factors may contribute to women's ability or failure to attain school leadership roles. In Kenya some policies meant to promote girls' education and women leadership in school address problems at the institutional level, ignoring any other sources of barriers to women's advancement to school leadership. For example, Kenya's policies of free education at primary and secondary levels, that is, Universal Free Primary Education and Universal Free Secondary Education, introduced in 2003 and 2008, respectively, are meant to provide education opportunities to all young people, particularly girls and children from poor families. While these policies may be effective in attracting more enrolment in schools, they may not directly speak to parents who have not embraced education for female children.

The other policy designed to promote women in Kenyan schools is the government requirement that every co-ed (or mixed) school have a woman as either deputy principal or principal. This policy appears to directly address hiring discrimination as a hindrance to women's access to school leadership, which is an institutional problem as well. The above educational policies in Kenya suggest strongly that the examination of the problem of women underrepresentation in school leadership in Kenya focuses on institutional factors. In spite of the policies that promote girl child education and the participation of women in school leadership in Kenya, women are still underrepresented in higher institutions of learning and school leadership positions in Kenya. This situation implies the existence of other influences than the institutional factors. My study investigates the internal factors that contribute to the success of women school leaders. In this study I explore life stories of three successful women who hold or have held leadership positions in high school in Kenya. This study will complement work on women underrepresentation in school leadership that has examined the influence of external factors. It is

important to understand the factors behind the success of women school leaders in order to address fully the issue of women underrepresentation in education and school leadership in Kenya and other developing countries.

Purpose of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to understand the challenges that Kenyan women face on their way to school leadership and ways through which some women succeed, nevertheless. A number of studies have been done to try to understand what women school leaders go through in the process of becoming school leaders and in their leadership positions. However, little is known about the factors that contribute to women's resilience amid the challenges they face through the process of obtaining school leadership. This study seeks to understand how some women succeed in education and in their roles as school leaders despite the multiple challenges that come their way. Through an examination based on gender socialization theory, this study seeks to explore ways in which gender socialization, especially childhood and schooling experiences, affect women's perception and approach to school leadership. Therefore, this study examines the lives of successful high school women leaders, right from their childhood up to adulthood, in order to understand the secret of their success. In addition to examining the challenges women school leaders face on their way to leadership and during their tenure in leadership, this study goes a step further and investigates the foundations of these women's success in attaining leadership and overcoming challenges that come with such leadership roles.

This study does not focus on the nature of the participants' school leadership beliefs, behaviors, or practices, nor how their experiences as teachers informed their work as school leaders; factors that may have contributed to the good academic performance in the participants' schools.

I intentionally chose not to concentrate on these factors because they were beyond the scope of this study. My major objective was to understand challenges that the women leaders I studied faced throughout their lives before they obtained school leadership and what enabled them to conquer the challenges to finally obtain and stay in leadership. Perhaps this could be a research topic in the future to build on my current work.

Research Questions

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of successful high school women school leaders in Kenya, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do women principals in Kenya manage to go through school up to the college level? What barriers do they encounter, and how do they overcome them?

2. What motivates Kenyan women to become school leaders?

3. How do the ethnicity and religion of Kenyan women principals intersect with their gender to simultaneously shape their aspirations toward school leadership, the attainment of their positions, and their experiences as leaders?

4. How do women principals assess the future prospects for women educational leaders in Kenya?

Historical, Cultural & Contextual Factors Affecting Women Leadership in Kenya

Studies on the underrepresentation of women in school leadership indicate that women's life and work experiences differ depending on the geographical location. The differences may also be as a result of differences in social, historical, national, cultural, and contextual factors. Therefore

4

issues related to women underrepresentation in school leadership may best be analyzed in context (Oplatka, 2006). Creighton and Yieke (2006) argue for the need to "contextualize social processes carefully and to analyze the constraints upon and opportunities open to women within particular regional, national and local contexts [in order] to avoid overgeneralization and if we are to devise effective solutions to the problems women face" (p. 1). In order to contextualize the issue of poor representation of women in school leadership positions in Kenya, this study examines the historical, cultural, and contextual factors that shape the lives of Kenyan women in general and high school women leaders in particular.

Kenya has about forty-two different ethnic communities, each with its own culture. However, there exist cross-ethnic characteristics that define them as Kenyan communities. The cultural differences found among the Kenyan communities are easily discernible. The pastoral communities in Kenya such as the Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, and the Turkana prioritize herding at the expense of education. Kenyan communities such as the Abagusii (my community), Somali, and Maasai practice female genital mutilation (FGM) while other communities such as the Luo and the Luhya do not. The Kikuyu (the most populous community) and the Kalenjin do practice this rite but seem to be abandoning the practice (Yount & Abraham, 2007). Despite the fact that the Kenyan communities have different cultures, they also have common cultural practices related to similarities in language, geographical location, and environmental factors which make generalizations across communities applicable. Therefore, the historical, cultural and contextual factors explicated in the paragraphs that follow speak for most Kenyan communities.

Historically, the subordination of Kenyan women dates back to the pre-colonial period. During this era, Kenyan communities were firmly patriarchal. Senior men and the oldest sons wielded power over women and children in the household as well as in the wider society. It was

the men who held leadership positions as chiefs and rulers (Shadle, 2006). Men and women played different roles in society and in the family. The typical roles for men included hunting, herding, building houses, protecting the community, and fighting in inter-tribal wars. Women occupied roles such as child-bearing and rearing, cultivating, cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood and fetching water (Barng'etuny, 1999; Mungai, 2002; Choti, 2005). The traditional gender roles assigned to women restricted them to the domestic sphere while those of men exposed them to the public realm. The prevailing underrepresentation of women in the public sphere in Kenya today, including their underrepresentation in school leadership positions, reflects a situation that existed in pre-colonial Kenya.

The establishment of colonial rule in Kenya in the mid-19th century appears to have reinforced the patriarchal system among the Kenyan communities. With the introduction of capitalism during the colonial period, Kenyan men were recruited into low wage labor while women remained at home where they were in charge of domestic duties and subsistence agriculture that supplemented the meager wages that their men earned (Shadle, 2006). Since women did not participate in wage employment, their subordination in society was more secured and perpetuated. Choti (2005) explains, "The power that [came] with wage earning for the man at the end of each month was bound to restructure gender relations in the Kenyan household" (p. 67). The increased subordination of Kenyan women through their exclusion from paid labor and their concomitant restriction to domestic chores disempowered them socially and even politically. The exclusion of Kenyan women from wage employment during the colonial era continues to afflict women in Kenya even today, albeit in different ways and to different degrees.

The other relic of the colonial era whose impact on the education and leadership opportunities for Kenyan women is felt today is the divergent schooling opportunities that the

colonial system provided for boys and girls. The colonial administrators in Africa demanded "an 'educated' white collar labor force" (Mutua, 1978, p. 160). Since it is the men who provided this workforce, the colonial administrators selected young boys to train and prepare them for these jobs. When men went to school to gain an education, women remained home and missed the opportunity to access education. However, later on, the colonialists offered women some opportunity to acquire formal education but "the missionary encouragement of women's education was primarily motivated by the need to provide the men with literate wives" (Mutua, 1978, p. 161). The current underrepresentation of Kenyan women in school leadership and other public roles seems to be rooted in some of the biases against women that were established during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

Cultural practices of the Kenyan people have also influenced the prevailing situation of women in school leadership roles. Interestingly, these cultural factors seem to intersect with the historical factors. The main cultural factors affecting women leadership in Kenya include patriarchy, gender roles, and imposed marriages on girls. Regarding patriarchy, the power structure in Kenya is, and has been, male-dominated. In most Kenyan ethnic communities, the father or oldest son, is the head of the household or clan and wields immense power especially over women and children. The other manifestation of patriarchy in the Kenyan society is the fact that "in most communities, one's ancestry is traced through a male figure and based on patrilineage" (Wangila, 2007). In such communities a woman is regarded part of the properties of her husband and consequently depend on him for leadership, among other things (Ayanga, 1996; Wangila, 2007). In Kenyan the man is the center of power in the household; at the national level men dominate in the main leadership positions.

However, in Kenya today "there is a greater awareness of women's rights and the influence of traditional norms is diminishing" (Andela, Escandon, Garlo, and Prisca Kamungi, 2008; p. 7). One consequence of this awareness is a noticeable presence of women in positions of leadership across the various public institutions such as schools. Nevertheless, this awareness has not been embraced in all parts of the country nor has it improved remarkably the general condition of the Kenyan. In rural Kenya people still perceive women as subordinate to men and incompetent to lead. In a recent incident in western Kenya a community rejected a new primary school principal posted to their school simply because she was a woman (Wanzala, 2009). In Kenya most communities still observe the traditional gender-based division of labor that is biased against women and thwarts their effort in ascending to leadership positions. The traditional gender roles assigned to girls and women restrict them to private roles thus denying them the opportunity to take up and experience public responsibilities. In contrast, boys and men occupy roles that expose them to public duties some of which involve them making major decisions affecting the entire society. The traditional gender roles for women deny them the opportunity to attend school even within the context of free primary and secondary education (Nicole, 2003). The girls who manage to enter school have to shoulder the burden of endless domestic chores set aside for women.

The traditional gendered division of labor observed across Kenya does not affect only the girl child but also women, be they those already occupying leadership positions or those who aspire to be leaders. Domestic chores place a heavy demand on such women thus weakening their effectiveness in their professional work. In most cases, women school principals are perceived as inefficient mostly because they find it hard to juggle their professional work and domestic duties (Barng'etuny, 1999). Barng'tuny explains that this situation becomes advantageous to male

8

teachers in such situations as they are more likely to be promoted to leadership positions as opposed to their female colleagues who are overwhelmed by domestic chores.

The other cultural tradition that hinders girls' education and their advancement to leadership is the practice of early marriages. In most Kenyan communities parents marry off their young daughters in order to receive the bride price, or dowry, part of which may then be used to educate sons. Marrying of young girls in some Kenyan ethnic communities is a customary requirement and a source of family wealth and pride. In such communities, the girl is not involved in the marriage arrangements nor is she given an opportunity to express her opinion in any way. Some communities hold rigorous traditions before and/or during marriage that expose girls to humiliating situations that may affect their academic pursuits and cause them psychological instability. In a recent incident reported in the Kenyan mass media, a thirteen-year-old girl from the Samburu community who had never been to any school was forced to have sex with a warrior who was her relative in an initiation ceremony for village girls known as 'beading'. In the process, she became pregnant and upon delivery the baby was to be abandoned in the forest because it was taboo among the Samburu for the girl to conceive during the process of this ceremony. According to the Samburu culture the girl was supposed to be married temporarily to the warrior without becoming pregnant, and later get married 'properly' to her 'real husband' (Ndirangu, 2010). Thus the pregnancy violated this community's traditions. This case illustrates the plight of young women in Kenya. Innocent girls are forced into temporary 'marriages' but are condemned if they become pregnant in the process. Ironically, the warriors responsible for the pregnancy are not held responsible in any way. Educating girls in a community like this must be a rare occurrence. The same biases girls face early in life dog them into their adult life as job seekers, professionals,

candidates for various leadership and as occupants of leadership roles in Kenya's public institutions such as schools.

The main contextual factors affecting women leadership in Kenya and most countries in Africa are related to health and economic sectors. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Kenya has severely affected the advancement of girls and women in education and career life. This is because girls and women are the most vulnerable group in contracting AIDS due to the social and cultural situations that they find themselves in. In Kenya "Women have no right to ask their spouses or partners to use condoms even when they know [their spouses] are infected with an STI [Sexually Transmitted Infection]" (Ministry of Health [MOH], 2006; p. 9). It is reported in this study that "many women are brought up knowing that the man is always in charge of sex and should thus not be directed on how to go about it" (p.9). Therefore, as statistics show, most of the HIV/AIDS victims in Kenya and other African countries are girls and women. Besides, it is women and girls who are responsible for taking care of the HIV/AIDS patients and orphans in the family, since caring for family members is part of the repertoire of women's chores.

High levels of poverty in Kenya have also had a negative impact on women. Poor families who may not afford to send all their children to school prefer educating boys while the girls remain home to assist their mothers in their culturally sanctioned gendered roles. In some cases the girls are married off so as to the dowry obtained from their marriage may be used to pay for the education of their brothers. Thus, most communities in Kenya consider educating girls to be a waste of money because, finally, the girl will be married and benefit her husband's family. "Consequently, when poverty forces a family to make a choice between sending a son or a daughter to school, families often choose to educate their sons." (Girls' education in Kenya, n.d.). In extreme cases, some mothers introduce their daughters into prostitution so that they may raise

money to buy food and other needs. Normally, such girls never go to school or if they do, drop out of school and concentrate on this 'business'.

Structure of Kenya's Education System

Kenya attained her independence from the British colonial rule in 1963. In the post-independence Kenya, there have been two systems of education. The first one, the 7+4+2+3 system, was in place from 1966 to 1984 (Eshiwani, 1993). It consisted of 7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education (Ordinary level or O level), 2 years of high school (Advanced level or A level) and 3–5 years of university education (The Kenya National Examination Council). Before 1980, students in the 7+4+2+3 system sat for regional examinations in the last year of their primary, secondary and high school education. The examination was issued by the East African Community that oversaw an examination body that served the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The candidates were awarded the East African Certificate of Primary Education (EACPE) for primary school education, the East African Certificate of Education Examination (EACE) for secondary education and the East African Advanced Certificate of Education (EAACE) for high school education. In 1980 the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) was founded which changed the primary school certificate from EACPE to CPE (Certificate of Primary Education), EACE to KCE (Kenya Certificate of Education) and EAACE to KACE (Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education). KCE, the O level examinations were graded using divisions I to IV, division I being the best grade (The Kenya National Examination Council).

The second system, 8+4+4, that replaced 7+4+2+3, was established in 1985 and it is the system being used in Kenya presently. It consists of 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 years of university education. In the last year of primary and secondary

school, students sit for national examinations and are awarded the Kenya Certificate of Primary education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) respectively. After 8 years of primary education, some students may join technical training institutes or youth polytechnics instead of proceeding to secondary school. The youth polytechnics are "supposed to provide a non-formal training to unemployed school-leavers in skills directly related to local income-generating opportunities" (Munene, 2010). These skills include tailoring, masonry, and carpentry. This kind of training takes at most two years. Some students proceed to secondary school but not all of them qualify to join university. Therefore, at the end of 4 years in secondary school, those students who do not qualify for university may go to medical training colleges, technical training institutes, institutes of technology and national polytechnics for a maximum of three year (Ganiere, 2009). The Kenyan university education provides for the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degrees offered in both public and private universities.

Kenyan primary and secondary schools are classified into various categories. There are public and private schools - categorized on the basis of ownership, or who runs the school. Private schools are run by individuals or organizations while public schools are run by the government. Kenyan secondary schools are also classified into national, provincial and district schools. National schools were established during the colonial period and are the most prestigious. They are situated in different provinces and were meant to be model schools with high achievement standards. They are well staffed, have excellent learning facilities, and admit students from across the country. Provincial schools were established in each of the eight provinces in Kenya to cater for students in the respective provinces. They are ranked second to the national schools in terms of student achievement. They admit students from their local provinces but they do their selections after the national schools have selected best performing students from schools all over Kenya.

District schools come third in the hierarchy and are junior to provincial schools as regards establishment and student performance. They admit students from the districts in which they are located, and they admit students after provincial schools have selected theirs. The last category is *harambee* secondary schools. These are schools that were established by community members during colonial days and after. The word *harambee* means 'let us pull together' and was a slogan used to mobilize community members to build schools that met their educational needs. *Harambee* schools are meant to serve the immediate communities. "The management of most *harambee* schools is mainly in the hands of local leaders such as chiefs, primary school teachers, and clergy" (Mwiria, 1990; p. 351). Later, in the 1970s, the government decided to partially support *harambee* schools by paying for teachers' salaries (Mwiria, 1990). Presently, *harambee* schools fall into the category of public schools, some of which are district schools and other provincial schools.

Secondary schools in Kenya are also classified into girls schools (admit only girls), boys schools (attended by boys only), mixed schools, or co-ed schools (attended by both boys and girls). There are also the categories of boarding schools (with students residing in school except during breaks), and day schools (with students commuting from their homes on a daily basis).

Pathway(s) to School Leadership in Kenya

For many years, the appointment of school leaders in Kenya has lacked the guidance of a straightforward and documented policy (Teachers Service Commission, 2007). Unlike in most developing countries where the preparation of school leaders is formal, with colleges and universities offering training for educational/school leadership (Nandwah, 2011), the appointment of school leaders in Kenya has been commonly based on teachers' seniority, teaching experience (a minimum 3 years) and the teachers' involvement in co-curricular activities (Bush & Oduro,

2006). Besides, the TSC has been appointing individuals proposed by politicians, school sponsors/churches, other school principals or members of the school boards for school leadership [Nandwah, 2011; Teachers Service Commission (TSC), 2007].

According to the TSC (2007) report, the lack of clear guidelines in selecting school heads has resulted in many negative issues:

> External interference in the appointment and deployment of heads of institutions; promotions based on non-professional considerations; protection of ineffective heads of institutions by influential personalities even when such heads deserve to be disciplined; localization of appointment and deployment of heads of institutions to serve in their home districts or communities; rampant cases of mismanagement and misappropriation of institutional funds and property; and frequent absenteeism due to personal and other interests (pg. 8).

In 2007 the TSC of Kenya initiated a policy to guide the appointment of heads of post- primary school institutions, including secondary schools, and tertiary level institutions. The policy constitutes of the following eight guidelines for appointment to leadership. Under these guidelines, the applicant for a position of leadership in these institutions should:

1. "Be a professionally qualified university Graduate Teacher/Technical/Teacher/Lecturer serving under the employment of the Teachers Service Commission.

2. Have a minimum of seven (7) years continuous post qualification experience, two of which must have been at the level of Deputy Head of institution or Head of Department.

3. Have portrayed competence and ability both as a classroom teacher and an administrator.

4. Be at a minimum grade of Job Group M on the Scheme of Service for Graduate Teachers/Technical Teachers and Lecturers.

5. Have attended at least two in-service courses in institutional management offered or recognized by the Kenya Education staff Institute (KESI).

6. Have a clean personal record.

7. Have shown or expressed interest in institution administration by applying for consideration to an advertised vacancy for headship.

8. Have proved through evaluation to possess the needed qualities of a head of Institution – For example, a pass in a selection interview and performance report." (TSC, 2007; p. 9 & 10).

According to Rarieya (2007), the stipulations of the policy are currently at work and all school leadership positions are advertised and the headship aspirants are then invited for extensive interviews before consideration. Therefore, since 2007, anybody aspiring to become a school principal in Kenya must meet the above criteria.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter II reviews the literature related to women leadership in Kenya and other developing countries. The chapter also presents the framework through which the study is developed. Chapter III describes the methodology that was applied in this study. Chapter IV contains the presentation and interpretation of the narratives from the women in my study. The summary and recommendations are discussed in chapter 5. The chapter also includes implications for further studies as informed by the findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores the literature on women school leadership in Kenya and other developing countries. The chapter specifically discusses literature that addresses the (under)representation of women school leaders. The review includes studies from other developing countries alongside those from Kenya because the existing literature on women school leadership in Kenya is insufficient. In addition, the issues affecting women school leadership in other developing countries are relevant to Kenya because there are a many similarities among developing countries regarding gender issues and economic development patterns.

This chapter also presents an alternative approach to the problem of women underrepresentation in school leadership. This approach derives from the literature under review. Therefore, this chapter consists of three main parts. The first part examines the participation rates of women school leaders in different countries. It provides an overview of the status of women school leadership in some developing countries and continues to explore statistics describing patterns of women's involvement in school leadership. The second part seeks to explain the underrepresentation of women in school leadership in developing countries. This part discusses research designs that have been used in studies that explore women's underrepresentation in school leadership. The last section consists of a synthesis of the reviewed literature and also introduces a new framework for investigating the problem of poor representation of women in school leadership. The proposed framework of gender socialization emphasizes the construction of self-image by an individual throughout one's life through the experiences one encounters.

Women's Participation in School Leadership in Developing Countries

In most developing countries the participation of women in development is remarkably low as compared to men's contribution (Morrisson & Jütting, 2005). In terms of economic development, Morrisson and Jütting (2005) observed that social institutions, particularly in South Asia, South-East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa impose various constraints on women which decrease their opportunities to active participation in the development of their countries' economies. The constraints identified include women's limited access to education, health care, and access to the labor market.

Besides women's discrimination in economic development, women are largely underrepresented in leadership in many sectors including politics and educational, or school, leadership. In political leadership, there are disproportionately few women holding parliamentary seats in most developing countries. The table below shows the representation of women in national parliaments in selected developing countries (Norris & Inglehart, 2001):

Table 1: Percentage of Women in National Parliaments, Lower or Single House, March 2001

Country	Percentage	Country	Percentage
Algeria	3.4	Guyana	18.5
Angola	15.5	India	8.8
Botswana	17.0	Indonesia	8.0
Burkina Faso	8.1	Israel	12.5
Cambodia	7.4	Jamaica	13.3
Cameroon	5.6	Kenya	3.6
Egypt	2.4	Malaysia	10.4
Ethiopia	7.7	Niger	1.2
Gabon	9.2	Nigeria	3.4
Gambia	2.0	Philippines	11.3
Ghana	9.0	Vanuatu	0.0
Guatemala	8.8	Zimbabwe	9.3

The statics in Table 1 show very low percentages of women representation in parliament. Norris and Inglehart (2001) attribute this underrepresentation of women in parliament to religious, political and cultural factors. The underrepresentation corresponds to "the predominance of traditional attitudes toward gender roles" in the countries involved (p. 129). The poor representation of women in parliament is graver in some countries than others. Countries like Algeria, Egypt, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria and Vanuatu post less than 5% women parliamentarians. Generally, there is a wide gap in terms of gender and political leadership in most developing countries.

The participation of women in educational leadership in developing countries, including Kenya, follows the same trend as that of leadership in the political sector. Various studies reveal that women are significantly underrepresented in school leadership in developing countries. In a recent study of women administrators in Kenyan public universities, Choti (2004) shows that positions of chancellor and vice chancellor, registrars, and financial officers in all the sample universities were occupied by men. The only departure from this pattern is the few women who served as deputy vice chancellors (13.3%), deans of faculty (11.6%), deans of students (25%), heads of departments (14.4%), and council chairs (16.6%).

The situation that obtains in Kenyan public universities is not any different from that found in secondary school leadership in Kenya and indeed in other developing countries. The number of women holding school leadership position is significantly lopsided compared to that of men. Sperandio and Kagoda (2008) who examined the distribution of women in both private and public secondary school leadership in Uganda discovered a very wide numerical gap between male and female school leaders in the schools that were investigated. The findings of this study are summarized in the Table 2 below.

18

Table 2: Distribution of Male and Female Head and Deputy Head Teachers in Government-Aided and Licensed Private Schools in Uganda, February, 2006

School Type	Position	Females	Males	Total	Females* (%)
Government-Aided Schools					
Boys only	Head	0	29	29	0
	Deputy	3	46	49	6
Total		**3**	**75**	**78**	**4**
Coed	Head	78	555	633	12
	Deputy	119	571	690	17
Total		**197**	**1,126**	**1,323**	**15**
Girls only	Head	46	6	52	88
	Deputy	31	52	83	37
Total		**77**	**58**	**135**	**57**
Grand Total		277	1,259	1,536	18
Private Schools					
Boys only	Head	0	15	15	0
	Deputy	2	17	19	12
Total		**2**	**32**	**34**	**6**
Coed	Head	85	752	837	10
	Deputy	116	731	847	14
Total		**201**	**1,483**	**1,684**	**12**
Girls only	Head	22	10	32	69
	Deputy	13	14	27	48
Total		35	24	59	59
Not Stated	Head	0	2	2	**0**
	Deputy	0	1	1	0
Total		**0**	**3**	**3**	**0**
Grand Total		238	1,542	1,780	13

(Source: MoES, 2006b)   *Author's calculation*

The data in Table 2 reveal that women head teachers are well represented in single girls' schools both in government-aided and privates schools (88% in government aided schools and 69% in private school). However, there were no women heading single boys' secondary schools at the time the data were collected. In coed schools, women are significantly few compared to their male counterparts (12% in government schools and 10% in private schools). Such a pattern is to be

expected in most developing countries because many societies in these regions consider women to be competent only in leading girls and not boys. This cultural perception partly explains the unbalanced female and male percentages shown in Table 2. Writing about the situation in the Caribbean, Morris' (1999) observes a similar trend as the one in Uganda reported in Table 2 in that high numbers of women leaders are found in single-sex girls' schools:

> "Males are more likely to be principals of secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago than females. Female secondary school principals are found in particular school types; single-sex girls' schools and junior secondary schools where the students are between 12 and 14 years old. Women are less likely to be principals of large co-educational schools for older adolescents with mixed staff." (p. 344)

In South Africa, Damons' (2008) statistical data indicated that in the year 2005, there were only 32% women school principals and 38% deputy/assistant women principals in South Africa. Damons explains that even though 64% of South African educators are women, 58% of secondary school leadership positions are held by men. This kind of gender and leadership trend is experienced in most developing countries, and perhaps in some developed countries, where women are the majority in the teaching profession but end up being a minority in school leadership positions (Morris, 1999).   In Trinidad and Tobago, approximately a decade ago, 52.1% of primary school principals and 46% of secondary school principals were women (Morris, 1999). Comparing these figures with the Ministry of Education report of 1995/96 where 62% of school principals were men and 38% women, there appears to be a significant increase in the total number of women school principals (Morris 1999). However, as we noted earlier, most of women school leaders in Trinidad and Tobago are likely to be found in single-sex girls' schools and junior

secondary schools as the data in Table 2 illustrate. In summary the above statistics from different developing countries provide evidence of inadequate representation of women in school leadership. There is need to establish the factors that contribute to this trend. In the section that follows I review some of the studies that have tried to explain the basis of women underrepresentation in school leadership roles in developing countries.

Explaining Women's Underrepresentation in School Leadership

A number of authors have tried to examine reasons behind women's under representation in leadership in developing countries. Many of the studies conducted to establish the root cause of this bias attribute most barriers to women's upward mobility in school administration to the patriarchal nature of many societies in developing countries. It is argued that patriarchy contributes to the inadequate representation of women in school leadership in two major ways. First, it leads to the overt discrimination against women seeking to fill leadership positions in schools. Such discriminative practices include discriminative hiring practices against women, lack of, or limited, leadership preparation opportunities for women due to discriminative organizational culture. Second, patriarchy contributes to the challenges that women leaders face during leadership. Since women expect to face unique challenges in their leadership roles based on their gender, women aspiring to seek leadership shy away from seeking leadership positions in schools. The work-related challenges that confront women in school leadership include unfriendly work environments and the burdensome domestic responsibilities that women in most developing countries are expected to undertake besides their professional duties. The unfriendly work environments are rooted in the general patriarchal principles that regard women as homemakers and hence unsuited for public responsibilities.

Sperandio and Kagoda's (2010) study established that a number of female Ugandan teachers aspire to school leadership but lack the necessary support to make their aspirations come true. This study was motivated by the fact that in Uganda there has been an increase in opportunities for women to secure leadership positions through the expansion of private single-sex girls' schools that have a preference for women principals and women teachers. Besides, the policy of affirmative action initiated by the Ugandan government includes a stipulation that all coed schools should have a woman as the principal or assistant principal. However, even with these seemingly increased leadership opportunities for women, still women continue to be a minority in school leadership in Uganda. This situation is what led to this study that sought to find out whether or not women teachers in Uganda aspire to occupy school leadership positions and if so, establish the factors that facilitate or hinder them from realizing their aspirations.

The results obtained from Sperandio and Kagoda's (2010) study showed that most of the women teachers (50 out of 62) wanted to become deputy principals or principals in spite of the inhibiting factors key of which is the "burdensome family commitments" (p. 29). The most frequently cited reason behind women's failure to secure these leadership positions "was the corruption of the interviewing committees and the lack of support from school administrators for providing recommendations" (p. 30). The Ugandan cases reported in this study suggest that women have to contend with obstructive hiring procedures even in the context of sound government policies meant to increase the number of women leaders in schools.

Moorosi's (2010) study examined the experiences of women principals on their way to becoming secondary school principals in South Africa. The study examined factors affecting women school leaders before entering leadership, at the point of pursuing leadership and during leadership. In order to understand these experiences, the author framework consisted of three

phases to analyze the career path through which women pass as they ascend to school leadership. These phases are the anticipation phase, the acquisition phase, and the performance phase. Moorosi's (2010) goal was to establish whether or not women underrepresentation in school leadership is as a result of obstacles encountered at the acquisition phase. Most previous works on women (under)representation in South African attributed the scarcity of women in school leadership to obstacles encountered at the acquisition stage. Moorosi discovered that the preparation and performance phases have a major role to play, too. This study shows that women seem to experience more obstacles than men at the personal, organizational and social level and that "central to these experiences, is the underlying male norm of who is more appropriate for secondary school principalship" (P. 547). The study reveals some of the challenges facing women leaders and leadership aspirants, "despite equal and to some extent preferential treatment policies being put in place" (P. 555). She gives examples of the 1996 Bill of Rights and the 1998 Employment Equity Act that should assure all citizens, including women, equal treatment and employment opportunities. However, these two bills seem to offer lip service to women because in reality, these policies are not put into practice.

Similar to Moorosi (2010)'s study, Matope (2012) sought to investigate discriminatory practices among educational employees in one of the Districts in Zimbabwe. The Sample included a total of 120 employees from 12 secondary schools. Using questionnaires and face-to – face interviews, the study revealed that women employees in secondary schools do not do well in promotion interviews because they lack the required experience. This is because women mostly hold informal administrative posts "such as Home Craft Club organizer, School Health Director, and Scripture Union organizer, caring positions and by the large extension of domestic chores" (p. 695). Conversely their male counterparts "hold posts, such as chairperson for the Teachers'

Club, chairperson for Schools' Functions, co-coordinator for heads of department, Exam Committee chairperson and sports director" (p. 695). Consequently women are rarely promoted to school leadership because they do not have prior exposure to relevant leadership opportunities.

Apart from the obstacles women encounter in their endeavor to secure school leadership positions, women leaders encounter some challenges at work that make school leadership less attractive to women contemplating leadership. Regarding the challenge of juggling domestic chores and professional duties, Morris (1993) sought to explore factors that either encourage or hamper women's pursuit for school administrative positions by seeking to understand women leaders' perceptions of these factors. The study considered career histories covering the work and personal lives of seven teachers and successful women from different educational settings including school principals, school supervisors, directors of educational institutions and women faculty at the university. Morris's (1993) study concluded that most women in developing and developed countries do not have a well-defined career plan because of the many obstacles involved in the vertical upward movement through the hierarchy. Some of the obstacles include family-related responsibilities for married and young women professionals who are required to be family care-givers. In some cases, the women are forced to sacrifice their career advancement opportunities when they relocate with their working husbands. This study established that in South Africa some, women particularly those working in university settings, choose to engage in activities that lead to professional satisfaction and not necessarily career advancement. These activities may include teaching, advising and counseling instead of focusing on research and publications. Morris found out that women contemplating school leadership positions sometimes choose to suppress their ambitions to avoid inconveniences that come with taking up leadership positions.

On the same issue of work-related challenges that women school leaders face, Moorosi (2007) studied South African women secondary school principals from KwaZulu-Natal Province in order to understand their experiences as they tried to balance home and work responsibilities. Moorosi's study was structured to study experiences of women principals, but the findings reveal some of the challenges that make school leadership undesirable particularly to married or unmarried women with young children. These categories of women fear the additional responsibilities that come with leadership roles while at the same time they are expected to fulfill their household chores.

Moorosi's (2007) study consisted of 28 secondary school principals from different racial groups and different marital statuses. Results from this study revealed that most of the women experienced immense conflict in balancing their work and personal lives in varied degrees. For example, those who were married or single with young children felt guilty that their work responsibilities denied them quality time with their families, especially time with their children. The women principals that were single with grown up or no kids reported to be so immersed in work-related duties in order to prove their competence, to the extent that they neglected their social lives. In summary, the experience of the women in this study typifies the lives of many career women in developing countries. Some women have aspirations to advance onto school leadership but the gender-based responsibilities particularly in the private sphere bar them from seeking leadership positions. Women already in leadership positions like the ones in Moorosi's study find themselves torn between by work and home demands, a situation that makes their lives miserable.

Phendla's (2000) study examined the experiences of six South African black women principals in elementary school determined to bring about social change in their schools. The study looked at how race/ethnicity, language, class and gender intersected to influence the effort

of black women principals in elementary school in creating socially just and equitable learning environments for children in South African schools. The study explored the question whether social justice and equity have changed with the end of apartheid and the start of a post-apartheid South Africa. In terms of the influence of their different social locations, the identities of the women principals were not fixed. For example, in some situations, their race/ethnicity, class and language were more prominent than their gender; therefore, the sources of their oppression were multiple and not just gender.

On the question of social justice and equity in the new South Africa, Phendla (2000) concluded that the women studied promoted social justice in various ways including conducting fundraising campaigns, bringing in outsiders to address social justice, co-working with parents unlike in the previous era when school leaders were the sole decision makers. Amid all the experiences and struggles, the women in this study visualized "a state where education would bring equality and provide equal opportunities for black children" (p. 260). One of the implications of Phendla's (2000) study is that women school leaders are likely to fight for justice and equity because of their minority status in most societies of the world and particularly in developing countries. Since such an effort may threaten to dismantle the prevailing patriarchy, women leaders are likely to face hostility from their male (and even female) colleagues. The kind of conflict at the workplace associated with innovative practices aimed at promoting social justice may make school leadership undesirable to some women. Such women may lose the inspiration to seek school leadership so as to make the school environment more accommodating to both male and female children.

To understand the experiences of Kenyan women principals in the face of patriarchal power in their schools, Kariuki (2006) applied a narrative inquiry to examine how 4 women school

principals responded to prejudices that were associated with patriarchy. In particular, Kariuki sought to understand strategies that women school principals use to survive the demeaning messages and treatment they receive in the course of their leadership due to male domination in school leadership. Kariuki (2006) concluded that women school principals' leadership practices were shaped by their experiences with patriarchal practices in the Kenyan society. While some women principals contested patriarchy in an effort to bring about gender transformation, others reinforced it by arguing that "female oppression is not universal but rather case specific." (p. 72). Kariuki's study introduces another dimension to the issue of women underrepresentation in school leadership. While the oppression of women school leaders may be widespread in Kenya and other parts of the world, some women may see it differently. Since women have grown up in the patriarchal culture, some may perceive male dominance or "male-supported leadership" at work settings as the norm under which an organization should operate (p. 72). Therefore, such women do not approve the view that women are inferior to men. Whether or not women principals challenge patriarchal practices at the workplace, prejudice against women remains a problem in Kenya's educational institutions and needs to be investigated.

Based on the literature that I have reviewed, I use a model to summarize the causes of women underrepresentation in school administration. The model captures the various positions proposed to explain the problem of women underrepresentation in school leadership. The model presents culture as the bedrock of the problem of women underrepresentation in school leadership. Patriarchy arises from the culture of a people, and the four factors that lead to women underrepresentation in school leadership originate from patriarchy. These four factors are lack of preparation for leadership, discriminative hiring practices, family demands on women's time, and oppositional work environments.

Figure 1: Factors Contributing To Women Underrepresentation in School Leadership

```
                          ┌─────────────┐
                          │   Culture   │
                          └──────┬──────┘
                                 │
                                 ▼
                          ┌─────────────┐
                          │  Patriarchy │
                          └──────┬──────┘
```

| Lack of preparation for leadership | Discriminative Hiring | Family demands on women's time | Oppositional work environments |

Under representation of women in school leadership
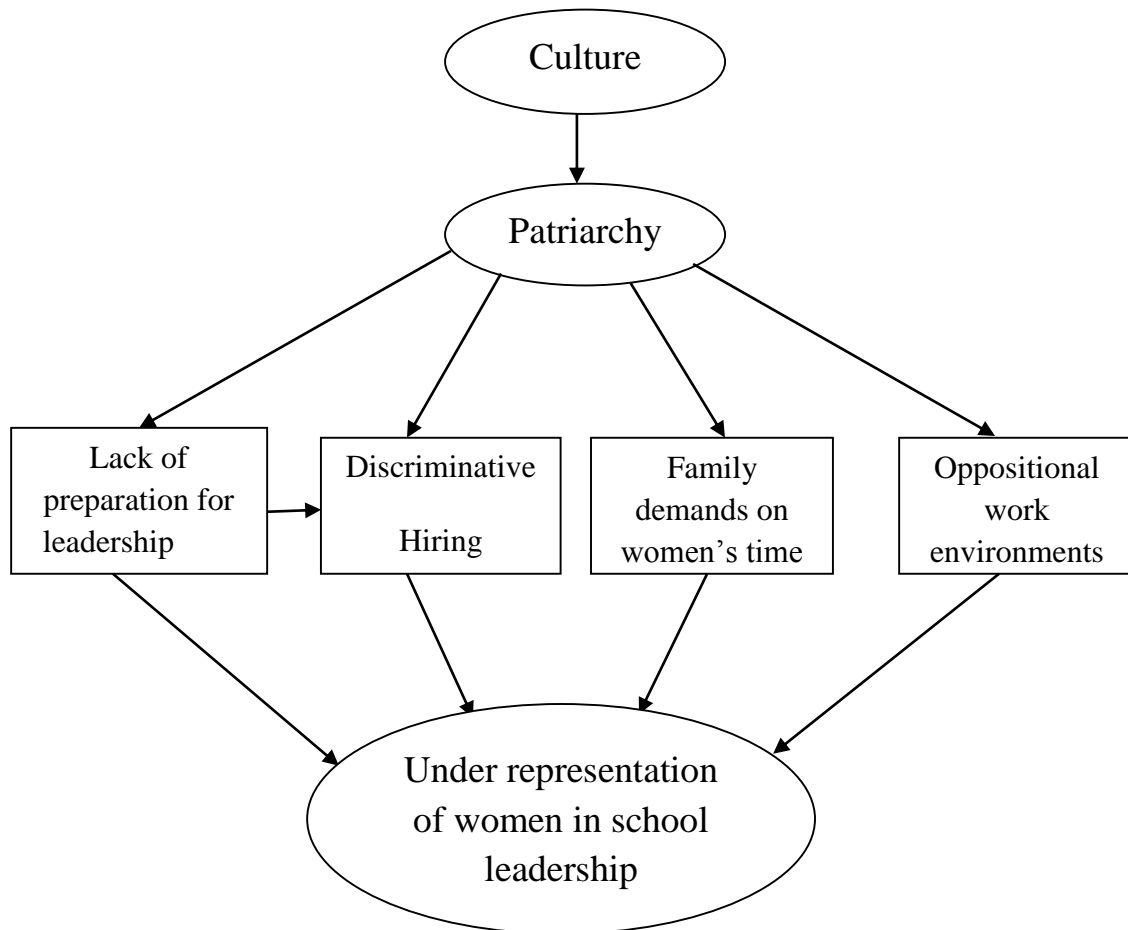
In the subsection that follows I synthesize the views expressed in the literature reviewed in the preceding subsection and then provide an alternative framework to explain the underrepresentation of women in school leadership positions in developing countries.

Synthesis and Alternative Conceptualization

The studies examined in the above subsection have proved insightful in understanding the issues related to women underrepresentation in school leadership in developing countries. The studies have shown that patriarchy is the main contributing factor to the underrepresentation of women in school leadership especially due to the challenges it poses to women holding school leadership positions and those aspiring to be school leaders. It has been shown that the effects of patriarchy on the status of women in school leadership is manifested in women's poor preparation for leadership, discriminative hiring procedures, family-related demands on women leaders' time and work environments that are hostile to women.

However, the patriarchy-based account of women underrepresentation in school leadership leaves a number of questions unanswered. It still remains to be established why some women ascend to school leadership and succeed whereas other do not. In seeking the answer to this question, I hypothesize that women's self-image and gender socialization play a central role in determining women's (in)ability to claim and maintain school leadership positions. I propose that gender socialization influences the development of a woman's self-image. In turn, a favorable self-image will facilitate a woman's realization of her aspirations to seek school leadership while unfavorable self-image will impede such aspirations. The effect of unfavorable self-image may be experienced throughout the life of an individual and is likely to persist even if patriarchy-related challenges are controlled. A favorable self-image has the power to boost women's resilience in the face of barriers to their upward mobility in the workplace. Nevertheless, most studies that explore the basis of women underrepresentation in school leadership have not considered the influence of gender socialization and self-image on the general status of women in society and particularly in their journeys to school leadership and during leadership.

This study utilizes the concept of gender socialization in trying to understand how different socialization patterns within and outside the family influenced the construction of my respondents' self-image. Rosenberg (1989) defines self-image as "an attitude toward an object" (p. 5) where attitude subsumes "facts opinions and values with regard to the self, as well as favorable and unfavorable orientation toward the self" (p.5). According to Rosenberg, of the many things or objects that people develop attitude about, the *self* is one of them, which may then lead to understanding self-image as attitude toward oneself. It is worth noting that the development of self-image is not confined to a specific age or period of time. Rosenberg sees it as a continuous and changing process that is influenced by one's life experiences and the people he/she interacts with along the way. In this paper I augment the definition of self-image to include women's internal feelings about their competence, ability, worth and motivation to pursue education and to take up leadership roles.

Gender socialization "is the process by which people learn to behave in a certain way, as dictated by societal beliefs, values, attitudes and examples" (UNICEF, 2007). The definition of gender socialization I adopt in this study see it as a process by which children learn about their different sexes and the particular tasks and expectations that are consistent with and suitable for their assigned gender, and related to "jobs, activities, tasks or expectations attributed to one sex" (Wojtalik, Breckenridge, Gibson Hancox, & Sobehart, 2007; p. 46). It has been argued that a big part of a person's socialization occurs in childhood and that parents are the "primary influence on the gender-role development" (Lindsey, 1990; Crespi, 2010; p. 3). Wojtalik (2006) investigated women leaders in business and education and uncovered the effect of childhood gender socialization on women's decisions to take up leadership roles. She explained that "Parental and

societal influence during childhood colors the adult woman's frame of reference and thus unconsciously inhibits her ability to advance into challenging or leadership roles" (p. 32).

Similar to Wojtalik (2006), Lindsey (1990) and Crespi's (2010) understanding of the importance of early socialization within the family, Coleman (1988) talks of the influence of family social capital in students' achievement at school. According to Coleman, family social capital is composed of at least three constituents namely: financial capital, human capital and social capital. Financial capital refers to the wealth or income that a family possesses and how the income promotes achievement in school by providing resources, such as, a study room, study materials and other financial assets that cater for the family needs. Human capital is mainly measured by parents' education and how the education enables parents to influence their children's a thought process, including their problem solving and decision making skills. Finally, social capital within the family refers to "the time and effort spent by the [parents] with the child on intellectual matters" (p. 110). It is simply the intensity of relations between parents and their children. As Coleman notes, of course children are significantly affected by the parents' human capital "but this human capital may be irrelevant to outcomes for children if parents are not an important part of their children's lives, if their human capital is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside the home" (p. 110). Nevertheless, while most socialization takes place in childhood and within the family, socialization is a lifetime process.

Gender socialization has negative influences on girls and women in various ways. First, it affects the self-image of girls and women and suppresses their ambition to seek leadership (Wojtalik, Breckenridge, Gibson Hancox, & Sobehart, 2007; Strasen, 1992). Second, it restricts women to the domestic duties thus excluding them from the public domain, including school leadership roles (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Third, it leads to the discrimination of women in

31

employment, resulting in few women in school leadership (Corcoran & Courant, 1987). Fourth, it affects how women leaders evaluate themselves or are evaluated by others at work (Wojtalik, 2006; Strasen, 1992; Corcoran & Courant, 1985). The question that emerges from the impact of gender socialization on women's self-image concerns the specific ways in which gender socialization constructs favorable or unfavorable self-image in women.

In summary, this study addresses the issue of women underrepresentation in school leadership by examining the effect of women's self-image on their ability to obtain and maintain school leadership. According to Lanham (1996), "a person's self-image is necessarily based upon the conveyed opinions of others which in turn reflect the freedoms and restraints set by the society of which s/he is a part" (p. 52). Therefore, the specific goal is to understand how gender socialization impacts girls' and women's self-image and how the self-image in turn shapes the way women view their leadership potential and skills. I argue that the concept of patriarchy applied in many studies on women underrepresentation in school leadership in developing countries does not address internal barriers such as self-image that have a potential to affect women in their pursuit for school leadership. The gender socialization approach provides a basis for examining the effect of self-image on women in seeking and carrying out school leadership roles.

The alternative approach I propose to account for women underrepresentation in school leadership may be summarized in model 2 below. Besides introducing the factor of self-image, the model presented below acknowledges and accommodates the other factors that influence the participation of women in school leadership. Thus, I collected data for this study with an open mind and was able to obtain data that implicated a variety of factors that shaped my respondents' life experiences right from childhood through school and work/leadership. These factors have been detailed in chapters 4 and 5 of this work.

Figure 2: The Influence of Gender Socialization on Women Underrepresentation in School Leadership
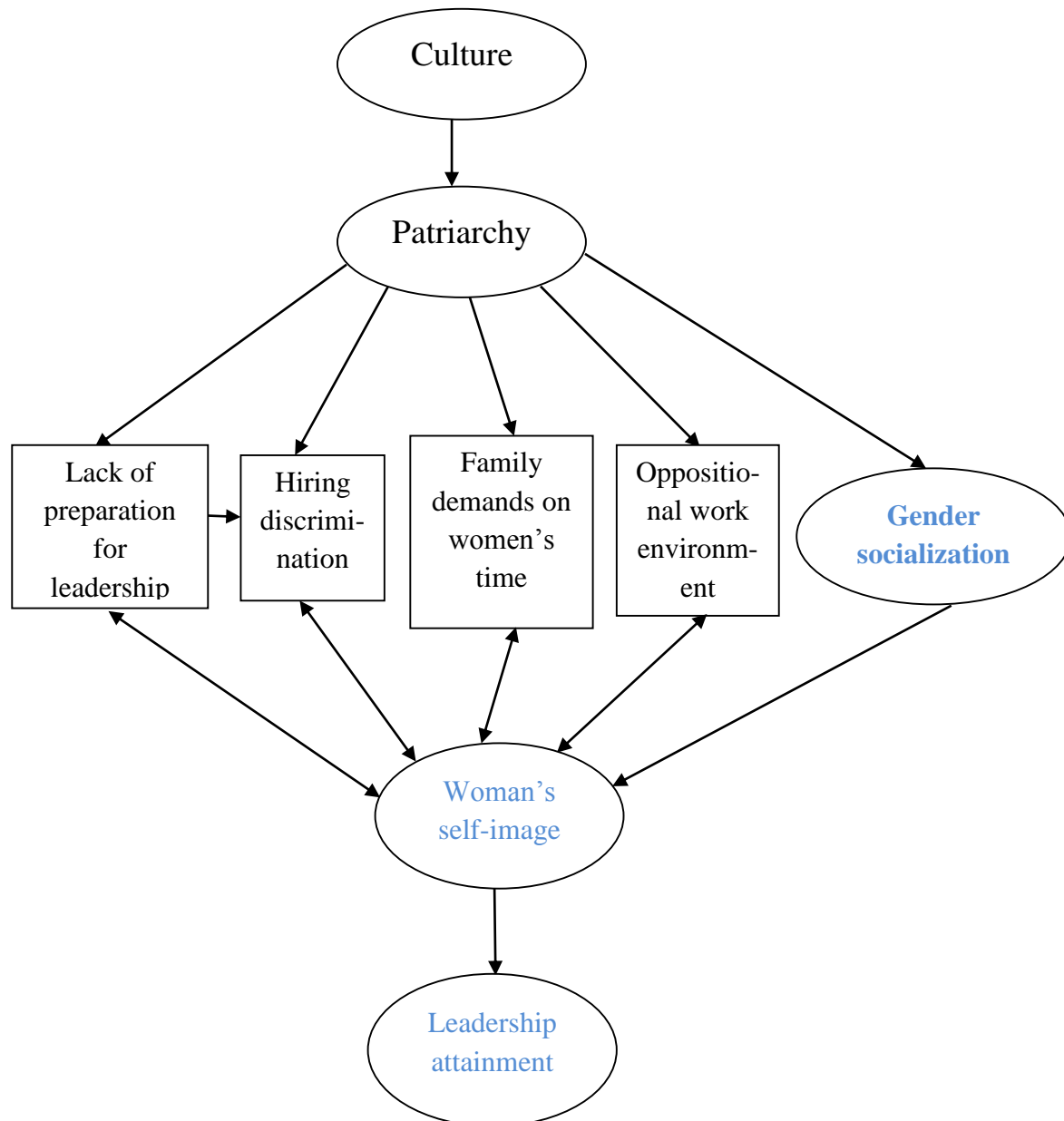
For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine challenges that Kenyan women school leaders go through on their way to leadership and also to try to understand how some women manage to conquer those challenges and finally obtain and stay in leadership. The following four questions guided this study:

1. How do women principals in Kenya manage to go through school up to the college level? What barriers do they encounter, and how do they overcome them?

2. What motivates Kenyan women to become school leaders?

3. How do the ethnicity and religion of Kenyan women principals intersect with their gender to simultaneously shape their aspirations toward school leadership, the attainment of their positions, and their experiences while in the post?

4. How do women principals assess the future prospects for women educational leaders in Kenya?

This chapter presents the steps followed in collecting data and analyzing in order to answer the research questions. The elements that constituted the research methodology used in this study include the biographical approach, sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis. Also included are definitions of the concepts of validity, reliability, research reflexivity, and a brief explanation of the ethical considerations that were made in this study.

The Biographical Approach

This study is qualitative in nature and is based on the biographical approach that emphasizes life experiences of respondents. Biographical research seems to borrow a lot from

other research methodologies including phenomenology, case studies, and ethnography (Apitzsch & Siouti (2007). Therefore, due to its interdisciplinary nature, "biographical research cannot be fully united under one methodology or one theoretical approach" (Roberts, 2002, p. 169). A number of words and approaches are said to characterize and mold biographical research as (Denzin (1989) explains

> A family of terms combines to shape the biographical method . . .
>
> method, life, self, experience, epiphany, case, autobiography, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, ethnography story, discourse, narrative, narrator, fiction, history, personal history, oral history, case history, case study, writing presence, difference, life history, life story, self story and personal experience story. (p. 27)

There are many ways that researchers have conceptualized "biography" as a research method, including three approaches that Miller (2000) outlines namely, the realist approach, the neo-positivist approach, and the narrative approach. The realist approach follows the principles of grounded theory methodology and, therefore, uses the induction procedure, unfocused interviews, 'saturation' in the data collection process and considers reliability to be an important aspect in a study. The neo-positivist approach is deductive, uses focused interviews, tests a theory and considers validity to be important. Finally, the narrative approach underscores the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in the construction of reality and perceives truth to be less important in constructing an individual's unique standpoint.

My study leans more towards Miller's suggested neo-positivist approach but the narrative approach also informed my study particularly in data analysis just as Miller (2000) suggests: "it is likely that the student will find her- or himself adopting an eclectic approach to biographical analysis that borrows freely from all three traditions" (p. 145).

The biographical method is well suited for this study on the strength that it enabled me to examine the socialization patterns of my informants during their childhood and particularly how gender socialization impacted their abilities to enter leadership and carry out school leadership roles. The method also helped me look at the life experiences of my respondents in my quest to understand how they have been able to conquer the cultural barriers women face in many societies. These objectives harmonize with Roberts' (2002) observation that "the intent of biographical research is to collect and interpret the lives of others as part of human understanding" (p. 15). The biological approach, therefore, took me through the lives of my respondents for a better understanding of their journeys to school leadership and during their leadership work.

The Pilot Study

Prior to this study, I conducted a pilot study in February, 2011. My respondent was a woman who had worked as a high school principal in Kenya for 6 years and as deputy principal for 7 years before relocating to USA. Even though she is not currently working as a principal, I considered her suitable for the study since she had enough leadership experience and was a principal in a coed school.

The pilot study proved to be helpful in several ways. To begin with, it gave me confidence that the interview questions and my questioning technique were adequate in gathering information from a respondent. However, I realized that it would have been more helpful to have my respondent complete a brief demographics survey prior to the interview in order to have some background information about the respondent beforehand. I, therefore, designed and used demographic surveys in the main study.

Secondly, the pilot study enabled me verify that a total of four and a half hours are sufficient to collect meaningful biographical data from one respondent. Initially, I thought the time may be quite short to allow me collect the intended information but through the pilot study I confirmed that in-depth interviewing can yield large amounts of rich data. Thirdly, I was confident that with a good audio recorder, I could have very clear recordings of the interview sessions to make transcription easy. Finally, in regard to the analytic technique, the pilot study gave me a chance to practice on how to craft and analyze profiles out of biographical data. In general the pilot study assured me that my study approach was realistic.

Sampling procedure

My target sample comprised of two groups of respondents: high school women principals and their teachers. The sample of high school principals consisted of three successful women from different ethnic affiliations in Kenya. The sample of teachers consisted of teachers from the schools headed by the women principals in my study. I interviewed a total of six teachers, two from each school (one male and the other female). I applied the purposeful sampling procedure in selecting the women principals. This method allowed me to select informants that suited my selection criteria, such as "successful" women principals and ethnicity. One of the defining characteristics of the women principals that were in my sample was that they had to be "successful" principals. In this study I considered a woman principal successful if she had been principal for at least five years, had led in a mixed-sex/coed school and the school had posted good student performance in national examinations. Student performance in Kenya is gauged mainly through the national examinations that students take at the end of their 4th year in secondary school. Therefore, by good student performance, I imply that the schools included in this study exhibited improved performance in the National examinations during the tenure of the women studied. My motivation

to study women principals in coed and/or boys-only schools is based on the observation that heading a Kenyan high school whose population consists of male students is more demanding than one without them. In this regard, women leading coed schools are considered to be more successful than those heading single-sex girls' schools. I obtained data about the principals and their respective schools from the headquarters of the Ministry of Education where records about school principals, national examination results, hiring protocols and other operations are kept. At the time of the study, there were a total of 8,113 high school principals heading public schools. Only 612 were women.

I sampled my teacher respondents using convenience sampling as I selected and interviewed any male and female teacher willing to participate in the study. During my initial visits to the schools to meet the principals, I visited the staff room and explained my study to any of the teachers that I found in the room either during lunch time or during their free hours. The first male and female teachers that were willing to participate were the ones I included in this study.

<center>Introducing the Women in the Study</center>

This being a biographical study, the lives of my participants are explained in detail through their narratives. This section, therefore, gives a brief demographic background of my participants. Joan is married with four children; two adult sons and one teenage daughter. She is in her fifties and has served as a principal for a total of 11 years in her community located in the Rift Valley province of Kenya. Currently she holds a Master's degree in leadership and education policy. Nina is a widow in her mid forties. She has five children; 3 girls and 2 boys. She has been a school principal for about 10 years in her local community within Nyanza province in Western Kenya. She has a Master's degree in educational administration. Nancy comes from the central province

of Kenya. She is in her mid fifties and a single mother of two adult boys. She had served as a head teacher within her province for approximately 14 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in education.

Data collection

In collecting data from the principals I conducted one-to-one in-depth interviews. The interviews were in three phases. Some interviews were longer than others but each of the three-phased interviews was at least one hour long and I allowed for an interval of at least one week between the interviews. The lapse of time between interviews was important because it enabled the participant to think over the next interview and it minimized the effect of the participant's deplorable days on the quality of the interview (Seidman, 2006). Seidman also notes that the repeated interaction between the interviewer and the participant affects positively their relationship. The first interview focused on my informant' childhood experiences, such as the family of origin, important values and principles upheld during childhood and the respondents' religious affiliation. The second interview sought to understand the schooling experiences of my informant. The interview also included questions about marital status or the marriage life of the respondents. The last phase of the interview concentrated on the experiences of my informant at work as a woman high school principal. I audio taped all the interviews in order to capture data more accurately and refer to it later during data analysis.

In addition to the interview questions, I designed a demographics survey which my respondents filled out before conducting the interview. This protocol gave me some background information about the respondent in advance. The information proved to be very important during the interview sessions because I could refer to some of the survey responses to get the respondents talk about some issues that otherwise might have been missed in the interviews. For example, if

the respondent indicated that she was single but had children, I would ask some probing questions in order to understand whether she was divorced, widowed or whether she got children out of wed-lock.

Regarding the interview venue, two respondents allowed me to conduct the first interview at their homes but carried out the second and third interviews in their offices at school. With the third respondent, I conducted all the three interviews at school in her office. Initially, I intended to conduct the first and second interviews at the respondents' homes and the third interview at the respondent's work place. I presumed that the home environment may arouse memories of childhood, schooling and marriage. Similarly, I thought the work environment would remind the informants about significant work-related events that have influenced their school leadership. However, the venues were adjusted according to the respondents' work schedules and personal preferences but in overall, I got meaningful data regardless of where the interview was conducted.

To provide insights into the interviews with my respondents, I observed them at work for two days. I also attended official school meetings like the school board and staff meetings. In two schools, I attended both the staff and school board meetings while in one of the schools I was able to attend the school board meeting and the parents, teachers and students conference. This helped me understand more about the nature of relationships existing in the women principals' schools, particularly, between the principals and their teachers as well as other school administrators. I also took field notes during the observation and interview period to keep record of some details I observed during the data collection process.

Another source of data was document analysis. First, I perused records from the Ministry of Education particularly those related to participation rates of women school principals, my

respondents' years of experience, and student performance in my respondents' schools. Second, I went through one of my respondents' photo albums during my interviews with her at her home. The time we spent together looking at the albums generated some informal but important conversations particularly about her immediate family members and friends.

The teacher interviews took place on the school premises and lasted between 30-35 minutes long. The specific venues varied between the staffroom, laboratory, library, and a conference room. These venues provided the privacy that the interviewees needed.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study is interpretive in nature. I adopted Seidman's (2006) approach for analyzing phenomenological interview data and Miles and Huberman's (1994) case analysis approach to make sense out of my informant's narratives. Using Seidman's approach, I first transcribed the interview data and then constructed narrative profiles of each of the women principal respondents. To make profiles, I read through the transcripts marking with brackets the passages that were interesting to me. I made two copies of the marked transcript. I kept one copy as the original transcript and from the other copy I cut and pasted the marked passages into a new file to make a third shorter transcript. This is the copy I used to craft abbreviated narratives that highlighted the most remarkable experiences of the women principals in my study. The narratives are presented using the respondent's words except that I deleted some of the phrases that the informant would not have used in written speech. Examples of these characters include, "you know", "uhm", "I was like". In cases where I used my own words to make transitions or make clarifications I used symbols to separate my insertions from the informants' words. I, therefore, shared my interview data through the narratives that I crafted.

To interpret the data, I applied Miles and Huberman's (1994) within and cross-case data analysis approach. In respect to within-case analysis, I carefully read through the shorter transcript from which I crafted the narratives and assigned codes to phrases, sentences and/or paragraphs that relate to "a particular research question, hypothesis, construct or theme" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57). For each profile, I combined coded segments that seemed to be related and gave them a common unifying label or theme in order to reduce data further and make it more meaningful. In regard to cross-case analysis I searched for themes across the cases and identified some underlying similarities and differences in the themes. I then drew interpretive conclusions, using primarily the gender socialization concept.

Issues of Reliability and Validity

The issues of validity and reliability or trustworthiness are widespread concerns in qualitative research (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Roberts, 2002). Some scholars have argued that it is hard to ensure validity in qualitative research because of the interpretive nature (Schwandt, 1990). In my study, I increased internal validity through the multiple sources of data: interviews, observation, field notes and document analysis. The pilot study also enabled me verify that my overall approach to the study was feasible. To further increase the internal validity I plan to send a draft of the analyzed data to my participants for member checking.

In regard to external validity, this study is not intended to be generalized to all groups of women leaders in Kenya or all women school principals. However, its strength lies in the possibility to make visible some of the delimiting cultural aspects that have contributed to women's underrepresentation in school leadership in Kenya. The experiences of the three women principals studied who come from different ethnic backgrounds are adequate in revealing the effect

of self-image is shaping the destiny of women in school leadership. The study also highlights some of the support systems that can be tapped to enhance women's journeys to leadership. As Chase (2005) suggests, "Any narrative is significant because it embodies – and it gives us insight into – what is possible and intelligible within a specific social context" (p. 667). Therefore, through the experiences of a few women from localized regions of Kenya, we may have a localized but valid understanding of the issues affecting women school leadership in those parts of the country.

Concerning reliability, some authors on qualitative studies have argued that validity and reliability are inseparable in qualitative research (Bashir, Afzal & Azeem, 2008). Once validity is taken care of, then reliability is insured. Golafshani (2003) notes, "Reliability is a consequence of the validity in a [qualitative] study" (P.602). I adopted Golafshani's view on the relationship between validity and reliability and devised ways of increasing validity in this study.

The Researcher's Personal Story

I was born and raised in western Kenya where I also received my primary and secondary school education. I completed my undergraduate studies from a Kenyan private university. I belong to the Gusii ethnic community of Nyanza Province. I am married with two daughters. My husband, Jonathan (a doctoral student), and I come from the same ethnic community. I am the third born in a family of 7 children: five girls and two boys. My father is a retired church minister while my mother is a home maker. All my siblings except one have college education.

Throughout my life religion has been an integral part of my family, both before and after marriage. My families are members of the Seventh Day Adventist church. As a child, I participated in various church activities for children and youths. In the evenings we held family worship during which we sang hymns and read verses from the bible. In addition, our parents counseled us on a number of issues. They taught us the essence moral uprightness and loving others. They also

explained to us the negative elements in our culture such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Unfortunately, my grandma schemed and had my older sister and I undergo FGM against our wishes and those of our parents. Although undergoing FGM satisfied a cultural tradition, I never approved it.

The Gusii are a patriarchal society. When faced with difficulties in educating their children, most families prefer to educate boys. In my case, my parents never discriminated against us girls. They chose to educate all of us regardless of gender. I owe my parents for the successful climb I have had in my educational journey. Thus my own experience has taught me that family plays a central role in the liberation of the girl child. I decided to do my dissertation on women leadership in Kenya in order to contribute to the improvement of the status of women in society.

Researcher Reflexivity

There has been a lot of debate on how much the researcher needs to be reflexive, particularly, in qualitative studies. By being reflexive, "researchers are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and how the research processes affect them" (Gilgun, 2010; p. 1). There has been a call "for researchers to indicate their own relationship to the study – their presence in the research and the influence of social background, for example gender, race, social class, or religion" (Roberts, 2002; p. 13) on the outcome of the study. To date, the extent of the researcher and respondent's collaboration is open to discussion but the core concept in the discussion is that qualitative researchers' awareness of their influence on the research is necessary to help them in their endeavor to strike a balance between retelling the respondent's story and drawing on their own experiences as a way of understanding the socio-historical forces on individuals' lives.

My studies-both the pilot and the actual study-have made me more and more aware of how much my own life story is similar to or different from that of my respondents and possibly from other women scholars from Kenya. Similar to other researchers, I struggled with the reflexivity concept but I kept referring to various authors throughout the analysis process. However, one of the essential lessons in regard to reflexivity is that I get over-intrigued with the portions of the respondents' story that differ from my own experience and thus might over-emphasize those details. To minimize such kind of influence in the analysis of my study, I kept reminding myself about the reflexivity balance while systematically following the principles of my analytical framework.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to my field work, I obtained a written approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in my institution. To keep my respondents' identities confidential, I used pseudonyms for their names, their schools and also some personal information that could easily distinguish them. Also, I personally conducted the interviews and transcribed and analyzed the data to further conceal their identities.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the respondents' narratives and the whole process of making sense out of the narratives. I present a brief narrative of each of the three women principals I interviewed, paying attention to the unique experiences in each woman's story. I primarily use the women's own words in presenting the narratives. In cases where I use my own words to make connections or to elaborate on something, my words appear in italics. Also I have used pseudonyms for all the names of people, places and institutions except names of presidents, where mentioned. In interpreting the stories, I do a single narrative analysis by looking at each narrative as a case. I first identify and discuss the major themes in each narrative and then I relate the emerging themes to the women's self image and gender socialization at home, at school, and in leadership.

It emerges from the narratives that the issues of polygamy and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) occupy a prominent place in the experiences of two of the women in my study. For this reason, in the following paragraphs, I provide a brief background on how polygamy and FGM are practiced in Kenya. This exposition will make it easy to follow the experiences reflected in the two respondents' narratives.

The Culture of Polygamy in Kenya

Polygamy, the practice of getting married to more than one partner at the same time, has been a prominent type of marriage among most Kenyan communities. Some writers prefer to use the terms polygamy to refer to the situation in which one husband is married to many wives and

polyandry when one wife is married to many husbands (Jonas, 2012). However in this passage, I will use polygamy to refer to the practice of marrying more than one wife at the same time. Polygamy is a legal custom in Kenya (Maillu, 1988). The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2008-2009) revealed that of the eight provinces in Kenya, polygamy is most prevalent in North Eastern (36%), Western (23%), Nyanza (21%), Rift Valley (15%) and Coast (15%) provinces no.

The culture of polygamy in Kenya has its roots in pre-colonial times, when the "economy of high land/man ratio became well-established in sub-Saharan Africa" (Hayase & Liaw, 1997; p. 295). The increase in mortality rate due to wars, diseases and poor climate led to a vast decrease in population which necessitated polygamy with the intent of fast reproduction to sustain the seemingly vanishing sub-Saharan communities (Hayase & Liaw, 1997). Also since agricultural production depended on women and children, polygamy ensured large families with many wives and children to provide cheap farm labor (Maillu, 1988; Hayase & Liaw, 1997). With the values attached to it, polygamy accorded men status in society. Manliness was associated with the accumulation of wealth in form of land and many wives and children (Silberschmidt, 1992).

In some communities men take more wives not necessarily by marrying but through wife inheritance within one's clan. Kenyan communities are subdivided into clans which consist of a large family of kinspeople. The essence of wife inheritance is family line continuity in that instead of letting the widowed woman remarry in a different family, one of the men in the clan takes over to make her stay in order to carry on the family name of the deceased man.

Kenyan polygamous families function like separate household units within a big family. The husband divides land, livestock and other property among his wives. Each wife has her own share of possessions and lives in her own house with her children. The husband is expected to support his wives equally. Traditionally, the polygamous man is supposed to live in the youngest

47

wife's house but he may visit the other wives as he pleases. However, in some cases a man may choose to live in any of his wives' houses depending on his preferences.

Although polygamy is still practiced in Kenya, the culture is becoming less widespread with time due to various reasons. To begin with, the economic situation in Kenya has changed. The agricultural land that was once in excess is not available any more. The Kenyan population has greatly increased leading to land shortage. Since most families in Kenya depend on agriculture, large families are becoming less popular because it is becoming quite difficult for even monogamous families to meet the basic needs with the decrease in farming land. Second, the women rights activists have started to enlighten women about their rights within marriage and sensitizing them on the objectification of women through polygamy. Third, some religious denominations in Kenya disapprove polygamous marriages (Njiiri, 1998). Nevertheless, since polygamy is not considered illegal, the practice is still alive in Kenya today.

Most polygamous families in Kenya today are characterized by internal conflict. This is partly because of the scramble for the scarce resources among households. When their needs are not met, some wives feel abandoned and neglected, and therefore, start pointing fingers at their co-wives as the source of their problems. Also in the past, polygamy was generally acceptable by all members of society including women. In most communities, it is the first wife who asked the husband to marry another wife to help with the duties around the home. The first wife sometimes took part in finding a suitable wife for her husband. In arrangement of this kind, conflict among co-wives was rare because the senior wives initiated and approved of their husbands marrying additional wives. In the contrary, polygamous marriages nowadays are neither encouraged nor approved by first wives, which is partly the cause of conflicts experienced in polygamous families. However, in a male dominated society like Kenya, polygamy is likely to linger. In spite of the

effects that poverty, women rights movements and religious have had on polygamy, the practice is still pervasive in Kenya today and is likely to persist for years to come.

The Practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Kenya

Female genital mutilation, also referred to as female circumcision or clitoridectomy, is a cultural practice that has been prevalent in Kenya for a long time. The communities in which FGM is rampant include the Maasai, Somali and Gusii. FGM is conducted differently in different communities and the procedure is categorized into type I, type II and type III depending on the amount of tissue that is removed during the operation. Type I is the most common in Kenya and involves cutting off the entire, or part of, the clitoris; type II refers to the cutting off of the entire or part of the clitoris and partial or complete removal of labia minora. Type III, the most severe form of FGM, is less common in Kenya and involves partial or entire removal of the clitoris, labia minora and labia majora. The wound is then stitched together leaving a small opening for menstrual and urine flow. (Oloo, Wanjiru & Newell-Jones, 2011)

In most Kenyan communities the practice FGM is a rite of passage that symbolizes a girl's transition from childhood to womanhood. After undergoing the rite, the initiates are supposed to conduct themselves in a mature manner. In some communities, FGM signals readiness for marriage while in others it is simply a rite of passage and a girl does not have to necessarily get married immediately after the rite. Either way, FGM is regarded highly in communities where it is practiced. Forgoing circumcision in such communities arouses stigma and ridicule. Most girls, therefore, are forced to undergo circumcision in order to acquire a sense of belonging and acceptance in their community.

Like in the case of polygamy, the prevalence of FGM in Kenya is diminishing in some communities because of the influence of some religious institutions and female activist groups

49

fighting against female circumcision (Olenja & Kamau, 2001). Also in the year 2001, the Kenyan government passed a legislation banning FGM (Africa Department, 2009). Nevertheless, FGM is still practiced in Kenya. The Kenyan communities that practice FGM regard it as one of their social norms that they find hard to abandon. It is such norms that define them as a coherent unit despite the fact that FGM poses numerous health risks to girls and women. FGM also affects girls' education in communities where initiates get married upon circumcision. Girls in such communities are socialized to believe not in formal education but in the culture of FGM and its role in reinforcing cultural identity and transforming girls into adults. In the contrary, formal education has proved to be an effective tool for empowering girls and women to make wise decisions about their health, marriage, and other human rights issues (Africa Department, 2009). On the other hand, FGM traps girls in the culture of ignorance and thus lose their educational opportunities as most of the initiates enter into early marriages that increase greatly after circumcision.

In summary, FGM is a cultural practice that violates the rights of women and girls in more than a half of the Kenyan communities. Some girls are forced to undergo circumcision not because they approve of it but because they want to have a sense belong in their communities and families (Njue & Askew, 2004). Besides, girls in these communities have no option but to undergo this rite which is effectively implemented by parents across the community. However, government legislation, religious teachings, human rights activism, and internal changes occurring in communities that practice FGM have combined to reduce cases of FGM in Kenya.

Joan's narrative – Shujaa Mixed Secondary School

I was born in a place called Bendera. The year *I was born* is not clearly known because my parents were not literate enough but they had some historical events that enabled me to trace my year of birth to be around 1962 in the great locust invasion in history. So we were able to trace that to 1962 around the month of July and so that is my birthday. I was born to Obori who was a polygamist, my mother being the second wife. He had three wives, my mother being the second wife, or the middle wife. My mother had 4 children: 3 boys, myself, the only girl. My first step mom had two children and the last wife was inherited. It was after my father lost his brother that he (my father) took up his wife. So she (the third wife) is supposed to be my aunt but she is my stepmother and she managed to get a daughter.

I grew up in Shujaa and I was fortunate enough to have gone to school. At the age of 10, 11 is when I started schooling. *I started* in standard one *because* those days, there was no nursery school. So I just went to class one direct. Before then, my father was not prepared to take me to school but he prepared me to look after animals. I took care of animals in the grazing fields away from home. When I came back home my friends in the neighborhood had gone to school. So I also said that I want to go school. My father said "I think you are over age" *but* I said I want to go to school. Finally he allowed me to go to school and I started my class one in 1972. That was around 10 years to be precise.

When I reached class 6 my brother from the first wife insisted that I should not go to class 7. He said if I go to class 7 I will do well and go to secondary and he was in form 1 (9th grade) and my father will have a problem paying (our school fees). He really struggled to ensure that I repeated class 6 but fortunate enough my father said "ok let us take her to school and ask the teachers that she repeat class 6." So when we went to school I had my female teacher who said "no she cannot

repeat. You cannot waste her." She demanded that I proceed to class 7. While I was at primary *school* my mother differed with my father and she had to leave for her home. You know the people that drink have problems *and* their marriages are not stable. My dad was not a drunkard as such but he could drink a little but my mom was a real drunkard. Being the only girl of my mom, I had to take care of my brothers.

It is surprising that my dad did no marry me off when I was young because you know in Shujaa, basically issues of early marriage were not prevalent. Then secondly, my dad grew up in Trans-Nzoia where he worked for the white settlers. So he had a bit of knowledge about law, rights and what have you. It is only unfortunate that he never took education very seriously at that point in time *though*. So, issues of early marriages were not there. Thirdly traditionally you could not arrange for marriage of a girl who has not been circumcised. I never underwent the rite anyway. I am very lucky. I knew I started school late and I just wanted to learn (study) and learn and learn because the person who really motivated me was my neighbor and my teacher. When I used to visit their place, I really liked the lifestyle and then I said "one day I will want to live like this." So, issues of peer pressure to undergo the rite were not there.

There is this time my father asked me to go and stay with my first mom. I didn't stay there for long. I think there is something in me that could not allow anybody to joke with me and let somebody stumble strumble on. I could fight for my rights even if I was young. My first mom had a daughter and they could stay at home the whole day because she (the daughter) never went to school. So when I came back in the evening I could be asked "go fetch water, go get firewood, do some grinding, and look for vegetables" Who is doing that? I was not ready to be a slave of another person. I'd rather do it when I am alone. I wanted my cousin-sister too to participate in the work but she didn't. I went back to my mom's house.

I respect my dad *because he* was a worker and he trained us to work and be independent. Our father gave us support. He trained us up like even for my brothers, there was no division of labor in our house. My father could say "it is you today to cook, it is you today to go to the river, and it is all of us on Saturday to go to the bush to look for firewood." So we had work but all of us did the work. You know we had the hand grinding machine and grinding was just a duty for all of us. There was nothing like my brothers would leave the work to me. My dad would stay with us most of the time. My father could say "there is no one here all of you are my children and you can work." And my brothers just gave us the support. We linked up very well with them. *Besides,* my father could sell a cow to take me to school. *For sure my dad* protected me and I think it is also God and that madam and that role model of mine who kept on talking to me and telling me boys will waste you so take care. I became very aggressive because I wanted to be a teacher like her.

I went to Naboko girls' secondary school for my form one and life was good except for the fact that I went to secondary when my mother was not there. So issues of being visited were not there. Issues of being bought what you wanted like a secondary school student could have wanted was not there. My father struggled to meet my school expenses. My life was full of struggle in form 1 but in form 2 my head teacher connected me with Jomo Kenyatta foundation. I was given that scholarship and I managed to finish school without so much trouble. At form two is where the resolution to follow Jesus was real, I got so much involved with the Christian union and my friends began mentoring us on cultural impediments that we call today FGM, that is circumcision. *As I told you* in my community there was no forced circumcision because it was also a bad omen if a girl screams during the operation. That was the trick that some of us used. You either postpone *circumcision* until you finish your schooling or forget about it altogether. So that is why I never got circumcised because I joined the right group. I did not attend circumcision functions neither

did I go with the girls in the village to some of those functions. So it became difficult for my friends to convince me also. *However* it was going to be hard to find a husband because I had not undergone the cut but I got a man who is a Christian and who was praying to get a woman who has not been circumcised. Are you getting!

About A-levels, I cleared from Naboko with a strong division 3. What affected me most was the absence of my mother. But God was good he gave me a division 3 and I was admitted at Usalama girls. I had not gone beyond my home town so at Usalama I had a culture shock *with foods we ate, teachers and students' behaviors and school rules and regulations*. I stayed there for one year very depressed, very dissatisfied and learned nothing I didn't belong to that environment completely. I, therefore took off and completed my A level in a school that was in my community.

After I finished my A-level I got employment with World Vision Kenya and after a year I got married. I met my husband at the end of form 5 but the agreement was if I happen to pass then I go to the university if I don't pass then I think we can consider *marriage*." And he said "fine I have no problem. When the results came I didn't make it and I said "OK fine let us go ahead on condition that in the near future I still want to fulfill my dream of one day going to the university." He said "well and good I will support you." So we wedded and I got my first born child in 86. In 88 I went to a teachers training college and my husband was very good. He took care of our one and a half years child. I taught for 3 years then I decided to go to the university. I cleared my degree within 3 years and in 1997 I was posted to Shujaa mixed secondary school. I taught there for 2 years and in 2000 I was appointed as a head teacher in a starting school; right from class to headship. In 2001 again I was transferred by the PDE back to Shujaa as a principal. I have been the longest serving head since the institution of the school.

Even though I was nominated to become a leader, ambition is there. Even my going to university was motivated by *the fact that I was* a local girl not having the right papers to sit somewhere. Diploma alone would not have enabled me to be where I am today. Also, most employers were kind of favoring the people that they know. For some of us who were Christians, "who could anyway look at you to promote you?" I needed to go back to school so that a promotion becomes automatic. *Concerning juggling school and family duties*, I want to say being a married woman with children might not have affected my leadership so much because, one my husband is very supportive, 2 I have a small family; when you have 3 kids life is just OK. There was not so much in my family that could have affected my work. I worked well, I went for meetings and my husband never came on my way to say no. I also did not interfere with his work. So when both of us left our offices, we met in the house and we were parents until our children grew.

As a woman principal, I feel great. I am not the only woman principal. There are others who are ahead of me but in the community we are just few; a handful and we feel nice that we are able to serve other people. The community really desire that we have women leaders in our institutions of higher learning so as to serve as role models for the girls. However, there are challenges. For example, *it is hard to* deal with the girls in the rural community when they undergo circumcision. They look at themselves as big women. *Women are taking up leadership positions more than before* but we still have a long way to go in terms of getting women who will get into those competitive careers that men are getting into. But I think in the near future we are reaching there. If there was some organization that will sponsor women who are willing to pursue education and from those marginalized communities, particularly, I think that could help.

Joan's Enabling Factors

It is clear from Joan's narrative that her leadership journey started with her growing up in her village. In this journey, Joan was privileged to have some empowering opportunities that contributed to the successful school leader she is today. Some of these opportunities were provided by her family, school, and the community while some of them came through self-motivation and self-discipline. All these factors speak to the question of how or why some Kenyan women school leaders become successful in spite of the challenges they face along the way. The following are the most pertinent factors that enabled Joan to go through school and finally ascend onto school leadership.

Father's Support

Joan's story exemplifies the extent to which fathers can influence their girl children and thus determine their destiny. Joan was not raised up in a well-to-do family. She grew up in a polygamous family with scarce resources shared by all the members of a large family. Her growing up was full of struggles with a lot of choices to make in order to succeed in life. Amidst all the challenges she faced, she managed to go through school because her father was ready to provide the support she needed. The support came in various forms. First Joan's father socialized all her children into non-gendered division of labor as Joan testified:

> Our father gave us support. He trained us up like even for my brothers, there was no division of labor in our house. My father could say "it is you today to cook, it is you today to go to the river, and it is all of us on Saturday to go to the bush to look for firewood." So we had work but all of us did the work. If it is taking care of the animals "it is you today to take care of the animals. It is so and so today to go to

the river."You know we had the hand-grinding machine and grinding was just a

duty for all of us. There was nothing like my brothers would leave the work to me.

In most developing countries division of labor among children of the same household is normally skewed against female children. The disproportional assignments that girls have to complete at home count as one of the greatest hindering factors to girls' advancement particularly in education. Girls always have a lot more chores to do at home and school as compared to boys (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998). That Joan's father assigned duties to all her siblings in a proportionate way regardless of their gender was a positive influence on Joan's self esteem. Joan was socialized right from her childhood to believe that girls and boys are equal and thus can perform the same tasks. Unlike her family, their neighbors had distinct chores for girls and boys. Joan considered herself lucky and loved for the simple reason that she shared chores with her brothers:

> There was a family that was living next to our family. That one was a real traditional
>
> family where the girl should do the work for girls, and boys could not come near
>
> the kitchen or anything. But ours was very different. My father could say "there is
>
> no one here all of you are my children and can you work!

Besides dividing chores equally among his children, Joan's father responsibly paid Joan's school fees through high school. In Kenya, lack of school fees is a common reason why most girls drop out of school. Studies have shown that in cases where families cannot raise enough money for school expenses for all children, boys are given a priority (Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Sankhulani, 2007). The situation was different in Joan's family. Her father was willing to sell his precious cows to raise Joan's school fees. Surprisingly, Joan's brothers dropped out of school but that did not discourage or distract Joan's father from educating her, as Joan narrated:

57

My father paid for my school expenses and though I was a girl ... He [my father] was so far up to recently the only one who educated his children up to some level except for the failures of my brothers who dropped because of drinking. They were supported but they failed. So it was different. My father would sell a cow to take me to school where as in most homes they could not sell a cow to take their children to school. Cows were precious those days and especially to educate a girl. If you look and compare to the homesteads around, my father succeeded to educate me whereas my own friends from the neighborhood dropped because of pregnancy.

Finally, Joan's father protected her from boys who could have wooed her in early marriage or sexual relationships that could possibly disrupt her studies. Joan comes from one of the Kenyan communities that are known for their strong attachment to their traditions, one of them being the marrying off of underage girls after circumcision. It would not have been surprising at all for Joan's father to give away Joan for marriage instead of educating her. However, he did not choose to marry her off. Instead he honored Joan's wish of getting the highest education and, therefore, safeguarded her from boys who kept loitering along the compound fence in search of Joan as she recounted:

And if they [boys] continued hanging I could go and tell my father "look at that boy over there." And my father could chase them away… For sure my dad protected me. That is why I keep saying God rest my father's soul. He really molded me. He really, you know, he really helped me.

In most Kenyan communities, fathers and daughters do not interact so closely. In fact in rural families, daughters eat with their mothers in the kitchen while boys eat with their fathers in

the "big house"; normally the main house is separate from the kitchen. Joan's case seems different. She appears to have developed a kind of closeness with her father, which is not typical of many Kenyan families particularly in Joan's community and childhood days. Otherwise it could not have been easy for her to report to her father the presence of the potential suitors who hung around their fence. As she mentions, her relationship with her dad may have been exceptional because her father worked with white settlers and consequently may have been sensitized about issues, such as human rights, that made his behavior different from other fathers in her village. As she put it, "My dad grew up in Trans-Nzoia. He went and took care of I don't know if he was helping these whites-the white settlers. So he worked and he had a bit of knowledge about law, rights". Perhaps, Joan's father had learnt from his white masters the importance of socializing both boys and girls into a uniform pattern of life. He then practiced this on his own family, with Joan becoming a great beneficiary.

Joan spent most of her childhood life without her mother. Her mother had differed with her dad and left home only to return later when Joan was about to complete her A-level education. Having her father around as the sole parent may be one of the reasons that Joan and her father developed a rare closeness between father and daughter. She never had a chance of learning from her mother during her growing up days as she expressed: "Anyway, simply my mother never shaped us. I never learned much from my mother. I think my father is the one who shaped us in terms of the skills he gave us". This segment of Joan's narrative underlines the influence that Joan's father had on her. The absence of Joan's mother during her childhood meant that Joan had her father as the main socializing agent in her life. This explains the basis of Joan's closeness to her father. Evidently, Joan's success in school that saw her become a successful school leader has its roots in the kind of socialization she got from her father during her childhood and beyond.

Husband's Support

Joan's journey to leadership highlights the prominent role of her husband's support and motivation throughout her schooling, work and leadership times. Before they got married, Joan had expressed to her husband-to-be her wish to further her education. He supported her idea and did all he could to facilitate her efforts in advancing her education. Indeed Joan's husband kept his word as her narrative consistently demonstrates. When she was ready to join the teachers' training college her husband was willing to take care of their child:

> So I got my first born child in 86. In 87 I tried to find a college but I couldn't get it. In 88 I was admitted to the then Makutano teachers' college. I went there and my husband was very good. He accepted to take care of our one and a half years child. I left the child with him and I went to college. He was teaching but he allowed me to go to college do my diploma.

In the literature it has been shown that a woman's desire to advance her career or studies may meet strong opposition from her husband (Lumby, Azaola, De Wet, Skervin, Walsh, & Williamson, 2010; Matope, 2012). Stay-at-home dads or fathers who are ready to juggle their careers with child-rearing while their wives are working or studying are rare particularly in developing countries like Kenya. Joan's husband is one of the exceptional cases. He never became impatient or tired as Joan advanced her education at different stages in their marriage. Later, when Joan enrolled in a Bachelor's degree program, Joan's husband not only took care of their third child but also financed part of Joan's university education, as Joan proudly recounts:

> "So he [husband] allowed me I went to the university and I went to Matokeo University. I got work-study program to raise tuition fee. So I worked and raised my tuition fee and my husband paid for my accommodation….. when I went to

Matokeo I had gotten our second born …Remember I had the first born during my

diploma. The second born I took care of him and I got a third child, a daughter.

When she was seven months, I decided to go to the university. So my husband had

to nurse a 7 months old girl. I think my husband is exceptional. He is the one who

took care of our first born child and he had to take care of our 7 months old baby.

Joan's husband seems to be laid back as regards to advancing his own education. After Joan

completed her Bachelor's degree, she encouraged him to go for a bachelor's degree too.

Unfortunately, the work-study program that paid for Joan's tuition was discontinued. Joan's

husband could not advance his studies without the help of such a program. Furthermore, he claimed

to be too old for school and instead encouraged Joan to enroll for a Master's program. His apparent

lack of ambition for further studies did not hamper Joan's determination to earn graduate

education. Instead, she capitalized on his support for her urge for further studies:

In 2009, I asked him that I wanted to go and pursue my Master's and he was ready.

He was very ready to support. I know not many men can do that. And even in

December last year when we were celebrating my Masters certificate at home, he

clearly indicated to the guests when they came that he was even ready to support

me. He said "if madam would wish to pursue her PhD he is ready to sell even part

of his land if he doesn't have money to pay for her.

Joan's husband was not only supportive in her education but also in easing up Joan's

responsibilities as a married woman with young children and also serving as a school principal.

Unlike many married career wives who have to deal single-handedly with their job duties and

family responsibilities (Rarieya, 2007; Lumby, Azaola, De Wet, Skervin, Walsh, & Williamson,

61

2010), in Joan's case her husband assisted with duties at home which made Joan's work light at home, and by extension, at work as a school principal. Joan brings this point up in her narrative when she talks about her positive experience as a woman principal even when she has children to take care of:

> There was not so much in my family that could have affected my work. I worked well, I went for meetings and my husband never came on my way to say no. I also did not interfere with his work. So when both of us left our offices, we met in the house and we were parents. We shared all the work at home after work. We cease being a teacher and a principal. We left those in the offices and came home as parents.

Joan seems to have played a part in winning her husband's support. Even after having advanced her education beyond that of her husband and earned a leadership position at school, Joan never looked down upon her husband. In spite of her advanced education and rank as principal, she still played her role as a wife and reciprocated her husband's support, love and caring spirit. She did not brag about her academic qualifications and privileged position of school principal. She understood that such an attitude caused conflict between educated wives and their husbands:

> African women, sometimes they are proud. When they see they are more educated than the husband, they look down upon the husband. With me he has never seen that in me. When I come home I become a wife. I become what he wants me to be. There is no single day I have bragged or anything. Even when he is among his friends I show him the respect he deserves because that is the person I chose for my life forever. So he has never actually shown any dissatisfaction in terms of the way

I treat him and I am proud of him. Even amongst my friends I am ready to introduce

him to my friends and I tell them where my husband works.

Apart from showing respect to her husband, Joan has always wished to sustain her marriage
by staying away from the kind of gossip that destroys many families (Lanham, 1996). In her early
years of marriage, she was leading a local women group but she later on decided to quit because
she was not comfortable with the gossip that was going on there:

You know women like gossiping. That is one thing that I didn't like and I think I

hated the whole thing of being in [women] groups. I never loved that kind of thing.

For example, after getting married and I was in a group, women used to discuss

about their home affairs and their families and I said "from today I don't want to

be in this group" because I never contributed and I was a leader. I didn't want to

engage myself with gossip.

The above text expresses Joan's determination to keep her marriage secure which later shows up
in her continued effort to respect her husband and keep a healthy marriage regardless of the fact
that she is more educated than her husband. On top of safeguarding her marriage, Joan established
a good relationship with her in-laws, which may have been an added advantage in her marriage
experience. Since most Kenyan communities are patriarchal, husbands are not expected to occupy
'feminine' roles. Any man found to be occupying roles such as such as baby sitting and cooking
especially in a case where the woman is more educated than the husband, such a wife is always
accused of having bewitched her husband or the husband is said to be hen-pecked. In a situation
like this may sever relations between the husband's family and their daughter in-law, and may lead
to separation or divorce. While the family of Joan's husband may have been comfortable with the

situation in his house and respected his position, Joan worked hard to avoid conflicts in her marriage:

> I relate with my in-laws so well regardless of the fact that I am well educated. The good thing with me, Damaris, I am a very simple lady and I interact with anybody coming my way… With my in-laws I appreciated them, they appreciated me and that is that. I have no complaints and I think they have no complaints… I go along with my sisters-in-law. I am like their youngest sister. I took it upon myself to help my in-laws. In fact they don't have to go to my husband to ask for anything. They come to me. I have taken care of them and I have taken care of some of their children.

It is clear from Joan's account that her husband contributed a lot to the success of her leadership journey. The support of one's husband is vital in the success of any married Kenyan woman school leader. Joan's experience as a married career woman is quite extraordinary. It is rare for a Kenyan man to allow and encourage his wife to advance in education and career while neglecting his own. It is mostly well educated men who sometimes see the sense in supporting their wives to progress in education and career in order to become "intellectually" fit for them. Joan's experience with her husband is a revelation of why positive gender socialization is necessary for both boys and girls. The support Joan received from both her husband and father is rare in a patriarchal society as her. Her husband perpetuated the kind of socialization Joan had received at her home under the leadership of his enlightened father. It is doubtful if Joan could have gone so high in her education and career if both her father and husband denied her the opportunity to advance her education and assume a school leadership role. In other words, even if Joan was born into a patriarchal society in Kenya, she managed to rise in her education and career

to become a successful school leader owing to the kind of gender socialization she received from the two important men in her life: her father and her husband. The way they treated her made her to believe that a woman can achieve what a man can achieve, and this must have raised her self-image. Her success in education must have encouraged her to take a leadership role with confidence that she would succeed just as she had done in education and at home.

Teachers' Support

While students generally need support from their teachers in order to succeed in school, female children need it even more. However, sometimes schools perpetuate the biases of gender socialization found in the wider society in which they are located. It is not uncommon to find that teachers hold different expectations for boys and girls in which the girl's potential and abilities are underestimated (Stromquist, 2007). In Joan's case, most of her teachers were supportive in her studies. Joan started school comparatively late, at the age of ten. In this case she needed to be appreciated and encouraged in order to succeed in school. In her narrative, Joan recounts how some of her teachers who had realized her potential made it possible for her to advance to the next classes. Some teachers encourage her to do her best in school and also assisted her to find funding opportunities for her education. In one occasion, Joan's step-brother who was in high school tried to influence their father to have Joan repeat Standard 6 (6th grade) in fear that if Joan proceeds to 7th grade and later to high school, it would be difficult for their father to afford to raise school fees for both of them. When this idea reached one of her teachers, this teacher opposed it vehemently, as Joan narrated:

> When we went to school I had my female teacher who did not come too far away
> from our area and she said "no she cannot repeat. You cannot waste her." She
> demanded that I proceed to class 7. I, therefore, proceeded and sat for my Kenya

Certificate of Primary Education… they wondered "how could a girl in position one repeat? My teachers really fought for me.

Joan also tells how the same female teacher who defended her promotion to 7th grade became her prime example and how she advised Joan on academic matters. This teacher was indeed one the role models Joan had early in life. Joan narrated:

I had a lady teacher who was very supportive and she was actually my role model; a very good madam. She talked to me on the importance of education and I came to admire her life and I think part of what I am having today is because of her. She is the same lady who told my parents that I could not repeat. She loved me and God was good because I was bright.

Raising high school fees in Kenya is a hard task for most parents, especially before the introduction of free primary and secondary education policies in Kenya. It becomes even harder for female children because in financially struggling families, male children are always given priority. Joan was lucky that her father was willing to sell his cattle to raise her school fees. Sometimes Joan could be sent home from school because she had not completed paying her tuition fees. However, her high school administration understood her plight and allowed her stay in school even when she owed the school some money:

So instead of being given Kshs.350 [after her dad sold a cow] the county council deducted some amount which made it less. I cried but my tears could not help… Luckily even though the money was less, the school accepted it because they knew my background. So they accepted the money less what had been deducted by the county council.

Joan was so lucky that her financial struggles did not last forever. When she was in form two (10th grade), her principal assisted her to get a national scholarship that paid the rest of her school fees up to form four (12th grade). Perhaps, were it not for her principals' intervention, Joan could not have completed her high school education and go on to become the successful leader she is today.

> At form 2 my head teacher connected me with Jomo Kenyatta Foundation. It gives some scholarships to needy students. So I was sponsored at form 2. I was given that scholarship and I managed to finish school without so much trouble… My head teacher in secondary was very very supportive. She was a lady and a half-cast of a mzungu (white person) and an African. She was very nice. She understood my plight; she understood my background.

It is not typical for teachers to go out of their way to support students, more so female students in their struggles in school. Joan's school experience is better than this author's and yet Joan attended school in times when girls faced harsher cultural and financial obstacles. Clearly, one of the things that shaped Joan's school experience for the better was her supportive teachers.

Forgoing Female Genital Mutilation and Delaying Marriage

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is one of the most valued rites of passage in some communities in Kenya, including Joan's own community. It signals a girl's transition from childhood to womanhood. Girls in these communities are socialized into cherishing the tradition of FGM, as it is not only a symbol for womanhood but also instills a sense of belonging and bestows respect on women who undergo it. Once a girl has undergone FGM in most communities that circumcise girls, the next logical step is for the girls to get married. To avoid early marriage, Joan had to forgo FGM:

You know when you undergo the cut early it is like you're telling people you're ready and they come. Yes you're telling them you're ready for marriage, you're ready for sex, whereas for a girl who has not undergone the cut, nobody bothers with her.

Since Joan did not want to get married before completing her studies, she opted to forgo FGM. Three things in her life worked in cahoots to enable Joan evade FGM. First, her parents separated even before Joan started school. It is Joan's mother who would have arranged for Joan to undergo FGM, so her absence became a blessing in disguise. Secondly, Joan's father could not ask Joan to undergo FGM since in Joan's community fathers do not discuss such matters with their daughters. Besides, Joan's s father appears to have been uncommitted to the traditions of his community. Third, Joan seems to have had everything set right from an early age: she was determined to succeed in school and so she did everything possible to avoid early marriage, and so she had to sidestep FGM at all costs. She captures this situation vividly in her narrative:

"Traditionally you could not arrange for marriage of a girl who has not been circumcised. I never underwent the rite anyway. I am very lucky… Some of my friends who were already circumcised dropped in form two and they never made it. They got pregnant and they went."

Forgoing circumcision is not an easy decision to make for girls in communities that value the practice. It comes with extreme stigmatization and few men may marry a woman who is not circumcised (Silberschmidt 1999). Yet, marriage is an equally valuable institution in most Kenyan communities. Therefore, even girls who detest FGM opt for it so as to fit in their community and avoid the stigma and the possibility of being perceived as social misfits. Apparently, the

consequences of forgoing circumcision were not an immediate worry to Joan. Her determination to go through school was so strong that she preferred to forgo circumcision and thus delay her marriage: "I never allowed myself into issues of love when I was in secondary. I think I had a target in my life and I was ambitious. I had the ambition to achieve what I wanted." Joan's motivation to forgo FGM and early marriage was her ambition to get an education. Undoubtedly, Joan understood from an early age what the fruits of education were: a successful career. The fact that Joan was able to circumvent FGM and delay her marriage contributed to her success in education and in turn facilitated her promotion to the position of school principal. Joan was able to forfeit FGM given that her community does not force individuals to undergo this rite of passage:

> In my community there was no forced circumcision. You could not be forced to get circumcised because it was also a bad omen if a girl screams during the operation. It was so bad that no man will marry you. In fact that one would stress you but the moment you accept to get circumcised you, have said you are ready for marriage and therefore any man can now come and get hold of you whether you are in school or not. You like it or not you are carried away. So that was the trick that some of us girls used. You either postpone [circumcision] until you finish your schooling or forget about it altogether. So that is why I never got circumcised … no father or mother would force the daughter to get circumcised.

Besides the advantage of no forced circumcision in Joan's community, she chose good company at secondary school. When she was in primary school, Joan did not face a lot of pressure from friends to undergo FGM because only mature girls were circumcised in her community. In fact, it is girls who were fit to be in secondary school that underwent FGM. In high school Joan could have been a target for stigmatization but knew how to insulate herself again any

stigmatization. When she reached two she joined a group of Christian girls who had also resolved to forgo FGM. In this group Joan was surrounded by like-minded girls:

> Definitely I could have been altered in my high school were it not for Christianity because you are influenced by the friend that you talk to or walk with. What are they talking about? They are talking about these things and you get influenced. But you see now in secondary the friends that I was talking to were not talking about those things. They were talking against those things and that is what really helped me.

One may think that since FGM and marriage are intertwined in Joan's community it would be almost impossible for Joan to find a man within her community who would marry her. However, as we saw earlier, not only did Joan get a man from his community to marry her but also a man who became a strong pillar of her academic and career success. Just like her father, Joan's husband encouraged and supported her throughout her educational and work life:

> According to our culture a girl or a lady who has not undergone the rite, that is the cut [FGM], could find it very difficult to get a husband and, therefore, that was the worry. But much later when I met the father of my children, I got a man who is a Christian and who was praying to get a woman who has not been circumcised. Are you getting! So the two of us met people with the same interest. I said wow!

Both determination and religion seem to have played a pertinent role in Joan's circumcision and marriage story. She was determined to go to school against all odds and along the way, the influence of religion made her determination complete by enabling her to shun detrimental cultural influence that would have forced her into early marriage or FGM. She was able to delay her

marriage until she completed her A-level education and shunned the demands of her community's culture. Joan's involvement with Christianity enabled her to avoid stigmatization over her uncircumcised status and led her to the right man for a husband. Joan's husband treasured Joan's uncircumcised status.

Role Models

A number of studies have verified that role models are powerful sources of inspiration for girls seeking to pursue education amidst the many challenges that they face especially in developing countries (Muller, 2006). Joan did not have any educated role models within her family neither did she have many within her immediate community. However, she had one female role model in her neighbor and primary school teacher. This teacher made a remarkable impact in Joan, as she influenced Joan's decision to forgo circumcision and pursue education. Thus, long before Joan moved out of her home to join a girls' boarding school within her village and later a distant high school, Joan's role model had stirred in her a desire to succeed in school:

> When I was still in primary school, I knew I started school late and I just wanted to learn [study] and learn and learn because the person who really motivated me was my neighbor and my teacher. When I used to visit their place, I really liked the lifestyle and then I said "one day I will want to live like this." So, issues of peer pressure to undergo the rite [circumcision] and what have you were not there.

The above excerpt from Joan's narrative tells how the good life that her neighbor and primary school lived aroused in her the spirit to make it in school. In Joan burned a raging desire to grow up and become a teacher like her teacher role model. Joan was not only inspired by observing the life of her role model but she also received advice and encouragement from this teacher. Her

71

teacher's words of encouragement gave Joan the stamina to make right choices. In Kenya early, pregnancies is among the main reasons why girls drop out of school (Barng'etuny, 1999). Joan's role model warned her to keep away from boys out to enticing girls into sexual relations:

> That role model of mine who kept on talking to me and telling me boys will waste you so take care. I became very aggressive because I wanted to be a teacher like her. She was a very good teacher. I didn't have any other role models in other careers but I thought teaching was the best because of what I saw in her. So I think she helped me and my aggressiveness in terms of not allowing boys to come anywhere closer to me helped greatly.

Later on when Joan joined high school, she met a headmistress who also encouraged and inspired her in her studies. When she joined high school (i.e. form 5 -6) she met girls from other regions of the country and she became energized to reach for even higher heights as she realized that a lot more women outside her community were pursuing education. So in high school the female principal and the other female students influenced Joan positively. She was encouraged that there were many girls out there seeking an education and other women who had risen up to the level of high school principal:

> That headmistress encouraged me so much and she loved me. When I went to form 6 I mixed up with ladies from different communities and then I realized people are actually studying. People are embracing education.

As Joan continued interacting with people from other areas in Kenya, and some from outside Kenya, Joan's role models became many and made a strong reason for her to advance in her schooling. However, the role model she had in primary school was indeed her primary role model.

Joan appreciates her primary school role model as she was a good example for Joan to emulate. However, Joan felt that had she had role models from high up careers, perhaps, she could have aimed even higher in setting her career aspirations. Joan herself acknowledged the importance of having role models in one's life:

> You know, Damaris, some of us could be far because like my role models never pursued higher education and I didn't see much of why I should pursue higher education. But you see I became a teacher and I mingled with people from various communities. I realized that we are being foolish by being contented with what we have. So role modeling is something that should be encouraged. As for me my role models for going for further studies were not people from my community but were people from outside.

In her current position as a woman leader in secondary school, Joan had become a role model to some of the women in her community. There are a few other women principals in her community and she feels happy that together they have at least made a difference in the community by influencing other women and girls to advance in their studies:

> Some women may be looking at role models around them because quite a number are claiming that I am their role model. For example, one woman is registered for her Master's and I think she is through with her class work.

Joan has also taken up as her responsibility to encourage girls in her school to identify people who can serve as their role models because of the experience she had with role models. She seems to be convinced that emulating the life of a woman who is successful in academics and/or career life is one of the ways young girls may succeed particularly in her patriarchal society:

73

I still encourage my girls when I am with them. I tell them "if you don't have a role model then you are finished and don't say your role model is your mother. How far did your mother go? Can you take a role model who can possibly enable you to desire to be like her or him? Your mother can be a role model in some ways not education. In that way I am not going to refuse, but is that all?"

Joan did not have many career women in her village who she could emulate. Her initial desire to become a teacher must have been ignited by her neighbor and primary school teacher. However her experience with role modeling within and outside her community testifies of the importance of having more women school leaders in Kenya, as this may be a source of encouragement to girls and women to become school leaders or successful career women.

Competence

Women school leaders sometimes face employment discrimination regardless of the fact that they are competent enough to perform the duties of school principals (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). Joan did not directly face employment discrimination. Aware of her competencies, Joan seemed to have anticipated a leadership role. So she decided to prepare herself in advance for promotions in her teaching career, as she reports: "Even my going to university was motivated by the fact that I was a local girl not having the right papers to sit somewhere. Diploma alone would not have enabled me to be where I am today." These words reveal that Joan was a self-motivated, focused woman who worked diligently towards achieving her academic and career objectives.

In Kenya securing a good job or getting a promotion at work may depend on whether or not one has a reliable network of influential people to deliver the job or promotion. At worst, it may depend on one's ability and/or willingness to part with a bribe. In Joan's case, neither did she

have such social network nor did she bribe to rise to the rank of principal. In fact, she was not ready to bribe anybody for a job or promotion. She set her eyes on academic achievement. This involved returning to school to advance her studies even when she had children who needed her care and attention. Joan knew that competence was her only avenue toward a job and upward mobility in her career as a teacher:

> What made me to go back to school was that most of the employers were kind of favoring the people that they know. For some of us who were Christians, "who could anyway look at you to promote you?" Most of those people were able to give something [bribe] to get a paper or to be promoted. So of course I was not in a position to do that. That is why I said "I think I need to go back to school so that a promotion becomes automatic, so that nobody would ask me to give something before they can think of promoting me.

What is encouraging is that Joan's struggle for competence was finally rewarded. Previously, she had been nominated to administrative posts, such as school boarding mistress during but her first promotion from classroom teacher to principal was based primarily on her qualifications:

> In 2000 February I was appointed as a head teacher in a starting school: right from class to headship. That time it was not a matter of a deputy being promoted to a head. It was a matter of who is more capable?

Even though competence does not always pay for women contemplating school leadership, it did pay in Joan's case. Joan's situation shows that women's promotions to school leadership may be based on competence alone. It has been shown in other studies that indeed women's competence plays a bigger role in their promotion to school headship as compared to men whose promotions

may be based on their teaching experience and/or whether they are properly linked to networks of influential people (quote).

Passion to Educate Girls

Joan comes from a community that does not value girls' education. In her leadership work, she faced a lot of cultural challenges related to the issue of girl child education. However, since she understood the plight of girls in her community, she found pride and satisfaction in serving girls most of who were in desperate need of her guidance and support. As a principal in a coed school, Joan was greatly disturbed to see girls enter into relations with boys. She always cared about the plight of girls should such relationships lead to pregnancies. In most Kenyan schools then it was part of the school rules that if any girl became pregnant she had to be expelled from school. Moreover, girls who gave birth while in school faced the burden of raising the baby and the stigma of becoming a mother before marriage. Joan's passion to educate girls especially those from her patriarchal society drew her closer to them, and she was always ready to counsel them:

> Dealing with these teenagers is a problem because they are pairing. They begin engaging in relationship too early. That is a bit challenging for me because I do not want to uphold the morals that I don't want. I try but I cannot keep watching them all over wherever they are going and it is not efficient…that is why I spend more time with girls talking to them because if they start relationships too early and become pregnant they drop out of school and boys continue.

One of the male teachers in Joan's school commended her for specifically paying attention to the well-being of the girls in their school. He is a native of that community and like Joan he

understands that few girls from that region complete their education, as some drop out of school even before 12th grade. Talking about Joan's commitment to support girls in their school he said:

> I don't have to say much about her [Joan] because even if you ask anybody in this village they will tell you that is a good madam. She can't send girls out there by themselves because they can be snatched away and be married anytime and she doesn't want that …that is one thing she worries about every day. Because of that she doesn't send them home for school fees. If the parents don't pay it is up to the school and if a parent comes without school fees she doesn't ignore them. She listens and if the school gets even a little donation, it goes to needy girls. If she couldn't do that we will only be having boys in this school.

Even though Joan's school performs comparatively well in national exams, most her students are financially needy. Most of the students owe the school money in the form of tuition fees. Joan was always disturbed by the fact that in her community girls do not get the same educational privileges as boys. Many families in her community find it hard to support the education of all their children given their low socioeconomic status. The situation is aggravated by big family sizes characteristic of Joan's community. Therefore, in cases where a brother and sister owe the school some money, their father will settle the boy's fees first and the girl's later if/when funds become available. This situation becomes a setback to girls' education. All the girls in secondary school have attained marriage age; thus when they stay away from school due to huge tuition fee balances exposes them to early marriages:

> Another issue is to do with the school fees particularly girls from the rural communities. That is where most of the parents cannot pay for the girls' school fees

77

and they prefer paying for a boy than for a girl. First of all when you ask them to go home for fees the father takes care of the boys. He takes care of the boys back to school so fast and asks the daughter to remain a bit as he looks for the fees. In the process there are these young men who could want to marry them.

Joan's desire is to see the girls in her school complete their studies and serve as role models to other girls in the community. Therefore she takes it upon herself to call the girls back to school even though they owe the school tuition fees. She then explores alternative avenues of raising money to offset these fee balances. Joan's leadership practices seem to be driven by her desire to make society better through educating girls:

Sometimes you get phone calls from people that your student so and so is being married off. So what you do is you incur the expense of going to get her and bring her back to school even without the school fees now. It is a problem to me that sometimes I don't send them for fee… So recently when they started the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), you talk to those people [the ministry of education] and they are able to send some little bursary for these girls… What do you do and yet you want them to finish school so that they can become a role model to this particular locality?

Joan is devoted in her leadership and in ensuring that girls complete at least secondary school education. It is unlikely that a devoted school leader like Joan will misappropriate school funds, a common problem among Kenyan school leaders. Normally, school leaders found misappropriating school funds face interdiction, and even dismissal. Such principals end up getting frustrated with their work due to humiliation and mistrust from the communities they serve.

In the case of Joan, she appeared happy and satisfied with her work in spite of the challenges she faced at her school. She reported how thorough she was in accounting for her school funds. She put into worthwhile causes every donation she got; she particularly channeled some monies towards assisting needy girls in order to retain them at school:

> Sometimes we have miscellaneous funds within the school or a visitor comes and leaves some money with you. But basically if somebody comes and he left some money I always turn it into school fees for the most needy. So I buy a few boxes of sanitary towels for the most needy so that when they come to my office I help them. .. Some girls come to you to ask "what do I do now? I don't have sanitary towels." …You cannot send them home to get the sanitary towels.

One of Joan's female teachers that I interviewed attested to Joan's diligent use of school funds when she said, "In financial management madam is very superb. We see things that couldn't take off but now they are in place. She has built structures and she even takes care of things that have not been done before. You can't imagine she is so considerate and [smiling] and she even keeps pads [sanitary towels] in her office in case there are some who don't have. You see! Women can make better leaders". Joan's passion to educate children especially girls is one of those things that made her succeed in her leadership. Her passion to educate girls seems to be driven by her desire to promote girl child education in her community and her rich experience growing up in her village and benefitting from women role models.

Joan's Hindering Factors

Joan's life experiences are not filled with only privileges and opportunities. Part of her journey to leadership was characterized with struggles and hardships that she had to overcome in

order to realize her dreams. In the paragraphs that follow I present some of the challenges she had to overcome on her way to school leadership.

Polygamous Family and an Absentee Mother

Joan was raised in a polygamous family. His father had three wives, with her mother being the second wife. Living in a family with more than one mother was not easy. Besides, her own mother had left home leaving her alone with her three brothers. Consequently, her father asked her to go and stay with his first wife. Joan's life was difficult at her step mother's house, as she recalled:

> By the way she [her step-mom] had a daughter. They would stay at home the whole day because she [the daughter] never went to school. So when I came back in the evening I could be asked go fetch water, go get firewood, do some grinding, and look for vegetables. Who is doing that? I was not ready to be a slave of another person. I'd rather do it when I am alone. I wanted my cousin-sister too to participate in the work but she didn't. She was just staying outside there with her mum and doing nothing but just waiting for me to come and do the donkey-work.

As a young girl who had started school late (at the age of ten), Joan needed love and support from her family. Of course her dad gave her as much love as he possibly could but still Joan missed the warmth and love of her mother and brothers. The environment at her first mother's house was hostile to her. She finally decided to walk away and stay by herself at her biological mother's house. At that time, her eldest brother was at school while the second born brother was away taking care of animals at the "cattle villages." Cattle villages were temporary shelters built away from home where men and boys stayed while taking care of their herds. Her youngest brother lived in the house of their father's youngest wife. Therefore, she was forced to live in her mother's house

by herself. This situation was not easy either, but she preferred it to living in her step-mothers'
house where she was treated like a slave. She needed her freedom:

> I did not survive there [at her first mother's house] for long. I said I cannot
> stay here. I had to go to my mother's house and stay there even though I
> was alone. One day my father found me in my mother's house and asked
> me "what are you doing?" and I said I am not going back and I need our
> animals here. My father had nothing to do but bring back my cows. Yeah I
> said "bring back my cows. I am not going to accept that." And my father
> knew that.

It is clear from the above excerpt that Joan's assertiveness developed quite early in her life. Also
her father started treating her with respect even at her early age. Joan knew her rights and how to
fight for her rights at an early age. Her father's love and protection was her shield. However,
staying alone in her mother's house was not an easy option. She was so lonely that she decided to
seek the company of her friends in the neighborhood: "In the evening, I went to my neighbors and
asked my friends from the neighborhood to come and give me company. We could sleep together.
I didn't have a big issue." By asking her neighborhood friends to give her company at night, Joan
was able to solve albeit temporarily the problem of loneliness. This move too underlines Joan's
assertiveness and ingenuity in handling her problems. While her friends' company could not
substitute that of her mother and/or siblings, it enabled her to live happily:

In addition to living by herself in her mother's house, Joan had numerous family
responsibilities to undertake. Although she was young she had to fulfill her mother's duties. She
recounts how she had to take care of all the traditional requirements during the circumcision

ceremony of her brothers. These duties were supposed to have been performed by her mother but since she was absent, Joan had to represent her, being the first and only daughter of her mother:

> Being the only girl of my mom, I had to take care of my brothers. So during those days when they [my brothers] went for circumcision I am the one cooking I am the one preparing all those issues like when they were coming out [of seclusion] I could go and participate and it is at that age when you're in primary [school]. It was actually a task and a half for me.

The ceremony that marks the graduation of initiates from seclusion is a big and honorable in communities that practice circumcision. Several activities are normally lined up on this day. The parents of the initiates play a central role in these celebrations. In the absence of her mother, Joan was forced to perform the necessary rituals that were supposed to be done by her mother. It must have been mind-boggling to a girl in her early teens to shoulder such duties. Amid all the family obligations, Joan was able to complete successfully her primary and secondary school education. However, she believes she could have performed much better at school if her mother were home:

> My primary school life…was not very small especially now that my mother was not around… Now about my A-levels, I cleared from Naboko with a strong division 3. I was admitted at Usalama girls for A-levels. Of course you can imagine my background. What affected me most was the absence of my mother. I didn't know what was going to happen. But God was good he gave me a division 3 and I was admitted at Usalama girls.

To an outsider, Joan should not have had a lot of challenges in her family in spite of her mother's prolonged absence. She had siblings, half-brothers and sisters, a father, and two step-

mothers. It thus beats logic why she had to shoulder all preparations for the circumcision ceremonies of her brothers. Joan's situation is just but a tip of the iceberg of what life is in Kenyan polygamous families. Possibly, Joan's step-mothers were not ready to help.

Scarce Family Resources

Joan's narrative reveals that she lived a better life compared to her neighbors. At least her father was able to pay for schooling. Nevertheless, the resources in Joan's family were not enough to cater for her personal needs as a female child. It was up to her to raise money for personal items such as clothes and sanitary pads because her father could not afford to provide for every item she needed:

> To get this other simple simple things and shopping, I got a vibarua [petty jobs] during the holiday and I could get some money. I could do jobs like teaching in primary school. I could also, for example, buy and sell traditional vegetables and I keep the money. So mostly I could raise some little money that could last me for like 2 months. That is how I got my basic needs given the fact that my father could not meet all my requirements. I could do those petty jobs even to buy myself second hand clothes to put on.

Joan's family did not provide enough food, and the little they had was not nutritionally balanced. Joan's food situation was compounded by the fact her primary school was located far away from her village. This meant that she did not have enough time to walk back home for lunch. Moreover, nobody was home to prepare her lunch. In the absence of electricity, refrigerators and microwaves, preparing lunch required more time. What she needed was packed lunch, but this was not allowed

at school. Joan had to devise a way of hiding the food in the bushes near the school until lunch time. In most cases this did not work, as Joan narrated:

> The school was a distance from home. To survive we could cook maize (corn), plain maize without beans put it in a polythene bag and we could go and hide it in the bush near the school so that around lunch time you come and get your maize for lunch. So we cooked the maize alone put it in a polythene paper bag and go and hide it in the bush. We had no other way of taking care of lunch because it could not be allowed in school. That was a bit of a hard life because sometimes when you go to where you hid your maize you will find that another student who spotted you has stolen it or sometimes animals like cows and goats would come around and when you come, you find the paper bag is thrown all over and your maize is all over. It was so difficult. So many a times we could go hungry. We devised a way of climbing on a tree and hiding the maize under some branches and we succeeded somehow with that trick but the other mischievous pupils could still come and steal. So life was a bit difficult.

The preceding excerpt paints yet another pitiable situation in Joan's troubled life. The narrative also reveals the extent to which poverty made her life miserable both at home and school. One may not help but wonder what kept Joan going with all the hardships she went through at a very tender age. It appears Joan had set a goal that she had to fulfill no matter what. She had to get an education by all means. Joan's story is so powerful and encouraging. Joan's life-story illustrates the power inherent in one's determination and support from others. The two may be necessary in the life of any successful woman in school leadership.

Nina's Narrative – Lulu Mixed Secondary School

My name is Nina. I was born in Nyaoke as the first born of my dad and my dad by then was a teacher while my mama was a house wife. I was born in 1967 and I have 7 siblings; 3 brothers and 5 sisters. I grew up and my childhood was much. Generally as a child I grew well being brought up by a teacher and by then teachers were very popular. My dad was very strict even my mom was very strict and by the time I was in standard 2 he (*my dad*) got married to the second wife so that is how I started to grow up in a polygamous family. My life must have changed but I had to cope. But being brought up in a single family then to a polygamous family it all changed my life but I grew up and I was educated. My life changed but one thing I liked about my dad he knew the value of education and he was very strict. So ours was just to read (*study*) and he emphasized that. So we grew up knowing the importance of school and maybe if I have to say on leadership I borrowed a lot from my dad. He is a straight forward man and if you do something, he will always want you to say the truth. He wants you to be very honest and he trained us actually to be very responsible.

I really do not know why my dad married because they did a very ceremonial wedding with my mother and then all of a sudden….but you know what happened during that time there was that move of people marrying 2 wives. There was a time during the 70s when everybody was marrying a second wife. Very few people didn't get married. I really cannot say my dad did bad because it was their time so I must say may be *it was* influence from friends. I loved it (parents wedding) and all of a sudden he just got married. I didn't really understand. The only impact it had it made me hate a wedding because my parents wedded when I was already born. I said from today I don't want to wed. That is the only impact it had. Also you know when it comes to things to do with love, there is a case where your dad loves you so much and you enjoy so much then another

person comes and he starts dividing his love and here are other kids who are born. For me it really affected me totally and at one time, when I was in class 5, I even wrote a letter to my dad and I expressed to him all my feelings. I don't know whether he ever remembers because he had to beat me every day and make me read that letter. He could read to me and ask me, "Why were you writing to me these?"

In my family there was division of labor where the boys could go and graze cows and the girls' work was to go and fetch water, firewood and all that. So my follower sister for us was like a boy. She liked to graze the cows. It was her major. But as for me I could do cooking, fetching firewood, and going to the farm but all those activities were timed and immediately you finish *doing them*, you eat and you have to go and read (study).

Religion was taken serious in my family. My parents are very staunch Catholics. They love the church. On Sundays we had to go to church and before we eat we have to pray. Actually like my dad taught me a lot about how to read the bible. He had a lot of history about the Catholic Church and my mom was very prayerful. When she had a problem it was just praying. Having been in a polygamous family my mom just had a lot of good relationship with God and it lead us somewhere because she taught us morals. She could advise me not to have relationships with… like having a boyfriend. By the way I had a strong relationship with a boy when I was in university. She could tell me not to be careless. The moral standards at home were very high. I only got to know things when I went to college. My dad was very influential. He is a good leader and he made sure that for the kids he never showed partiality. He made sure that he gave us the best. Even up to now he respects me and I respect him. He is a very special man.

I started school when I was 6 years. One thing I remember about class 3 is this teacher who made me start knowing how to read. I used to sit in the front bench and he could make sure that if it is a paragraph, mnasoma (you read). If you don't know how to read ni kupigwa sana (you will be spanked a lot). So he made us know how to read by the time we were in class 3 and actually all of us who were in that first bench went to university or we are somewhere. Another teacher I also loved is the one who taught me math in class 7. I should say the math teacher made me move on to sciences because for him if you do a calculation and you are the first one to get it right, he could give us 50 cents. And by then it was a lot of money. I could do it like a machine. I think he influenced us because most of us who were in that class did sciences.

For secondary school, I went to a private school called Uchumi girls. The school was sponsored by the Catholic Church and it was owned by the sisters of Notre Dame from the US. I think it is because my dad was a staunch catholic that he wanted me to go there. From form one to form 4 I was brought up in a school where the rules were very strict and ours was just to read (study). Unlike in other schools, we never experienced issues to do with girl-friend and boy-friend things. That was because when you go to school you only come back at closing. Your parent takes you back to school and sometimes they have to come for you. I finished form 4 a very innocent girl not knowing anything.

I did my A level in 2 schools; Sura girls and Mrembo girls. By then in Sura girls the standard was not so good. I actually used to be among the best but when I did my form 6 from there, I missed a point to go to university. I had challenges because Sura region has a lot of malaria. Because the headmistress knew that I was very bright only that I was affected by the climate, when my dad went for the results she told him "your daughter is a very bright girl and she can do better. So my dad took me to Mrembo girls to rewind. The principal at Mrembo, Sister Rena was more

87

strict than the sisters at Uchumi girls. She was an African sister. On leadership I borrowed a lot from Sister Rena; a very diligent administrator. And for us she was result oriented because that time actually in our class when we did an exam in A level, all of us except 3 out of 45 passed and went to university.

In university I wasted a lot of my time. In my first year I conceived my daughter and he (the boyfriend) was 2 years ahead of me. When I got this man I thought he was so special but the worst came out when he was done. He just went and he left me. I cried and cried with no answer. Life was very difficult for me after he walked away like that. I had to have a house outside where I stayed with my child for 3 months. When the child was around 3 months I took her home. My mom had to take care of my child after 3 months. She brought her up for me but I was so much frustrated. In the beginning of my 3rd year in college is when I met my husband. My husband took care of me *and* I finished college when I was expectant.

Before I became a principal, I was a teacher and then I was employed as deputy after 2 years of work. I don't know which criteria were used for me to be a deputy but I was just called up and I was told you are the deputy of this school, Nyamaiso secondary. There I had so many challenges. I didn't have a problem with the students as such but the teachers were not ready to take me as up as a woman deputy. They were not ready to have me as their deputy. I think the students marketed me or maybe it is because among the graduates that were teaching there, I was the one who had done bachelor of education. It may have been because of merit or maybe it could have been another reason but I became a deputy. The head teacher made life very difficult for me. He mistreated and intimidated me *until* I ended up coming to this school.

Because the head teacher in my first school disturbed me so much, when I reported here as the headmistress I ended up having depression. I stayed with depression the first year. Administratively I didn't have any problem. The only challenge I had was that depression and some financial challenges too. The parents didn't have a question about my leadership even up to now. The community accepted me but the problem was that I used to have medical checkup every month. As a married woman with kids, it was very difficult when the kids were younger because during that time my husband was also a teacher. So it was difficult managing home and school. As a headmistress with the problem that I had I think it could have been difficult but my husband really supported me. By the way Noah (her deceased husband) was a good man of course nobody can stay without weaknesses but he was a good man. When it comes to taking care of the kids we could share responsibilities and I was able to manage because of the support he could give me.

About my experience as a woman in leadership, I actually I enjoy being a principal despite having the difficulties I told you about. I enjoy being a principal than a deputy because I am able to make my own decisions as a headmistress. *When asked about what keeps me going amid all the challenges I have faced*, I always say even me I do ask myself how I was able to stay in headship. I think I had a self drive. *On the question of whether more women are accessing school leadership today than before*, I would say yes there are many women leaders that I see. Now I see many women teachers too who are so good. We have so many women leaders only that people don't recognize them. The employer should see that the girl child is well taken care of and defended. Some women have failed to work as women leaders because their husbands will never want them to be leaders. They (women) are quiet to themselves, they are very obedient to their husbands, and their husbands will never allow them to say anything.

Nina's Enabling Factors

Parents' Support

Nina was brought up in a polygamous family, like Joan. However, unlike Joan, she was privileged to have the support of both of her parents. Her father was a primary school teacher who later became a principal while her mother was a homemaker. In the most part of her narrative, Nina praises her father for the unconditional love and the financial and academic support she gave her even though he was a polygamist:

> What I remember more about him is his total love for me and his total commitment for my education. Like I should say some people who have polygamous families they can abandon one of the families kabisa (completely). But one thing he did he made sure that for the kids he never showed partiality. He made sure that he gave us the best. That is one special thing that I remember about him… He is such a person who could work tirelessly to see that we achieved the best in our academic life and out of love.

Never did Nina experience any problem raising money for school fees and school supplies. Her dad devotedly took care of all her school expenses. Studies have shown that in Kenya most families neglect female children when it comes to academic expenses (Herz, & Sperling, 2004). However, Nina's father seems to have valued education for all his children. He even bought textbooks for Nina that she used at home and school. He did not discriminate against his daughters, as Nina expressed in her narrative:

In terms of school fees I didn't have any challenge because my dad just used

to pay. He used to pay all the fees at the beginning of the term or even more.

Since I was the first born he had to make sure that he has paid everything.

So I didn't have a problem with the school fees… and if I ever asked my

dad anything about academic work may be a book or anything, the books

were at home.

Nina's mother too played a pertinent role in Nina's upbringing. Unlike many uneducated housewives, Nina's mother loved education. Nina's mother never had a chance to go to school but she always encouraged her children to work hard in school so they may be successful in the future. Nina's mother inspired her children: she predicted what professions they would follow upon completing school: teachers, nurses, engineers, pilots, and so on. Nina's mother understood the importance of education and she visualized for her children the kind of life they would lead after their successful academic journeys. She knew how to motivate her children. She foretold that Nina would grow up to be a teacher and she sure became one:

She [my mother] could just tell us how to read [study] and she could tell us

what we are going to be. Like she could tell me I am going to be a teacher,

and I became a teacher [laughter], she could tell my follower that she could

be a nurse which she never became, she could tell my other brother to be a

doctor, she told my other younger brother to be an engineer though he has

done computer science, the other brother is an economist. She used to be

telling him you will be a pilot. You see that is an inspiration.

In most cases, the literacy level of parents influences the amount and quality of educational support the children are likely to get at home. Less educated parents are likely to contribute less in their children's education (Mansuetti, 2009). Among the many contributions Nina's mother made toward the education of her children, she created time for her children to do their school work:

> My mother was a housewife but she also contributed a lot because you know there are mothers who don't know the value of education. For us she knew the value of education and she always made sure she had time for us to study.

Nina's mother also provided the moral support that contributed to Nina's success in education. She always advised Nina to make wise choices especially in avoiding relationships with boys who may make her pregnant and thus terminate her schooling. In Kenya it is the mother who raises her children alone should she get them before getting married. The father of the children is not obliged to contribute towards their welfare. Nina's mother understood the consequences of one getting a child before getting married. She educated Nina and her siblings the importance of chastity. Nina praised her mother for the care she gave her and her siblings:

> She [my mother] could advise me not to have relationships with like having a boyfriend. By the way I had a strong relationship (with a boyfriend) when I was in university. Usually even when I was in form 5, 6 she was very strict…she was very strict. So she could tell me not to be careless, not to have a relationship, not to even have a boyfriend. Even at form 5 and 6 she could not allow us even to go out…. The moral standards at home were very high. I only got to know things when I went to college.

Nina attributes her success in education to her parents. Both parents shared the responsibility of disciplining their children. Nina's mother always reported to Nina's father any mischief she noticed in their children. Nina's parents worked in unity to discipline and raise their children:

> We grew up in a family where if you do something, mom could not hide from my dad and that is one thing that I really liked and if I messed up anywhere mom will never fail to tell dad and I grew up wanting everybody to do the right thing at the right time. So during my childhood up to class seven I was brought up in a very strict way.

There was a gendered division of labor in Nina's family, but it did not disadvantage her in any way. Her brothers' main chore was taking care of livestock while the girls' duties included cooking, gardening, fetching water and collecting firewood. Nina's family had an organized schedule that created time for chores and school work for all children regardless of their gender. So the children knew when and for how long to work on their chores before they turned to their school work. Therefore, it did not matter what kind of duties they were assigned because at the end of the day, they had enough time to complete their school work. Nina appreciated the role this level of organization played in her education and general upbringing:

> In my family there was division of labor where the boys could go and graze cows and girls their work was to go and fetch water, firewood and all that so my follower sister for us was like a boy. She liked to graze the cows. But as for me some of the things I could do maybe cooking, fetching firewood, and going to the farm but all those activities were timed and immediately you finish doing them, you eat and you have to go and read [study].

Nina's parents not only created time for their children's academic work but also provided the support they needed to do their work well. Nina's father helped them with their homework and read stories to them while their mother prepared meals. The orderliness, love, and facilities in Nina's home facilitated her achievement in school.

> What was there is that children had to be at the table to read [study] and then my mom had to cook and bring us ugali [traditional dish] or something like that. We could eat and then we go on reading, revising, doing homework with my dad. He could read us stories and we sleep and that was the order of the day

Nina's parents were determined to see Nina attain the highest level of education. They supported her through university and Nina's father expected her go to take graduate studies after her Bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, Nina had a baby with her very first boyfriend during her first year in college. It was disappointing to Nina that her boyfriend, who was in his final year at the same university with Nina, graduated and abandoned Nina and the baby. Nina was devastated by the sudden turn of events in her life. Nina's parents loved her so much that they were ready to babysit her child so that Nina could continue with her university education:

> So my mom had to take care of my child after 3 months. She brought her up for me but I was so much frustrated…My father was hurt but then he said "bring the baby to stay here at home." So they took care of my child and I came to take her when she was almost 3 years. She stayed with my parents for some time.

Nina's socialization and upbringing gave her some privileges that many girls in Kenya may not have. Nina's parents established a good schedule for Nina and her siblings. Her parents' love for her was apparent and steadfast. Nina's mother provided all the financial support Nina needed to succeed in school. He was always there to assist her with homework and read stories to his children. Her mother visualized for her what life would be like after Nina completed her education and became a teacher. Nina's mother instilled in Nina early in her life the significance of moral integrity. Nina's mother was her moral compass. Nina's parents never favored any of their children on the basis of gender. Nina indicates in her narrative that all her siblings made it in school and most of them hold good jobs. Nina's relationship with her parents shows the critical position parents occupy in the academic and career success of any child in Kenya.

Husband's Support

After Nina's first boyfriend abandoned her, she finally found a man whom she believed was her right match. She got married and was pregnant with her second baby while still in college. However, her experience with her husband healed her broken heart. "My husband took care of me *and* I finished college when I was expectant. So now I started working when I was married. My husband took care of me. It was not like when I was expecting my first baby." In Kenya having a child out of wedlock carries a strong social stigma. When it comes to marriage, few men would readily marry a woman with a child from a previous relationship. In most Kenyan communities family lineage is traced through the father; therefore, a child born out of wedlock is treated as an outsider by the family into which their mother gets married. However, Nina's husband chose to marry her although she had a child from a previous relationship. Apparently, he sincerely loved Nina together with her child. He supported Nina throughout her career as a secondary school teacher and in her leadership role. Nina's husband was also a secondary school teacher who went

up the ranks to become a principal. He died while still a principal. Nina recalled how they shared the responsibilities of raising their children:

> Like when I became the headmistress I think it could have been difficult but my husband really supported me. By the way Noah [her deceased husband] was a good man. Of course nobody can stay without weaknesses but he was a good man. When it comes to taking care of the kids we could share responsibilities and I was able to manage because of the support he could give me.

One of the biggest challenges that women school leaders in developing countries face is juggling home and school responsibilities. This challenge is exacerbated by unsupportive husbands. In Nina's situation, her husband understood the challenges and responsibilities of women leaders and supported Nina throughout. He was her emotional anchor, participated in caring for their children, supported Nina's decision to accept leadership, and shared household duties.

Role Models

We saw earlier the role that Nina's parents played in raising her and providing for her educational needs. In addition, Nina's parents were her primary leadership role models. At home, both parents were orderly and the best team-players in raising their children. Nina's mother was their father's deputy in their household. She stressed integrity among her children and briefed her husband regularly about the state of things in the home. Both parents disciplined Nina and the other children in love. Nina's dad was a teacher and later became a principal. Nina always admired her father's leadership style. He held leadership positions in the community besides being a primary school principal. People in their community admired his leadership style:

96

I have to say on leadership I borrowed a lot from my dad. He is a straight forward man and if you do something, he will always want you to say the truth. He wants you to be very honest and he trained us actually to be very responsible. .. My dad has been a leader in several places and nobody has ever questioned his leadership. So I must say I borrowed a lot from him as a leader because he has been a role model in leadership. That one alone made me strong.

Besides her parents, Nina interacted with other people that shaped her journey to leadership. She repeatedly talked about how much she learned from some of the teachers and women school leaders in the secondary schools she attended. Their excellent teaching techniques and leadership skills inspired Nina to desire a career in teaching and a leadership role. Nina singled out her secondary school biology teacher who she praised in her narrative:

Like my biology teacher I always say he inspired me. By the way I am a biology teacher because he was a smart teacher. I did biology. So that teacher inspired me to do the biology and even recently I had to try and reach him. He is an associate professor in one of the universities in the US… You can't imagine I am still in touch with that my biology teacher. I had to look for him and say thank you for being my best biology teacher. I had to look for him.

Nina admired the personalities of some of her teachers and principals to an extent that she loved volunteering to demonstrate in during class activities. This gave her the opportunity to emulate her teacher role models. Nina aspired to become a woman school leader some day:

97

When I was in high school in form one to form four, there are times when the teacher would ask "who can come and show us this who can come and teach us on this?" I could go in front there and teach and teach and teach and behave like a teacher… I could do some of the responsibilities of a teacher and I always admired being a headmistress because I had role models in all the schools I went to.

Nina attended single-sex girls' secondary schools that were led by women. She therefore had an opportunity to interact with these women leaders. She admired their leadership and wished to rise to be a principal in the future. Nina's school principals made a difference in her worldview. The first secondary school she attended from form one to four was sponsored by the Catholic Church. The school was mainly administered by four white Catholic nuns from the USA. One of the sisters was the head teacher and three of them were regular teachers. Of the many qualities that Nina admired in their governance is their transparency in admitting students. In academically competitive Kenyan schools, cases of admission irregularities sometimes occur. Admission may be influenced by social networks and relationships. Nina reports that such cases of dishonesty were unheard of in her secondary school, and she liked that. Nina admired the way the nuns led her school. Even parents who enrolled their girls in this school were satisfied with its leadership:

One thing I loved about their leadership (sisters from the US) is that if it is reporting on this day you have to be there. So the first day all of us the 48 were there. And during those days people used to opt to take their students to Uchumi girls than any other school. The students that were admitted had to pass. There was nothing like bribery where you had to bribe or take a student if he was your relative.

Nina attended two different high schools for her A-level education (form 5 and 6). She did not qualify to join university when she did her final exams form the first school. The school was located in a region in Kenya that has high cases of Malaria, and Nina suffered frequent Malaria attacks. This disrupted her studies a great deal, causing her dismal performance in final exams. He principal understood that Nina was a bright student, and encouraged her father to reenroll her in a different school so that she could re-take the A-level exams and qualify to join university. Nina's father enrolled Nina in another Catholic sponsored high school headed by a Kenyan nun. Nina remembers her as a "tough" but admirable woman determined to see her students excel in their studies. Nina said that she learned a great deal from her leadership style:

> On leadership I borrowed a lot from Sister Rena; a very diligent administrator. And for us she was result oriented because that time actually in our class when we did an exam in A level all of us except 3 out of 45 passed and went to university. Our school was number 20 in the whole republic. Rena was a very good time manager… There students had to adhere to the rules. Sister Rena was very strict. So the challenge that was there is for you to make it to the university. That was the only challenge. There was nothing more, nothing less. So one of the women leaders who also inspired me was Sister Rena because she was an educationist, a very staunch catholic and very strict.

Nina's secondary and high school experiences maintained the foundation her parents had established in her from home. However, at school she had more exposure to leadership role models in an institutional environment. Yet, she could recognize a common theme in both categories of role models: integrity, determination, and hard work. Both her parents and the teachers/principals

99

who she emulated stressed and showed these virtues. Nina acknowledged that both her parents and teachers alike were her role models and shaped her life a great deal:

> If you check on my schooling, you will see that I have gone through the Catholic sisters; the headmistresses have been sisters who are very honest, very sincere on what they do on financial matters. At the same time I was brought up by a father who was very strict and likes honesty. My dad and my mom like somebody who is very honest.

Nina's parents, teachers and school principals were her immediate role models. They socialized Nina into believing in the importance of the virtues of honesty, teamwork, ambition, and discipline in one's undertaking including studies and school leadership. Nina witnessed the effect of these virtues at home as well as school, and with her success in her studies, teaching, and later in leadership, she herself lived these qualities that she acquired from her role models.

Determination and Transparency

Nina's leadership experience was not all that smooth. A substantial part of her narrative reflects enormous hardships she went through right from her first appointment as deputy principal and how her frustrations as a deputy later affected her principalship work. Nina's first leadership role was when she was appointed deputy principal in a coed school. Some of her male colleagues despised and isolated her, claiming that as a woman she could not be their leader. Nina talked about a series of mistreatment she suffered under her principal who at some point dismissed her while she was on maternity leave. He even ejected Nina and her family from the school house where they lived. Amid all the challenges she underwent, Nina stayed in leadership. Her determination to succeed earned her the position of principal in a different coed school:

I think one thing that gave me the courage to stand the challenges I went through

as a deputy in Nyamaiso secondary school… I am one person that if I get a

responsibility, I have to grab it with a lot of determination and vigor of a lady.

Nina faced a lot of prejudice from her male colleagues including the school principal. However, instead of whining or quitting, she focused on her duties and executed them conscientiously and with unparalleled gusto. She went an extra mile and completed administrative duties that the school principal neglected. Despite her troubles, Nina remained determined and transparent in fulfilling her responsibilities. She put the welfare of the students first:

The first year he [the principal] couldn't walk into the office and work with the

students *and* even the teachers. So in the first year I took up the office as the head,

deputy, and boarding master. I worked very hard and that is the year that school

actually had the highest mean grade. If the school went on record that is the year it

had the best grade. I had to take up the all the work by myself.

Nina's determination was evident in our discussion about her resilience to stay in leadership in the face of acute opposition. She explained how she assertively made her determination known to her husband because she believes "some women have failed to work as women leaders because of the violence they get at their homes. Their husbands will never want them to be leaders." However, Nina had all the support she needed from her husband. Moreover, Nina believes that women leaders and leadership aspirants should speak up for themselves and be able to fight their way through both at home and in their career assignments:

Why we don't have more women leaders is because some women drop their jobs

because of the husband. You see somebody has been promoted and then the

husband refuses completely. So the woman is just seated like a log because she is listening to the husband and what the husband is saying. For me I told my husband "when I want to do something I will do it and allow me to do some of these things." But there are women who have voice but they can't put forward the voice. They can't say anything. They have the brain but they are unable to talk.

The above text highlights Nina's determination to continue with her leadership duties despite the oppression she faced. Her level of determination may be attributed to two main sources: her personality and socialization (influence of parents, teachers, principals). It is possible that Nina has an inbuilt fighting spirit. The success stories she had witnessed in her secondary and high school female principals may have been a reliable source of encouragement to remain strong.

In her narrative Nina talks about her transparency in dealing with school finances. Transparency is a crucial leadership virtue especially in Kenya where misappropriation of school funds is a common malpractice among school leaders. Nina remained confident in leadership position since she knew that she was already a winner in the way she handled school funds. Nina's transparency in dealing with funds coupled with her determination and other strengths earned her trust and support from the school community. In Kenya, it is common practice for school board members to be given sitting allowances for attending school board meetings. However, when Nina first became principal, her school did not have enough funds to cover sitting allowances for board members. She communicated this situation to the board members. None of them opposed her stand since her openness and sincerity won her respect and trust from the board members as well:

There were other big schools so they [board members] expected me to treat them the way they were treated in other schools until I started to do what many head

teachers cannot do. You can imagine I could give them the fees register I tell them "come let us do some accounting". We look at how much we have collected, how much we have spent and when I became transparent like that they were able to say "oh this madam treats us nicely. We've never gone into any school and are given a transparent record like this.

I had an opportunity to attend one school board meeting at Nina's school and indeed witnessed the mutual respect and understanding that characterized the interaction between Nina and the board members. The discussions were cordial and any disagreements were communicated in a friendly manner or put on a vote. Most of the members agreed with Nina's proposals that involved school funds. Members praised Nina for her leadership and her integrity in dealing with school funds. The board members suggested ways of raising money for the school. The chairperson of the board promised members that the executive board would confront the Ministry of Education about the promised Constituency Development Fund (CDF) funds that were never transferred to the school account. Nina provided a snack for the board members but did not give them any sitting allowance that day. None of them complained, as they understood that the school was on the red. Nina explained the situation to me: "You know Damaris we have to face the truth. I can't give board members sitting allowances and allow the school to incur unnecessary debts. I have an understanding board."

Nina attributed her success in education and school leadership to her upbringing. She always wanted to emulate the honesty she had noticed in her dad and the female principals of the secondary and high schools she attended. She constantly encouraged herself that she would succeed just like those female principals. Her husband encouraged her but he sometimes criticized her extreme openness. It was Nina's openness that made her collide with the principal under who

she worked as deputy principal. Unbowed, Nina maintained her strong belief that honesty was a necessary pillar in the success of any leader despite the challenges:

> One thing that even my husband kept on telling me is that if you think you are going to be a principal and think you are going to be sincere and say the truth all the time Nina you can't survive. You'll be depressed. And I ever used to tell him I can't be able to cheat. But what I can tell you today is that in order for you to be a very successful head teacher, people do crooked things. In financial management people balance their books in a very crooked way. But one thing I thank God for is that I was brought up in a very moral way.

Nina revealed in her narrative that she managed to head her current school for a long time because the parents, teachers and the community had faith in her leadership. She became principal of the school when its performance in national exams was at its lowest. At the time we were doing the interview, her school ranked among the top five in the district. She was able to raise funds to build and equip the science lab. The school's infrastructure improved greatly during her leadership. The science lab she established paid off as the school started posting top grades in science subjects, as one of the male teachers in her school testified:

> What I have to say is I may not compare because she is more organized and if you look at what she has done I think you can appreciate what she has done so far. Just look the lab has been made within a very short time she is been able to source funds from the government to build it. She has done something good with the lab. Actually even you can see some stools have arrived there and probably we may

even go there you have a look at it. You can just admire it. Just before that it was a store.

Nina comes from a community that has a deep-rooted tradition of gender roles. Based on this gender-based division of labor, leadership positions in this community are normally occupied by men. Nonetheless, through her determination, good role-modeling and upbringing, and support from family, Nina overcame many leadership challenges and rose to be a successful school principal.

Nina's Hindering Factors

Nina's successful journey from childhood to school leadership was not all smooth. She encountered a number of obstacles some of which appeared insurmountable but she overcame them. Nina reports that the challenges affected her both physically and psychologically but she kept moving forward. In the subsections that follow I discuss some of the struggles Nina went through in the course of her journey toward leadership and during her leadership.

Polygamous Family

Nina's father married a second wife when Nina was young. However, Nina did not experience many problems normally associated with polygamous families in Kenya. In most cases, polygamous families experience tension between the two wives and children of the two wives, fight over family resources, and father's biases against/for one side of his family. Nina's major problem about his father having a second wife was more psychological than physical. She revealed in her narrative that in her childhood she hated the fact that she had to share her dad's love with her step-mother's children. As a young girl, Nina could not comprehend why her dad who appeared to love Nina's family so much decided to get himself a second wife. Nina was disturbed with this

state of affairs in her family. When she was in grade five she wrote her father a letter to express her feelings about his second marriage, as she narrated:

> You know when it comes to things to do with love, there is a case where your dad loves you so much and you enjoy so much then another person comes and he starts dividing his love and here are other kids who are born. For me it really affected me totally and at one time I even wrote a letter to my dad and I expressed to him all my feelings. I don't know whether he ever remembers because he had to beat me every day and make me read that letter. He could read to me and ask me why, why were you writing to me these?

This excerpt shows the conflict in Nina's family that resulted from polygamy. The letter she wrote to her dad protesting his marrying a second wife landed Nina in trouble. The beatings she received caused her both physical and psychological anguish. Nina did not raise this issue again. Nina's father worked hard to provide for his family of two wives and fourteen children. He educated all his children. However, with a large family, there was strain on family resources, and Nina was deprived of most of the privileges she enjoyed before her family swelled. The gifts and celebrations they used to have become less and less as the family grew. This change affected her emotionally. She changed her demeanor from bold to quiet.

> Another ceremony that we celebrated was Christmas. Then we could celebrate the birthdays but not always. When we were very young, before my dad was married the second time, he could bring us presents but when he got married now the family was large and we didn't get presents like before…It really affected me and that one

alone made me change from being very bold to be a very quiet person. It is a life I really didn't like.

Nina's experience growing up in a large polygamous family made her to have negative feelings toward weddings. Nina's parents were Catholic Christians and had a church wedding. In those days weddings were not common in her community. Arranged and forced marriages were the commonest kinds of unions. Therefore, an official marriage ceremony like the one Nina's parents had signified mutual love between the couple. It also reflected a move away from tradition, since Nina's parents were active members of the Catholic faith. Nina's parents had their wedding when Nina was a young girl. She admired her parents' move in solemnizing their union. She was old enough to witness the wedding. It was thus a great disappointment to Nina when her father married a second wife. Indeed polygamous families existed in their village, but Nina never thought this would happen to her family:

> I really do not know why my dad married because they did a wedding with my mother a very ceremonial wedding and then all of a sudden…. The only impact that it had it made me hate a wedding. They [my parents] wedded when I was already born. I said from that today I don't want to wed.

Nina's narrative reveals that Nina was psychologically affected by the shift from a monogamous to a polygamous family. The presence of an extra family in their home made her feel as if her mother's household was not appreciated. The stress lessened due to the fact that her father still showed his love to her by supporting her through school even though the demands of a large family forced her and her siblings to forgo some privileges. Nina reports that her step-mother was a malicious woman:

One thing that I never loved is when my step-mother came and she could say "we never slept on mattresses; we slept on a cow skin." And now when we wanted a mattress we were not given that mattress. You can imagine having been having a very good life and all of a sudden you are sleeping on the cow skin. My step mother could say that. You ask for pocket money she says "Go. We used to be given only 5 shillings go to school and read [study]." It was bad. So later on we lived like any other villager around because my dad was spending every single cent now to make sure that we are educated. It was bad.

In brief, life in Nina's polygamous family was challenging to her. She had difficulties coping with the psychological challenges because she was born into a monogamous family that later turned polygamous. She had tasted life in a monogamous family which made it hard to cope with the sudden change in her family. Luckily her experiences did not bar her from advancing in her education and rising to be a successful school leader.

<div align="center">Uncooperative Male Colleagues</div>

Like most school leaders in Kenya, Nina began her school leadership as a deputy principal. It is a wonderful opportunity for one to serve as deputy first before ascending to the position of principal. However, Nina's experiences in that position were so demoralizing and tormenting. Her misfortunes at the level of deputy principal had ramifications on the principalship later on. The main opposition she received was from her male colleagues who were not ready for a woman deputy. She believes the school board nominated her for the position of deputy principal either because she was the only qualified teacher at the time or the students campaigned for her since they readily accepted her unlike her male colleagues including the principals under who she served:

I didn't have a problem with the students (at Nyamaiso) as such but the teachers were not ready to take me as up as a woman deputy. They were not ready to have me as their deputy. I think at Nyamaiso the students marketed me because at that time the head teacher who was there was a drunkard. So when I became a deputy I think the students liked me and marketed me.

Nina had a chain of problems when she served as deputy principal. She thinks these problems arose because she was a woman. Nina's male colleagues scrutinized her leadership such that any simple mistake she made was a source of condemnation. The male teachers tried to distract her from her duties so that they could find a chance to criticize her. Nina recalled painfully the conduct of her male colleagues at Nyamaiso co-ed secondary school:

It is so sad to say but I came to realize that where I had a lot of challenges is to do with gender. That is where my problems came from not from the students but from the teachers. I generally had challenges and they couldn't take any of my mistakes. If I made any mistake I had to be challenged. I was not encouraged… When I came to Nyamaiso secondary some teachers were asking me "why are you being in class? Here we don't teach. You don't have to be in class all the time."

The school principals under whom Nina served as deputy were also a source of headache to Nina's leadership. Nina worked under three different male principals during her term as deputy principal, and all of them had issues with her. However, the last principal she worked under tormented her to the core. He was the kind of leader who took pride in using his juniors as scapegoats. In some instances, he assigned Nina the most controversial issues that he was supposed to handle himself, but because he did not want to fail, he pushed them to Nina:

I think my head teacher knew that I was one person who could not hide to say what is right and I could go ahead and take on any responsibility that has been assigned to me... He could delegate to me some cases which have been very difficult for him to handle. Later on when I became a head teacher I came to understand that those were not my duties. … Somehow I was again left to handle conflict situations that the head teacher doesn't want to associate with.

The particular male principal Nina's describes in the above excerpt was so irrational to the extent of forcing her to tell lies in his favor. Such situations were so challenging to Nina given her upbringing. She believed in saying the truth and situations like these were so stressful to Nina. She did not have a voice of her own because everybody was against her and used her for wrong motives. Nina recounts one of such instances with open resentment:

He [the head teacher] made life very difficult for me. He actually started now to mistreat and intimidate me. One thing that I remember as a dream, he was very nagging. He was one head teacher who sees a parent from there and may be the parent has a case that he doesn't want to handle. He could *then* come to my office, hide behind the door and tell me "don't tell him that I am here." He wants to come there listen to what I am telling the parent and then maybe he signals to me what I have to tell him (the parent) when the parent is not seeing. That is one issue that used to stress me a lot…. You know he has put the words into my mouth. You see those were some issues.

Nina's conscience could not allow her to continue leading in the interest of her principal. She finally decided to stand by her principles and refused to be used as a tool. She rejected all the

moves the principal made to use her in achieving his ill-motivated agenda. Nina resolved never to involve herself in any corrupt leadership, as she knew this to be an eyesore in any leadership:

> So finally I was tired of it and we principally differed. When we differed he had to call the board. First of all he started to have meetings with me and the local chief and the councilor. They used to come to his office and sit and then they are just talk badly about people. You know he used to use money. He is somebody who could give the top education officers money to act against me and this was the time I was expectant. During the chief executive board meetings with the head teacher, he used to pick up issues with me and I could be very clear to the chief even the councilor, whoever he could bring to the meeting and I tell them "we are differing principally because I don't work the way he wants me to work."

Apparently, Nina eventually found her voice and her true self after having been used by the principal for some time. This turning point came from within her: a sort of internal revolution or rediscovery. Nina's decision to make her voice heard marked the beginning of her toughest moments in school leadership. The principal began accusing Nina falsely and he finally succeeded to kick her out of the deputy position and the school property where she lived with her family. He succeeded to do this because he had strong social ties with the most powerful people in the community. Nina, being a woman with no such powerful social networks, was subjected to rejection and humiliation she never deserved:

> For the whole of 2000 I and the head teacher differed in so many things. Things were so bad until now he had to call the district education officer and to the board and told false things about me. So we differed badly and the worst thing that he did,

111

he saw me as a lady and punished me and actually did the worst for me because he had politicians who were supporting him. He was simply drunk with power. I was greatly affected.

The conflict between Nina and the principal sucked in Nina's husband, a situation expected in most patriarchal communities. In such communities women are perceived to be dependent on men. Consequently, men try to manipulate women because of the notion that women cannot make decisions on their own. The principal in Nina's case expressed openly his hatred toward Nina's husband, assuming that he was the one encouraging Nina to stand her ground. In this situation, the principal exposed his unfounded belief, or stereotype, that women cannot oppose men in this patriarchal community. What was purely a school leadership issue became a family issue simply because one of the people involved in the conflict was a woman:

> Even more he started hating my husband thinking it is my husband who is inciting me to differ with him. He even wrote him a letter telling him "you are advising your wife wrongly." He made it a family issue now. He even went and wrote a letter and told him to vacate the school house because we were staying in a school house…. Before we could move out of the school he already put down the toilets. You know the toilets we used are those that are outside-the latrines. Without toilets, we were forced to move out of the school and we hired a house outside.

The challenges Nina faced at Nyamaiso coed school were huge, but she never quit her deputy position. Even after the principal 'demoted' her, she fought a bitter fight until she was finally promoted to the position of principal in a young coed secondary school not far from her former station, Nyamaiso. Unfortunately, the cruel treatment she had experienced in the hands of

the Nyamaiso principal, Nina became mentally ill. This illness lasted close to nine years. However, this condition did not deter Nina from executing her leadership duties at her new school. This became Nina's biggest challenge to her new leadership position as school principal:

> I have had several challenges as a headmistress. I was promoted after somebody had tampered with me because we differed principally and he saw me as a woman….Because the head teacher in my first school disturbed me so much, when I reported here as the headmistance I think because of the disturbance and everything I ended up having depression Imagine somebody staying for almost 9 years mentally confused because of another person. He had to put me through meetings for the whole year and it was terrible.

Nina faced another notable challenge in her new leadership position. In her first year as principal she had to clear the mess the ex-principal had caused at this school. He had misused the exam fees from the 12th grade students. In Kenya 12th graders have to sit for a national exam that determines their entry into university. The former principal in Nina's new school squandered the exam from some 12th graders and did not enroll them for the exams. Nina was forced to look for money and settle this debt. The affected students and their parents even threatened to harm her if she failed to refund their money. When she contacted the former principal he told her that he spent the money and she needs to refund it to the affected students. As painful as it was, Nina had to use her own money to refund the affected students:

> When the results came out those students who didn't sit for the exam came with a knife to school wanting me to refund them the money which I never collected. When they could go to him (the deputy) he just ran away. He actually ran away and

got a job as a BOG [Board of Governors] teacher in another school. And when they could go for him, he could come with those students and he could demand that I pay them. When I could ask him "where you did take the money you collected? Did you even write a receipt?" He could tell me I collected the money and used it. I wasn't able to handle the case and yet those students wanted to knife me. So what I did I looked for Kshs. 24,000 and paid them and that is how I was able to be free and I started running the school

Possibly, if Nina were a man, the situation could have been different. She could have leveled charged against the former principal. Again, she was going through this after having experienced an ugly conflict with her former boss that had taken toll on her health. The students whose money had been misappropriated heaped their anger on Nina most likely because she was a woman. One wonders why the affected students had not resolved this issue with the ex-principal who had received their money. The school was young and needed maximum attention from Nina, the new principal. The school was in dire need of more teachers and an improved infrastructure. Amazingly, Nina rode over these challenges and established herself as the most competent leader the school had ever had since its inception.

Talking about Nina's leadership talent and how she showed her leadership rationality in handling the chaos created by the former principal, her male teacher that participated in this interview explained:

She is a strong lady. She was transferred here when I was already 2 years old here and the former principal had completely spoiled the school and ran away with form 4 exam fees. I don't know why but she did not go to court or do anything. She gave

114

back the students her own money so that activities in the school became normal because there was chaos. People here…the parents like her leadership because she is a calm leader….she cares about school performance instead of fights.

Lack of Support from the Employer

In Kenya, The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) is the body that oversees the employment of teachers. TSC also offers all sorts of support teachers may need in the delivery of service. However, in Nina's case, TSC failed to intervene and solve the issues she had with the male principal under whom she served as deputy. When she tried to seek TSC's help, they gave her a deaf ear. She was illegally dismissed from her position of deputy principal by a single individual who had connections with the political leaders. Instead of establishing the root cause of the conflict and solve the issue justly, Nina's employer, TSC, endorsed the decision taken by the corrupt principal whose sole motive was to humiliate Nina:

> When he [the head teacher] gave me the release letter I did report to TSC (Teachers Service Commission). He had written so many letters to me and I sent them to TSC but he had some people at TSC who could receive letters and keep them. I wrote him a very strong letter and sent it to TSC through the DEO attaching all the letters he wrote to me including the ones he wrote to my husband. Because he had a very strong network, I don't know how he got copies of the letters. He was so mad at me as to why I had to send all those letters.

Nina's narrative reveals that her principal used his network at the TSC to ensure that Nina's case was not impartially settled. In other words, the male principal colluded with an agent of government (TSC) to settle scores with another government employee simply because she was a woman who wanted to live according to what she believed was right. However, Nina was able to

115

have her case addressed by a different government agency, that is, the Ministry of Education. It is important to note that Nina's case received a fair arbitration only after the intervention of the Provincial Director of Education (PDE) who by then happened to be a woman. Nina's prior attempt to have the District Education Officer (DEO) address her case failed because the DEO expressed his inability to help Nina. That is when Nina decided to approach a higher authority in the hierarchy of the Ministry of Education in her area. She contacted the PDE. The role of the PDE is to supervise teachers at the provincial level to ensure quality education. The PDE has representatives at the district and local levels. The fact that the DEO was unable to assist underlines the power his principal wielded, as Nina narrated:

> When he released me now I had to go to the PEO (Provincial Education Officer) who also seemed to be helpless. He told me "this man is drunk with power and since he is politically strong there is nothing I can do for him." I had to go to the PDE (Provincial Director of Education) and she told us she was helpless, it was a lady by then…So what happened, the PDE had to find a school for me.

The situation Nina explains at this point of her narrative illustrates the depth of corruption and inefficiency rampant in Kenya's government agencies such as the local offices of the Ministry of Education and TSC. It is not clear, however, whether Nina's failure to have her case addressed at the district level was due to her gender or general inefficiency of Ministry officials or a combination of both. It is important to note that the PDE who assisted Nina find a school and had her posted there as principal was a woman. According to Nina, lack of employer intervention is one of the main challenges women school leaders in Kenya face. In other words, the high levels of corruption and inefficiency of government officers compound this challenge. The voices of

116

women school leaders are ignored by the very people expected to guide them. Nina recounted this fact with great disappointment:

> The ministry cannot assist you. The TSC did not do anything to help me despite my writing to them because instead he [the male head teacher] was writing to them and they were responding to what he writes to them. In fact that thing always troubles me. I always think asking the TSC why they never responded to my problems as if they don't know what I went through. They don't know what kind of life I led. Some of the challenges we face as women administrators is that even the employer does not intervene. May be they see us as women or they have their own reasons why they never responded to my cry.

Nina's story about her childhood, schooling, and school leadership gives us a glimpse of what Kenyan girls and women go through in their journeys toward school leadership. It is apparent from Nina's story that while Kenyan girls from certain families may not be prejudiced at home, they face a variety of obstacles at school, or/and work, or/and leadership. Nina's personal determination, support from her father and husband, and excellent role models in her dad, high women principals, and the PDE became important pillars in her fight against a hostile leadership environment.

Nancy's Narrative – Saidia Mixed Secondary School

I was born in a family of six and that time my mother was a nurse and you know working as a nurse there are night duties meaning the person who was so much taking care of us was my grandmother who was very sincere a learned grandmother. I would say we owe our learning from that old woman. She was one of the learned old people in that village who embraced education. She could read, write, and communicate in English and Kiswahili though old. That woman had

only one thing in mind; nobody should drop out of school regardless of anything. That was her vision for us. Even looking through her family, everybody was educated and that is why actually we are talking of her achievements because you can imagine those old days.

I began school in 1971 when I was six years old. I did not even start in nursery. I went straight to standard one after the interview. I guess my IQ was quite high and they said "No. We cannot take this one to nursery school. Let her go straight to standard one. My first term in standard one, I was number 3. That was really encouraging to me. Number one was a boy, number 2 was a boy and I was the first girl. I even wondered how clever I was. All of my siblings are educated. My grandmother and even my grandfather could not stand somebody not going to school. If everybody in the family was not learned there is no way we could be going to school.

I grew up in a village where we could do all sorts of work. In our homestead we had a lot of cows but there was a large grazing area where we could take them. In the evening we could collect firewood but the good thing we were not allowed to cook until when we were in class 6. So our work was to collect firewood, take the cows to feed and then bring them back. We could leave school running because no matter how you spent your time, your duty remained as a duty. Nobody would do it. The work really helped us in studying because it is only after you have cleared your work that you will go and study. Yeah and duty was shared.

As children we used to attend family gatherings. At the end of the year, in January, all families could meet at our grandfathers' place. Even after the aunts and uncles got married, they could still come to the get together. At these gatherings older family members advised us all the time about the importance of school; my uncles, aunts, grandparents, older cousins all of them were learned and kept telling us the importance of getting educated. They had good jobs at that

time and some of them had cars which we admired. They valued education. The first group of people with university education in our village came from my family.

For secondary school, I went to a provincial school for four years. I got 32 points out of 36 from primary school. In the admission list, I was fourth from bottom. I think this is the only thing that challenged me in my secondary life. That list! I had performed well with 32 points but seemingly all the students in that school were tough. I remember my uncle telling me, "can you see that list?" This is telling you that you are competing with all bright people so please take care. In form 3 second term I was number one but nobody would be number one twice no matter how much you tried and everybody aspired to be number one. When I went home for holidays I was encouraged for being number one but in form 2 my friend became number one and when she went home the father did not encourage the girl but just told her probably you were leading fools. The girl cried. That is how I realized parents can really be discouraging. In our family education was for all not girls or boys as in other families. That was what could give us the morale to continue. Our parents had a lot of sacrifice to ensure that we continued.

About religion, my family was very religious. Our parents were devoted Christians and my grandparents especially my grandmother were the founder members of the Presbyterian which is at our home. Our grandparents introduced us to religion when we were young and we love it up to now.

My A-level school was run by an Asian head teacher**.** I passed the A-level exams and I was the best in economics. The Asian teacher told me he has never seen any A or B in economics. I was the first one to get it. After A-level, I joined Kenyatta University. Generally speaking the university life was very good. It was a simple life and it all depended on what do you want to be? What have

you gone there to do? You know when you go there with so many businesses, that is when you lose your track but if you go there with one business, I just want to learn (study) nothing else, you are good. *Throughout my schooling life* the person who really influenced me was my uncle, my mom's brother. He has been a role model. That man was hard working and learned. What you could want to see in a learned person you would look at him and say, why not me? He graduated in 1975 when I was in standard 5 and I attended the graduation ceremony. You can imagine that joy. And then he told us unaona? (You see?) One day I want us to celebrate like this. Up to this day I owe a lot of respect to that man.

About my marriage I have never married. I have twin boys who are in college I got them…just you know of this way, you have friends here and there, but you know very clearly you won't get married (laughing). That is the thing. I decided not to marry because I knew very clearly that having a man in the house will affect my ambitions to advance my career. I had a lot of married friends when I was in college and I used to hear how they complain about their husbands. You hear people say, I had to force my way here. My husband refused that I don't continue with my studies. People think when women go to school or university there is two men in the house and the woman should instead stay home and take care of the kids. So I don't regret having never married. I had my kids after college when I was employed. Not in college. In college, I had said no. The business is one and it is learning.

I started my professional life as a teacher. Generally, I loved my teaching even if I had to look after my boys. In the fifth year of teaching I did an interview and I was transferred to a girls high school as a head of department where I stayed for 10 years; 7 years, as HOD and 3 as a deputy. And these seven years I had refused responsibility. People could come to me and say let you go to a certain school and become a deputy. I could tell them let me not sacrifice my children for

120

leadership because I cannot allow wasting my children's time at the expense of leadership which will be there even some time to come. In the 7th year, the deputy who was there was promoted to headship. That is the time now when the principal brought a letter to me and told me mwalimu (teacher) even as much as you have been refusing I am authorizing you. I know you are the right person do this work. I did not want to let her down. I told her yea then I will be a deputy principal. All along I have aspired to become a leader but you know the only thing that had stopped me I realized you cannot make a good leader when your home is not in order. I cannot let my children stray when I am leading others.

I have been a deputy for many years and this is my first school as a principal. When I came here I had a male deputy but he was promoted to be a principal. That is when I elevated the female one and by elevation I mean of course she had done an interview, but I wrote a letter to the ministry and said please retain the person here. Let the people who are here realize that people can grow up at Saidia. Luckily, the community here doesn't have a problem with both of us being female. Even some students transferring from a neighboring school told me "I have been told this is leadership of women but women are very strict." Then I told him it is because they are mothers, they care about your life. We have many schools having such leadership and people are doing well. What matters is do they respect you? When they see that you are serious in what you are doing and you want to give them the best they respect that.

Concerning particular challenges as a woman leader I would say no. I have not come across such issues because the only place where there was challenge is where I was a deputy. That place, they were really rejecting women because of the cultural practices. They could say "how come we are being brought a woman leader uncircumcised?" Even the students cannot be convinced how somebody cannot undertake FGM. Imagine I could be an outcast until sometimes

121

you realize this is not the right place. Parents could come to the office and ask you "I thought the head teacher was a man?" I could tell them nowadays there is no man or woman. But people have learned to appreciate leadership of women. It is the one which is succeeding. I have noted even in this district all the schools whereby the principal was a man; they have been replaced with a woman. We have around 4 schools in this district and they have all been replaced with women. May be we can say it depends on the region where you are leading because very remote areas not many people embraced education from the word go.

Compared to the time I started working as a principal, many now are becoming head teacher than before but sometimes the husbands do not allow. One mentality people tend to have is that we exchange the roles with men when we are leaders. With me I had said one thing; I want my freedom. I don't want an inhibition. Let me not have somebody who will come in between me and where I would like to reach. More women cannot be encouraged into leadership unless we change mentality. For women, they should not look down upon themselves as if they could only wait for a man to do something. That thing I hated with all my heart. I love a very independent mind. I don't want when people say let me wait until I am married so I can move on because if I get so educated nobody will marry me. That is wrong. Let the young girls know from the word go that they can make their future by themselves. The future is in their hands. All they need is our support. Life is in you!

<div align="center">Nancy's Enabling Factors</div>

<div align="center">Family Support</div>

Nancy was brought up in a family that valued education. Her grandparents, parents and most of her other close family members were educated. Her story is a perfect example of how knowledge and love of education within the family can make a woman's life experiences,

particularly the schooling process less stressful. Nancy was surrounded by people who had gone through school and understood the importance of education in shaping an individual's life and consequently making society better. Nancy's parents constantly encouraged and supported her to go through school as she said: "my parents had a way of impacting a sense of responsibility in us and encouraging us to move with education not to give up." This encouragement started at a very young age and Nancy grew up knowing that education is for all regardless of whether you are a male or female child in the family. All that was required of all the children in Nancy's family was to work hard and qualify to join a good school that offered better chances of performing well:

> In our family education was for all not girls or boys as in other families. There was nothing like that. There was one principle: work hard to go to a government secondary school. From the time you go to standard one that was the principle. The one who will make it, it doesn't matter what will be sold but you will continue with your education. So that spirit was there. You knew no turning back and that if you make it in standard seven you will continue. That was what could give us the morale to continue.

Nancy considers it a privilege to have had parents who valued education and sacrificed to ensure that all their children went to school. Her parents' sacrifice was Nancy's driving force that made her to perform well at school so that she would not disappoint her parents. As Nancy recounted, some of her friends and neighbors did not have the advantage she had which makes her appreciate even more her parents' efforts in educating her.

> Looking around, my friends didn't have the opportunity. Some were very bright but they could not even go beyond standard seven. You see their parents did not

have that sense of sacrifice. Our parents had a lot of sacrifice to ensure that we continued. Those were people who could have lived a life even above how they lived but they did not for our sake…The fact that my parents were able to take us to school made me do well in school because I did not want to let my parents down.

Some of Nancy's friends were also able to move from primary to secondary school. However, some of them had unsupportive parents. According to Nancy, parents who did not support their children's education were working for their children's downfall. Instead of cheering their children on as Nina's parents did, some parents underrated their children's performance at school not knowing that appreciation may seem a simple gesture but it carries a lot of meaning especially to female children working hard to make a difference in their lives. According to Nancy, some her friends did not do so well in school due to words of discouragement from their parents. She vividly remembers a case involving one of friends:

> I remember in form two my friend became number one and when she went home the father told her "probably you were leading fools". And when she looked back and realized the type of people who were in that class and you are told you are leading fools and the competition is stiff you don't sleep aiming at number one and somebody just tells you they were leading fools that was devastating. The girl cried. I think that girl from that time she did not become an encouraged person the way she was. That encouragement was so good because I remember when I became number one I took that report form home na nikawaambia (and I told them) what did I tell you look at this report form. Yea I am leading 168 students … to me that was good news for my parents.

Nancy's grandparents also exerted their influence on her to do well in her education. Unlike most grandparents (including this author's), Nancy's grandmother knew how to read and write and her grandfather was a civil servant. They both regarded education highly and made sure all their children were learned. Therefore, they could not expect any less from Nancy and her siblings. Nancy believes that she was able to go to school because of the great value that her entire family, including her grandparents, placed on education:

> All of them [Nancy's siblings] are educated. I am telling you my grandmother could not stand somebody not going to school. That was the vision at home and even talking about my grandfather these were learned people because I am talking of those old people and my grandfather was an accountant. You can imagine such people not allowing their children to go to school. If everybody in the family was not learned there is no way we could be going to school.

Besides her parents and grandparents, Nancy's other family members played a tremendous role in Nancy's academic life. During the family meetings, the older family members including Nancy's aunts, uncles and cousins talked positively about the importance of education and encouraged Nancy and her siblings do their best in school. In addition, most of Nancy's family members who had had an education were working and enjoyed comfortable lives. Nancy admired their lives and hoped to be like them after she completed her education. In Kenya one of the common symbols of success is to own a car, as some of Nancy's family members:

> We used to attend family gatherings. All families could meet at one point and the place was the grandfathers' place so we knew about it. Even after the aunts and uncles got married, they could still come to the get-togethers. At these gathering

older family members advised us all the time about the importance of school; my uncles, aunts, grandparents, older cousins all these people were learned and kept telling us the importance of getting educated. They had good jobs at that time and they, some of them had cars which we admired.

The successful life the educated members of Nancy's family led motivated her to work even harder in her studies. Nancy's immediate and extended family valued education so much that they spent every opportunity they had to inculcate in their children the value of education. They encourage the younger members to embrace education in order for them to have a bright future. Nina remembers her uncle's counsel on her first day of secondary school:

When I went to secondary school with my mom -- my uncle was a head teacher by that time, a head teacher of a secondary school -- and my dad. And I remember my uncle telling me, "can you see that list?" This is telling you that you are competing with all bright people so please take care. I remember telling him I will never be this position. Never!

Nancy had two great friends in high school, but of the three girls, it was Nancy who had the greatest parental or family support in her education. Not only did Nancy's parents provide her with everything that she needed for her studies but also provided her with the best and closest role models. The excellent role models Nancy had in her family extended beyond her parents to include uncles, aunts and cousins. Thus, Nancy's own family became a strong source of motivation in her studies. As a young girl in primary and high school Nancy attended some of the family members' memorable events like university graduation ceremonies, which reinforced the positive messages

she received from her family about the value of education. Nancy used one of her maternal uncles to illustrate the influence her family had on her education:

> Can you imagine he graduated in 1975 when I was in standard 5? Think of primary that time attending a graduation ceremony. How do you feel? You definitely want to be there tomorrow not even 10 years to come. You can imagine that joy. And then he told us unaona? [You see?] One day I want us to celebrate like this. That person really influenced us. Then one day after he completed his studies, he settled and constructed a very beautiful house. That man had been a point of reference to me. Up to this day I owe a lot of respect to that man. He is a retired head teacher now.

The above excerpt underlines the kind and scope of influence Nancy's family members had on her education. Nancy was literally surrounded by educated and successful family members from both the paternal and maternal lineage. In Kenya graduation ceremonies are held only at college level, and Nancy's attending her maternal uncle's university graduation when in grade five must have left a permanent impression on her. In sum, in her supportive family, Nancy had a privilege that other girls did not have in the course of their education.

Forgoing Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important rites of passage in the Kenyan society. It is valued as a means of establishing a family and thereby gaining status in society. Nancy is a single mother of two grown sons. Nancy has never been married, and her decision to remain single stems from her belief that men are domineering and her fears that having a man in her life would jeopardize her career:

I have never married. I have twin boys who are in college that is why I am here alone. I got them. Just you know of this way you have friends here and there but you know very clearly you won't get married [laughing]. That is the thing. I decided not to marry because I knew very clearly that having a man in the house will affect my ambitions to advance my career.

Nancy seemed to be having a firm conviction that the responsibility of shaping her life was hers and hers alone. She prioritized her freedom and a successful career above marriage. Nancy's decision to remain single emphasized her determination to succeed in her teaching career that culminated in her rise to school leadership. Nancy understood very well the amount of stress married life would cause her job; thus, she opted to forgo marriage altogether. Nancy's ambition to become school principal and help her community was so strong that she had to forfeit marriage. She did not want marriage to curtail her advancement in the job, as it had happened to most of her female friends who were married. In order to stay focused and lead an independent life, Nancy took the bold step of remaining single because education and career seemed to have had a special place in her life, as she explained:

You know when you are a leader you become busy and you realize you are busy for others and not busy for home. You know this is one mentality people tend to have; that we exchange the roles with men when we are leaders. Yea, this one I noted because I have some married friends who have even decided they cannot be leaders. They can just teach because they cannot be allowed to lead in a way, unless now you just think of becoming a rebel and yet you don't want to be a rebel. With me I had said one thing; I want my freedom. I don't want an inhibition. Let me not

have somebody who will come in between me and where I would like to reach and the people that I would want to assist.

Nancy does not regret her choice to remain unmarried. Instead, she expressed satisfaction in her accomplishments in career as a high school teacher and later principal and her contribution to her family and society while single. Nancy attributes part of her success as school principal and single mother to the decision she had made to remain single, whereby avoiding the stresses of marriage life in Kenya. She expressed this fact contentedly:

> You know I could sit down and say "my God, do you know if I was married I could not help these kids!" [her orphaned nephews and nieces]. The mother died and the father died. Can you imagine! And I could just say I would have not helped them. I could be just sitting somewhere lamenting feeling that I cannot act; just sympathizing but no helping. That is why I have really said OK people may say being single is challenging but all the same if you have your good principles you can stand up as a leader, you can stand up as a mother and you can stand up as a woman. Yea, I take pride in that.

Nancy grew up in a time when her community valued marriage more than it does today. I would think that very few women of her age would readily forgo marriage and stay single for the sake of education and career. The fact that Nancy decided to remain a single mother must have attracted a lot of stigma. Many Kenyan career women realize the burdens married life visits on their jobs but they dare not opt to be single owing to the stigma attached to single mothers. Therefore, Nancy's decision to forgo marriage is a clear testimony of her high self-regard. She chose a seemingly rough but promising avenue to a successful career in school leadership.

Passion to Educate Children

There are many reasons that make people seek or enter school leadership. Some may target the benefits that the position offers while others may admire school leadership for the opportunity it provides one to bring about change in the community by perfecting the acquisition of knowledge and skills by the youths and guiding them toward superior careers. The latter was one of Nancy's strongest motivations to seek school leadership. Nancy's narrative portrays her as the kind of principal who makes a lot of sacrifices in order to see her students succeed in their education and beyond. Nancy's school in situated in a rather poor neighborhood but its relatively high scores in national exams makes it stand out school. Her school is a mixed district school whose biggest challenge is the high numbers of average students it draws from the immediate community. Nancy's school is perceived as a community school that must admit many students from the surrounding and after provincial and national schools have completed their selections. Nancy exposes this dilemma in her narrative:

> The challenge is of these people around here not embracing education. This is a very challenging station because one thing they have believed is that the school is for those who have failed. Well, if our children are not at provincial schools, let us bring them here because this is our resting ground. Wakae hapa wakue [they should study and grow up here]. In so doing they are not ready even to pay for these kids. Their mentality is these children cannot make it why should we waste resources in them? The learner in one way or another belongs to a teacher; more to a teacher than to a parent. That is one thing I noted in this station when I came here - that teachers are the ones owning the children.

The situation described in the preceding excerpt is a major challenge to Nancy's administration; however, her school has recorded tremendous student achievement gains since Nancy took over the mantle of leadership. Nancy attributed her successful leadership to a united and hardworking team of teachers and that of the school board. However, Nancy's effective leadership is reflected in the words of one her female teacher that I interviewed:

> "This school has made milestones in national examinations. Our mean score I should say maybe for the past 5 years has increased greatly and we feel proud…Nancy is a good leader but she is too strict [laughing] to students and teachers but maybe it is because she doesn't want nonsense that we have seen improvement".

Nancy's passion to educate Kenyan youths comes out clearly in the way she shoulders the parents' responsibilities by having the school pay part of the fees for needy and worthy students. Nancy does this by looking for alternative ways of covering school balances owed by the neediest students in order for them to stay in school and continue with their education. Nancy explained that after she realized that the more students missed school, the poorer their grades became, she established a Worthy and Needy Scholarship that helped pay part of the fees for needy students:

> Now the big challenge is that they [students] will not pay. We still retain them. If you have carried a student from form one, form two and he/she is in form three we cannot allow this one to drop out. We feel it is our wastage not the wastage of the parent because we have put a lot in this child and what the child has used is even more than what is remaining. This year we even paid a lot of exam money. These

candidates we are having here we have paid their KCSE fees because the parents did not pay.

Nancy loves her leadership duties because of the satisfaction she derives from the high grades her students get in national exams. She perceives the students' to subsume the success of their community. It is not uncommon in Kenya to find a number of high school seniors missing to take the final exam for lacking exam fees. Missing the national exam implies that either the student has to repeat their final year of high school or drop out of school. Nancy's passion to educate Kenyan youths is exceptional. Assisting needy students to clear their balances or enroll for final exams enables many students to remain in school and better their grades and prevents others from repeating classes or becoming school dropouts. Nancy's motivation to go beyond her regular leadership duties is her desire to better the lives of her people. She believes that a better education for the youth today will be a better society tomorrow. Nancy's success as a woman principal derives partly from her ability to empathize with the needy students, as she recounts in her narrative:

> You hear of a day scholar with a balance of Ksh. 24,000 [~$250]. What does that translate to? You see if they are not able to pay the 2,000 you cannot expect them to pay that large balance. They cannot pay. So let the child complete. Let the child feel I have completed form 4. Probably that child will be blessed and go work come back redeem a certificate. That is all what we do. You have to treat them as your children. That is the thing. You cannot afford to treat them otherwise. If you treat them otherwise you will not have a school.

One of Nancy's male teachers that I interviewed noticed her leniency in collecting school fees from parents. On one hand, he seems to feel that Nancy should be stricter in raising money to run the school through the student fees but on the other hand he apparently understands the economic situation of the community around the school. Comparing Nancy to the former male principal that left before her he said:

When you look at fee payment scenario you see it coming out clearly. The former principal used to say bring the fees or go but the current principal I don't know whether it is because she is a lady or maybe she feels that if she did not have money she could not be here. She is lenient with student paying the school fee. My position is that she may be acting like a mother or she may be reflecting back and saying if the principal in the school she went did not understand her background then she could not be what she is today. There are times we have told her to call the parents and tell them this amount of money is required and she tells us you know some children have no parents. So we simply accommodate them within the limits of the resources they have.

The logical question that arises from Nancy's financial assistance she gives needy students concerns the source of funds. Nancy explains that there are many miscellaneous ways of raising funds including donations and the government operated Constituency Development Fund (CDF). She also explained to this author one way the school is able to provide lunch for all students, including day-scholars who normally do not pay for lunch, since lunch is generally for boarders:

To manage our finances when others are not paying, what we do, for example, because we have a small boarding section the boarders, girls only, and they are very

133

faithful in paying, the day scholars will not pay. The little paid by these boarders

we divide it within these others. That is the way we survive. So we are always in

debts. That is the only strategy we can use to retain learners in school. Otherwise if

we are to send them home we could not have them in school. We could only have

the boarders.

The other source is government that gave Nancy's school funds to construct a laboratory and offer

bursaries to needy students. In Kenya one of the most common malpractices among school leaders

is embezzlement of school funds. Clearly, Nancy is unaffected by this form of corruption. Nancy

strives to raise funds for her school, something from which she drives great satisfaction. The

contentment she gains from this effort was evident in the enthusiasm she exuded in her

explanation:

But right now our school is one of the beneficiaries of a project in the Ministry [of

education] called Education III. This lab is being constructed … that new building

there is a science laboratory under the Ministry of Education's Education III

Project. The project is also going further to facilitate needy students' learning.

There are some bursaries they paid last year so at least these students in form 4 their

balances will be cleared. So 3rd term we are not sending anybody home for school

fees.

School leadership in low socioeconomic communities is bound to be challenging and

discouraging to the people leading them. It requires self-determination and a caring spirit for one

to succeed leading in a low-income school, such as Nancy's. Throughout my interview with

Nancy, I did not hear her complain and blame parents or society for failing to support the education

of their students. She believed it is her work to educate the children under her leadership whether they are financially able or not. I think Nancy's passion to educate children is one of the driving forces behind her success as a woman high school principal in Kenya today.

Nancy's Hindering Factors

Raising Her Kids

Nancy got her twin sons immediately after landing a job as a high school teacher. Nancy admitted that raising her kids while she was a teacher and later school leader was a big challenge to her leadership and professional life generally. Being a single parent, she wanted to have full control in raising her children. In Kenya most women who get children before marriage do not involve the children's fathers in the raising of their children. Moreover, there is no legal requirement that the fathers of these children pay some form of child support or visit with these children. In most cases children from single mother families grow into adulthood without knowing who their fathers are. This is the case with Nancy, who got children knowing very well that she would never get married. So she kept the father of her twin boys out of their picture. Nancy was solely responsible for their care. Nancy had a house-girl who helped with the babysitting and other chores in the house but she had to be there for her children. Therefore, she had to find time to help out with house chores and directly caring for her boys. Because of family responsibilities, Nancy declined taking up school leadership responsibilities for a long time:

> And these seven years I had refused responsibility. I remember very well. Even people could come to me and say let you go to a certain school and become a deputy. I could tell them, let me not sacrifice my children for leadership because there are those challenges there. OK I cannot allow wasting my children's time at the expense of leadership which will not end. It will be there even some time to

come. So in Vumbini I even went and told the principal that one reason why I don't want to become a deputy is because I want my kids to settle.

Nancy would have assumed school leadership roles earlier, but her responsibilities as single mother held her back. It has been established that most women refuse to seek or accept leadership responsibilities because their husbands don't allow them or they have a lot of responsibilities at home besides their careers (Sobehart, 2007). Nancy avoided marriage in order to free herself from such as situation. However, she ended up in more or less similar circumstances, avoiding entering leadership for the sake of her young children. In Nancy's observation, a number of school leaders spend most of their time shaping the lives of their students leaving no time for their own children. Nancy gave priority to her children. In order to have more time with them, she put motherhood before leadership, which delayed her ascension to school leadership:

> Yes and if I am leading others and my children are wasted I will be feeling bad because I have experiences of people, leaders but their children are wasted. They always project on these youngsters they are leading yea and they don't give their best to their children. I have realized that they always hold back because they reach a point and the whole thing turns back and they look back and say I am doing this and my child is not in good shape. They didn't give their best. But when you have set your way you can be the best mum. Yeah.

In summary, being a single mother delayed Nancy from taking up school leadership responsibilities. She had to forgo many leadership opportunities for the simple reason that she wanted to devote her time to raising her young children. And even after she assumed school leadership, she had to spend some time attending to her kids. By staying single, Nancy was trying

to run away from the restrictions that a husband would introduce in her life. She was aware that such restrictions would last forever, but the limitations brought about by the single motherhood would disappear as the kids grow and start school. According to Nancy, she spent more time serving as department head and deputy principal as these positions allowed her more time to attend to her kids. She took up principalship at a time when her kids were grown and needed less time from her. Nancy's experience with family-related responsibilities may not different from those of married women leaders who have to find themselves in a dilemma of balancing their family and career duties.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I examine across the three narratives in order to identify some specific examples and quotations that depict how gender socialization in the family, at school and at leadership impacted the participants' self-image. I also discuss the role of protective family capital in the development of the participant's self-discipline early in life which may have contributed to their development of favorable self- image. To better understand the women's common challenges and support systems that enabled them to go through the challenges, identify and discuss the differences across narratives. Lastly, I present two secondary themes that elaborate on the influence of religion and ethnicity on the participants' lives.

Accounting for Respondents' Success Stories: Gender Socialization and Self-Image

The main goal of this study was to understand the challenges Kenyan women face on their journeys to school leadership and how some women overcome these hardships to obtain and secure school leadership positions. In order to understand fully the experiences of my subjects, I collected the subjects' life stories covering their experiences from childhood through their current positions as school leaders. The approach adopted in this study was biographical in nature, and focused on the influence of gender socialization and self-image on the life experiences of the subjects. The study explored the effect of gender socialization and self-image in the family, schooling, and school leadership contexts. Gender socialization "is the process by which people learn to behave in a certain way, as dictated by societal beliefs, values, attitudes and examples" (UNICEF, 2007). Gender socialization is interlinked with the ethnic, cultural, and religious values of a given society;

however, its effect may be neutralized by family, schooling, and individual self-image. Self-image may be defined as women's internal feelings about their competence, ability, worth in society.

Gender socialization begins at childhood and continues into one's adulthood. Normally, children are raised in families and communities with established systems of values, beliefs, expectations, and artifacts that regulate members' behavior as males and females. Therefore, as children grow up, and interact with people within their environment they come to learn behavior that is (in)appropriate to their gender. Gender socialization may affect one's self-image favorably or unfavorably. Positive gender socialization leads to favorable self-image which makes people believe in themselves. In contrast, negative gender socialization results in unfavorable self-image that engenders feelings of incompetence and inferiority. Kenyan communities are generally patriarchal, and socialize females in a way that results in negative self-image, as opposed to their male counterparts. Gender socialization patterns in Kenya may vary slightly across the numerous ethnic groups but the core values remain. Kenyan women are ascribed an inferior status in society through what society expects of them and the gender roles they occupy. Kenyan males carry on the family name, serve as head of household, occupy major leadership positions, and may marry as many wives as they desire. On the other hand, females are homemakers and masters of domestic chores such as cooking, house cleaning, gardening, and child-rearing. Such duties restrict females to the domestic sphere and affect their efforts to access educational and career opportunities. School girls and career women are expected to distribute their time between school and work related duties and domestic chores. This study reveals that positive gender socialization reinforces women's favorable self-image in significant ways. I will show in the subsections that follow how this fact is attested in the lives of my subjects.

Gender Socialization in the Family

Throughout their journeys to school leadership, the respondents' families played a very important role in shaping their lives positively. All the subjects in this study attended school at a time when educating a girl child was more of a privilege than a right in most Kenyan communities. The number of females in high schools and colleges was remarkably low compared to males. The few females that made it to high school and university had their families to thank for the support and encouragement. Others supplemented support from family with their individual favorable self-image to climb up the academic ladder, albeit against societal expectations at that time. The latter situation seems to have been the case in the life experiences of the respondents in this study, that is, Joan, Nina and Nancy.

Joan's parents were not educated but her father sacrificed to take her to school. The support Joan received from her father to get an education seems to have reinforced her favorable self-image that she exhibited at a very early age. Joan demonstrated a favorable self-image when she resisted mistreatment at her step-mother's house and went back to her own mother's house to live by herself even though she was young. Given that it is her father who had asked her to go and live with her step-mother when her own mother separated with her dad, her dad could have forced her back to her step-mother's house. However, this he did not do. Joan shows her wisdom and self-determination when she asks her friends from the neighborhood to come and have sleepovers at her mother's house. She also portrayed a very assertive personality in persisting to advance in her education unlike her brothers who gave up school quite early. In fact, one of her brothers never attended school at all while the two that had joined school dropped out and became drunkards. Joan's dad was ready to support her through school but evidently it was Joan who made the first

move because her father did not encourage her or her brothers to go to school, as it emerged in her narrative:

> My father was not prepared to take me to school but he prepared me to look after animals. In those days people used to stay in the fields away from home …when I came back home my friends had gone to school. So I also said that I want to go school. My father said "I think you are over age" but I said I want to go to school. So it was like if you cannot push your way then that is that.

The decision to forgo circumcision is another illustration of Joan's positive personal self-image. She valued her achievements and future success so much such that she chose to flout a traditional requirement. By forgoing circumcision, Joan was able to avoid early marriage and advance her education. Abstaining from circumcision was not an easy decision for Joan. She clearly knew that her father, her mother, her step-mothers and the whole community expected her to be circumcised in order to conform to community values and in order to find a husband in the future. Nevertheless, her feelings of self-worth allowed her to choose the rare path and risk her marriage. Joan had to discipline herself to overlook the expected consequences of her decision to undergo FGM. Apparently, Joan believed that education would make her more valuable in society in the future than FGM and early marriage. Her move also implies that she did not admire the lives of her circumcised friends who, as she recounted, dropped out of school in form two, possibly to get married.

In essence, Joan seems to have had a self-initiated esteem that was reinforced by her father through selling his precious cows to educate her, discouraging gendered division of labor between her and her brothers, protecting her from boys that were seeking to marry her before she met her

education target and also respecting her decision to stay alone at her mother's house. It is not typical for fathers in Joan's community to stand for their girls to the extent Joan's father did. Given that he was not educated, he could have discouraged Joan's desire to go to school or refuse to pay her school fees. Joan's father socialized her contrary to the limiting societal values that smother girls' desire to fulfill their dreams in life. No wonder Joan keeps using the phrases "my father really protected me; my father really molded me, the person who really shaped us is my father" to express the important role of her father in making her the person she is.

Evidently, Joan's positive self-image enabled her to advance in her studies even after marriage. Of course her husband supported her during her undergraduate and graduate studies but she had to take the initiative. Before she could agree to his husband's marriage proposal, he had to promise not to interfere with her educational plans after marriage. She was not ready to trade her dream for advanced education with marriage:

> We began arrangements and I said "OK fine let us go ahead on condition that in the near future I still want to fulfill my dream of one day going to the university." And he said "well and good I will support you. I said wow that is OK.

Indeed Joan's husband kept his word because he socialized Joan differently than what is expected of husbands or men in Joan's community. He did not bar her from advancing her studies or carrying out her leadership roles, he financed her advanced education and as if that was not enough, he stayed home to babysit their infants while Joan was pursuing her college studies. Joan's husband contradicted the socialization of men and boys in Joan's community. This must have

made Joan feel worthy, loved and respected and prompted her to reciprocate by respecting and appreciating her husband for who he was.

On Nina's case, both her father and mother socialized her positively from an early age. Nina's mother was not educated but she knew the value of education. To ensure that all her children had time to do their school, she took the responsibility of always preparing and serving dinner for the family. This was very atypical of a traditional Kenyan family because, under all circumstances, girls are supposed to always be in the kitchen to prepare food with their mother as part of their training to become marriageable women in future. School work for girls does not come before such a 'noble' training. It is, therefore, every mother's duty to ensure that her daughters have learned homemaking skills early in life because traditionally if a girl/woman gets married and her husband realizes that she, particularly, does not know how to cook, he will send her back home to her mother, not her father, to (re)train the cooking skills before he can consider taking her in for a wife. Apparently, Nina's mother ignored these cultural requirements for girl children because she seemingly valued her daughters' education more than marriage. Her desire was to see her children succeed in their academic work which is why she constantly advised Nina to stay away from relationships with boys in fear that she may get pregnant before completing her studies.

Nina's father also gave her a positive orientation in life, something that is not common in many Kenyan traditional families. The culture of most Kenyan communities teaches girls to be timid and gentle. However, that was not the case for Nina. Her father taught her to confidently express herself. Seemingly it is the self-confidence that pushed her to write a letter rebuking her father for marrying a second wife when she was just a young girl in fifth grade. Also it could have been the same self-confidence that allowed Nina to freely mix and play with boys. In my experience at the time I attended primary school, girls were scared of boys because most boys had

disruptive behavior. For example, they could take away our play ball, tease us or kick us around unnecessarily.   Attempts to report them to teachers or adults were mostly met by the obvious response, "boys are like that. They are just cheeky" Consequently, it was rare for girls to freely intermingle or play with boys. Nina seems to have been one of these rare girls. She had no difficulty playing with boys as she indicated:

> One thing that was funny with me is that I could never fear that this is a boy. If it is football I could go in the middle of them and I start kucheza tu ninacheza nao [just playing and I played with them] and then tunamaliza [we finish].

Apart from encouraging her to express herself freely, Nina's father devotedly catered for Nina's school requirements and held high expectations for her. When Nina did not qualify to university after her A-level examinations, his father heeded to the counsel of Nina's principal to reenroll because he also believed his daughter was capable of achieving university entrance grades. After all the money he had put into Nina's education up to A-level, he could have left Nina alone to carry on with her own life because after all she had pushed her way far in academics than any other girl in the community. In the contrary he reenrolled Nina in another school and she finally qualified for university.

Unfortunately, in the first year at university, Joan had a baby out of wedlock. That could have been the end of Joan's relationship with her parents because of the shame and stigma that the Kenyan society attaches to having a baby before marriage. It ruins a girl's prospects of marriage and depicts the family's failure to teach their girls good morals. Shockingly, Joan's parents did not victimize her as most other parents could have done. They took care of her daughter and encouraged her to continue with her university education. The privileges that Nina's parents

extended to her seem to have given her the morale to pursue her educational goal even though her road was rough at some point in her schooling. Failing to qualify to university and having a baby out of wedlock were enough reasons to kill Joan's positive self-image that her parents had established in her from an early age. However, the positive socialization, from her father and mother, so huge to comprehend within the constraints of societal culture, seems to have pushed her along until she completed her undergraduate studies. Very few fathers in the patriarchal Kenya could have taken the route Joan's parents took. Their sacrifice, love and guidance gave Joan a positive outlook of life.

Besides her parents, Nina's husband too contributed a lot toward her positive self-image. First, he accepted to marry Nina with her out-of- wedlock baby. Since society condemns and marginalizes girls who become pregnant before marriage, Nina's marriage probability was very low. She could have been lucky to be married as second or third wives because as per the culture she was second hand after all .Nina's husband did what society less expected of him. He was already a well established teacher who could have easily married a girl with more admirable reputation than Nina because teachers were very special those days. He however decided to marry Nina out of love. Just like any Kenyan girl in Nina's situation could feel, Nina was very happy that her husband did not judge her past. He loved her baby just like his own. This must have elevated Nina's self-worth and stirred a sense of forgiveness in herself. As she explained in her narrative, she felt hopeless when her very first boyfriend impregnated her and dumped her. Her positive self-image was challenged to the limits, but she remained strong. Nina's husband strengthened it when he took her for a wife. In marriage, Nina's husband also did what most Kenyan women could not have done. He supported her especially when she assumed school leadership. He helped with babysitting and stood by Nina when she differed with her principal. He took up all the house duties

when she had depression while serving as school principal. The natural option for most men in the shoes of Nina's husband could have been to force her to quit leadership. In this situation, Nina's husband contradicted the principles of gender socialization operative in their community. Clearly, Nina's husband seems to have been liberated from the chains of patriarchy that regulated behavior in their community. He not only gave Nina the freedom she wanted to pursue her dream and serve the community but also embraced domestic chores that are traditionally women's. The positive gender socialization exhibited in Nina's husband helped Nina overcome the challenges she faced at work as a teacher and later as a deputy principal and principal.

Nancy's positive self-image is also evident throughout her narrative. It got a big boost from the kind of socialization her educated members of her family gave her. Nancy's parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were educated people. They inculcated in Nancy the value of education to all children, regardless of their gender. Nancy's own family members served an example of this fact, as both women and men were educated and had good jobs. Nancy's parents demonstrated their support for her education by financing her schooling. Nancy's case was among the few unique in her neighborhood. As she revealed in her narrative, only boys were sure of attending school in her village. However, the kind of gender socialization that Nancy's family adopted was different. Her family operated on the principle that both boys and girls were to attend school and work hard to qualify for admission into good schools. Nancy's parents were ready to sell everything they owned for the sake of her education. The commitment of Nancy's parents in educating all their children pushed her to work harder in school, as she explained: "The fact that my parents were able to take us to school made me do well in school because I did not want to let my parents down." The positive orientation Nancy's family gave her regarding the value of education contributed to her outstanding grades at school, which, in turn, strengthened her self-

image, as she narrated: "First term in standard one I was number three. That was really encouraging. Number one was a boy, number two a boy and I was the first girl. That really gave me courage. I wondered how clever I was."

Nancy's desire to perform well in school continued through to secondary school. The high expectations her family placed on her put pressure on her to excel in school. When she realized that she was at the bottom of the admission list even though she had performed so well in her secondary school entrance examinations she promised herself to work her way to the top. Nancy did not take long to realize how stiff the competition in her class was and quickly settled down for hard work. The feeling that her family cared about her education as much as they did about her brothers' gave her the impetus to work even harder to claim obtain top grades. Nancy's positive self-image is also manifested in her firm decision to remain a single mother so that she could focus on her career. The Kenya society places great value on marriage, but Nancy does not seem to approve this position, as she believes that in marriage women are subordinate to men. Nancy feels that this imbalance in the family may jeopardize women's careers. It is not clear from her socialization in the family when she first embraced these views about marriage, but we learn from her narrative that her family treated boys and girls equally by providing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Perhaps, Nancy's independent views may have evolved from the kind of gender socialization she experienced in her family. She must have learned early in her family to believe in her independence and ability to achieve anything regardless of her gender. Nancy has the same advice for Kenyan for girls and women:

> For the women, they should not look down upon themselves as if they could only wait for a man to do something. That thing I hated with all my heart. I love a very independent mind. You know sometimes I was asking another person "you are married and you are not

working. It is only the husband who is working. What is the difference between that husband and I? I just asked that person that way. That tells you the way that man keeps your family is the same way I can keep my family. I said the way that person will buy a piece of land, even me I will buy it and right now I am settled. I have already bought a plot somewhere and that is where I am settled. .. I don't want when people say let me wait until I am married so I can move on because if I get so educated nobody will marry me. That is wrong. Let the young girls know from the word "go" that they can make their future by themselves. The future is in their hands. All they need is our support. Life is in you.

The preceding excerpt underlines Nancy's strong positive self-image. She equates herself to a man, and offers the same advice to other women. Her choice to remain an independent-minded single mother is a clear testimony of her positive self-worth. She did not want a man to control her life and limit her ambitions as was the case to most of her married women colleagues. Nancy did not care about the stigma attached to single motherhood, but celebrated her decision to remain a single mother because she seemed to be happy and had achieved her goals in life.

In sum, the kind of gender socialization that Joan, Nina, and Nancy received in their families contributed a lot to their success in school and in acquiring school leadership and sustaining the same. In particular, their parents and husbands acted contrary to society's traditions and supported them through and through. Their support and exceptional behavior boosted these women's self-image that walked them through the challenges they faced at the different stages of their lives and earned them the success they have today in their principalship. Some studies have established that women's advancement in education and career is mostly inhibited by lack of family support (Olser, 1997). The life experiences of the women in my study testify in a way to

Osler's findings. Their success in education and career relied heavily on family support provided by parents, husbands, and other members of their extended families.

The support that the women in this study received within their families, particularly from their parents and in some cases husbands, can also be explained through Coleman's (1988) concept of family social capital, which is categorized into financial capital (wealth and income), human capital (education of parents) and social capital (time spent by parents on their children's intellectual development). Coleman's argument does not necessarily address the influence of family capital on female children. It speaks to the influence of family background on the education of both male and female children in a family. This seems to have been the case in the families the participants were raised in because the women had the same privileges as their brothers. They benefited from the different forms of capital provided in their gender neutral homes.

Nina and Nancy seem to have had accrued all the three forms of family social capital. Regarding financial capital their fathers faithfully paid their children's school fees in time. They also ensured that they had the required supplies for school and had time set aside for study at home. In terms of human capital, Nina's father was educated and spent time helping his children with school work while both of Nancy's parents and grandparents, too were educated and were available to help Nancy and her siblings with school work. Social capital in Nina's family was mostly provided by her mother. Although she was not educated, she spent time encouraging her children to work hard in school in order to become scholars in different fields. As for Nancy, an example of the social capital provided by her family is when she attended her uncle's graduation while she was in fifth grade. The exposure with academically successful people seems to have increased her motivation to advance in her education.

Joan seems to have mostly benefited from her father's financial capital. Although he could not afford to meet all her financial needs, her father offered her great financial support during her early years of school before she got a scholarship when she was in her 10th grade. Her father also paid for her A-level studies before she met her husband who provided more financial capital that saw Joan advance in her studies up to the university level.

A closer examination of some forms of family support available for all the three women in the study reveal that their families shielded or protected the women from detrimental influences around them. This may have contributed to their development of a self- discipline that inspired them to sail above the constraints of the patriarchal society in which they grew up. Joan's father protected her by honoring her decision to stay alone in her mother's house than stay with uncaring stepmother. He also offered protection by chasing away the boys who could have enticed Joan to consider marriage before completing her studies. Nina and Nancy's families protected them from the influence of friends who did not value education. They rarely visited even their relatives because their parents seemed to distrust interactions outside the family as Nancy explained:

> You see *we didn't have* that freedom of visiting any place. There were a lot of restrictions because we were told you don't go to people who you don't have similar things to talk about like similar interest. Our parents didn't want us to visit friends who didn't like school because they feared we may get bad influence.

Similarly, Nina recounted:

> My dad was very strict that he could never allow me have even good girlfriends. He could tell me "I don't want bad company". Even when we were having visitors

150

my father could just allow us to greet them and then you go back and that is all. He just didn't want us to have company and bad company.

The above examples illustrate some kind of family capital that Coleman (1988) does not address in his concept of family social capital; the form of capital that I will refer to as protective family capital. Apparently, providing financial, human and/or social capital alone may not have been sufficient to see Joan, Nancy and Nina advance in their academic journeys. The protective family capital seems to have complemented the other three forms of capital by enabling the women focus on their studies with no or little influence from society. The concept of protective family capital is a solid contribution toward the family social capital literature as it brings to light another form of capital that may shield children from unfavorable influences outside the family, particularly during their early years of life.

Gender Socialization at School

The respondents in this study who expressed in detail the positive gender socialization they received at the schools they attended are Joan and Nina. The teachers and school leaders in Joan and Nina's schools inculcated in these girls a sense of self-belief that reassured them success. Some of the principals demonstrated their confidence in the girls by providing them with financial assistance. The school environment reinforced their self-image just as their family back home had done. Joan and Nina attended school at a time when there were few girls in high school due to cultural beliefs emphasized that education was not meant for girls, but for boys. So when Joan and Nina got this kind of support from their teachers, they got energized and worked very hard to succeed and prove society wrong.

The most influential person Joan remembers most from her primary school days is her female teacher, neighbor and role model, who stood by Joan when her dad wanted Joan to repeat

6th grade just because her step brother had talked their father into believing that it was the right thing to do. Joan's teacher was not obliged to protect her especially given that it was Joan's family members that had decided to make her repeat on the grounds that there were no sufficient funds educate both Joan and step-brother had Joan moved up to the next class. Nina's teacher was a member of Joan's community and understood very well the prejudices females faced under the tyrannical patriarchal system. Possibly, she had experienced similar hurdles in the course of her schooling, and did not want little Joan to go through the same experience like hers. Again, being Joan's neighbor, she must have realized the scheme Joan's family had hatched to derail her progress in school. She elected to be Joan's advocate, and she succeeded: Joan proceeded to 7th grade. Although Joan and her primary school teacher's community did not value girl education, the latter understood the value of education in liberating women and oriented Joan toward this idea. She socialized Joan to believe in herself and that women needed an education just as boys did. Joan praised her primary school teacher for the protection she gave to Joan:

> She loved me and God was good because I was bright and that is one reason they could not allow me to repeat. So they wondered "how could a girl in position one repeat? She has not gone beyond position 3[and you say she] repeats. So my teachers really fought for me.

Joan's teacher did more than supporting her promotion to the next class. Joan was smart and her teacher's support reinforced Joan's self-worth. In addition, Joan's teacher used to counsel Joan about social life: she warned Joan about the perils of having intimate relationships with boys. She asked Joan to keep away from boys who may entice her and make her pregnant, curtailing her chances of advancing in her studies. This kind of teaching went against the general belief in their community where girl education was not emphasized and early marriages were the order of the

day. In other words, Joan's primary school teachers gave her the initial positive gender socialization that gave her a firm foundation for her success in education, career and family. Joan herself was determined to go pursue education to the bitter end, but she needed the kind of motivation her primary school gave her. Joan had decided against circumcision. Her decision was buttressed by her primary school teacher who encouraged Joan to aim higher in her education. Joan's teacher was a good example for Joan to emulate. She lived a comfortable life that Joan admired and aspired to attain upon completing her education and securing a job. Joan's teacher socialized her to believe that education was an opportunity for both boys and girls.

When Joan completed her primary school education she got admitted into a boarding girls' secondary school. Joan's secondary school principal became her role model. She got to understand Joan's unstable financial situation and let Joan stay at school when she sent other girls home to get school fees. She also introduced Joan to Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, an organization that gave scholarships to needy and worthy students across the country. Joan benefitted from them and was able to complete successfully her four-year secondary school education. The actions of Joan's secondary school principal strengthened Joan's self-confidence and made her admire and aspire to be like her principal in future. The kind of support Joan received from her principal paralleled that she received from her primary school teacher. From her principal Joan received a form of orientation that contradicted the prevailing cultural norms that devalued girl child education and oppressed women across the board. Without the positive socialization Joan went through at school in the hands of her teachers and administrators, her dream to get education and a good job could have shattered. Joan's success in education that prepared her for school leadership could not have been possible without the input of her teachers and school administrators who supported her and

demonstrated their value for girl child education. They socialized Joan to believe that education was for males and females.

The positive gender socialization Joan received at school also came from a group of Christian girls she joined while she was in form two. These girls opposed FGM, and affirmed Joan's decision to remain uncircumcised. Were it not for this Christian group, Joan felt that life in secondary school could have influenced her away from her ideals. Some of her friends who were circumcised dropped out of school and got married. Joan disclosed to me that without the positive influence from her Christian friends, she could have been tempted to reconsider her position about FGM and early marriage.

Nina also benefitted from her socialization while at school. The kind of interaction Nina had in secondary school approved her attitude toward education as a gateway to success for both boys and girls. Nina recounted passionately how her biology teacher inspired her to love biology, a subject she studied as a major at university level, and graduated as a biology teacher. In Kenya sciences are considered a boys' domain. But Nina's biology teacher did not approve of this stereotype. His approach in teaching biology maintained that girls like Nina could be as good as anybody else in science subjects. Recent studies indicate that in Kenya today women are penetrating into sciences and other men-dominated fields such as engineering and law (Ngunjiri, 2013). However, the representation of women in these fields is still poor. Nina's teacher socialized her positively because as Nina explained, he was a very smart teacher and the best biology teacher she ever had. He made Nina believe in herself and disapprove the false idea that science, and indeed, education is form boys. He helped Nina dispel any fears about science subjects and the popular notion in the community and Kenyan community that science subjects are tough that only boys may succeed in studying them. Thus, Nina's biology teacher made Nina and the other girls

expunge such baseless ideas from their minds and realize that girls can make it in sciences just as boys.

Nina's experience with her biology teacher is quite similar to mine. I attended a coed secondary school and the general belief among girls in my class was that girls cannot compete with boys in science subjects because boys are smarter in science. During science laboratory lessons we had to share microscopes between 8-10 students. Because of the popular belief that boys are better at science than girls, most girls did not participate in performing the experiments. They waited for boys to conduct the experiments and record the results that girls had to copy. All our science teachers were male and most of them were not keen to know what went on in the lab. Consequently, girls always performed poorly in science subjects. Luckily for me, my biology teacher was smart and keen on what went on in the lab. He explained concepts systematically and encouraged us to go for extra help during his office hours. I took advantage of his commitment and within a short time I became one of the best biology students in my class. My biology teacher was so proud of me and always made positive comments about my achievements. My experience with my biology teacher changed my attitude toward science subjects from negative to positive. I came to believe that teachers play a vital role in student performance. Similar to Nina in my study, I ended up studying biology as my major in university. In these parallel cases, our biology teachers socialized us differently from the popular belief in our society that it is only boys who can make it in sciences.

Nina's high school principal also affirmed Nina's intellectual capabilities and asked Nina's father to enroll her in a different school after she failed to qualify to university in her first attempt of the A-level exam. Nina's principal understood why Nina did not qualify to   university: she suffered several malaria attacks that affected her class performance. The school was located in a

155

region of high malaria prevalence. Not all teachers or principals would care to know what happens to a student after they graduate from their school. However, Nina's high school principal cared about Nina's future. Sure enough, Nina qualified to university in her second attempt of the A-level exam. Definitely, the principal's move determined Nina's future. It is important to note that in the Kenyan society of the time, Nina had already achieved more than an ordinary girl could achieve. However Nina's principal held much higher expectations for her than the society did. She went an extra mile to ensure that Nina had an opportunity to exploit her full potential. Knowing that her principal realized her academic capability and wished her well in her academic pursuit must have impacted Nina's self-image positively and gave her the motivation to work harder and to qualify to join university.

Gender Socialization in School Leadership

The experiences of Nina, Joan and Nancy in the context of school leadership reflect the impact of favorable self-image and positive gender socialization before and in the positions of leadership. The positive socialization they received while in leadership came from different people including the school communities and school board of governors, students, family, and government officers in the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

At the time all the three women assumed school headship, very few women were heading co-ed schools in Kenya. Most communities in Kenya did not readily accept women to head their schools. By promoting and posting them to co-ed schools, the Kenya government expressed their faith in Joan, Nina, and Nancy. And the fact that their respective schools accepted them, this implies that they received support from their immediate school communities, boards of governors, students, and teachers alike. None of the three respondents was rejected by the school they were

156

heading. This acceptance challenged the popular view in society then that women are incapable of heading co-ed schools.

Nina's first nine years of principalship were quite challenging because of the depression she suffered following the mistreatment she had faced in her former school as a deputy. In addition, she started her principalship in a beginning school that had a lot of challenges to do with insufficient funds and conflicts arising from the delinquency of the previous principal. These distressful experiences would have discouraged Nina from leadership. However, as her story depicts, Nina was brought up to believe that quitting is no option. When faced with tough and discouraging situations during leadership, she looked back at the lives of her father and her school principals for reference. These were her leadership role models. They socialized Nina to be honest in all situations and she could not afford to behave otherwise. It is her transparency in handling school funds coupled with determination that attracted the support of teachers, students, board members and the whole community.

Obviously, the local community was pleased with Nina's leadership. They credited her for improving the students' performance in her school as she excitedly explained: "We compete about the school mean score and our school defeats most schools around here and I hear the community members say "we hear that a woman has defeated men around here." So that is one thing that I like." Gaining community trust and support was a big motivation for Nina because there have been situations where the community denies a woman leader because they do not believe in women's competence in leadership. Women are viewed as invaders in men's field. In a significant way, Nina's community strengthened her self-image and reminded her of her value to the community she served.

Similar to Nina, Joan's school community gave her exceptional socialization during her leadership. They did not reject her for being a woman. Instead the community members wished they had even more women in school leadership to serve as role models for girls in the community. According to Joan, the community gets frustrated when they cannot raise their own women to lead their schools:

> The community really desire that we have women leaders in our institutions of higher learning so as to serve as role models for the girls. You know this is the environment where the girl child education is still low because of the various cultural impediments that are there. So we need women leaders to guide girls in their schools. Like when I was transferred from the school that I headed first, they wondered who was going to take up the school. They looked around for a local but they could not find. They couldn't find the right local to take up the school and that is how they ended up getting a person from another community. Most of the locals still had diplomas**.** They had not taken degrees. Even pursuing education is not something easy for women in this region. It is a bit difficult. They [women] say after all I have a diploma that is enough for me. So the community looks at women with a lot of appreciation for what they are doing. They really appreciate the work we are doing.

In terms of her promotion to leadership, Joan did not experience any discrimination from the board of governors or the government. She was promoted right from class to headship based on her competence. At no point was she asked to give a bribe or any other kind of favor in order to be promoted to principalship. She seems to have had a positive socialization throughout her journey to school leadership and during leadership.

Evidently, Joan needed no more proof in order to believe that she was a woman of substance and that the community cherished her. She experienced the community's tremendous support which may have contributed to her strong desire to see more girls complete their education in order be role models to the future generations of girls in her community. Also Joan's inspiration to support her female students may have been as a result of her earlier positive gender socialization through her father, her teachers and her principals. Joan had walked in the female students' shoes before and she clearly understood their struggles. She must have remembered how her teachers and principals went out of their way to ensure that she completed her studies. Perhaps it is with that spirit that she also made a special effort to obtain bursaries, sanitary pads, soaps and even pens for the neediest girls to make sure they could stay at school. Fundamentally, Joan's positive socialization at home, school and at leadership made her believe in herself and also contributed to her zeal to support girl education for the betterment of society.

Concerning Nancy, her family socialization prominently speaks to her passion to educate all kids in her school regardless of the low expectations that parents and the community held for the students in her school. Nancy's experience portrays her commitment and determination to leave no child behind because her family socialized her that education is the key to success. She must have borrowed a lot from her grandfather who, as Nancy narrated, could educate needy children in her village because of the value he placed on the education for all children whether they were his own or not. Joan recounted:

> My grandfather had tried very much assisting even let's talk of the needy bright because sometimes when we were young we were wondering how large is this family? There were so many people living there who did not belong to our family. They were just needy but were being educated in that homestead… they were just

people from the community needy hardworking who embraced learning and my

grandfather was very generous, a very generous man. Maybe it was because of his

love for education that it did not matter whose child he was educating.

Regarding Nancy's experience with the school stakeholders and the community and the government, it is evident Nancy' socialization was positive. Her colleagues, the teachers' service commission and the board of governors saw her leadership potential long before she was ready to take up school leadership. In several occasions, while she was serving as a deputy principal, she was offered principalship opportunities but she kept declining because, being a single mother, she wanted to raise her kids first before she could consider leadership. She came to accept her first leadership position after a long time of persistent requests. Nancy's socialization was quite unique to the experiences of most women school leaders particularly in developing countries. In most cases, women go through arduous principalship application processes and finally end up not being considered because of corrupt hiring authorities. Nina's experience most likely contributed to her positive self image. The feeling that the community had seen her leadership capabilities was heartening.

Both Nancy and her deputy are women in a coeducation school but still the community appreciates their leadership as she said: "people have learned to appreciate leadership of women. It is the one which is succeeding." No wonder all the four schools in her district were being led by women at the time of the interview. The fact that Nancy's community recognized the value of women school leaders was likely to have given her the motivation and determination she had in earnestly serving students that were entrusted to her by parents and the community in general.

Unity in Diversity: How the Women Succeeded Albeit their Differences

Evidently Nina, Nancy and Joan have some commonalities in some of their life experiences. For example, both Nina and Joan were raised in polygamous families while Nina and Nancy had educated family members. Also all the three women were not affected by gender-based division of labor in their families. All these similarities contribute to a better understanding of the common challenges that the women went through and some support systems that saw them through the challenges. However, it is also clear that these women have some unique distinctions among themselves, which raises the question of how all the three women happened to succeed although faced with different situations in their lives. The following few paragraphs will point out the most prominent distinctions among the women in the study and explain why their differences do not seem to be as prominent as they are.

Beginning with Nancy, one prominent factor that distinguishes her from the other two women is that she was never married. In a patriarchal society, such as Kenya, one is likely to expect that Nina and Nancy could be more privileged as compared to Nancy since marriage affords a person respect and thus higher status in society. Surprisingly, all the three women had similar experiences in terms of respect from their families and the communities in which they led. This seems to be the case because Nancy's community does not cling onto discriminatory societal norms as much as Nina and Joan's communities. This gave Nancy an advantage and thus minimized the differences in the women's experiences based on marital status.

Joan is very distinct from Nina and Nancy because of her uncircumcised status. Just like Nancy, her status may have jeopardized her chances of obtaining leadership especially within her community where women circumcision is rampant. However, Joan was lucky that there was no

forced circumcision in her community and that she met a husband who cherished her uncircumcised status. She, therefore, was able to advance in education and her competence earned her a leadership position. Seemingly her academic merit downplayed her uncircumcised status, a factor that made their experiences at leadership more similar than different.

Finally, Nina's distinguishing feature is that she had a baby out-of-wedlock. Her situation may appear to be similar to Nancy's who also had children outside the marital bond but Nancy's case is different because she intentionally wanted children but not a husband. For Nina, she desperately wanted to be married by the father of her baby most likely because marriage is more of a requirement in her community. Raising a child as a single mother in her first year of college was not easy for Nina. One could expect her to quit or take time out of college to take care of her baby; a situation that may have affected her educational and career plans. However, her loving parents lifted the burden off her shoulder by taking care of the baby so that Nina's education could not be disrupted. Besides, she met a man who gave her tremendous support in her leadership journey, instead of judging her past.

As it is evident, forgoing marriage, forgoing circumcision and having a child out-of-wedlock were enough reasons to disrupt the traditional life paths of Nancy, Joan and Nina, respectively. They were bound to be considered social misfits in society, which would have negatively affected their self-image. However the support they got from their families and/or communities seemingly uplifted their self-image and enabled them move forward with their lives. The favorable self-image developed from the assured support they received may have increased their resilience in the challenges they faced in their lives.

Concisely, while the women in this study had similar experiences in their journeys to school leadership, they also lived or operated under different circumstances but still made it to leadership. This underscores the importance of different support systems within and outside the family that may contribute to the success of the many girls and women struggling to realize their goals in life regardless of the different location or situations that they may find themselves in. Highlighting the similarities and differences may enable us to realize that women do not have to operate in the same situations in order to succeed. All that is important is identifying strategies that may support them to realize their potential from wherever they are.

Secondary Themes

The Role of Religion in the Respondents' Experiences

Religion is a quite prominent theme in my study. Nina and Nancy were brought up in Christian families and they grew to appreciate the Christian faith. Joan's family was not religious but at high school she became a Christian and she has ever since remained a devotee of the Christian religion. In the Kenyan context, education seems to be closely linked with Christianity. Formal education in Kenya was established by European missionaries in Kenya in the early 19th century. "The foundation of modern education was laid by missionaries who introduced reading to spread Christianity" (Wosyanju, 2009; p. 2). Before the missionaries, education in Kenya was informal and learning took place through apprenticeship as children learned customs and traditions from parents, other family members and the community members (Wosyanju, 2009). The missionaries, therefore, had to teach the natives how to read so that they could be able to read the bible. With time, the missionaries build churches and schools. Because the Christian teachings

163

challenged the traditional education, formal education was not well received in Kenya. Only the people who appreciated the Christian teachings were willing to send their children to school.

Because of its origin, formal schooling in Kenya has since then been associated with missionaries and Christianity. Most Christians embrace the education of their children because Christianity teaches that education is the key to success. It also teaches about developing a moral character which blends well with the love of education because without morality, children end up in wrong company and distancing themselves from school. Therefore, that Joan decided to join a group of Christian girls in secondary school was a decision that was meant to enable her to shun away from the cultural influences, such as circumcision, that Christianity discourages. In essence, growing up in a Christian family, as it was in the case Nina and Nancy, or choosing to become a Christian, as in the case of Joan, was an added advantage to the women in my study because it gave them a chance to ignore or stay away from the cultural pressures that impede the schooling process particularly for girls.

In a significant way, each of the women's experiences speaks to how religion was a motivating factor toward getting their education. For Joan, the company of Christian girls shielded her from the influence of other girls who adhered to the cultural traditions that affect girls' education. In the case of Nina, her parents and the Catholic schools that she attended gave her a good religious background. She recounts her mother's strong adherence to the church teachings and commends her mother for teaching her good principles which she believes contributed a lot to what she has achieved in life:

> Having been in a polygamous family my mom for me I can say she just had
> a lot of good relationship with God and it lead us somewhere because she

taught us morals. There are things that she told us not to do ever and she
even insists up to now. So she was a total prayerful lady.

Nancy's Christian upbringing seems to have helped her go through some of the challenges she faced teaching and her leadership work. For example, Nancy was happy that she was able to stay with one house-help for quite some time when her kids were little. House-helps are sometimes hard to keep in Kenya because they are bound to move from family to family depending on financial offers they get. High house-help turnover makes it hard for career women with young children to make long term plans because they are not guaranteed babysitting services. Nancy believes in God's intervention in bringing up her kids successfully as a single mother and trusts that with God's guidance, she can go through any hurdle in life.

I think sometimes God cannot give you a burden which you can't bear. That is the thing because when I got my twins the girl house help I got stayed for 3 years. The first 3 years I stayed with only one house help and it was well.

In summary, all the three women in my study benefited from their knowledge and adherence to religion in various ways. For some it was a means of getting focused on their studies while for others, their faith in God gave them the courage to face life's challenges.

The Intersection of Gender and Ethnicity

Intersectionality is a sociological term or theory that conceptualizes discrimination or oppression as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Nash (2008) defines intersectionality as the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality." (p.2). The theory of intersectionality seeks to underpin the fact that different individuals or groups of people may experience discrimination differently depending on their identities in

terms of race, gender, ethnicity, class and other social constructs. One of the advantages of examining the experiences of marginalized people using the intersections approach is that it enables one to fully understand the uniqueness in those experiences better than when generalizing the experiences of people with similar identities (Dhamoon, 2011).

The women in my study came from different ethnic groups and religious backgrounds. In trying to look at how their various identities intersected to shape their experiences, I realized that the women's experiences differed depending on their ethnicity more than their religious backgrounds. Nancy comes from the central province, Joan comes from the Rift valley province and Nina comes from Nyanza province. These women represent three different communities from each of those provinces. Although their experiences cannot be generalized given the small sample size, my respondents' narratives give a picture that a woman from central province is likely to face lesser challenges in leadership as compared to a woman from the other two provinces. This is because according to Nancy, most schools in her community were headed by women as she pointed out:

> Elsewhere where I have led and taught they do not have such a culture
> [discriminating against women school leaders]. Like in most parts of this
> province, people embrace the leadership of women. That is the thing. Yes
> that is the thing and you realize that they [women] even tend to occupy some
> of the high posts even most of these post like the national schools there are
> some of them.

This is an indication that the oppression of women school leaders in Nancy's ethnic group is not intense as compared to the communities where Nina and Joan come from. For example, Nina faced a lot of oppression from her male colleagues during her leadership as a deputy because

majority of school leaders in her community are men. Therefore, a woman school leader is seen as an intruder in men's domain.

In Joan's community, there are very few women in school leadership not because the women leaders are discriminated against by their male counterparts or by the community. Women school leaders are the minority because the strong cultural beliefs among the community members deny women opportunities to become school leaders. For example, since FGM is rampant in Joan's community, most girls end up getting married because they are good for marriage once they are circumcised. The biggest challenge for girls, potential women school leaders and the few women already in leadership in Joan's community then becomes lack of empowerment to repel the limiting cultural notions in order obtain and stay in school leadership. As much as the community looks supportive of women school leadership, they can't let go some of the traditions that hinder women's succession to leadership. Essentially, the intersection of gender and ethnicity shape Joan, Nina, and Nancy's leadership experiences in varied ways.

In most cases, women school leaders in Kenya and other regions around the world are seen as a universal woman with universal experiences. With such generalizations, it sometimes becomes hard to a come up with viable strategies that speak to the underrepresentation of women in school leadership because in reality, women school leaders have different experiences in relation to factors like their family backgrounds, religious affiliations, ethnicity and social class. In this case, the differences in my respondents' ethnic origin reveal that Kenyan women leaders may experience leadership differently albeit all of them being Kenyans. This makes it necessary for women leadership studies in Kenya and elsewhere to consider various aspects of women's leaders' lives that intersect to shape their experiences. This way it may be easier to make practicable recommendations that will speak to the issue of women school leadership in Kenya.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study demonstrates, women school leaders in Kenya are bound to go through various difficulties in different stages of their lives before and during leadership. These include the challenge of growing up in a polygamous family, maltreatment by colleagues at work, raising kids as single mothers, and scarcity of shared resources in large families. However, even with such challenges, some women have managed to carry on because of commendable support systems along their journeys to leadership. Three significant sources of support stood out in the women's lives namely: positive gender socialization which established and/or reinforced the women's self-image, protective family social capital and also the influence of role models.

Regarding gender socialization each of the women's narrative speaks to the big role that positive gender socialization played in shaping the experiences of the women in my study. The women's socialization patterns at home and at school contributed a lot to their success in schooling and in principalship in a variety of ways. First, all the three women did not experience the effects of division of labor that denies female children opportunities to study at home. Even for the women who had different roles for boys and girls in their families, the duties were not skewed against girls. The home environment was quite conducive, which allowed the women enough time to do their school work. Joan did not experience gender-based division of labor at all in her family. The chores were randomly shared with her brothers. Nina and Nancy did have different chores from their brothers but still their families ensured that all the children had quality time set aside for school work. Gender-based division of labor at childhood and even adulthood is one the most cited causes of poor representation of women in school leadership. In the literature I reviewed, school

leadership was not attractive for some women in teaching positions because they feared juggling their professional and domestic duties since housework is traditionally women's work whether professional or not. It is quite amazing that the participant's parents and husbands gave them a positive orientation in terms of division of labor, which seemingly impacted their motivation to advance in education and also challenged the common experience of poor/lack of husband support among women contemplating to enter school leadership or those already in leadership positions.

Second, Joan, Nina and Nancy's parents sacrificed to finance their education. These were not upper class parents who had surplus income to spend on their daughters' education in a society where educating girls is not a priority. They only chose to educate their daughters because in their eyes, all their children were equal and they deserved the best. This kind of love and support was a motivation for the women do their best in school and attain higher levels of education because they did not want to let their parents down. The women believed they will excel because their parents made them believe so. Not all women have the privileges that the three women had, particularly in Kenya and other developing countries. Some authors have realized that when faced with poverty, most families choose to educate their sons, leaving many girls with no option than drop out of school and get married. However, some school leadership literature has pointed out that parents, and more especially fathers, can be very influential in their daughters' academic endeavors. This finding supports prior studies that have realized the crucial role of parents in their female children's advancement in studies.

Third, in their schooling life, two of the three women testified to the moral and/or the financial help they got from some of the teachers and administrators in the schools they went through. By seeing a potential in them and supporting and encouraging these women to take education seriously, the school staff played a crucial role in the success of the women in this study.

The school-based support supplemented the gender-balanced orientation the family provided for these women. Schools are not always the haven they are supposed to be for female children facing cultural pressures from their communities and sometimes parents. For example, there are young girls who choose school in order to run away from detrimental cultural practices, such as, early marriages only to land in the hands of sexually abusive male teachers (Moletsane &Manuh, 1999). The very people who are expected to guarantee their protection end up being their molesters. In my interviews with my respondents, none of them mentioned having challenges to do with such kind of exploitation at school. For example, comparing her experience at school with what happens between teachers and students in Kenyan school nowadays, Joan explained with disappointment:

> Protection especially from teachers nowadays is not a guarantee. I am telling you Damaris I cannot say much about my teachers in primary or secondary because I never saw anything like teachers befriending girls during my time. I think there was a lot of professionalism in the past but nowadays our teachers have no professionalism in them. They have no morals in them. But in the past I never saw a teacher approaching a pupil. I never saw that for sure. I never witnessed that in the past. But what is happening today, teachers are being removed from the register. Carnal knowledge here carnal knowledge there; I never witnessed that. Otherwise I could be a victim. I think because with teachers, now it could become a bit technical for me to know what is right and wrong. So I never had an experience with the teachers.

This is a great testimony of how much schools can accomplish for female students who are always at risk of exploitation in the current Kenya. Schools should provide the kind of

socialization that will make up for what the larger community has deprived of female children. Literature on women in school leadership has not extensively looked into the role of schools in promoting girls' education. Most studies speak to women in leadership and/or those contemplating leadership and yet the core problem of women's underrepresentation in school leadership seems to originate in lack of support for girls education. This finding is an important contribution to the subject of women underrepresentation in school leadership as it unmasks the important role of educational institutions in assisting more girls to complete their education and ultimately acquire school leadership.

Fourth, at their leadership positions, all the women had positive gender socialization from the parents, teachers, students, community and the government. The government trusted their leadership and recommended them for leadership while the local community acknowledged the women's leadership. This was a great boost on the women's self-image. Joan, Nina and Nancy were mostly likely energized to do their best in leadership since they were assured of the support and acceptance by the larger society. Contrary to the preceding studies that have identified discrimination and disrespect of women school leaders to be prominent issues in the women school leadership literature this work portrayed communities and hiring bodies, including board of governors and the government, to be supportive to women school leaders.

Concerning protective family capital the three women in this study were privileged to be raised in families that valued education for all their children. Providing financial, human and social capital for Nancy, Nina and Joan was pertinent stepping stones toward their success but it may not have been enough without the protection that their families offered. Apparently, the women's parents understood that there were challenges awaiting their daughters outside the family and decided to limit their interaction with people outside the family as a way of sheltering them from

171

negative influences. Coleman's (1988) work sets the stage for understanding the role of family in providing the necessary social capital that children draw on for their academic success. This work augments Coleman's work by adding protective family capital to Coleman's three forms of family social capital. In patriarchal societies like Kenya, protective family capital seems to be crucial particularly during the children's early years when community influence may interfere with their ability to make sound decisions regarding their future lives.

Apart from positive gender socialization and protective family capital, Nina, Nancy and Joan indicated the influence of role models in positively shaping their journeys to leadership. In their growing up and schooling, these women crossed paths with admirable people who they sought to emulate. These were their parents, relatives and their teachers and administrators. These role models gave the women a positive attitude about school because they were all educated and were comparatively successful in life. As young women, Nina, Nancy and Joan came to believe that making a bright future is real if you pursue your target. They were able to map their future through observing and listening to their role models. These heroes and heroines that my respondent met with at some point in life inspired them in various ways and influenced them to see a future that they lived up to.

Through role modeling the three women were motivated to aim high in their academic achievement. Numerous studies on the underrepresentation of women in school leadership in developing countries have pointed out that lack of role models is a great hindrance to girls' motivation to advance in their studies (Brown & Ralph, 1996). This finding speak to these concern by confirming that indeed when girls and women have a successful figures, particularly females, to emulate within or outside the family, they are more likely than not to carry on in their paths to

172

success even when the road seems rough. They are able to see the destination through the lives of their role models.

It is quite encouraging that even though Nancy, Nina and Joan had their unique circumstances in their growing up, schooling and leadership, all of them finally made it to leadership because they were privileged to get the support they needed at the right time.

Given the incredible role of family and school in the rewarding experience of the women in my study, I am compelled to believe that any efforts to make Kenya a gender equitable society should begin from these two institutions and then move on. I, therefore, find it pertinent to suggest that government initiatives for encouraging women into school leadership should consider targeting families, schools and local communities. These seem to be spaces where women's fate is sealed. As my study reveals, a supportive family, school and community is the primary resource that a girl child needs to become a woman of substance in the future. This is where her ego is built or destroyed. During my interviews, two of the women pointed out that there is a government policy in Kenya, instituted in the year 2004, stipulating that in every mixed secondary school, a woman must be either a principal or assistant principal. This policy is quite relevant in addressing the underrepresentation of women in school leadership as it opens vacancies for women aspiring to become school leaders. However, such openings may be less meaningful to a girl whose morale has already been killed at an early age. It is possible to have so many women teachers who may be expected to fill in the opening opportunities but because they have been socialized that leadership is men's domain, they may not be ready to take up those vacancies. The more enlightened the society becomes about our mutual role and urgency of promoting a gender just society, the more female role models Kenyan communities are likely to have for future generations.

In essence, men and women at the grassroots level in the Kenyan society should be sensitized to understand that independency is vital to a sustainable society. The Kenyan economy has been dragging and will continue to degenerate as long as society expects men to think and act for women. Our Kenyan society should cease to live in a generation where the incapacitation of a man/husband incapacitates the whole family because of the total dependency of majority of women/wives. Sensitizing the Kenyan society as a whole to value the girl child is all it takes to make this happen. I strongly believe that if the government prioritizes educating families, communities and schools to cherish education for girls, Kenya stands a better chance of seeing more women get into school leadership and consequently more reachable role models for the female children and women contemplating leadership.

Along with the suggestion of sensitizing local communities to value girl child education, the Kenyan government should consider sourcing out scholarships or some form of funding specifically for the support of needy female children. This is to ensure that poverty and lack of money to cater for girls' personal needs should not stand on the way of parents willing to take their female children to school (Herz & Sperling, 2004). Free education policy in Kenya may have lifted the burden of school expenses off parents' shoulders but as it stands, the policy only caters for tuition fee while parents are required to provide all other necessities including school uniforms and books. These mandatory supplies are quite expensive for parents with low or no income. Therefore, with large family sizes, some parents may find an excuse of sidelining the education of their female children at the expense of their brothers' education.

<center>Revisiting the Conceptual Framework</center>

Before I went for my field study, I speculated that gender socialization will have unidirectional influence on women's self-image and result in their confidence or lack of it in

<center>174</center>

accessing and maintaining leadership positions. However, after analyzing the data, I realized that gender socialization and self-image seem to have a cyclic influence on the lives of the women in my study. That is to say, gender socialization apparently influenced the women's self-image positively and with the favorable self-image, the women impacted the way they were socialized at different levels. The favorable self-image they exhibited seems to have prompted their socializing agents including their family members, teachers and their spouses to support and encourage them, thus giving them the positive socialization that they needed to move on in life. For example, Nina's husband may have accepted to marry her with her out of wedlock baby just because she portrayed a favorable self-image that gave her determination to continue with her undergraduate studies regardless of her circumstances. After marriage, her husband socialized her positively by supporting her throughout her challenging leadership journey, which is not the norm in women school leaders' marital relationships. In brief, positive socialization seemed to influence the women's favorable self-image as the favorable self-image influenced their socialization thus continuing the cycle.

Secondly, I realized that gender socialization did not necessarily initiate a favorable self-image in all the women in my study. In some cases the positive socialization they received at different stages in their lives reinforced an already existing self-image that their narratives do not account for. For example, Joan made the first initiative to go to school at the age of 10. Her father did not influence or encourage him to go to school. It all originated in her inner self. Also, while at her step mother's house, she adamantly refused to be mistreated by her step mother and sister. She made a personal decision to stay in her mother's house by herself. All these portray a favorable self-image that does not seem to originate in her early gender socialization. Her father's influence in her life came later after she had made challenging personal decisions regardless of her young

age. In Nina and Nancy's cases, their families seem to have given them a positive orientation in life at an early age which seems to have provided a basis for their positive self-image in subsequent life experiences.

In summary, the success of the women in my study right from childhood to the leadership level was not exclusively as a result of personal factors. Their positive experiences resulted from the interaction between personal and societal/institutional factors. For example, the women's self-image (a personal factor) was in some cases self-initiated and in other cases reinforced by people with whom the women interacted within the family, community and also in institutions, such as school (societal or institutional factors). The interaction between personal and societal factors is also exemplified through the protective family capital that was available in the women families. It is likely that the protective 'wall' that the women's parents built around them (societal or institutional factor) disrupted the influence of traditional social norms or practices on the women thus enabling them to develop a sense of self-discipline that ultimately contributed to the development of favorable self-image (personal factor). The diagram below summarizes my revised conceptual framework particularly as it relates to the cyclic influence of gender socialization and self-image on the women in my study.

Figure 3: Revised Conceptual Framework
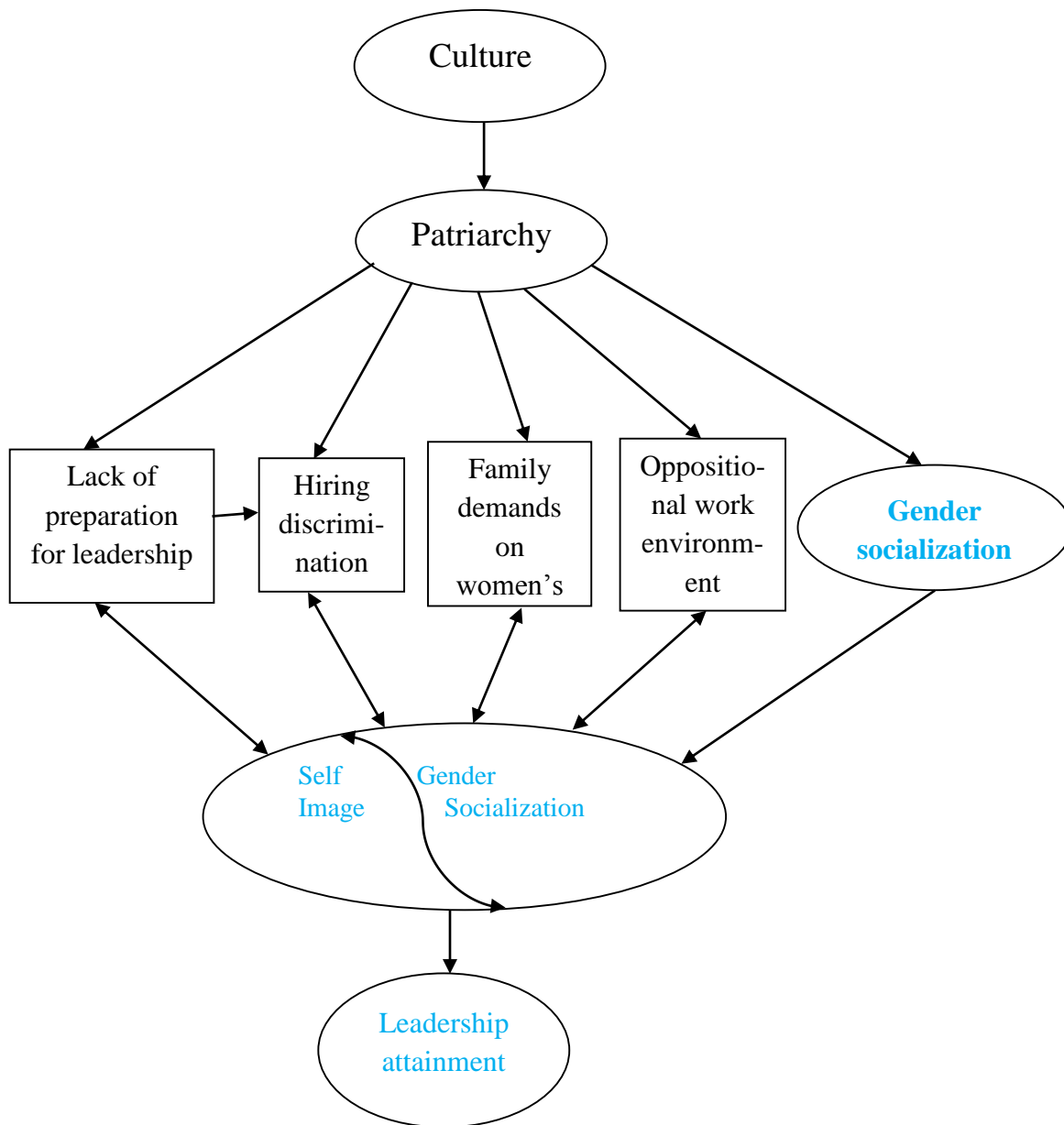
Implications for Future Studies

My research highlights the role of positive gender socialization and role modeling in the success of women in school leadership in Kenya. These findings make a great contribution to women school leadership studies in Kenya because they speak to the issue of women underrepresentation from a positive end. Instead of explaining why women fail to attain leadership as most findings do, these findings reveal how some women are able to attain school leadership. This approach to understanding the problem of women underrepresentation in Kenya seems worthwhile as it provides promising examples of women's penetration into the field of women school leadership in Kenya. More studies targeting the influence behind the success of women school leaders will be valuable to push this approach further and add another dimension to the examination of the problem of women underreprentation in the field of educational leadership in Kenya.

Another important recommendation for future studies is the integration of the concept of Intersectionality in studies to do with women school leadership in Kenya. As described in my findings, many a times women school leadership studies tend to universalize the experiences of women leaders with little understanding that differences in individual women's circumstances shape their experiences differently. My study found out that the intersection of gender and ethnicity influenced the way the women in my study experienced leadership. Some women encountered more challenges than others depending on how their communities perceived women. Future studies should consider how other factors such as class, religion, and sexuality interconnect to simultaneously shape the experiences of women school leaders. Instead of looking at the experiences of women leaders from a single perspective i.e. their gender, efforts to take into

account how their different positionalities affect their experiences will yield more realistic results that will inform any interventions meant to encourage more Kenyan women into school leadership.

Third, my study reveals the important role of spouses in the positive leadership experiences of some of the women in my study. Two of my respondents' spouses challenged the traditional cultural notion that a woman belongs to the domestic sphere. They wholeheartedly supported their wives throughout their journeys to leadership and during leadership. Whether the husbands' early socialization played a part is beyond the scope of this paper. Future studies should look into the question of why some husbands do not conform to the patriarchal underpinning of men's dominance over women, particularly as it relates to the experiences of married women school leaders in Kenya.

Finally, from my literature review, hiring discrimination is one of the most prominent obstacles women school leadership aspirants face all over the world. In a country like Kenya where securing a job, in most cases, depends on one's social networks or ability to give a bribe, it was quite surprising that none of the three women I interviewed encountered discrimination in the process of accessing leadership. Their hiring was based on competence. This detection needs more exploration to be able to understand whether this is a widespread experience among women contemplating school leadership in Kenya and if so, why women school leaders are still a minority in most regions of Kenya.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

June 14, 2011 To: Susan Printy
407 Erickson
Re: **IRB#** 11-588 Category: EXPEDITED 2-6, 2-7
Approval Date: June 9, 2011
Expiration Date: June 8, 2012
Title: Reversed gender roles: Biographies of three successful Kenyan high school women principals.

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been approved**.

The committee has found that your research project is appropriate in design, protects the rights and welfare of human subjects, and meets the requirements of MSU's Federal Wide Assurance and the Federal Guidelines (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR Part 50). The protection of human subjects in research is a partnership between the IRB and the investigators. We look forward to working with you as we both fulfill our responsibilities.

Renewals: IRB approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. If you are continuing your project, you must submit an *Application for Renewal* application at least one month before expiration.

If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.
Revisions: The IRB must review any changes in the project, prior to initiation of the change. Please submit an *Application for Revision* to have your changes reviewed. If changes are made at the time of renewal, please include an *Application for Revision* with the renewal application.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects, notify the IRB office promptly. Forms are available to report these issues.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.
Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair
c: Damaris Mayienga

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Title: Reversed gender roles: Biographies of three successful Kenyan high school women principals

Researcher: Damaris Mayienga

You are being asked to participate in a research study of successful high school women principals in Kenya. The purpose of the study is to understand challenges women leaders face on their way to school leadership and during leadership and also to understand strategies that Kenyan women school leaders employ to overcome challenges they may face on their journeys to leadership and as school leaders. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a high school principal in Kenya.

You will be asked to respond to some interview questions about your growing up, schooling and school leadership experiences in Kenya. The interview will be conducted in three phases. The first interview will be asking you about your childhood experiences. The second interview will inquire about your schooling experiences and the third interview will concentrate on your experiences as a school leader. Each interview session will be approximately one and a half hours long. Therefore, the whole interview will require about four and a half hours of your time. All the interviews will be audio-recorded.

The only potential risk involved in this study is the breach of confidentiality. This is because there are a few women leading coeducation and boys' schools in Kenya. Therefore, even if I use

a pseudonym for your name, somebody from Kenya can easily identify you. However, I plan to

minimize this risk by using pseudonyms for your name and the name of the school you are

leading. I will also modify the number of years you been principal and your ethnicity.

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in

this study may benefit the Kenyan society because it may encourage the African girl child and

aspiring African women leaders to view school leadership as a possibility. The study may also

help various school stakeholders and the Kenyan society in general realize and appreciate

contributions that women make or have made in education regardless of the challenges they go

through.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You

may change your mind at any time and withdraw without penalty or loss of benefits. You may

choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you

will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The research data will be stored in a password protected computer or locked file cabinet on the

campus of Michigan State University (MSU) for a minimum of 3 years after the close of the

research. Only the appointed researchers and Institutional Review Board will have access to the

research data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher using the following contact information: (Damaris Mayienga 3030 Staten Ave. Apt. 3 Lansing MI 48910 Phone: 517-980-5645 Email: mayienga@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

By putting your initials below, you agree to allow audio-taping of the interview.

_____ _____

Initials Date

This consent form was approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. Approved 06/09/11 – valid through 06/08/12. This version supersedes all previous versions. IRB# 11-588.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

Title: Reversed gender roles: Biographies of three successful Kenyan high school women principals

Researcher: Damaris Mayienga

You are being asked to participate in a research study of successful high school women principals in Kenya. The purpose of the study is to understand challenges women leaders face on their way to school leadership and during leadership and also to understand strategies that Kenyan women school leaders employ to overcome challenges they may face on their journeys to leadership and as school leaders. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a high school teacher in a school led by a woman principal in Kenya.

You will be asked to respond to some interview questions about your experience under the leadership of your current school principal. The interview session will be approximately 30 minutes long and the interview will be audio-recorded.

The only potential risk involved in this study is the breach of confidentiality. This is because even though there are many high school teachers in Kenya, which makes your identification seem unlikely, people who know you closely can easily identify you even if I use pseudonyms for your name. However, I plan to minimize this risk by using pseudonyms for your name and the name of the school you are teaching. I will also modify the number of years you have taught and your ethnicity.

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may benefit the Kenyan society in the sense that your response will provide insights into some factors that shape the experiences of women school principals. This will lead to informed recommendations in an effort to minimize the gender gap in school leadership and also in the Kenyan educational institutions in general.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw without penalty or loss of benefits. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The research data will be stored in a password protected computer or locked file cabinet on the campus of Michigan State University (MSU) for a minimum of 3 years after the close of the research. Only the appointed researchers and Institutional Review Board will have access to the research data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher using the following contact information: (Damaris Mayienga 3030 Staten Ave. Apt. 3 Lansing MI 48910 Phone: 517-980-5645 Email: mayienga@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

By putting your initials below, you agree to allow audio-taping of the interview.

_____ _____

Initials Date

This consent form was approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. Approved 06/09/11 – valid through 06/08/12. This version supersedes all previous versions. IRB# 11-588.

Interview protocol for principals

Childhood

1. Can you tell me about your family of birth? Siblings, parents and grandparents.
2. What was your growing up days like? What kind of activities did you engage in?
3. Was religion important in your family?
4. What special events/occasions did your family or community celebrate?
5. What do you remember most about your parents or other family members during your childhood years?
6. What feelings come up when you remember your parents or grandparents?
7. How would you describe the social class of your family in comparison to your neighbors or other community members?

Schooling

1. At what age did you start attending school?
2. Did your other siblings attend school too?
3. What was your primary school life like?
4. How about your secondary school?
5. What do you remember most about your college life?
6. Who financed your education? How affordable was the school fees?
7. Do you remember any particular challenges you faced that might have prevented your schooling?
8. Who or what influenced and shaped your schooling life most?

Marriage and work life

1. Did you marry before or after college?
2. Can you tell me as much as possible about your professional life before you became a principal?
3. How old were your kids (if they do) when you started working?
4. How did you become a school principal? Did you aspire to become a principal?
5. How did being a married woman with children affect your leadership?
6. Was the school you led located within or outside your community?
7. Was your assistant a male or a female?
8. How did you feel about being a woman principal in your school?
9. Have you had any particular challenges to your leadership in your school?
10. Have you had any particular challenges to your leadership in the community?
12. Was your school affiliated to any religion? **If her religion is different:** what was your experience leading in a non-Adventist/catholic/Anglican…school?

13. Are you seeing more women leaders in Kenya now than when you began your leadership?
14. What changes do you think are necessary in order for more women to become school leaders?

APPENDIX E

Interview protocol for teachers

1. For how long have you been teaching in this school?
2. For how long have you been teaching under the current principal's leadership?
3. What is your experience working with the current principal?
4. How would you describe the principal's methods of leadership?

Demographics survey for principals

1. What is your age in years? _____ years

2. What is your marital status?
   o Now married
   o Widowed
   o Divorced
   o Separated
   o Never married

3. Do you have children? If yes how many?

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.

   o Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, BSc)
   o Master's degree (for example: MA, MSc, MEng, MEd,)
   o Doctorate degree (for example: PhD)

5. What is your ethnicity?

6. To what church or denomination do you belong?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Africa Department (2009). Female Genital Mutilation and Legislation. Retrieved October 2012
    from http://www.intact-
    network.net/intact/cp/files/1291028777_FGM%20&%20Legislations%20against%20-
    %20GTZ%20(2009).pdf

Andela, C., Escandon, S. D., Garlo, C. K. & Kamungi, P. M. (2008). Women of Africa
    Leadership Development Program Combined Research Report: Kenya, Liberia & Côte
    d'Ivoire. Retrieved July 30, 2010 from
    http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/lwi/documents/Women_of_Africa_Combined_Report.p
    df

Apitzsch, U & Siouti, I (2007). Biographical Analysis as an Interdisciplinary Research
    Perspective in the Field of Migration Studies. Retrieved March 13, 2011 from
    http://www.york.ac.uk/res/researchintegration/Integrative_Research_Methods/Apitzsch%
    20Biographical%20Analysis%20April%202007.pdf

Ayanga, H. O., (1996). Violence Against Women in African Oral Literature as Portrayed in
    Proverbs. In Wamue, G. & Getui, M. (eds). Violence Against Women: Reflections by
    Kenyan Women Theologians. Nairobi: Acton Publishers.

Barng'etuny, M. C., (1999). Women's education and career opportunities in Kenya. Nairobi:
    Creative Publishing Company Ltd.

Bashir, M., Afzal, T. & Azeem, M. (2008). Reliability and Validity of Qualitative and
    Operational Research Paradigm. Retrieved Dec. 8, 2010 from
    www.pjsor.com/index.php/pjsor/article/download/59/38

Brown, M. & Ralph, S. (1996). Barriers to women managers' advancement in education in
    Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 10 (6), 18-23.

Bush, T. & Oduro, G. K. T.(2006). New principals in Africa: preparation, induction and
    practice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44 (4) 359 – 375

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin &
    Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), The Sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed). Thousand
    Oaks: Sage Publications.

Choti. C. O. (2005). Gender and electoral politics in Kenya: The case of Gusii women, 1990-
    2002. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Clark Atlanta University.

Choti, T. M. (2004). Outsiders inside: an examination of the experiences and perceptions of
    women academic administrators in Kenya's public universities (Unpublished master's
    Thesis). Georgia State University.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *The American Journal of Sociology* , 94, S95-S120.

Corcoran, M. E. & Courant, P. N. (1985). Sex Role Socialization and Labor Market Outcomes. The American Economic Review, 75 (2), 275-278.

Corcoran, M. E. & Courant, P. N. (1987). Sex-Role Socialization and Occupational Segregation: An Exploratory Investigation. Journal of Post Keynesian Economics, (9) 3, 330-346

Creighton, C. & Yieke, F. (2006). Introduction. In Creighton, C. Yieke, F., Okely, J., Mareri , L., Wafula, C. & Smith, E. Gender Inequalities in Kenya. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization. Retrieved July 2010 from http://amper.ped.muni.cz/~miler/aktivity/unesco/145887e.pdf

Crespi, I. (2010). Socialization and gender roles within the family: A study on adolescents and their parents in Great Britain. Retrieved on July 18, 2010 from http://pdfcast.org/pdf/socialization-and-gender-roles-within-the-family-a-study-on-adolescents-and-their-parents-in-great-britain

Damons, M. H. (2008). The performance of female principals in the management of selected secondary schools in the Guateng province. (Unpublished minor-dissertation). University of Johannesburg.

Dhamoon, R. K. (2011). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64 (1), 230 – 243

Denzin, N. K., (1989). Interpretive Biography. London: Sage Publications.

Eshiwani, G. (1993). Education in Kenya since independence. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

Ganiere, M. (2009). Updates on the Kenyan education system. Retrieved July 10 from http://shelbycearley.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/kenya.pdf

Gilgun, J. F. (2010). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Current Issues in Qualitative Research*, 1(2), 1-7.

Girls' education in Kenya (n.d) Akili dada: empowering the next generation of African women leaders. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://sites.google.com/site/akilidada/education

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. The *Qualitative Report*, (8) 4, 597-607.

Hayase, Y. & Liaw, K., (1997). Factors on Polygamy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Findings based on the demographics and health surveys. *The Developing Economies*, 35 (3), 293-327.

Herz, B. K. & Sperling, G. B. (2004). What Works In Girls' Education?: Evidence And Policies From The Developing World. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

Jonas, O. (2012). The practice of polygamy under the scheme of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa: a critical appraisal *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 4(5) 142-149

The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2008-2009). Retrieved September, 2012 from http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR229/FR229.pdf

The Kenya National Examinations Council. History. Retrieved August 2012 from http://www.knec.ac.ke/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=67#history

Kariuki, W. (2006). "She is a woman after all": Patriarchy and female educational leadership in Kenya. Retrieved on July 18, 2010 from http://www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/postamble/vol2-2/woman.pdf

Kirk, J. & Miller, M.L. (1986). Reliability and validity in qualitative research. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications

Lanham, B. B. (1996). Marriage in Japan, Conformity and Diversity: Comparisons of Japan and United States. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 26 (1), 51-65.

Lindsey, L. L. (1990). Gender Roles: a sociological perspective. Prentice Hall: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Lumby, J., Azaola, c., De Wet, A., Skervin, H., Walsh, A. & Williamson, A. (2010). Women school principals in South Africa: Leading the way. Retrieved from http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/196239/

Maillu D. G. (1988). Our Kind of Polygamy Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya.

Mansuetti, S. (2009). Intentional Literacy-based Parenting Education: Can Parents with Low Literacy Skills Increase the Academic Achievement of Their Children? PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 18, 59-74.

Matope, N. (2012). Gender Discrimination in Educational Personnel: A Case Study of Gweru Urban District Secondary Schools, Zimbabwe. *US-China Education Review*, B 7, 689-696.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. Michael. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miller, R. L. (2000). Researching Life Stories and Family Histories: Introducing Qualitative methods Series. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ministry of Health of Kenya (2006). Millennium development goals needs assessment report: Requirements for Goal No. 6, Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. Nairobi: Downtown Printing Works, Ltd.

Moorosi, P., (2007). Creating linkages between private and public: challenges facing woman principals in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, (27) 3, 501-521.

Moorosi, P., (2010). South African Female Principals' Career Paths: Understanding the Gender Gap in Secondary School Management. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* (38)5, 547-562

Morris, J. (1993). Women and Educational Management: A Trinidad and Tobago Perspective. *British Educational Research Journal*, (19) 4, 343-356.

Morris, J. (1999). Managing women: Secondary school principals in Trinidad and Tobago. Gender and Education, (11) 3, 343-355.

Morrisson, C. & Jütting, J. P. (2005). Women's discrimination in developing countries: A new data set for better policies. *World Development Journal*, (33) 5, 1065-1081.

Moletsane. L. & Manuh, T. (1999). Girls Don't Quit School by Choice. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity. Education and Transformation,* 15 (41) , 86-91.

Muller, T.R. (2006). Education for social change: Girls' secondary schooling in Eritrea. *Development and Change*, 37 (2), 353-373.

Munene, D. (2010). Govt moves in to revive youth polytechnic programmes. Retrieved on July 10, 2012 from http://safariafricaradio.com/index.php/reforms/94-reforms/447-govt-moves-in-to-revive-youth-polytechnic-programmes?format=pdf

Mungai, A. M. (2002). Growing up in Kenya: rural schooling and girls. New York: Peter Land Publishing, Inc.

Mutua, R. (1978). Women's education and their participation in the changing societies of east Africa. In Pala, A. Awori, & Krystall (eds). Participation of women in Kenya society. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.

Mwiria, K. (1990). Kenya's Harambee Secondary School Movement: The Contradictions of Public Policy. *Comparative Education Review*, 34 (3), 350-368.

Nandwah, I. 2011. Preparation and development of public secondary schools principals in Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1 (9), 291-301.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review, 89, 1-15.*

Ndirangu, M. (2010, March 12). Beautiful to look at? Not for this girl. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Beautiful%20to%20look%20at%20Not%20for%20this%20girl%20/-/1056/878308/-/g13s0hz/-/index.html

Ngunjiri, P. (2013). Kenya-Development: Men Accept Gender Equality, But with Limits. Retrieved from http://www.ipsnews.net/1997/07/kenya-development-men-accept-gender-equality-but-with-limits/

Nicole L., 2003. Teen Girls Flooding Kenya's New No-Cost Schools. Retrieved July 28, 2010 from http://www.womensenews.org/story/education/030907/teen-girls-flooding-kenyas-new-no-cost-schools

Njiiri, E. N. (1998). Polygamy in the African church today: A Kenyan woman's perspective. In Pemberton, C., Ward, K. & Wingate, A. Anglicanism: A global communion. New York: Church Publishing Inc.

Njue C. & Askew, I. (2004). Medicalization of female genital cutting among the abagusii in Nyanza Province, Kenya. Retrieved from http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/FRONTIERS/FR_FinalReports/Kenya_FGC_Med.pdf

Norris P. & Inglehart, R. (2001). Cultural obstacles to equal representation. *Journal of Democracy*, (12) 3, 126-140.

Olenja, J. & Kamau, J. (2001). Baseline survey on female genital mutilation practices in Koibatek district, Rift Valley province. Retrieved September, 2 from http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/dokumente/en-fgm-baseline-data-koibatek-ke.pdf

Oloo,H., Wanjiru, M. & Newell-Jones, K. (2011). Female genital mutilation practices in Kenya: the role of alternative rites of passage. A case study of Kisii and Kuria districts. Retrieved, October, 2012 from http://www.feedtheminds.org/downloads/FGM%20Report_March2011.pdf

Olser, A. (1997), "Teachers' biographies and educational development: a Kenyan case study", International Journal of Educational Development, 17 (4), 361-71.

Oplatka, I. (2006). Women in educational administration within developing countries: Towards a new international research agenda. *Journal of Educational Administration, (*44) 6, 604-624.

Phendla, T. S. (2000). "Musadzi u fara lufhanga nga hu fhiraho": Black women elementary school leaders creating socially just and equitable environments in South Africa (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://proquest.umi.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/pqdlink?Ver=1&Exp=07-31-2015&FMT=7&DID=727910501&RQT=309&attempt=1&cfc=1

Rarieya, J. F. (2007). Women in educational leadership: A comparison of Kenyan and Pakistani women educational leaders. In Sajid, A. & Meher, R. Quality in education: Teaching and leadership in challenging times. *2*, 469-483. Retrieved from http://ecommons.aku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=books

Roberts, B. (2002). Biographical research. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rosenberg, M. (1989). Society and the adolescent self-image. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Sankhulani, L. (2007). Responding to the needs of the community: Examining the educational opportunities for girls in rural Malawi. *International Education Journal*, 8(1), 100-107.

Shadle, B. L., (2006). Girl Cases: Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya, 1890-70. Portmouth: Heinemann.

Schwandt, T. A. (1990). On judging trustworthiness in interpretivist methodologies. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association Boston

Seidman, I. (2006). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press

Silberschmidt, M. (1992). Have Men Become the Weaker Sex? Changing Life Situations in Kisii District, Kenya. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30 (2), 237-253.

Silberschmidt, M. (1999). Women forget that men are the masters: Gender antagonism and socio-economic change in Kisii District, Kenya. Copenhagen:Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

The Sixth African Development Forum (2008). Action on gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women in Africa. Retrieved May 2011 from, http://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/3667/bib.%2029080_I.pdf?sequence=1

Sobehart, H. C. ed. (2007). Women leading education across continents: Sharing the spirit, fanning the flame. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Sperandio J. & Kagoda, M. A. (2010). Women teachers' aspiration to school leadership in Uganda. *International Journal of Education Management*, (24) 1, 22-33.

Sperandio J. & Kagoda, M. A. (2008). Advancing Women Into Educational Leadership in Developing Countries: The Case of Uganda. *Advancing Women Into Educational Leadership Journal*, (27). Retrieved October 18 2010 from http://www.advancingwomen.com/awl

Strasen, L. (1992). The Image of Nursing: Strategies for Self-Action. New York: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Stromquist, N. P. (2007). The Gender Socialization Process in Schools: A Cross-National Comparison. Commissioned paper by UNESCO for the EFA Global Monitoring Report. Retrieved December from http://trylanarkcounty.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Report-Gender-Socialization-in-Schools-Comparing-Countirs.pdf

Teacher Service Commission (2007). Policy on identification, selection, appointment, deployment and training of heads of post primary institution. Retrieved, August 2012 from
http://www.kcse-online.info/tsc/downloads/DEPLOYMENT.PDF

Thompson, L. & Walker, A. J. (1989). Gender in Families: Women and Men in Marriage, Work, and Parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family* (51), 4 845-871.

UNICEF (2007). Early Gender Socialization. Retrieved November, 2011 from http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_40749.html

Wangila, M. N. (2007). Female circumcision: The interplay of religion, culture and gender in Kenya. New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll.

Wanzala, O. & Andanje, H. (2009, January 8). Woman to head school? Parents say No. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved July, 2010 from http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/512244/-/item/0/-/10ujbhfz/-/index.html

Wojtalik, J. R. (2006). There's No Place Like Home? The Effects of Childhood Themes On Women's Aspirations Toward Leadership Roles. Retrieved July 18, 2010 from http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?Ver=1&Exp=12-13-2015&FMT=7&DID=1127203371&RQT=309&attempt=1

Wojtalik, J. R., Breckenridge, M. B., Gibson Hancox, M. K., & Sobehart, H. C. (2007). There's No Place Like Home? The Effects of Childhood Themes On Women's Aspirations Toward Leadership Roles. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, (5) 1, 41-67.

Wosyanju C. (2009). The system of education in Kenya. Retrieved October, 2012 from http://international.iupui.edu/kenya/resources/Education-in-Kenya.pdf

Yount, K. M. & Abraham, B. K. (2007). Female Genital Cutting and HIV/AIDS among Kenyan Women. Retrieved April 2, 2011 from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1728-4465.2007.00119.x/abstract