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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify how adolescent girls exercise agency, in order to access and complete Secondary (SE) and Higher-Secondary (HSE) education in the Makwanpur district of Nepal. Considering the low retention rate of female students at SE and HSE levels, aim of the thesis is to determine the issues which hinder, and the mechanisms which assist, educational participation, and the way in which adolescent girls navigate around their individual circumstances.

The thesis particularly considers those factors which shape the agency of adolescent girls, and the agentic practice they exercise as a result of this. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, and capital are used to demonstrate the effect social norms and practices have on the agency of adolescent girls, and utilising Robson et al’s ‘Continuum of agency’ illustrates the different types of agentic practice individuals exercise, ranging from action in a restricted context to that within a broad range of options.

The research design consists of individual interviews with adolescent girls involved in CWIN’s Girl Power Programme, and additional actors involved in the education of adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district. The aim of interviews was to obtain detailed narratives about the experiences, perceptions and opinions of actors relating to the agency of adolescent girls and their educational participation. In order to ensure the research was participatory, focus group discussions were held with groups of adolescent girls at both SE and HSE levels. In addition, due to the study’s focus on agency, participant observation was included in order to gain contextual insight and observe the way in which adolescent girls interacted with other agents, and their actions in relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE.

The results of the study suggest that while adolescent girls now have enhanced support and increased influence in terms of accessing and completing education, continued traditional expectations of girls has produced an emerging set of barriers which hinder their educational participation and limit their agentic practice as a result of this. Despite this, adolescent girls are aware of their constrained influence, and aim to make use of all opportunities for support available to them in order to overcome any educational barriers they face. The thesis is highlighting the limited but opportunistic nature of the agency adolescent girls exercise in order to participation in SE and HSE.

Therefore, it is evident that adolescent girls involved in the Girl Power Programme are active social agents, who seek to optimise their agency in order to achieve their educational goals. This suggests that offering substantive support to girls extends the agentic possibilities of adolescent girls, and contributes to their ability to access and complete SE and HSE in Makwanpur.
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<tr>
<td>CWIN</td>
<td>Child Workers in Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPP</td>
<td>Girl Power Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Education</td>
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<td>LSE</td>
<td>Lower Secondary Education</td>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
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<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village District Council</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Formal education in Nepal has a short history of just over 60 years, and historical expansions and post-conflict reconstruction have provided “universal” education and opened education up to women (Stash and Hannum 2001,p360-1). Mishra argues that female access to education has increased with each generation over the past 70 years due to “changes to structures and the agency of women” (2012, p49). This suggests that interplay between both structures and agency have influenced access to education for women in Nepal, and that women’s agency has played a vital role alongside government policies, location, and social norms in enabling women’s educational opportunities (Mishra 2012,p59).

As in many post-conflict and developing contexts, in Nepal many adolescent girls view education as a means to realise opportunities in employment, greater involvement in decision-making, and increase their overall quality of life; “We can be doctors, engineers and teachers if we study hard. Education is an instrument that can guide people to a better life” (Plan International 2013). Yet, despite recent government investment and encouragement from international education initiatives, often Secondary and Higher-Secondary schooling is not readily available for many Nepali women and girls - in reality it “still portrays an uneven distribution of socio-economic outcomes, perpetuating ‘horizontal inequalities’ in terms of caste, gender and ethnicity” (Pheralli and Garret 2014,p42). According to Kirk, adolescent girls face many obstacles to receiving formal education, and that often these barriers are contextual, and influenced by socio-cultural norms, economic and political concerns, and location (2006,p68). Stash and Hannum note that “the unequal allocation of resources among children in households by gender remains a serious problem in many parts of the developing world, and particularly in some societies in South Asia and North Africa” (2001,p335), and is prevalent in Nepal despite educational expansions.

This thesis will investigate how adolescent girls in Nepal exercise agency practice, in order to access and complete Secondary (SE) and Higher-Secondary (HSE) education, and will ultimately propose that they do so actively and, while limited, opportunistically, in order to ensure their educational participation.

This introductory chapter will set out the current state of SE and HSE for adolescent girls in Nepal, which include both inhibiting barriers and enabling mechanisms which shape the agentic practice they exercise in order to access and complete their formal secondary education. The chapter will then set out the rationale for research, and finally, an outline of the thesis chapters.

1.1 Current overview of female SE and HSE in Nepal (100)
Presently secondary education in Nepal is divided into 3 categories: Lower Secondary (10-12 years), Secondary (13-14 years), and Higher-Secondary (15-16 years). Free “basic” education in Nepal was extended from 5 to 8 years in 2009 (UNEVOC 2014), and now includes both primary and lower secondary schooling (aged 5-12 years), while school fees are still required at Secondary and Higher-Secondary levels. Rates of girls enrolling in and accessing SE and HSE have improved substantially over the past decade (disparities have been reduced by 34.8% since 2001 (UNGEI 2012,p32));
however dropout rates are high and completion rates fall with each progressive level of secondary schooling, and “gender and exclusion gaps widen as students progress through the system” (DFID 2011, p1). Stash and Hannum (2001) suggest that, despite expansion of education services in Nepal, high levels of gender stratification and issues of social exclusion persist in formal education. It appears then, that, notwithstanding recent efforts to improve gender parity and equity in SE an HSE schooling, significant barriers continue to hinder girls’ educational opportunities.

Therefore, the documented mechanisms which impede and mechanisms which facilitate educational access, are important for shaping the resulting agentic practice of adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal.

1.11 Barriers which hinder educational participation

In relation to inhibiting social structures, it is useful to discuss the variety of “barriers” present, which may affect young women and girls’ ability to access and complete formal secondary education. Although across literature of the topic of female education in Nepal there has been identification of many different types of barriers (Bista 2004), for the purpose of this research these will be categorised as social, economic, political, physical, and school specific barriers.

Social-cultural barriers refers to factors present in Nepali society and culture, which may prevent or inhibit young women and girls from going to school; including early marriage, household duties and responsibility for sibling care, preference of sons, and enforced traditional gender roles. Nepal has a long history of caste discrimination and social marginalisation, and “girls belonging to marginalized groups such as Dalits, or highly marginalized ethnic minorities, are doubly deprived of their right to basic education” (UNGEI 2008, p74).

As poverty is a widespread issue in Nepal, economic barriers are common in preventing access to secondary education, due to the cost of school fees and materials. In addition, young women and girls may be expected to carry out work in order to contribute to their family income – a contribution which increases with age (Bista 2004, p7) – or families may assume education will be wasted if a daughter marries and moves to her husband’s home.

Nepal is a relatively recent post-conflict state (since 2006), and civil war shattered educational infrastructures (GNWP 2011, p211). Currently in a state of transition, political barriers, slow development of national policies and delays to the constitution writing play a role in obstructing established educational opportunities for young women and girls. In addition, often natural disasters (UNESCO 2014) and fear of violence (Actionaid 2008) present physical barriers, which can prevent students from travelling to and from school.

School-specific barriers include factors which can also be categorised within the barriers above, but are specific to schools and formal educational settings. These include a lack of female sanitation facilities and involuntary absence during menstruation, and an absence of female teachers and gender sensitive curriculum (UNGEI 2008),
In addition, young women and girls may have to cope with different combinations and levels of barriers within their lives; CWIN report that many girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal experience at least one characteristic in their lives which renders them vulnerable to discrimination (CWIN 2011, p9). This will have an effect in shaping or constraining Nepali adolescent girls’ agentic possibilities in order to access and complete secondary education.

1.12 Mechanisms which assist with educational participation

Although barriers to formal secondary education for female students exist in Nepal, there are a range of enabling “mechanisms” in place to assist adolescent girls with accessing and completing secondary education. Working at international and national levels, international education agendas, such as the Education for All agenda and Millennium Development Goals, emphasise the need for states to invest in female education by reducing disparity and improving access and quality of education.

At national level, the Nepali government have made efforts to make education more inclusive in recent years, particularly in terms of girls’ Secondary education; through initiatives such as the School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015, National Plan for Girls Education 2008-2011, Three Year Interim Plan 2007-2010, the Gender Equality and Women’s’ Empowerment project since 2007 (2064/2065 BS), Secondary Education Support Programme 2003–2004, and the Education for All National Plan of Action 2001-2015. UNGEI report that “With the election of a new Constituent Assembly, the nation expects to establish a more engendered, inclusive and equitable governance and public management system that, in turn, will intensify demands for promoting girls’ education” (2008, p75).

Girl Power Programme

There are also a range of regionally located, non-governmental programmes across Nepal, working to provide adolescent girls with educational assistance. For this research, particular focus will be given to the Girl Power programme and “Girl Forums”, which are facilitated by the Child Workers In Nepal (CWIN) organisation.

The programme seeks to redress issues of gender injustices in Nepal, and has 4 central themes, which are parallel to several of the barriers identified above; protection against violence, socio-political participation, economic participation, and (post) primary education (CWIN 2011). In order to achieve these aims, the Girl Power Programme has identified several levels to improve girls’ lives and address the barriers which may prevent adolescent girls from accessing and completing Secondary and Higher-Secondary education – individual level (targeting girls and young women), socio-cultural level (targeting women, men, boys, families, traditional leaders, communities), institutional level (targeting government officials and institutions), and civil society level (targeting civil society organisations) (CWIN 2011).
1.2 Rationale for research

It will be revealing and developmentally relevant to discern how adolescent girls’ perceive their agentic possibilities; which barriers they identify as hindering their educational opportunities and how they cope with them, and to what extent mechanisms designed to assist female secondary education support agentic practice and support girls with negotiating the different challenges and opportunities they face in particular spheres of their lives.

In terms of academic relevance, at present there appears to be little literature discussing young women’s agency in relation to accessing and completing secondary education in developing and post-conflict states. As Mishra notes, agency and structure has changed over time and contributed to access to education for women in Nepal, however there is a gap in knowledge about how adolescent girls exercise agentic practice in this context. The research will therefore also contribute to understanding about the “continuum of agency” amongst adolescent girls in Nepal, and what shapes agentic opportunities for achieving SE and HSE.

Finally, with regard to social relevance CWIN (2011) note that, despite apparent gender-related issues (in education and beyond), presently there is little reliable information for the Makwanpur district of Nepal. Therefore, generating gender-sensitive information may prove useful for future projects, in order to achieve programme objectives in relation to the needs and capabilities of adolescent girls in the region. Enabling adolescent girls to actively participate by sharing their experiences and opinions will provide insight into shaping processes in the future.

1.3 Outline of the chapters

The thesis is divided into 5 main chapters, the first of which sets out the research context and relevance, as set out above. The second chapter addresses the theoretical framework; the first section relates the Bourdieu’s approach to agency and his concepts of habitus, field, and capital, which shape agentic practice. The second section of the framework employs Robson et al’s ‘Continuum of agency’ and the resulting agentic practice which social agents (in this case adolescent girls) exercise. Both sections of the theoretical framework will be discussed in relation to how they will be applied in the context of the research.

The third chapter will set out the research design, and address the methodological considerations, methods used, conceptual scheme and operationalisation table to describe how data was collected in the field. The chapter will also include a brief discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations, and identify the main challenges experienced during the fieldwork period.

The fourth chapter will present the empirical findings which results from the research, and set out the data in relation to 4 main sections: the societal context, institutional context, economic context which shape agentic practice, and the agentic practice exercised in relation to educational participation. The fifth chapter will then discuss the findings from the research alongside theoretical
and academic considerations, in order to answer the main research question relating to the agentic practice exercised by adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

Finally, the sixth chapter will conclude the thesis by summarising the main findings in relation to the development field, and provides implications and further recommendations for research.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The research will discuss the agentic practice adolescent girls in Nepal exercise in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education, and what influences them to do so. This chapter will set out a theoretical framework in relation to the main concept of agency, and its relationship with adolescent girls; here the proposal will discuss agency in relation to social structures from an analytical level.

Young people’s agency could be considered to be “…an individual’s own capacities, competencies and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life-worlds fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations, while simultaneously charting individual/collective choices and possibilities for their daily and future lives” (Robson, Bell, and Klocker 2007, p135).

Agency is not a universally accepted concept, and there is debate on the relationship between individual agency and social structures across literature on the topic. However, Giddens (1984) argues that theorists must understand “the need to include both freedom and constraint while also noting the ways that free actions reproduce social structures” (Hitlin and Elder 2007, p172). For this research, agency is understood to be “the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, p112) in relation to how individuals act in relation to structures, which may assist or hamper their ability or overtness in doing so.

Having discussed approaches to gender and agency extensively, McNay favours a Bourdieuan framework “which places stress on social agents (2000,p40) [and not subjects]” (in Maxwell and Aggleton 2010,p3), and how they exercise agency in relation to structures and capital which exist in different fields. In this section, agency will be considered in relation to a Bourdieuan approach, and will consider his concepts of habitus, the field, and social capital with regard to gender; here links will be made to the identified barriers and mechanisms which adolescent girls in Nepal may experience within various spheres of their lives. In addition, the various forms of agency and the continuum of agentic practice will be discussed in relation to how adolescent girls may engage with agentic opportunities.

2.1. Bourdieuan approach to agency

Bourdieu’s famous approach to agency, where the individual exercises agency in relation to social constructs, stimulates discussion on how agentic possibilities differ depending on context. Although complex, his conceptualisation of agency presents the useful concepts of habitus, social capital, and field, which provide insight into “how social arrangements materialise over time in specific circumstances, hence illuminating power relations that constitute the very foundation of these arrangements” (Navarro 2005,p13). Navarro also illustrates Bourdieu’s formula which highlights the main concepts and their interconnected relationship (2005,p16) in influencing agentic possibilities:

\[
[(\text{habitus}) \ (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practices}
\]

Figure 1: Bourdieu’s formula of agency
While Bourdieu’s work on agency has been criticised for his occasional failure to sufficiently consider the influence of gender (McNay 2000, Thorpe 2009), nonetheless he presents concepts which are valuable for understanding how adolescent girls may perceive social norms and how they choose to act within the “fields” in which they operate in order to achieve goals. Thorpe argues that “while there needs to be much more sustained attention to the gendered dimensions of his conceptual schema, theoretical syntheses between feminism and Bourdieu offer new ways to productively reconceptualise the relationship between gender, power, structure, agency, reflexivity, culture and embodiment” (2009,p492).

Therefore, Bourdieu’s approach to agency has been chosen for this thesis because the concepts he highlights can be applied to many different contexts and assist with analysing many different forms of agentic practice - his concepts will be helpful when considering agentic practice among adolescent girls in Nepal, at both Secondary and Higher-Secondary levels. Bourdieu’s concepts have been widely used in academia relating to the fields of international development, agency, and gender, and the work of several scholars is discussed in relation to this throughout this theoretical chapter.

2.11 Habitus

Bourdieu viewed the habitus as socially constructed norms and tendencies, which guide how people act in certain situations or spheres; “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant 2005,p316). According to Bourdieu, the habitus acts as “mediation between structure and practice” (1976,p487) and serves to influence and structure beliefs, and affect how the individual acts in relation to this. In relation to this research, the barriers to education identified previously are seen to be intertwined with the habitus, and will affect the agentic opportunities and practice of adolescent girls in Nepal.

The habitus presents itself as a particularly useful concept when considering educational participation – as Dumais notes, “Habitus, or one's view of the world and one's place in it, is an important consideration in trying to understand how students navigate their way through the educational system”(2002, p4). For example, McClelland (1990) proposes that men who are educated based on career aspirations are following their habitus, while women who do the same are potentially defying expectations of their traditional habitus.

Bourdieu suggests that gender is an “absolutely fundamental dimension of the habitus that, like the sharps and clefs in music, modifies all the social qualities that are connected to the fundamental social factors” (Krais 2006,p128). However, Bourdieu’s interpretation of the relevance of gender is somewhat divisive – he suggests that femininity is “an embodied disposition, which becomes part of the habitus, through performativity” (Skeggs 2007,p8), and thereby is embodied and repeated with no changes or challenges to gender roles. He argues that there is little space for resistance to gendered norms and that women are “condemned” to adhere to structure and agents of domination (Bourdieu 1998,p30). Thorpe notes that this element of Bourdieu’s work has been criticised, and highlights the deterministic nature of his perspective; “emphasis on social reproduction in Bourdieu’s work affects the degree to which people are able to exercise agency. Arguably, this leads
him inexorably into deterministic explanations” (2009,p502). This then suggests that Bourdieu does not consider that social agents, particularly women and girls, are capable of acting beyond social practices and challenging existing norms; instead he expects individuals to act within and reproduce set social boundaries. As Hill notes, emphasis on reproduction “masks the potential generative capacities of the habitus and seems to limit space for multiple subjectivities, change, and agency” (2006, p542).

Further to this, Kenway and McLeod argue that Bourdieu is dismissive of how social changes affect how women “inhabit, experience, move across, change and are changed by new and emerging social fields, as well as by gender relations within existing fields” (2005,p535). Yet, despite this criticism, McNay suggests that viewing actors as able to create change depending on their social positions demonstrates the difficulty of provoking transformation; “deep-seated, often unconscious investments in conventional images of masculinity and femininity which cannot easily be reshaped” (2000,p103).

Echoing Bourdieu’s notion that social structures weigh on individual agency, Charrad (2010) proposes women use their agency within limits of existing rules, and take social considerations and norms into account when deciding on a course of action. Atasoy notes that “[a]n emphasis on agency assumes that women are active, rational subjects who desire autonomy and self-realization by struggling against the dominants norms and institutions that oppress them...[yet this] belies the reality that women also actively adopt dominant norms that systematically constrain their options” (2006,p206). Therefore, Charrad advises that “women’s agency or subordination cannot be imagined outside established gender hierarchies and institutional and structural contexts.” (2010, p519), which has particular relevance in relation to how adolescent girls in Nepal may exercise agency in order to achieve their educational goals, and what barriers shape their decision in doing so.

2.12 Field

Bourdieu refers to the “field” as various social spheres, where people exercise and experience different levels of power to achieve their goals; “there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on” (Bourdieu 1993, p72). As noted, all concepts relating to agentic practice are interlinked – and within the field “capital” (discussed further in the section below) is crucial for actors to exercise different levels of influence; Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992,p97) argued that capital functions and exists in relation to a field.

Within the field, actors aim to change or preserve the status quo - “Bourdieu’s notion of field places social agents within a particular set of power relations, comprising different spheres of social action” (McNay 2008,p182). Several scholars have argued that the concept has potential to provide insight into the complexities of gender in social life (Krais 2006, Mottier 2002). For this research, the concept of field will be used in relation to the different spheres of adolescent girls lives in the context of Nepal (i.e. public and private), and where their position and influence may differ within each.
Yet, as with his interpretation of the habitus, Bourdieu has been criticised for neglecting to consider gender as a key factor in shaping the interactions between agents within fields; instead he suggests that gender mediates class positions—offering a “social space analysis of class”, but failing to explain “relations of powerlessness” (both Skeggs 2007, p.4) present in relation to gender and the ‘working-class’ (or ‘lower-castes’, as is the case in Nepal).

According to Bourdieu, class and gender are inherently connected, and “a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions” (1984, p.107). This is particularly prevalent in relation to SE and HSE for adolescent girls in Nepal, where gender stratification is deemed to be additionally influenced by social positions, and has an effect on the forms of agentic practice individuals can exercise. Social contexts will inevitably affect how secondary school-aged girls perceive their agentic possibilities and the types of agency they can exercise in various social spheres. However, Bourdieu’s positioning of gender as a sub-category of social class demotes the relevance of gender in affecting the influence of social agents within fields; instead it could be suggested that gender and social class are both key determinants in affecting agentic practice, particularly amongst adolescent girls, and interconnect to influence the range of agentic practice an individual can pursue, depending on both their gender and social position.

Furthermore, McNay suggests that the concept of the field offers the potential for dynamic and changing power relations, “where each field has its own historicity and logic which may reinforce or conflict with those of other fields” (2000, p.57), and therefore presents social actors (in this case adolescent girls) with the opportunity to exercise different forms of agentic practice as they move within different fields.

Relating to this, Allard (2005) uses Bourdieu’s concept of the field in her study on gender and complex intersections of power and agency and discusses which “fields of action” young women are able to exert a degree of agency. She argues that Bourdieu’s ideas offer a way to understand the agency of girls who are at risk of leaving school early; “Bourdieu’s conceptual tools provide “a means to better understand how the complexities of social practices, contexts, and capital intersect in both productive and inhibiting ways” (in Maxwell and Aggleton 2010, p.4). This in turn offers the potential to understand why adolescent girls may be at risk of “dropping out” of SE and HSE in Nepal, and what influences or prevents them from doing so.

2.13 Capital

The concept of capital, the third element of Bourdieu’s approach to agency, is key in Bourdieu’s work; he argues “The structure of the social world is defined at every moment by the structure and distribution of the capital and profits characteristic of the different particular fields” (1984, p.734).

Capital relates to the different types of power which agents hold - Bourdieu refers to many different variations, including economic, social, cultural, symbolic and physical (1986). In relation to this research, capital could be seen to be the different support mechanisms which adolescent girls have access to in various spheres of their lives; for example, the mechanisms present in the Girl Power
Programme are designed to enhance post-primary education (CWIN 2011) and provide support to adolescent girls accessing and completing Secondary and Higher-Secondary education.

According to Thorpe, “The power of an agent to accumulate various forms of capital, and to define those forms as legitimate, is proportionate to their position in the social space” (2009,p493). Skeggs argues that femininity, as a cultural capital, is a discursive position which is “informed by the network of social positions of class, gender, sexuality, region, age and race which ensure that it will be taken up (and resisted) in different ways” (1997,p10). Ownership of femininity can present advantages and disadvantages (Thorpe 2009), particularly in male-dominated societies, and will affect perceptions of social norms and structures, and of available agentic opportunities. Therefore, it is evident that capital is intertwined with habitus and field, and plays a role in the forms of agentic practice adolescent girls can exercise in Nepal.

In relation to gender and capital, Thorpe notes that Bourdieu suggests that, within social structures, women typically are not accumulators of capital, but rather “capital-bearing objects” whose “value accrues to the primary groups to which they belong [such as family]” (2009,p493). However, she goes on to argue that this is not exclusively the case, and that women often pursue capital-accumulating strategies – of which education could be deemed to be an example, within this research context. Huppatz echoes this line of thought, and suggests that Bourdieu “overlooked the possibility of gendered capital”, but also that “gendered currency operates within limits” (2009,p45).

Drawing on her study of women’s perceptions of benefits and drawbacks of ownership of female dispositions, she argues that Bourdieu’s concept of capital is useful for understanding gender practices and the relationship between gender and social positions (2009,p45) - a notion which will be explored in the research process.

The concepts which affect the agentic practice of adolescent girls are intricately intertwined, and combine to result in varying forms of agentic practice in relation to educational participation – Dumais suggests “It is particularly important to consider the functions of both cultural capital and habitus when studying gender differences in schooling” (2002, p3)", and notes that consideration of gender is often excluded when considering agency, despite being a highly stratifying element in many societies, including Nepal.

Again referring to Allard’s study, capital is used alongside the concept of the field to analyse to what extent adolescent girls are vulnerable to a variety of risks “is or is not able to access necessary resources to achieve her desired ends in a range of different social contexts” (2005,p64). Again, this highlights the interlinked nature of concepts within Bourdieu’s approach to agency. Further to this, Allard discusses how these concepts may be useful for understanding young women who are “at risk” and use them to “speak back” to educational policies and programmes (2005,p64). This then suggests that young women’s perceptions of and access to the mechanisms discussed previously may be useful for informing existing programmes about the needs of marginalised adolescent girls in Nepal.

A key point, that is evident across literature on Bourdieu’s approach to agency, is that although the concepts of habitus, field, and capital are distinct in their own right, all three concepts contribute to
shaping the agentic practice adolescent girls exercise in relation to educational participation at SE and HS levels. According to Bourdieu, the “habitus realizes itself, becomes active only in the relation to a field, and the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field” (1990, in Hill 2006). Although, as Hill notes, he does not use the concept of field in his work on gender, considering field in relation to habitus highlights the “salience” of different forms of capital which agents can use – and in this research context, provides insight into the agentic practice adolescent girls exercise in Makwanpur depending on the intersection of field, habitus, and capital.

2.2 Varying degrees of agency
Drawing on Bourdieu’s approach to agency, young people (and particularly young women) are considered to exercise “agency within constraint” (Bell 2010, p284), where actors are seen to operate within different power relations in different fields of action. It can be recognised that the agentic practice of young women will vary depending on the context of constraint; for example, parental constraint may exist in the private sphere, cultural norms may cause constraint in social terms, or the effects of poverty can cause economic constraints.

![Figure 2: Example of the continuum of agency](image)

In relation to this, Klocker (2007, p84-5) discusses variation in the extent to which young people can act in contexts of constraint, and sets out a “continuum of agency”; “At one end, “thin agency” refers to decisions and everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives. At the other, “thick agency” is having the latitude to act within a broad range of options.” (Bell 2010, p284). Depending on the impact of multiple factors and contexts, agency can be thickened or thinned. Robson et al (2007) discuss the continuum of agency in relation to degrees of young people’s agency or power/control over their agency, ranging from zero control to overt action. In relation to adolescent girls in Nepal, the inhibiting barriers and enabling mechanisms present in their lives will likely affect their agentic opportunities in relation to this continuum of agency; effective support mechanisms will provide “thick” agentic opportunities, while restricting barriers will “thin” opportunities to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education. Robson et al go on to suggest that “several aspects impact on, and are relevant to, a young person’s agency including the individual young person’s perceived sense of being able to act and confidence to do so, the constraints which they face daily, for example poverty or restrictive sociocultural norms and expectations, and personal (dis)ability” (2007, p5) - which links in with the previously discussed notion of barriers and mechanisms shaping agentic practice amongst adolescent girls in Nepal.

In addition, two other points lie along the continuum – one of little agency, where young people act out of necessity or for survival, and the other of secret agency, where subtle action is taken to indicate resistance to other controls (Powell et al 2008). Relating to Bourdieu’s approach of agency within restraint, and Klocker’s discussion of a continuum of agency, the concept of “subtle agency”
places “greater emphasis on individuals’ ability to exert influence over their own lives” (Bell 2010,p285). Scheyvens refers to the ability to achieve positive change in women’s lives, without causing wide-scale dissent (1998,p237). This suggests that adolescent girls may be able to navigate around constraining factors in their lives in order to achieve their educational goals, whilst not causing major changes to existing structures. Bell suggests that distinguishing between subtle and public agency “offers analytical opportunities for exploring consequences arising from young people’s agency, sustained agency and resulting change in societal structures” (2010,p286).

Many approaches to agency focus on the role of the individual; however it is also worth discussing collective agency, where individuals act collectively as a group or social movement. According to Bandura, collective agency often occurs when individuals with shared goals believe in the power to produce through collective action; “Perceived collective efficacy fosters groups’ motivational commitment to their missions, resilience to adversity, and performance accomplishments” (2000,p75).

This approach to agency beyond the individual can provide insight into how adolescent girls act collectively in order to achieve educational goals they may not otherwise have been able to. Potentially, adolescent girls feel they have more influence as a collective, as so actively voice their opinions within group settings; such as the Girl Forums, where adolescent girls in Makwanpur can discuss their concerns with community representatives and civil society organisations. However, in this case “influence” is delegated to adolescent girls, and so it could be argued they are still exercising agentic practice within constraint, even though it may appear to be overt. To conclude this section, the approaches to agency discussed will hopefully provide opportunity to compare research data based on existing academic debate on agency and structure.

The theoretical framework set out above will be used to gain insight into the agentic practice of adolescent girls in Nepal, and what enables or inhibits the extent of their agentic opportunities.

Effectively, this framework draws on Bourdieu’s argument that agency is influenced by social structures (ie. the habitus, fields, and capital), and seeks to demonstrate this in relation to the existing inhibiting barriers, enabling mechanisms, and spheres of live - which will affect agentic practice of adolescent girls in Nepal. In relation to varying degrees of agency, various authors recognise that agency amongst young people can be placed on a “continuum of agency” and it can be overt, constrained, or discreet, depending on social structures - something which will be explored in the research.

The next chapter of this thesis, relating to the research design, will set out the main methodological considerations of the fieldwork research.
Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

Problem statement:
How do adolescent girls exercise their agency in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education in the Makwanpur region of Nepal?

3.1.1. Sub-research questions:
1. How do dominant social norms and practices affect the educational participation and agentic practice adolescent girls exercise?
2. How does the position of adolescent girls in different spheres of their lives shape their agentic practice?
3. How do mechanisms, which are in place to support girls with accessing and completing Secondary and Higher-Secondary education, facilitate their agentic practice?
4. What varying degrees of agentic practice do adolescent girls in Nepal exercise in relation to educational participation?

3.2 Conceptual Scheme

Figure 3: Initial Conceptual Scheme
3.21. Description of Conceptual Scheme diagram

The conceptual scheme above demonstrates the relationship between agency and structure in affecting the ability of adolescent girls in Nepal to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education. Agentic practice is in the centre of the scheme, and represents the socioculturally mediated capacity to act.

To the left, three boxes indicate the interconnected effect (represented by dotted lines) of the habitus (social norms and context), field (various spheres or areas where agency can be exercised), and capital (the influence which can be drawn upon or accumulated). Mechanisms and barriers (representing factors which enable or inhibit agentic opportunities) are connected with the habitus-field-capital contextual structures, and play a role in influencing what agentic opportunities adolescent girls can draw upon. The thick arrows signify the direct effect which agency and structure has on the ability of adolescent girls in Nepal to both access and complete SE and HSE. An updated conceptual scheme is included in the discussion chapter of the thesis.

3.3. Operationalisation of major concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Indicating questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agentic practice</strong></td>
<td>Habitus (social norms)</td>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
<td>Do traditional gender roles have an effect on adolescent girls’ school participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In what ways does gender discrimination against adolescent girls manifest itself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does recent conflict negatively affect school participation amongst adolescent girls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does slow governance hinder educational processes for adolescent girls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What impact do school fees and materials have on school participation of adolescent girls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does household income play a role in affecting how girls differ from boys in going to SE and HSE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are girls at risk of assault when travelling to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How is gender based violence present within social norms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What key ways does gender discrimination manifest itself in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a lack of educational facilities available for adolescent girls?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Field (spheres of life) | Private | Does family support for SE and HSE schooling differ between boys and girls?  
Did other women in the family go to school? |
|------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public                 |         | How does the community encourage/discourage female participation at SE and HSE  
How many adolescent girls are in SE and HSE in the region? |
| Capital (influence)    | Socio-cultural | Does increasing numbers of female students enhance school participation for adolescent girls?  
Do forums (such as Girl Forums) provide adolescent girls with opportunity to voice opinions in relation to their education |
| Political              |         | Do government policies aimed at female education help enhance school participation for adolescent girls?  
Does the Girl Forum offer opportunity for girls to influence the governance and policies of their region?  
Does the post-conflict situation offer opportunities for greater influence of adolescent girls? |
| Economic               |         | Does extended ‘free’ basic education help to provide access to SE and HSE for adolescent girls?  
Does tuition fee supplements (e.g. from tutoring groups) help to improve adolescent girls’ ability to stay in school? |
| Physical               |         | Do better infrastructures (e.g. sanitation facilities) make it easier for adolescent girls to go to school?  
Does increased focus on tackling GBV enhance school participation for adolescent girls? |
| School-based           |         | Does increased attention to gender sensitive education enhance school participation for adolescent girls?  
Do post-primary enabling programmes (such as Girl Power Project) assist with educational participation of adolescent girls? |
### Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>Are adolescent girls encouraged to enroll in SE and HSE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What age is it compulsory for adolescent girls to enroll in schooling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>How many classes/days of school do adolescent girls attend per week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is attending school a priority for adolescent girls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>How many adolescent girls drop out of secondary education at various stages/grades of SE and HSE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In relation to their “lifeline”, does SE/HSE become more/less important as girls progress through schooling grades?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>How many adolescent girls (expect to) complete SE/HSE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What effect do adolescent girls expect completing SE/HSE will have on their lives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Operationalisation table

#### 3.3.1. Explanation of operationalisation table

I have identified the three main dimensions which presented themselves as being relevant to the theoretical framework and contextual background. Due to their interconnected nature, it is difficult to separate them into distinct dimensions when the relationship between structure and agency is very much intertwined. I have also included the concept of education in my operationalisation table, and identified access and completion as important dimensions, which are relevant to how adolescent girls exercise agentic practice.

It was anticipated that some variables and indicators may change as the fieldwork progressed (e.g. what is “public” and “private”), however it was found that these largely matched with what is presented in the operationalisation table above. However, it is clear now, following the fieldwork research period, that some reference to the varying degrees of agency which adolescent girls exhibit would also be useful as part of the operationalisation.

In some respects, the concept of agency can be viewed as what influences agentic practice (i.e. the before), and the concept of secondary education can be viewed as what effect their agentic practice has in achieving aims (i.e. the after). Therefore, the research concepts will provide a rounded view of how adolescent exercise agency in order to access and complete SE and HSE in Makwanpur.
3.4. Research Location
3.4.1 Makwanpur

Research was primarily carried out in the Makwanpur district of Nepal, which lies to the south of Kathmandu and has a population of nearly 400,000. Makwanpur was chosen as the main location to carry out research, due to a CWIN regional office and a district Girl Power Programme being located here, as well as offering the opportunity to collect data on and observe a combination of the barriers to education discussed in the introduction section of this proposal. CWIN reports that many girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal have at least one characteristic in their lives which renders them vulnerable to discrimination (CWIN 2011, p9), and therefore offered opportunity to gather data on the agentic practice adolescent girls exercise in relation to this.

There are at least 15 ethnic groups, the largest of which is Tamang (a predominantly Buddhist, Tibeto-Burman group), followed by Brahmin and Chhetri (groups of Indo-Aryan origin). According to a UN diagram depicting the distribution of ethnic groups, the district is home to several groups which are deemed to be “disadvantaged” (UN 2008), and the area scores 0.497 on the Human Development Index (UN 2011). CWIN chose to place a project in this area due to high rates of poverty and “larger numbers of families live in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities” (2011, p2); involving “low-caste” groups living in the area, flood prone land, communities of former bonded labourers, and lasting effects of conflict (CWIN 2011).

Because of this (and other factors), adolescent girls are disadvantaged in relation to receiving formal secondary education. In the Makwanpur district, female literacy is 53%, and socio-cultural gender discrimination prevails (CWIN 2011). According to DFID, “the increased life expectancy of women and school enrolment of girls has contributed to improving gender disparities, but these are still stark, and for women from excluded groups even more so”. Global Action Network Nepal note that educational infrastructure is weak in parts of the district, and schools often lack adequate sanitary facilities (2011, p10), which has negative implications for female Secondary and Higher-Secondary school-aged students.

In addition, there is currently little reliable data available in relation to female SE and HSE, and gender discrimination in the area, and so this research provides the opportunity to collect information on gender discrimination and educational participation in the district, in addition to investigating the agentic practice of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.
3.4.2 Kathmandu
Some research was carried out in Kathmandu. As Kathmandu is the capital city of Nepal, there were many opportunities to observe the national and international context in relation to education for adolescent girls.

CWIN’s head office was based in Kathmandu, which facilitated my attendance at government- and civil society-led conferences and forums relating to girls’ education, as well as additional interviews with CWIN staff, and opportunity to gather information on the state of SE and HSE for adolescent girls.

3.5. Research Methods
Here, the methods used during the fieldwork period will be discussed. This section will consider the merits and limitations of each method, and the way in which each contributed to addressing the research questions.

3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews
For this research, semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to allow participants to talk openly about their actions, experiences and perceptions, but also to guide the interview in relation to the topic of education for adolescent girls. Interviews provide opportunity to delve into participant narratives, and in the case of this study, provide insight into what agentic practice adolescent girls take in order to access and complete SE and HSE, why they do so, and how they perceive the habitus, fields, and capital as having an effect on their access to and completion of schooling.

In addition, other actors involved in the educational participation of adolescent girls were interviewed, in order to compare information and gain insight into how those within the context perceive the agentic practice, habitus, field, and capital of adolescent girls. Interviewing other actors who operate within the different spheres of these girls’ lives provides a comparative insight into the agentic practices and opportunities in relation to educational participation, which may differ to the perspectives of adolescent girls.

Interviews were conducted with participants individually and in a private room or area, to ensure participants felt comfortable and free to discuss their opinions and perspectives on the agentic practice of adolescent girls. Both myself and the translator were present for every interview – the translator posed questions in Nepali to participants (as many could not speak English), while I took notes on what was said (where possible), as well as the body language and behaviour of the participants. All interviews were recorded, and then translated and transcribed with the interpreter later that day, or the next day after the interview took place.
An interview guide (Annex 1) was used to guide the semi-structured interview and ensure the narratives gained were in relation to the research topic. As the study is focused on agentic practice of adolescent girls and the structures which affect educational participation, the research questions were based around each concept identified in the theoretical framework and conceptual scheme, aimed at allowing the participant to freely discuss their perspectives and actions in relation to this.

As Clifford et al note, “Semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner, offering participants the chance to discuss issues they feel are important” (2010,p.103). In addition, sub-topics were included as “follow-up questions” to pose to the participant if they did not bring it up organically, to ensure all themes and concepts were covered as much as possible. Interviews are useful for delving in detail, which focus groups and participant observation cannot offer in such a personal or in-depth way.

However, one of the limitations of using interviews in a study focusing on agentic practice, is that interviews will are likely to have a discourse due to the reliance on information gained through narratives, which may present biased information from participants. While interviews are very useful for obtaining detail on the thoughts and opinions of participants, they rely on the information participants choose to give – which may be false, exaggerated, or biased, depending on how the participant wishes to present the situation (Barnfield, 2004). In addition, the effectiveness of interviews also depends on the communication skills of the interviewer, and their ability to listen, probe, and encourage participants to talk freely (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007). Therefore, during the research period, care was taken to analyse information as objectively as possible, and the division of roles between myself and my interpreter was used to the best advantage possible – while he obtained verbal answers, I was able to observe and analyse non-verbal communication. This enhanced our ability to exercise effective communication skills, and provided more rounded data from interviews.

Interviews offered the opportunity to gain detailed insight into the opinions, perceptions and narratives about the different individual and collective actions which adolescent girls took in order to access and complete SE and HSE; the advantage of which crucially outweighs any limitations this research method may have.

3.5.2. Focus Groups
Adolescent girls were also involved in focus groups during the research process, in order to gain insight into their actions, perceptions and experiences, as with the interviews. The use of focus groups was to encourage girls to discuss the issues and mechanisms they face, as well as their opinions and actions, as part of a group. Focus groups were also used to investigate whether there were differences in the experiences of some girls with others, or if there were common issues which affected all adolescent girls. As with interviews, the adolescent girls involved were from various
parts of the Makwanpur district, and were from a range of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Focus groups were conducted with groups of adolescent girls (usually between 6-8 participants) in a private room or area to ensure they felt as comfortable as possible when discussing personal views and experiences in relation to issues they face, mechanisms which assist them, and agentic practice they use with regard to accessing and completing SE or HSE. As with interviews, all focus groups were recorded, to be translated and transcribed later that day with the translator. Again the translator posed questions to participants in Nepali, while I took notes on what was being discussed where possible, as well as the body language of participants, and the interactions between adolescent girls.

A focus group guide (Annex 2) was used to steer the general discussion, but the focus group was geared toward gaining narratives from the girls and to spark group discussion, and were not as in-depth as those used in interviews. As with interviews, the general focus group questions had a list of sub-questions to pose to participants if they were not raised organically, in order to cover all themes and concepts highlighted as affecting agentic practice amongst adolescent girls, whilst also gaining a range of narratives and opinions from as many people within the group as possible.

In order to make the focus groups more participatory, as well as provide ice breaker activities to make the participants more comfortable, girls were asked to take part in two separate drawing activities; a “life timeline” depicting significant events in their lives from ages 10-20, and a “Day in my life”, presenting their day-to-day activities. The aim of these activities was to gain insight into their life trajectory, as well as future life plans, and to ascertain what importance education has for them (and others within their lives), in relation to other responsibilities and expectations adolescent girls face. The participatory activities provided deeper insight into factors which affect the agentic practice which adolescent girls exercise in Makwanpur.

As with semi-structured interviews, “when well executed, focus groups...puts participants at ease allowing them to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words and add meaning to their answers” (Eliot et al, 2005). However, similarly to interviewing, as a method for this particular study on agentic practice, the use of focus groups does have some significant limitations. Although the questions presented to the girls were more general, by focusing on individual narratives girls may have wished to present themselves and their actions to the researcher, and indeed their peers present in the group, in a specific way. Therefore, again the role of the interpreter was used to obtain verbal information, while I observed non-verbal communication, which offered additional useful data relating to agentic practice.

Despite some limitations, focus groups were useful for demonstrating shared interests and experiences of adolescent girls as a group, beyond individual experience, which further emphasised
the prevalence of some barriers and/or mechanisms over others – thereby highlighting key themes which influence adolescent girls’ ability to access and complete SE and HSE. In addition, focus groups provided opportunity to observe how adolescent girls interact with each other, in addition to discussion about their perspectives, experiences, and what shaped the various forms of agentic practice which they exercised. Focus groups provided an additional insight into the reality of “practices” in relation to areas of girls’ lives than individual interviews could, somewhat similarly to the contextual reflection which participant observation offers.

3.5. Participant Observation

Participant Observation was the third method used in this research project, and was chosen in order to provide insight into interactions and actual practices of individuals. Although interviews (and to some extent, focus groups) are useful for providing detailed narratives, they run the risk of creating a discourse within the narrative, and participants can skewer the information to present a different reality than that which is actually in practice.

With the assistance of CWIN, I was able to observe girls in their classes, within their Girl Groups, and in some cases, within their homes and communities. In addition, there was opportunity to attend several conferences and training sessions in relation to education for adolescent girls in Nepal, which offered the chance to view how additional actors involved in this sector viewed the issues and actions of girls, and the formation of future plans to provide further mechanisms and boost the capital (and in turn, agentic practice) of adolescent girls across Nepal. During observation sessions, I took notes based on the layout of the Participant Observation Guide (Annex 3), and observed the events which took place during these sessions. I also sought to be as discreet as possible, so not to disrupt the natural flow of the session. For example, I sat at the back of classrooms and forums to ensure I did not distract students and remained quiet throughout.

For this study, participant observation was used to understand the agentic practice of adolescent girls “in reality”, and to view the girls and other actors within the various spheres of their lives to determine what variations of agentic practice they could and did use. Participant observation sessions provided opportunity to engage with the reality of participant’s lives (Ross 2014), and view the context as it really is – that is how social norms and practices manifest themselves, the positions of adolescent girls within different areas of their lives, and the agentic practice of these young women “in action”. The aim of participant observation was to provide deeper insight into the reality of how things are, which interviews and focus groups cannot, due to their removal of the participants from natural, everyday settings.

While participant observation certainly provides insight into practices, interactions, and actions, many observation sessions lasted no more than several hours, or took place over the course of a day. Therefore, considering this limited timeframe, attempts were made to incorporate observation into the other research methods used, which was made possible due to the split in roles between
myself and my translator, and enabled me to observe participants during interviews and focus groups, as discussed above. In addition, I was able to make use of opportunities for informal observation during my time in the field in order to further my understanding of the everyday context in which adolescent girls exercise agentic practice in Makwanpur.

Participant observation provided opportunity to see reality and context over the short time-span of the fieldwork, and could be compared with the detailed information collected from the narratives of interviews and focus groups, which referred to the long-term experiences and implications on the agentic practice of adolescent girls.

By combining the three methods discussed (interviews, focus groups, and participant observation), the aim was to provide as much insight as possible into the agentic practice of adolescent girls, and what shapes their educational participation. In doing so, I attempted to use the advantages of each method to gain information where possible, and gather both verbal and non-verbal information in order to provide a detailed and well-rounded analysis of the agentic practice of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

3.6. Ethical considerations

As this thesis is focused on agentic practice of adolescent girls in Nepal, ensuring the research met ethical standards was a key consideration before, during, and after the research process.

3.6.1. Research Design

Prior to the research process, I ensured my proposed research questions and activities met with international standards on researching children and young people, to ensure I would not be placing the adolescent girls involved in any uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations – attention was paid to the context within which the girls live and operate, and so the research guides (Annex 1 & 2) were designed while bearing this in mind. As interviews and focus groups involved participants from various backgrounds, questions were phrased to ensure subtlety around potentially sensitive issues such as poverty, caste and ethnic group, gender discrimination, and conflict.

3.6.2. Child Protection Policy

As CWIN organisation was facilitating my interaction with adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district, it was crucial that the research comply with their Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for Visitors. CWIN work with children and young adults from a range of backgrounds, and so their child protection policies are thorough in complying with national and international standards, and aim to ensure the best interests of children involved are kept at all times. Therefore, the fieldwork research also observed these guidelines to ensure best practice in ensuring no harm was caused to adolescent girls involved in the study.
3.63. Privacy and Safety
Interviews and focus groups were conducted in a private area or room, to allow participants to speak without feeling they would be reprimanded by other actors, such as teachers, family, community members, or other students. During interviews and focus groups, only myself and my translator, and at some points a CWIN staff member, were present to ensure participants felt as comfortable and expressed opinions as openly as possible.

All methods used in this study were conducted during daylight, in designated “safe” places, and participants were always present as part of a group (i.e. within Girl Groups or at schools). Adolescent girls always had someone or a group to accompany them home, as they would on any other day, to ensure typical safety measures could be enforced. In addition, other responsible figures (such as CWIN staff or teachers) were always present at the research location to ensure adequate measures were in place, and to ensure the safety of both participants and researchers.

3.64. Informed Consent and Anonymity
In order to ensure all participants were informed about the nature of the study, and were happy to take part in the research, I asked permission from all adolescent girls, and requested they sign consent forms (see Annex 3). In addition, CWIN made note of all the girls involved in interviews and focus groups, and which schools were visited for classroom observation. In order to ensure transparency, participants were given a forwarding email address for both myself and my supervisor, should they have any future questions about the study and the outcome of the results.

With regard to participant observation, all participants were informed about the purpose of my study prior to the session, and were free to choose not to be a part if they wished. As the study involved some participants who were under the age of 18, and participants were also discussing potentially sensitive issues, all names will be kept anonymous throughout the thesis. Only myself, my translator, and selected CWIN staff will have knowledge of the names of participants, and no names will be published or made public. In order to ensure anonymity of participants, the translator was required to comply with CWIN child protection rules, as well as agree to my conditions for maintaining confidentiality regarding participant responses. Should the information presented in this thesis be passed on to a third party, participants will be contacted and consent will be requested.

3.7. Limitations
As with any research project, there were limitations to my fieldwork investigation. This section will discuss the factors which impacted the research, and reflect on elements which could be improved if there study were to be repeated.

3.71. Positionality
Due to my interactive role with participants throughout the research process, my positionality as a researcher will play a role in affecting the responses and data obtained. As I am not from Nepal,
there is also a chance that participants will have formed their answers in order to present themselves to me (and the research) in a certain way. However, it is expected that by adopting methods which involved participants and assistance from actors (CWIN staff and my translator) from the same country, and often, the same district or village district council, that participants will have provided information which is relative to their true actions, experiences and opinions.

Another aspect which may have affected the research is my co-operation with CWIN, and that participants may have thought I worked for the organisation and was carrying out interviews and focus groups as part of monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, although this could have influenced the answers adolescent girls gave in relation to questions about their Girl Groups and the Girl Power Programme, all girls involved appeared to trust the CWIN staff who assisted me during the fieldwork, which may have encouraged them to provide in-depth information about their actions, perceptions and experiences.

Although my position as a researcher has impact on the information obtained from participants, I believe the fact that I am a young woman also played a role in adolescent girls feeling they could approach me, and many appeared comfortable talking with me about the issues they faced during interviews and focus groups, and often conversing informally with me about their lives and mine and comparing our experiences.

3.72. Identity and language barriers
As expected, there were some language barriers during my time in Nepal, particularly when I visited Makwanpur. There were several conferences and meetings I attended during my time in Nepal which were conducted in Nepali, and while I could generally understand what was being said, I most likely missed out on some information which could have been valuable for the research process.

Although language barriers didn’t affect my main research (I had a translator, as discussed below), it made me more aware that, when conducting research or visiting a location in relation to International Development, it certainly is useful to learn some of the local language, to make interaction easier for myself and the people I am interacting with. In addition, the importance of non-verbal interactions between actors when studying agentic practice meant that I was able to overcome many language barriers by using observation as one of my main research methods.

3.73. Role of the Translator
Throughout the research I used a translator, as mentioned frequently above, which provided both limitations and opportunities during the fieldwork period. I was very useful that my translator was skilled at translating from English to Nepal (and vice versa), and was able to make cultural and linguistic differences understandable. As with any translation process, inevitably some information will have been lost in translation during the transcribing process, which means some data may have
been lost or weakened, but are was taken to clarify cultural and contextual meaning during the transcribing process, which took place after interviews and focus groups.

I have become aware that relying on a translator can have a considerable effect on the research process as a whole. There were some instances where my translator did not ask participants some questions during interviews and focus group. While I had confirmed the meaning of all the questions and themes prior to the interviews and focus groups, as I cannot speak Nepali I was unable to monitor exactly what was being asked during these sessions, and only discovered any inconsistencies when the information was being transcribed afterwards. Therefore in order to address this, for interviews and focus groups which took place after this realization, I ensured all concepts and themes relevant to the research were understood by the translator to prevent future inconsistencies.

Finally, while I hoped to have a female translator, the translator I was provided was male. Although this could not be helped, due to the limited time scale within which I was working and the availability of translators, it may have had some effect on the responses obtained from adolescent girls involved in my research. However, girls generally appeared comfortable answering questions fully, possibly because the research was carried out with the help of CWIN staff whom they were familiar with. Overall having a translator was beneficial to my research, as my data would have been much more limited without this assistance.

Having discussed the methodological considerations which shaped the data collected during the fieldwork period, the next chapter will set out the main empirical findings which resulted from the research.
Chapter 4: Empirical Findings

This chapter will analyse the information collected during the research process, and discuss the key themes which presented themselves during the fieldwork research, in relation to the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

Themes have been categorised under four main headings: societal context, infrastructural context, economic context, and the different types of agency exercised by adolescent girls. Inevitably some themes will overlap and are relevant to other categories and themes, however the distinction has been made to present the data collected as clearly as possible.

Although there were extensive findings relating to the general educational context in Makwanpur as a result of the fieldwork research, many of these have been addressed in existing literature on the topic, as set out in the contextual introduction at the start of this thesis. In addition, although interesting, some information gathered has been omitted in order to provide a focussed answer to the main research question. Therefore this chapter seeks to highlight and discuss specific and noteworthy findings resulting from this particular study.

4.1. SOCIETAL CONTEXT

As this thesis is studying the topic of agentic practice amongst adolescent girls, it was expected that there would be considerable findings in relation to the societal context of Secondary and Higher-Secondary education in Makwanpur. This section will discuss the social and cultural implications relating to the educational participation of adolescent girls.

Gender norms and traditional attitudes

Gender norms were mentioned frequently in interviews and focus groups, and appeared to have a significant effect on the agency of adolescent girls. Throughout the research it appeared that those enduring traditional gender norms, and shifts to gender stereotypes both had an impact in shaping agentic practice.

Changing attitudes towards education for adolescent girls

- Interview: “I: How supportive are your family of you going into HSE?
P: Yes, they are supportive, they say “You should read”.”

Participant 11 (Male, Teacher): The scenario has changed a bit; parents often think that adolescent girls should also go to school. Most parents encourage their girls to go to school, and the government is also trying to help adolescent girls by providing different scholarships, and different institutions are also helping girls to participate in school and are providing annual scholarships as well. So no-one is discouraging adolescent girls from going to school, the situation is encouraging now.”

- Participant 12 (Female, CWIN staff): The patriarchal norms support and give priority to boys, in comparison to girls. And the second thing is the views which are being practised from previous time.”
In interviews and focus groups, girls studying at both Secondary and Higher-secondary levels, raised the issue of gender norms negatively influencing the views of some individuals within their families and communities; these often related to traditional domestic expectations of women and girls, and enduring traditional gender norms. As participant 12 mentions, traditional gendered expectation continue to affect the opportunities afforded to adolescent girls, despite advances in educational opportunities in Nepal. In addition, it appears these expectations increase as girls age, and present themselves as a more frequent concern amongst HSE level students than amongst SE students.

However, it was evident that the increased support for the education of adolescent girls was a recurring theme throughout interviews and focus groups, as illustrated in participant 1’s comment above. In relation to changing attitudes towards education for adolescent girls, many participants related during interview that they felt there was considerable support for girls’ education, while adolescent girls in all three focus groups conducted in Makwanpur during the fieldwork agreed that there was not as much opposition to girls accessing and completing SE and HSE as there has been in the past. This then suggests that, along with increased societal support, the agency of adolescent girls has also been extended. It appears that adolescent girls are now offered a broader range of options in terms of exercising agentic practice in order to achieve their educational goals, as a result of changing attitudes towards education for adolescent girls.

Many of the girls who reported a perceived negative attitudes towards SE and HSE for adolescent girls said they would continue with their studies regardless of the opinions of individuals in their families and communities. Several said that, although they may have received negative comments, the also received support in other areas of their lives. Some adolescent girls reported using skills they had learned during Girl Forum training sessions provided by CWIN to raise awareness and persuade people about the benefits of education adolescent girls. This demonstrates that, despite experiencing some negativity in relation their educational participation, the balance has shifted in favour of education for adolescent girls, which enables them greater agency in accessing and complete SE and HSE.

Gender preference in educational participation
Preference for sending sons to private schools and daughters to government-run schools presented itself as a prevalent theme during interviews and focus groups.

- Participant 6 (female, SE level student): “My brother goes to private school and I go to government school, it makes a difference.
  Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
  P: Because of the patriarchal society, parents are hoping that boys will look after them in their old age. Girls are supposed to marry and go to their husband’s home.”

- Participant 7 (female, SE level student): “I still think that there is a discrimination between boys and girls going to school, because boys are given chance to go to private school and girls go to government school. In my school, there are far more girls than boys.
  Interviewer: so there are more girls in your school because the boys go to private school?
  P: Yes. So there are lots of girls who go to government schools. I expect if I had been a boy, I’d probably be in private school.”
As mentioned by participant 7, the practice of providing sons with “better” education than that of daughters, is rooted in the belief that sons will continue to support parents in old age while girls, typically, go to their husband’s home after marriage. Sons, therefore, are considered more worthy of the investment of a private education. This arrangement is an example of the tension between the changing attitudes towards education for women and girls in Nepal and enduring traditional gender roles. The above quotes illustrate the girls’ awareness of these gendered expectations and how they shape their perceptions and actions in relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE.

Notably, it was observed during interviews, classroom observation sessions, and informal discussions, that there are more girls enrolled in government-run secondary schools in the district than there are boys. This reflects the perception that private schools are better than government schools, and that more emphasis is placed on ensuring sons receive a better education than daughters. Therefore, although many more adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district are now able to access and complete SE & HSE, they are, effectively, provided with an education that is considered to be of a lesser standard than that given to boys. While adolescent girls do have greater agentic opportunity in terms of achieving their agentic goals, gender preference presents itself as a factor which will inevitably affect the perceptions of adolescent girls, and shape the agentic practice they exercise as a result of this. Furthermore, gendered preference in schooling links in with other gendered norms and practices (as discussed throughout this section), which serve to constrain the agentic practice of adolescent girls.

Expectations of adolescent girls

There is evidence that expectations of adolescent girls has a significant impact on their ability to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education, due to continued gendered traditions, responsibilities and expectations of adolescent girls in Makwanpur – particularly in relation to early marriage and domestic tasks, which serve to restrict the agentic opportunities of adolescent girls in going to and complete their education.

Early Marriage

- Participant 1 (female, HSE level student): “Most of the girls gets married because their parents want that, and they think that if they stay in home for a long time, they cannot marry her. Timely marriage is important.”

- Participant 2 (female, HSE level student): “In my case, my mum says that if you want to do according to your will, do it at the appropriate age of marriage (age 20+). My mother is against child marriage, she will not let me marry when I’m too young. My mother also had a child marriage.”

- Participant 3 (female, SE level student): “Mostly when they [adolescent girls] are in another home [when they are married], they have to take responsibility for the whole family. And due to the will of her family members, she becomes pregnant, which hinders her getting secondary education.”

- Participant 10 (male, DoE representative): “The percentage of getting married is around 50%. The data shows that. If you see the data for +2 [HSE] after SLC [School Leaving Certificate at SE], many girls disappear. I can even see the girls wearing Pote [small pendants, married women wear them on their neck] coming to HSE. It also shows the child marriage.”
Participants, as illustrated above, cite early marriage and increased domestic expectations and responsibilities after marriage as factors which prevent girls from accessing and completing SE or HSE. Early marriage (marriage under the legal age of 20 in Nepal, commonly referred to locally as “child marriage”) was continuously referred to in interviews as a limiting factor in the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur. As mentioned above, girls in Makwanpur often marry after SE rather than progressing on to HSE. Those HSE level students interviewed reported more pressure to get married than those at SE, and it was evident that expectations of girls to marry increased with age. Girls at HSE level reported more pressure to get married than those at SE level.

Almost all adolescent girls involved in interviews and focus groups discussed this issue, at both SE and HSE levels, and noted its continued prevalence in Nepali society. They were acutely aware of the limiting effects it has on agency, and on educational participation, as demonstrated in the first quote above. In addition, it is clear that other actors are increasingly aware of the negative consequences early marriage can bring; as participant 2 mentions, family members who support their daughter’s SE and HSE are, typically, against marriage before 20, i.e. the legal age of marriage in Nepal (Girls Not Brides 2013). Emerging opposition to early marriage presents an example of how, while continued gender roles often constrain the agency of adolescent girls, shifting gender norms are also removing some traditional social expectations and offering increased agency and educational opportunity as a result of this.

Domestic responsibilities
Almost all participants referred to the household responsibilities of adolescent girls as a factor which limited their educational participation, and it was frequently cited as either a direct or indirect reason for adolescent girls dropping out of SE and HSE.

All girls involved in the study had household responsibilities (as noted during the “day in my life” interactive session in focus groups). Many girls mentioned that these duties limited their school attendance, or prevented them doing homework.

- **Participant 2** (female, HSE level student): “I get up early at 4.45am, after freshening up I go to college at 5.15am, because my college is far from home. After coming back from college, I do my domestic jobs. I spend my daytime chatting with my friends and neighbours. After that I study for 3 hours and I do entertainment with my friends. There are domestic jobs to be done, so I do that.

  *Interviewer: Does this mean you spend most of the time doing domestic jobs?*  
  *Participant: Yes*  
  *Interviewer: This means education is secondary?*  
  *Participant 6** (female, SE level student): It becomes like that. After all, we are girls.”

- **Participant 4**: “Most of the boys are free at home after school, because they don’t have to look after the household works. Girls have to do domestic work, like cooking and cleaning. So comparatively, boys get more chance to read than girls at home.”
As emphasised in the participants’ comments above, it appeared that, for parents, completing household requirements carried more importance (or even necessity) than girls going to school. The expectations on adolescent girls to complete household chores alongside, or in preference to, their educational participation, highlights the prevalence of traditional gender norms and practices in Makwanpur, whereby women are often confined to the domestic sphere. Girls must be able to deal with both domestic responsibilities and educational goals in order to access and complete SE and HSE

Interestingly, many of the girls involved in the research process appeared to accept the expectations place on them in relation to domestic responsibilities – none said they challenged their parents about how many chores they had to do, or the effect it had on school participation. Instead, many appeared to try to juggle schoolwork and complete their household duties, often with limited success. The limited influence adolescent girls hold effectively constrains their agency, as they are subject to the actions and decisions of more influential actors in the various areas of their lives, such as their parents.

Domestic responsibilities seemed to only apply to adolescent girls, as discussed in the second quote above. Typically, it seemed boys (sons) were not expected to carry out the same level of household chores. In addition, during participant observation and informal observation sessions, it was evident that adolescent girls were given a large amount of tasks in their homes, e.g. responsibility for cooking, cleaning, looking after younger siblings as well as working in the fields, which in turn prevented them from attending classes or completing homework. Holding a double workload (something which appeared to be specific to the female gender in this context) also contributed to limiting the agentic opportunities of adolescent girls, as they attempted to juggle their domestic responsibilities alongside schoolwork – placing them in a position of constraint, and, in turn, restricting their agency and opportunities to freely exercise agentic practice to access and complete SE and HSE. Continued domestic requirements of adolescent girls highlights the underlying way in which gendered norms serve to limit the agentic opportunity for girls to achieve their educational goals.

The influence of family and social position

- Interviewer: “Why do girls drop out of school?”

Participant 9 (female, SE level student): “Due to household issues, familial problems, household chores. Though they are willing to go to school, if their family doesn’t provide support, a girl is likely to drop out of school.”

- Participant 11 (male, teacher): “In the context of Nepal, first thing is familial background, which is attached to girls’ participation in school. Here is a trend of taking the marrying after SLC, especially the parents have a tendency of marrying girls after SLC. Particularly those who have financial problems or middle-class. So the enrolment rate at HSE declines”

- Interviewer: “Does caste or ethnic group have any effect on secondary school participation for girls?

- Participant 3 (female, HSE level student): Yes it does, because of the views of the society. I: Which groups do you think have lower rates of school enrolment? P: Tamangs.”
In relation to educational participation, most girls noted the influence their parents and families had over their lives. Several others mentioned that they and other adolescent girls are subject to the wishes and actions of their parents. If parents did not support a daughter’s education, this had an extremely limiting effect on her ability to go to and complete Secondary or Higher-Secondary education, as demonstrated by participant 9’s comment above. Adolescent girls typically held less influence than their parents, and as mentioned in the section above, their ability their agentic practice was shaped by the influence of other, more influential actors in their lives (such as their parents and family members). This was also noted during participant and informal observation, where it appeared that adolescent girls typically complied with their parent’s decisions, even with regard to contentious and serious issues like child marriage or educational participation.

In addition, although not a barrier which was raised as frequently as some others, the issue of their family’s social position or class was noted by adolescent girls during interviews, focus groups, and during participant and informal observation. In particular, it appeared traditionally marginalised, so-called “lower-caste” groups (such as Dalits) or indigenous groups (such as Tamangs) were subject to additional barriers to education, as noted in participant 3’s comment. Evidently, poverty and social position did have an effect on girls’ access to and completion of SE and HSE. Those girls who experienced financial issues or caste-related discrimination were often also subject to other factors which limit educational participation, such as early marriage, which works to present further barriers to education, and further constrains the agentic opportunity of girls in Makwanpur. This suggests that gender and social position can work as highly stratifying factors, and has the effect of limiting the agency of adolescent girls in relation to their educational participation.

Interestingly, during the research process, only those girls who were from traditionally marginalised groups, such as Dalit or Tamang communities, discussed social position as being a continued barrier to education. At times, girls from other groups, such as Brahmin or Cchetri communities (traditionally considered to be “high-caste” groups), mentioned that caste used to be a barrier to education, but this is no longer the case. This suggests that while the Nepali education system appears to be more inclusive now, the perception that discrimination has been eradicated is not representative of the reality experienced by female students from traditionally marginalised groups. Instead, these adolescent girls potentially face additional barriers to education based on their social position, as well as those other limiting factors which result from gender norms and practices, which in turn constrains their agentic practice.

4.2. INFRASTRUCTURAL CONTEXT
Although societal issues were commonly mentioned and observed during the research process, some of the most physically limiting barriers raised were in relation to infrastructural concerns relating to the educational participation of adolescent girls, several of which are discussed in this section of the chapter.
School facilities for adolescent girls
Availability of and access to facilities in school was suggested as a main barrier in limiting girls’ educational participation, and as an area which could be improved to assist the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

Support from teachers/school

- **Participant 2 (female, HSE level student):** “I belong to an education faculty, and my teacher encourages and teaches me how to control the classroom, and teaches me about classroom management.”

- **Participant 3 (female, HSE level student):** “The encouragement by our teacher has also helped me to move ahead.”

- **Participant 7 (female, SE level student):** “Some teachers come late and leave early from the class. If we tried to complain, then they scold us.”

- **Participant 12 (female, CWIN staff):** “Though the teachers in government schools are more educated and better trained [than teachers in private schools], and have more facilities from the government, due to the negligence of teachers and lack of punctuality, they fail to complete the courses... Most teachers of government are careless about their jobs because they think their jobs are secure. If the monitoring and evaluation is upgraded, these problems would gradually be eradicated.”

During interviews, adolescent girls frequently discussed the assistance they received from their schools as a main factor in their ability to continue with their secondary and higher secondary education. Several referred specifically to their teachers as individuals who had provided them with encouragement and support, or had directed them to other mechanisms to assist with educational participation (such as tuition groups, provision of uniforms and materials, and help with paying school fees). This assistance provided girls with more agentic opportunities, and extended their range of options for agentic practice in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education.

On the other hand, some participants mentioned that teachers in government run schools are “lazy”, and, unlike those in private schools, were not under pressure to produce good exam results. They were often absent or put little effort in to classes. This lack of support then limits the agency of adolescent girls, and again highlights the way in which the agency of adolescent girls is dependent on support they receive from other actors – limited by a lack of assistance, but extended when they receive substantive support.
The absence of gender focal representatives and female teachers

- **Participant 9 (female, SE level student):** “At the time of menstruation, there is a lack of female teachers and we feel awkward talking to male teachers.”

- **Participant 12 (female, CWIN staff):** “Most teachers are male and the teachers who teach health and environment are mostly males. There is a unit of reproductive health in the course books; how can the girls respond when such a sensitive topic is being taught? I think they can’t raise any concerns when it’s a male teacher, and it’s not girl-friendly”

- **Participant 9:** “It is obviously difficult when there is no focal person or any mechanisms to assist girls. They cannot tell their problems, and they just leave school. I feel really sad in that situation.”

In addition, an absence of female teachers or gender focal representatives was seen as a limiting factor by both adolescent girls and additional actors (such as a local teacher in the Makwanpur district, and CWIN staff). Several participants discussed how girls felt awkward or embarrassed approaching male teachers about sensitive issues, such as menstruation or reproductive health, which impeded their educational participation. This again highlights the way in which gendered norms inhibit adolescent girls from exercising agency in some situations – girls felt “shy” about approaching male actors in their lives as a result of stigmas relating to issues they experience (such as menstruation or reproductive health), and were thereby limited in the agency they can exercise to ensure their educational participation as a result of this.

During focus groups and interviews, girls mentioned female teachers as figures of support during SE and HSE, and often they were their “favourite teachers” as adolescent girls felt they could approach them for advice and assistance regarding issues they were facing in attending school. However, during interviews there was a pattern of schools and institutions having only one or two female teachers, as mentioned in the quote above. During classroom observation all teachers present were male, and it appeared that at SE and HSE, there were more male teachers in general than at lower educational levels. Although no particular reason was provided for this, this appeared to be a recurring theme across educational services in Nepal, and is cited in educational flash reports (Ministry of Education 2013).

As highlighted above, a lack of assistance in the form of a representative that they could approach with problems, made accessing and completing SE and HSE difficult for adolescent girls. Many of the girls involved in interviews and focus groups specifically mentioned “gender focal representatives” as something which they would like to have in their schools, and as something which would help them to address issues they may have in accessing and completing SE or HSE. They said they directly appealed to their school management to assist with providing a gender focal representative in their schools, although this request did not appear to have been fulfilled. This suggests that, even where adolescent girls make explicit requests, they are not necessarily satisfied – highlighting the limited influence adolescent girls have in Makwanpur (and Nepal as a whole), and their reliance on the educational assistance provided by more influential actors, such as family, civil society, and schools.
However, during participant observation at a government-led conference on education for adolescent girls, I noted that gender focal representatives are beneficial and a relevant mechanism which is in “early stages” of being implemented in some areas in Nepal. This then suggests that the needs and requests of adolescent girls are filtering in to national policy on improving gender equity in Nepal, which suggests that the agency of adolescent girls, although limited, is gradually becoming more influential in Nepal.

Sanitation facilities

- Participant 1 (female, HSE level student): “It would be better if the school would provide the girls with menstruation pads. If it had been the case, they would be able to continue our studies from first bell to last bell.”

- Participant 7 (female, SE level student): “We have told our teachers to manage this and they say they will, but it still hasn’t happened. Previously there was also a programme for adolescent girls, and they raised this issue too. They told the school to provide a separate room for girls, but it has not happened”

- Participant 8 (female, SE level student): “There are not, there’s no proper management of sanitation. But the toilets are separate for boys and girls. For example, if a girl is menstruating and she is in first class, she is forced to go home, so she leaves all the other subjects for that day. If the school provided us with a different area and there are some sort of pads, she could rest for some time and continue her studies.”

Throughout focus groups and interviews, the issue of the lack of sanitary facilities for female students was mentioned. In individual interviews many adolescent girls raised the issue, and it was a topic of discussion in all three focus groups. All additional actors discussed similar issues during interviews.

During interviews, a Department of Education (DoE) representative for the district noted that the DoE had committed to providing more sanitation facilities for adolescent girls in secondary schools. However, a teacher from the district noted that a lack of water availability limited the possibility of constructing such facilities, and one of the girls interviewed said that, despite confirmation of further facilities for girls in his school, these had not yet materialised

Menstruation was another theme which presented itself as a barrier which affected the educational participation of adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district. As mentioned above, an absence of facilities for adolescent girls to use in school during menstruation prevents them from attending school during this time, or forces them to leave classes during the day. This illustrates the way in which infrastructural constrain adolescent girls, and limit the agency they can exercise to access and complete SE and HSE as a result of structural barriers.
This lack of physical facilities highlights the typically “masculine” nature of public spaces such as schools and institutions (UN Women 2014; Bourdieu 2001) – also an issue in many different contexts outside of Nepal. Although social support for girls’ education has increased, the infrastructural state of education in Makwanpur continues to alienate female students at SE and HSE levels by failing to cater to their needs and create areas or facilities which assist girls with staying in school during menstruation.

**Girl Power Programme**

**Girl Groups/Girl Forum**

- Participant 2 (female, HSE level student): “It created a voice for us. We were able to present our problem frankly, and we came to know to whom we should present our problems.”

- Participant 3 (female, HSE level student): “I didn’t used to speak freely before being involved with Girl Forum, now I can raise awareness amongst society as well”

- Participant 6 (female, SE level student): “If the programme would address parents, it would be better because sometimes adolescent girls have problems participating in meetings because their parents don’t send them to our meeting, saying our meeting is meaningless.”

Almost all adolescent girls interviewed and involved in focus groups referred to their participation in a Girl Group as giving them influence which impacted services involved in their educational participation, as illustrated by the comments of participants above. Girl Groups are part of the Girl Power Programme, and are in place to enable adolescent girls in communities across Nepal to form groups and take action on a range of shared issues and interests involving adolescent girls.

With regard to the effect of the groups, almost all girls involved in interviews and focus groups cited their involvement with Girl Groups as something which has assisted with building confidence, enhancing public speaking skills, and raising awareness on a range of issues. Girls viewed groups as providing an opportunity to voice their opinions and share the problems they face. Therefore this suggests that by altering the perceptions of adolescent girls, as well as providing material support, the GPP is serving to extend the agency of adolescent girls, and providing them with a broader range of skills and options in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education.

Furthermore, as highlighted by participant 6 above, adolescent girls requested that more focus be placed on including parents in forums, in order to raise awareness of issues which hinder the educational participation and limit the agentic practice of adolescent girls, as they are more likely to listen to influential actors like CWIN than to the girls themselves. Therefore, while the agentic opportunities of adolescent girls do appear to be altering to provide girls with more agency than in the past, they are still limited in the agentic influence they have available to them.
Workshops and Training

One of the key strategies within the Girl Power Programme is the provision of a range of workshops and services aimed at adolescent girls across Nepal - largely facilitated by CWIN and supported by a range of other local, national and international organisations.

- Participant 1 (female, HSE level student): “GPP is enhancing the skills of adolescent girls. It is helping girls to have a voice, and it brings a kind of feeling in the girls that they can speak in forums, and take part in programmes organised by different organisations. It has brought a kind of feeling that I can do something”
- Participant 5 (female, SE level student): “If CWIN-like NGOs carry out campaigns like educating parents (raising awareness) along with us, it would be better for us to be a member, and it will also be fruitful for us to make them understand our programme
- Participant 12 (female, CWIN staff): “It works in three ways. They are parents, teachers, and students. GPP is linking these three components. We try to convince parents to send their children to school, and raise awareness about child rights. We have interaction with the parents, we conduct discussions at the parent level. We are providing training to teachers about gender issues, child marriage. We are doing campaigns for the girls, which raise awareness about child protection. And different sorts of workshops, particularly on education day we do different sort of programmes. We co-ordinate and conduct meeting with schools, management committees, and try to find out problems of the girls and what issues they are facing.”

In relation to mechanisms which influenced personal capital amongst adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district, many participants referred to training sessions held by local organisations, such as local branches of CWIN. Many girls acknowledged the positive role these training sessions had, in terms of, and some went as far as to request further training during interviews and focus groups, for themselves, their parents, and other girls in their communities to enhance the assistance they receive further. Again, adolescent girls appeared to acknowledge the limited agency they have, however they were willing to attempt to extend it by using the support on offer to them, by enhancing the support they receive in various areas of their lives.

Government action/policies and programmes

- Participant 10 (male, DoE representative): “The EFA policy is particularly focused on age 5-12, for free and regular attendance. There is no such policy of compulsory education for secondary or HSE. From 1-8 class [grades] there is free education, and no monthly fee.”
- Participant 11 (male, teacher): “There was a programme in this district, giving a kind of incentive to come to school...From that time, the enrolment rate has been increased, because they are more likely to come to get those materials. For here, enrolment is not a problem, but the problem is of dropping out...”
As mentioned by participant above, the Nepali government have provided material incentives (such as oil, subsidies, and school materials) to encourage the educational participation of adolescent girls. None of the girls involved in the research process were aware of national or regional policy aimed at improving the educational participation of girls in order to make SE and HSE more accessible. However, all additional actors (who were all directly involved in decisions affecting the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur) were aware of existing policies, and noted these include the National Plan for Action on Gender Equality and the Education for All agenda.

However, both of the above quotes illustrate the inadequate nature of these incentives so far. As participant 10 notes, the EFA is largely focused reducing costs of education for students aged 5-12 – therefore as students have to pay fees for SE and HSE, the number of students is likely to decline at these levels. In addition, as investing in sons’ education is at times deemed more important than the education of a daughter, the number of girls accessing and completing SE and HSE is lower again.

Although there appears to have been positive changes in relation to adolescent girls’ access to and completion of Secondary and Higher-Secondary education, the imbalanced focus on basic education (at primary and LSE levels) means that there has been less emphasis on keeping students in schools after they completing their lower secondary education. During his interview, the DoE representative noted that there are initiatives, at district level, to improve the educational experience of adolescent girls in schools and in the classroom. Therefore, a lack of focus on education for girls at Secondary and Higher-Secondary educational levels limits the assistance girls receive from the Nepali government, and restricts the agency they can exercise in terms of accessing these educational levels.

4.3. ECONOMIC CONTEXT
The third section relates to findings regarding the impact of the economic context on the agentic practice and educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

Financial issues
As noted in the introductory chapter, while primary and Lower-Secondary education (LSE) is free, Secondary and Higher-Secondary education requires tuition fees and schooling material costs. This has income-related implications for many impoverished adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district.

- Participant 10 (male, DoE representative): “Schools are taking different sort of fees, in the name of admission and many things. If they take a certain fee, I don’t exactly know whether it affects boys or girls more, but they drop out because of this. We have received complaints about this as well”

- Participant 11 (male, teacher): “Economic problems come first, most girls cannot enrol due to economic problems. If there are lots of children in a home, it also affect enrolment.”

- Participant 12 (female, CWIN staff): “The significant factor affecting adolescent girls is poverty...There are family members in the community who are in absolute poverty. These family members are not able to send daughters to school, because if they don’t have basic needs, how can they? And another problem is that, though the government say there is free education, they take different sort of fees in the name of admissions and education, in one way or another. So these factors prevent girls going to SE and HSE, and particularly HSE.”
All participants involved in the research process mentioned the significance of economic barriers in limiting adolescent girls’ access to and completion of SE and HSE, with many directly noting that financial difficulties are a key reason for girls dropping out of SE and HSE, or not progressing to the next educational level. As the quotes above illustrate, economic barriers to education are often due to poverty or financial instability, resulting in an inability to pay school fees.

Both adolescent girls and additional actors discussed the relevance of household income and its effect on educational participation. Many agreed that adolescent girls from low income households were less likely to be able to access and complete SE or HSE, and were more likely to drop out of school before completing their education. This suggests that economic barriers present a significantly limiting effect on the agency of adolescent girls. It appears that financial issues often require adolescent girls to seek assistance from other actors in their lives, and if adolescent girls are unable to cover the costs of schools fees and materials they are effectively unable to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education in Makwanpur.

Often, during interviews and focus groups, financial issues were also linked to social status and were presented as particularly affecting girls who came from minority communities or so-called ‘low caste’ groups. Typically, it seemed that girls from these households would be less likely to attend and complete SE and HSE due to financial problems or poverty.

The third quote above, highlights the problem of HSE students facing financial difficulties themselves, since they had to pay for their own school costs. At SE level students, typically, received assistance from parents. Therefore, girls studying at HSE level were much more likely to drop out before completing their education, due to financial difficulties. Again, this highlights the way in which adolescent girls who experience multiple stratifying factors (gender, poverty, social position) are restricted in the agency they can exercise in order to access SE and HSE.

**Financial assistance and income generation**

- Participant 1 (female, HSE level student): “I was economically backward, and I was totally unaware of the CWIN helpline. My teachers helped me to get to CWIN, and they said about my condition, and when I was doing class 11 CWIN helped me economically.”

- Participant 5 (female, SE level student): “In my school as well, there were two girls who were about to drop out because of economic problems, but they remain in school due to the help of CWIN, and District Child Welfare Organisation. They were about to leave the school, but institutions provided them with notebooks, pens, dresses.

- Participant 11 (male, teacher): “Up to SE level, the government provides scholarships and free structures, which helps girls. But it’s not the case in HSE. If the government have tried to implement such programmes up to HSE level, it would be more helpful.”
Throughout interviews and focus groups, many girls stated that they received economic assistance, from their schools and CWIN (in the form of fees, study materials, or uniforms). Girls at HSE level appeared to receive more assistance than those studying at SE level. The reason for this is likely to be because they receive less financial support from their parents and families and are, therefore, in more need of assistance.

Local government provided a small yearly subsidy to all SE and HSE students and scholarships for selected students. According to additional actors (including a teacher at a local school, A Department of Education representative for the Makwanpur district, and a local CWIN staff member) interviewed, this grant amounts to around 500NPR\(^1\) per student, annually. It was noted that while this grant is useful, it is not enough to adequately support adolescent girls in accessing and completing education, particularly at HSE, as mentioned by participant 11 above. Financial assistance offered to adolescent girls

- **Participant 2 (female, HSE level student):** “Most of the parents think of sending their children to higher secondary. Most of the girls could not go to college, due to economic problems. Some also tried to get jobs, like me, like teaching.”
- **Participant 8 (female, SE level student):** “If there is an economic problem in our home after passing SLC [School Leavers Certificate], I hope to get a job. I will continue my study alongside working”
- **Participant 10 (male, DoE representative):** “Now the girls are utilising their time before or after school or college. They’re going to work in someone’s home, and they’re paid for that. By doing this they’re supporting their education.”
- **Participant 11 (male, teacher):** “If someone has financial issues and she is unable to continue her studies, it [income generation] supports her education. And on the other hand, if someone’s involved in tuition classes, it may harm their studies. Because there are a lot of examples, of girls who have dropped out or not completing their education, because of

Throughout interviews and focus groups, more girls self-supported their studies at Higher-Secondary level than at Secondary level, and it was less likely that parents paid for education past HSE. Again, this suggests that traditional gender roles prevail and parents are less likely to invest in a daughter’s education, as previously mentioned. Several girls currently studying at SE level said they would have to find some method of income generation to support their future studies at HSE, suggesting that there is a general awareness amongst adolescent girls that completing HSE level requires more self-sufficiency than other, lower educational levels. Holding a paid job illustrates the increased agency adolescent girls now have; their ability to generate income enables them to go to and access SE and HSE, which may not have been possible in previous years.

During interviews and focus groups, it appeared that adolescent girls from both SE and HSE levels worked to contribute to their household income. In addition, during informal observation, it was noted

\(^{1}\) 500NPR is roughly equivalent to €4.25.
that adolescent girls worked in the field during planting season, sometimes in cafes and restaurants, and at times assisted their parents with their work. The ability to

Holding a job appeared to provide both a mechanism to overcome educational issues, and, at times, a barrier to educational participation. It was highlighted during discussions that whilst girls held part-time and seasonal jobs to support their education, the time spent in work inevitably affected their study time and school participation, as discussed in the participant’s comment above. As income generation often distracts girls from completing school work, it can hinder their access to, and completion of, SE and HSE.

Tuition groups

- Participant 7 (female, SE level student): “There is another girl near my house, she is in class 11 and she takes tuition classes in Kamane. So she is supporting her education through this tuition.”

As another method of supporting or subsidising their studies, several girls mentioned they were involved in tutoring groups (usually tutoring adults or younger students in their community). This mechanism was specifically used by girls studying at HSE level, and was discussed in the HSE focus group and interviews with HSE level girls as a way to subsidise their tuition fees in order to complete schooling. Several girls noted that their schools, or CWIN, had assisted with facilitating their role in tuition groups, whilst others mentioned that their school had set the position up for them. No tuition groups were observed during the research period, however, it is understood they occur frequently during term time. Enabling adolescent girls to supplement their education through their participation in tuition groups provides them with enhanced agency, and the opportunity to address financial issues they experience themselves, rather than just being passive recipients of monetary assistance.

4.4. DIFFERENT FORMS OF AGENCY EXERCISED BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Since the key focus of this thesis is investigating the agency of adolescent girls in Makwanpur, it is necessary to set out here the agentic practice exercised by girls in order to access SE and HSE. This section will discuss the resulting agency of adolescent girls, and the different forms it took – both individually and collectively, and from constrained to within a broad range of options

Individual action

The actions of adolescent girls as individuals appeared to be most diverse, ranging from agentic practice which was exercised within high levels of constraint to actions made within a reasonably unrestricted context.
Throughout the research process it became apparent that often adolescent girls’ attempts to access and complete SE and HSE are constrained by the various societal, infrastructural, and economic contexts present in Makwanpur. As indicated in the above comments from participants, adolescent girls are often subject to the actions and demands of other, more influential actors in their lives. Throughout the research process, it was mentioned that, if parents and family members do not support the educational participation of adolescent girls, it was likely they would drop out of SE and HSE. This suggests that the agentic opportunities of adolescent girls is often shaped by the support they receive.

Some barriers presented themselves as severely limiting the agency of adolescent girls (particularly those related to domestic responsibilities and economic concerns), and the only way in which they can overcome these issues is to seek support from more influential actors in their lives. Therefore, if they do not receive support from family, teachers, or the community, girls may not be able to access and complete SE and HSE, which highlights the way in which the agency of adolescent girls is still highly restricted in the context of Makwanpur.

However, adolescent girls also discussed the subtle ways in which they influence these other actors in their lives, in order to ensure they can attend school.

- Participant 2 (female, HSE level student): “My friend failed her examination and repeated her study. She again failed, I think she might have failed due to household work. There were a lot of jobs to be done at home. She was alright in her study, but could she not complete. Her parents thought that she had just wasted money on education, so they married her and sent her to another home.

- Interviewer: “Why do girls drop out of school?

  Participant 9 (female, SE level student): Due to household issues, familial problems, household chores. Though they are willing to go to school, if their family doesn’t provide support, a girl is likely to drop out of school.”

- Participant 11 (male, teacher): “I’ve not heard that students have solved a big problem that they’ve faced themselves. What is being practiced in reality, is a trend of accepting what has happened - and they try to raise their voice in one way or another, but it is not strong”
In the comments above both participants allude to the fact that they convince, or persuade, other actors (such as family, teachers, and community) to understand the benefits of education for adolescent girls. This serves to highlight not only the often restricted and dependent nature of adolescent girls in Makwanpur, but also their opportunism and use of any influence they may have to their best advantage.

Participants were aware that they must encourage those actors with more influence in their lives to allow them to go to school, in order to access and complete SE and HSE. In addition, it is notable that adolescent girls appeared to view the public speaking skills they gained and the training workshops they attended as enabling them to exert a subtle influence on actors in their lives who typically hold more effective influence, in order to encourage them to assist or support the education of adolescent girls. This is illustrative of the increased agency of adolescent girls, and the different ways in which they are able to exert that agency. Rather than simply taking direct action which may not have a positive effect, or which may receive opposition from other actors, opportunities for subtle action provide a way for adolescent girls to achieve their educational goals without disrupting the status quo. This then suggests that adolescent girls are aware of their position within the context of Makwanpur, and attempt to use agentic possibilities to their benefit.

- Participant 3 (female, HSE level student): “If a problem happens, I make them understand by saying “Even a girl can do everything, what do boys do?”. We have a small teashop, and villagers come there to have tea. There is discussion amongst the village women, and they say “After all, a girl is supposed to do household chores”. I make them understand.”

- Participant 7 (female, SE level student): “First I try to find out the problem, where it came from and why. I’ll try to handle it by taking suggestions from my friends and family. If I don’t get a chance to study, I try to convince my family along with members of the community. If there is a case with the family, who will not listen if we deal with the problem properly?”

- Participant 2: “What I do is, I am so friendly to my mother and sister, I’ll talk to them and I’ll move on [it will be beneficial]. If economic problems occur, I’ll talk to them freely. And I can also express to others, but if problems are psychological and social, and I could not tell to others, I can tell it to my mother and sister and try to find a way.”

- Participant 12: “They have a voice to speak up, and they can try to say something and are able to put their problems to the people who can help. We have seen those sort of skills after trainings and through the course of our work.”
Further to this, in interviews and focus groups, several girls made reference to their attempts to increase their positions of influence within their familial sphere. Participant 2, quoted above, noted that, in order to receive financial and educational assistance, she ensured she was particularly nice to her family members to gain their support. Again, involvement in the Girl Power Programme was reported as by adolescent girls as positively influencing their ability to negotiate and ‘convince’ their parents, due to developing public speaking and debating skills through workshops and training sessions. This suggests that adolescent girls are aware of the extent of their influence, and will use existing agentic opportunities to attempt to increase their influence, and therefore extend their agency in order to achieve educational goals at Secondary and Higher-Secondary levels.

- **Participant 7 (female, SE level student):** I have no plans yet, but I expect to finish HSE. Whether the family support me or not, I’ll insist on going to +2. I’ll try to get education up to Bachelor’s level, because I need qualifications everywhere [to get a job]. We can get a job according to our qualifications.”

- **Participant 14 (female, SE level student):** “My father has passed away so my mother is very supportive of my studies. The society has discouraged me and my mother, by saying ‘How can you complete your daughter’s education?’ I want to support my mother, so I am being self-aware and will complete my education”

As illustrated in the quotes above, many of the adolescent girls involved in the research project perceived themselves as having the ability to ensure they could go to and complete their education, providing they have the determination to do so. Both participant’s responses demonstrate that adolescent girls can, and do, defy the negative views of others, and actively challenge traditional gendered expectations of girls in order to complete their education. Girls were very aware that being able to support themselves and their families depended on their educational achievements leading to qualification for better jobs. This appeared to fuel their drive to finish SE and HSE, and it appeared girls were willing to use any available agentic opportunity to do so.

Based on the comments of participants above, it seemed that there were instances where girls exercised agency within a less limited context than adolescent girls in previous years – essentially the agency of adolescent girls has increased, and girls now have the chance to influence their lives and ensure they access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education. However it was apparent during the research process that this increased agency is due to the shift in attitudes towards education for adolescent girls, as well as the societal, infrastructural and economic mechanisms which are in now place to promote SE and HSE for girls. Therefore, a combination of perceptions and practices relating to female education in Nepal have led to increased agency amongst adolescent girls, which has assisted them with accessing and completing their education. This approach to educational participation amongst adolescent girls suggests that their agency has, and will continue to, gradually increase – the fact that girls are still limited, yet opportunistic, in their attempts to extend both their agency and ability to achieve educational goals is evidence that the agency of adolescent girls has been
significantly extended in comparison to previous years, when female educational participation at SE and HSE was unlikely.

**Collective action**

Action taken by girls as part of a group was a frequent theme throughout the research process. All of the adolescent girls involved were members of local Girl Forums in the Makwanpur district, and all additional actors were either a part of the Girl Power Programme, or worked alongside CWIN.

Therefore, discussion about the effects of adolescent girls acting collectively to access and complete SE and HSE was common.

- **Participant 2 (female, HSE level student):** “We can demand support from V.D.C [Village District Council] [as a group].”

- **Participant 4 (female, SE level student):** “We expect to call a meeting of teachers and students in school to try to solve the problems of students, especially girls.

- **Interviewer:** “How do girls deal with any issues their community may have in relation to participating in SE?

**Participant 8 (female, SE level student):** We would make a group of adolescents and try to get help from organisations. We also support ourselves.”

- **Participant 9 (female, SE level student):** I do my level best. If I could not, I’d go to the Girl Forum and we’d have a discussion about what to do. I’d go with the Girl Forum to institutions [for help].”

- **Participant 11 (male, teacher):** “If someone puts a problem to a group, that can be the same problem as another member of the group. And they may be able to decide on a solution through the group, and can come up with many ideas. So they try to find a solution [together]”

- **Participant 12 (female, CWIN staff):** “After training, we find they’ve been involved in different community-based groups, which are arranged by local clubs – they are being assertive and self-aware. We can also see they demand support from VDCs and invite representatives to their programmes. It is seen that they have become more empowered”

As illustrated in the comments of participants above, adolescent girls perceived themselves to have more influence as a group than as individuals. Many girls involved in the research process discussed the achievements of their girl groups in addressing issues which hinder girls’ access to education. They discussed the promotion of educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur, and in Nepal.
as a whole. This suggests that adolescent girls in Makwanpur have more influence, and can act within a broader range of options, as part of a group, than individually.

In order to tackle problems with facilities and other school-based infrastructural issues, several girls mentioned that they approached teachers and made use of help from organisations like CWIN. As highlighted by comments made by participants 2 and 4, girls felt more confident requesting assistance in addressing educational issues face by girls when they were part of a group. This suggests that, when acting collectively, adolescent girls have increased influence, and can exercise a wider range of agentic opportunities in order to achieve their shared educational goals.

During the national Girl Forum Conference (GFC) held in Kathmandu during the fieldwork period, it was evident that being a part of a group enabled many of the young women and girls involved to challenge existing gender stereotypes and attitudes. Interaction between groups from all over Nepal (including representatives from Makwanpur) was observed at the GFC; it appeared that this collective action provided adolescent girls with influence they may not have had as individuals. Girls seemed motivated by each other and other groups, and discussed plans for action on a range of issues over the coming year – including those which affect educational participation.

Adolescent girls involved in the research project appeared to understand the extended agency they have when acting as a group, and particularly referenced the influence they were able to exert as part of their Girl Forums. Furthermore, collective agency appeared to link in with other mechanisms adolescent girls involved in Girl Forum groups has access to, such as awareness raising workshops and public speaking training. This may have had a combined effect of extending the agency of adolescent girls further, and enabling them to have more effect, in terms of encouraging other actors who typically have more influence (such as Village District Councils, teachers, parents, and local government) to accept the requests and requirements of adolescent girls in relation to accessing and completing Secondary and Higher-secondary education. This suggests that by acting collectively, adolescent girls may have the ability to challenge the status quo within different areas of their lives, and challenge continued norms and practices which impede the educational participation of girls in Makwanpur.

This section on the resulting agency of adolescent girls sets out the varying forms of agentic practice which girls exercise in order to access and complete SE and HSE. The section above highlights the finding that girls will make use of influence where, and when, they have it in order to make possible their educational participation. In addition, adolescent girls are aware of the constrained nature of their agency, yet seek to gain support from other actors in their lives, or act collectively to address the issues which hinder educational participation and access barriers which assist with going to, and completing ,SE and HSE.

The four sections in this chapter highlight the key findings of this research. The chapter aims to illustrate the significant and interconnecting societal, infrastructural, and economically significant
considerations which shape the varying agentic practice of adolescent girls and their educational participation in the Makwanpur district of Nepal.

The next chapter in this thesis will discuss the implications of the findings discussed above. It will answer the main research question of how adolescent girls exercise agency in order to access and complete SE and HSE in Makwanpur.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Based on the findings reported in the previous chapter, this chapter of the thesis will discuss the main empirical data resulting from the fieldwork period in order to answer the main research question – how do adolescent girls exercise agency in order to access and complete Secondary education (SE) and Higher-secondary education (HSE) in the Makwanpur district of Nepal? The key concepts of habitus, field, capital and continuum of agency were identified in the theoretical framework and research design and will be considered alongside the findings in order to answer the main research question.

As set out in theoretical framework chapter, Navarro (2002) provides a useful diagram illustrating the way in which these three concepts interconnect to shape agentic practice:

\[
\text{[(habitus)} \ (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practices}
\]

Therefore, the next three sections of this chapter will discuss the thesis findings alongside theory, in order to demonstrate the way in which the agentic practice of adolescent girls is shaped in the context of Makwanpur.

5.1. Habitus: ‘The changing nature of girls’ access to, and completion of, Secondary and Higher-Secondary education’

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, the habitus - defined by Bourdieu as dominant social norms and practices - impacts on perceptions about agentic opportunities and influences on agentic practice. For Bourdieu (1976,p487), the habitus acts as a “mediator” between structure and practice; something which became apparent during the research process. In addition, this section will discuss the changing nature of the habitus, and the effect this has on the agentic practice of adolescent girls.

The stratification of gender and social position

Throughout the fieldwork process, both gender and social position presented themselves as stratifying factors in relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE. These factors were also noted by Stash and Hannum (2001) in relation to primary education, and both factors present themselves as creating barriers to education in Nepal at every educational level.

Bourdieu proposed that gender and class were important factors in shaping the agentic opportunities and practice of social agents. Yet, Bourdieu viewed gender as a “sub-stream” of class, rather than a distinct part of the habitus in itself, thereby suggesting that social class is more influential than gender in impacting on the habitus.
However, the data collected during the fieldwork research leads this thesis to recommend that gender and social position are distinctly important factors within the habitus in their own right, and each have separate (and sometimes interlocking) effects on the habitus for individuals. As noted above, it became evident that continued traditional patriarchal gender roles has a significant impact on the norms and perceptions around the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur. In addition, it was clear that social position often had a negative impact on the ability of individuals to access and complete SE and HSE.

Some of the adolescent girls involved in the research process were affected by both their gender, and by their social position, as noted by CWIN’s report on the issues which young women face in the Makwanpur district (CWIN, 2011). Therefore, this thesis agrees with McNay’s description of Bourdieu’s approach to gender and agency as “too deterministic” (2000), and proposes that gender is an equally significant (and in some instances, more prominent) factor within the habitus, than social class.

Social and economic position had a clear effect on girls’ ability to access and complete SE and HSE. It was noted that girls from so-called “lower” castes and indigenous groups had lower chances of completing their education. Although it is generally acknowledged that class-based stratification has improved in recent years, there are still underlying stigmas relating to caste and social standing, combined with the prevalence of poverty-related barriers. Indeed, economic barriers presented substantial issues for girls accessing and completing school, regardless of the aims and perceptions of girls, their families, and their communities.

Therefore, for adolescent girls, when combined the influence of gender and class-based stratification potentially has the potent effect of limiting both their educational participation and their ability to exercise agentic practice in relation to this. Here Bourdieu’s emphasis on the effect that social and cultural reproduction has on agency in education (Nash, 1990), is demonstrated by continued gender and class-based stratification in Makwanpur. Care should be taken to ensure that the often-intersecting nature of gender and social position is considered when implementing policy and practices relation to the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur, in order to ensure adolescent girls from traditionally-marginalised and indigenous groups are able to access and complete SE and HSE. However, it is also necessary to recognise the deterministic nature of Bourdieu’s stance, and consider that adolescent girls are not just passively involved in performativity (Skeggs, 2007, p8) of gendered and class-based norms, but actively seek to overcome and challenge these elements of social reproduction, in order to access and complete SE and HSE.

**Contextual juxtapositions: Evolving attitudes towards education for adolescent girls clash with enduring societal norms and practices**

Based on both the research findings for this thesis and literature on the topic it seems that societal norms and practices in Nepal have shifted considerably in recent years, but often they still present...
significant barriers to education for adolescent girls (UNICEF 2007; Heath 2008; UNDP 2014). Education for adolescent girls is now largely accepted across Nepal and seen as important in assisting them with finding jobs and improving future opportunities for both themselves and their families. Despite this, there are still some stigmas in relation to the role of adolescent girls - particularly regarding views that investing in the Secondary education (SE) and Higher-Secondary education (HSE) of adolescent girls is a waste (due to the belief that daughters will get married and go to their husband’s home), prevalence of child marriage, and expectations of what girls can achieve or offer in the future – as well as other cultural and religious practices, including underlying stigmas relating to caste and social standing.

As noted in the contextual background, in the introduction chapter of this thesis, the opportunity for adolescent girls to access and complete Secondary education and Higher-secondary education in Nepal has increased dramatically over the recent generations (Mishra, 2004). Similarly, the data collected during the fieldwork period and discussed in the previous chapter, also demonstrates this. It is clear that adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal are now able to access educational opportunities that their mothers and grandmothers could not – indeed, many of the girls involved in the research process were the first women in their families to be involved in post-primary education. This resonates with Mottier’s (2002) criticism that Bourdieu’s overemphasis on the constancy of the habitus “lacks a convincing account of social change” (p352) with regard to evolving gender roles and relations. Instead this thesis agrees with the notion that “increased access of girls to higher education...has led to important modifications in the position of women” (p353), and changes to the role of women in Nepal have increased the ability of adolescent girls to go to and complete their education.

Based on the information discussed in the findings chapter, it would appear that attitudes towards SE and HSE for adolescent girls have changed, showing support for the increased educational participation of girls – particularly in relation to the increased understanding and acceptance of the benefits education for women and girls has (UNGEI 2014) in relation to providing future social and financial security, based on the career opportunities as a result of educational qualifications.

Yet, despite evolving attitudes towards education for adolescent girls, it is clear that many barriers still exist in terms of accessing and completing SE and HSE. While many traditional barriers to education have been eliminated, shifting attitudes and practices present an emerging set of challenges for the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur. For previous generations of women in Nepal, accessing school was a key difficulty, but with changes to the opportunities on offer to adolescent girls and higher levels of enrolment at these educational levels, many of the challenges now relate to staying in and completing school – a crucial point for policy and practice relating to ensuring the educational participation of adolescent girls in Makwanpur.

As mentioned in literature on the topic, young women in Nepal face high levels of gender stratification (Stash and Hannum, 2001; Heath 2008; ADB 2010;), which contributes to the hindering of their
educational participation. Based on the findings of this research, it does appear to be the case, but the barriers adolescent girls face are arguably more subtle than in the past – girls are not explicitly excluded from SE and HSE as they may have been, but traditional social attitudes, institutional issues, and economic concerns continue to present less obvious but complex barriers to educational participation. As discussed in the findings chapter, existing gendered attitudes and practices relating to the role of men/women in Nepal have an impact in shaping adolescent girls’ ability to access and complete SE and HSE; notably preference for sending sons to higher-quality private schools and daughters to lower-quality government-run schools, reluctance to invest in daughters’ education, domestic expectations of adolescent girls both before and after marriage, a lack of substantial school facilities and services for girls, and the continued existence of early marriage and the impact this has on school participation. This shift in the barriers faced by adolescent girls in accessing and completing SE and HSE inevitably affects the agentic practice they exercise in order to ensure their educational participation.

In addition, as highlighted in the findings chapter, there is a clash between contemporary educational initiatives aimed at adolescent girls accessing and completing SE and HSE, and continuing practices in relation to gender roles and the expectations of adolescent girls. For example, several national-level programmes have been launched, with the aim of encouraging girls to enrol at SE and HSE levels, but social and domestic expectations, economic problems, and a lack of facilities in schools often prevent adolescent girls from completing their education, leading to high “drop-out” levels (ODI 2013). While initiatives to encourage SE and HSE for adolescent girls certainly illustrate changes in attitudes towards girls’ education in Nepal, and it is clear there is more support for their educational participation than in the past, it appears that, both academically and practically, there is a failure to consider the underlying structural norms and practices which present barriers for adolescent girls, and how they manifest themselves.

This then suggests that, while literature on the topic does identify the barriers which adolescent girls face in completing SE and HSE (Bista 2004), there is generally a failure to consider that the barriers and social attitudes to adolescent girls’ education which exist in Makwanpur (and indeed, other parts of Nepal), are more nuanced than generally reported, and are dynamic in terms of their presence and influence. Not all girls are affected by the same challenges to education, barriers to education are not necessarily immediately obvious, and there is increased support for the education of adolescent girls. This thesis proposes that the constant evolution of norms and practices mean that complex contextual juxtapositions are emerging within the habitus, which simultaneously compel and constrain adolescent girls’ ability to access and complete SE and HSE, and in turn shapes their agentic practice in relation to this.

Perceptions shape decisions in agentic practice
Perceptions and confidence in their own ability appears to have a large effect on the agentic action taken by adolescent girls in relation to educational participation. The information discussed in the
findings chapter suggests that girls were aware of the barriers which they faced. However, a combination of the changing attitudes towards the expectations of adolescent girls, and support offered to girls at SE and HSE level, meant that they are “determined” to access and complete SE and HSE, which was discussed in the findings section of the thesis. Therefore, rather than accepting traditional social norms it appeared they were willing to try to navigate around them and actively challenge the issues adolescent girls face in Makwanpur, in order to complete their education.

However, as the adolescent girls involved in this research process were all involved in the Girl Power Programme, it is likely that their perceptions (and therefore, resulting agentic practice) are influenced by the support they receive from CWIN and their peers within the Girl Forums of which they are a part. Therefore, although these girls discussed and enacted the types of agentic practice they engaged in, these practices may not have been illustrative of the agency of adolescent girls form Makwanpur who are not involved with CWIN or the GPP, and the way in which these girls attempt to access and complete SE and HSE. Based on the research findings, girls who are not involved in the GPP are less likely to have access to support mechanisms which assist with educational participation, and are likely to perceive their ability to access and complete SE and HSE differently (and probably more negatively) than those girls involved in the research for this thesis.

In addition, those girls from “lower castes” appear to be less confident in their ability to complete SE/HSE, and were more likely to drop-out (Bhattachan et al, 2009). Based on discussion in focus groups and interviews, and reports on the educational participation of adolescent girls from traditionally marginalised groups (Bennet 2005; Stash and Hannum 2005), the effect of social attitudes and opportunities in relation to social class and caste presented itself as a factor which shapes the perceptions of adolescent girls, and therefore the agentic practice they can, and do, exercise in order to access and complete SE and HSE.

Those girls that were involved in the Girl Power Programme in Makwanpur often appeared resolute in their aim to continue their education, regardless of any negative attitudes they encountered, and frequently challenged existing socially-constructed gender roles in the actions they take; this relates to perceptions about adolescent girls as agents of social change (UNESCO 2003), and resonates with Kenway and McLeod’s (2005) notion of women changing and being changed by new gender roles and relations. Yet, despite this observed determination within the context of the GPP and as part of their Girl Groups, beyond this it is difficult to say to what extent adolescent girls explicitly challenged barriers they face, particularly if they were aware of opposition to education of girls at SE and HSE within different areas of their lives.

Based on both academic considerations and the findings of the fieldwork research, the habitus clearly has a significant impact in shaping the agentic practice of adolescent girls in relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE. Attitudes, perceptions, and norms shape the agentic decisions of adolescent
girls by presenting the social, economic and infrastructural capacity they have to exercise agency. Further to this, the dynamic nature of the habitus and shifting attitudes and barriers increasingly presents a new situation for adolescent girls to navigate through, in relation to achieving their educational goals, thereby affecting the agentic practice they exercise in order to do so. Therefore, it is apparent that these changes to the habitus provide insight into those factors (particularly barriers) which shape the actions adolescent girls take to ensure they can go to and complete SE and HSE.

5.2. Field: The evolving influence of adolescent girls in different spheres of their lives

According to Bourdieu, the “field” refers to different spheres where people exercise different levels of influence, which in turn impacts on their goals to do with changing or preserving the status quo. As noted, scholars have suggested the field provides opportunity to consider the power relations between different sets of social agents, and provides insight into gender dynamics within social spheres – this concept is particularly useful for considering the interactions adolescent girls have with other agents within various fields.

As in the above section relating to the habitus, this section will note the way in which the changing position and influence of adolescent girls in the public and private spheres of their lives, impacts on the agentic practice they exercise.

The influence of gendered spaces

The research findings suggests that the impact of gendered spaces in Makwanpur relates to the conflict between changing attitudes and traditional practices in Makwanpur, as discussed in the section on the habitus above. Although, as noted previously, there have been considerable changes to norms relating to the educational participation of adolescent girls, it appears that infrastructurally there are many factors which continue to inhibit the ability of adolescent girls to access and complete SE and HSE.

As WOREC Nepal (2014) notes, Nepali women traditionally assumed roles in the private, domestic sphere. Relating to this is the finding that many infrastructural aspects in the public sphere in Makwanpur are not equipped to facilitate the needs of adolescent girls. While there is increased support for the educational participation of adolescent girls at SE and HSE levels, they are hindered by a lack of facilities – most notably the private or separate sanitation facilities which girls can use during menstruation in schools and institutions. Therefore, while adolescent girls may be able and indeed, encouraged to access and complete SE and HSE, in practice they may be unable or be uncomfortable doing so due to generally “masculine” arrangement of public services, such as SE and HSE schools and institutions. This is consistent with Bourdieu’s assertion that although present in the domestic sphere, with regards to masculine domination, “perpetuation of the material and symbolic power relations…is largely situated outside that unit, in agencies such as the church, the educational system, and the state” (2001, p116). Therefore, this thesis agrees with Bourdieu’s suggestion that public spheres are generally structured with masculinity as the “norm”, which in turn leads these spheres to neglect or
ignore the requirements of women and girls, and makes accessing and using public services (such as education systems) more difficult for non-male actors.

In relation to the context of Makwanpur, as discussed in the findings for this research project, many school-specific challenges related to infrastructural issues, rather than explicit gender discrimination or negative attitudes towards education for adolescent girls. A lack of sanitary facilities prevented girls from going to school, and even more so during menstruation. An absence of female teachers and female authority figures was seen as being an issue for girls who needed assistance in school. This then suggests that while, in theory, the position of adolescent girls within the public sphere has increased, in practice there are still issues with making these areas accessible for women and girls. This again highlights the importance of gender in shaping the nature of fields for social agents, particularly in those areas which are presented as non-preferential or gender neutral. As the UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre notes, it is necessary to acknowledged that spaces are not inherently neutral, and care must be taken to “…make space accommodate the diverse realities of women’s lives and socio-economic roles and to challenge outdated socio-cultural norms regarding gender roles” (2014).

The influence of adolescent girls is extending into other areas of their lives
Existing traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms affect the influence and position of adolescent girls in the private sphere, as well as the public sphere. In Nepal (as in many other parts of the world), women are not traditionally key bearers of influence, and are typically subject to unequal power relations and gender-based barriers (ADB 2010,p9), which inevitably affects the agency they are able exercise, as they are limited in wielding influence which enables them to achieve goals and challenge the status quo.

As discussed in the findings section, it appeared that, in general, the influence and position of girls within all spheres of life is not particularly influential – they are often subject to the commands and actions of other, more influential actors within each sphere. Again gender and social class play a substantive role in affecting the influence of adolescent girls, since adolescent girls from ‘lower-castes’ or those affected by poverty-related issues are much less likely to exert influence within the spheres of their lives. This again highlights the substantial (and at times, intersecting) role both gender and social position play in shaping the agentic practice of individual agents within fields.

However, with the changing social attitudes and ability to challenge gender roles, the influence of adolescent girls is being gradually extended to allow for greater agentic practice in relation to achieving their educational goals. As Allard (2005) notes, the concept of field allows us to investigate how social norms, capital and contexts intersect in different ways, resulting in varied agentic practice. In the context of Makwanpur, it is evident that social norms typically have an inhibiting effect on the agentic practice of adolescent girls, yet in some circumstances the availability of support extends the influence of girls in some areas of their lives, allowing for productive agentic practice to assist them with achieving their agentic goals. An example of this is training and awareness-raising workshops offered
by CWIN; which girls reported these as enhancing their debating skills and knowledge of the benefits of education, which in turn enabled them to persuade family members to assist or allow them to access and complete SE and HSE. This suggests that the presence of influence in some fields can “seep” into other fields, effectively altering the power dynamics somewhat and providing adolescent girls with more influence in spheres usually defined by gender stratification and/or social status.

Based on the fieldwork findings and existing literature, the field provides clear insight into the influence social actors (in this case, adolescent girls) have, and how they act and interact in relation to achieving their aims. This section has highlighted the varying nature of girls’ influence in different spheres of their lives, and the way in which this influence is often constrained, but gradually expanding and making its way into other areas of their lives. This links in with the forms of support adolescent girls are offered, and the effect it has on the agentic practice they are able to exercise, as discussed in the next section of the chapter.

5.3. Capital: Mechanisms which change structures versus those which reinforce gender norms

As discussed in the theoretical framework, Bourdieu refers to “capital” as the different forms of influence held by agents, and the mechanisms or characteristics present in each field which stimulate this.

Capital appeared to have a significant effect on the agentic practice of adolescent girls, and served to provide opportunities for agentic practice which enabled girls to access and complete SE and HSE through a variety of channels. However it became clear that available capital varied from individual to individual, and mechanisms and support differed in terms of the long-lasting impact they have on gender norms and attitudes in relation to agentic practice.

Mechanisms which “reinforce” existing gender norms

Economic capital appeared to be one of the most influential forms of capital available to girls, and effectively enabled girls to pay their fees or buy school materials. Generally economic capital related to girls being able to generate income by holding a part time job, taking part in tuition groups, or receiving economic assistance from their families, NGOs such as CWIN, and from the government in the form of scholarships. HSE students generally needed to hold a paid job and were expected to pay their own fees, while SE students often relied on their families to provide economic assistance.

While it was clear that mechanisms which provided economic assistance were necessary in order for girls to access SE and HSE, yet the fact that girls were commonly expected to pay their own school fees at HSE level, or hold a job in order to complete their studies acts as a short-term solution to overcoming enduring financial issues. Effectively, relying on their ability to find a job or seek economic assistance from others alienates those girls who are cannot seek or find economic support, in that they will be unable to obtain economic capital, and therefore unable to go to school. In addition, the requirement
to hold a job in order to generate income to pay for schools fees or contribute to their households, prevents girls from attending classes or requires them to neglect their schoolwork at times. This highlights the contradictory nature of some mechanisms, both assisting with and hindering girls’ access to and completion of SE and HSE.

In addition, although government expenditure on education is the largest in the Nepali national budget (NCENepal 2014,p1) in absolute terms, the primacy placed on achieving gender equity at primary and lower-secondary education potentially further reinforces the notion that SE and HSE is not as important for adolescent girls. As discussed in the findings chapter, while government commitment to providing some financial support to SE and HSE-level females through grants and subsidies is apparent, in practice, the mechanisms in place to do so are not substantive enough to facilitate the educational participation of adolescent girls at these schooling levels. As set out in the findings of the thesis, the financial support offered by the Nepali government (roughly 500NPR\(^2\) per year) does not cover the combined costs of school fees, materials and uniforms at SE and HSE levels.

Further to this, while the Nepali government has made use of international education initiatives (such as the Education for All agenda), and national projects (such as the National Plan for Education of Girls) to assist adolescent girls to access and complete their educational goals, failure to assertively implement infrastructural mechanisms – e.g. sanitation and menstruations facilities for women and girls, or focus on raising the number of female teachers at SE and HSE level – further reinforces those traditional patriarchal gender norms which undermine the educational participation of adolescent girls. Yet, as observed at national conferences relating to education for adolescent girls, there is an awareness at national government level that currently education infrastructures are not wholly inclusive of girls, and that there is a need for a comprehensive plan to enhance the educational experience of adolescent girls across Nepal.

This is not to say that those mechanisms which reinforce existing gender norms do not offer support and opportunity to access and complete SE and HSE to adolescent girls. Rather, this thesis is suggesting that capital too is shaped by social norms and attitudes, in that policy makers are also affected by the social and cultural context and can potentially re-enact and reproduce traditional gender norms as a result of this. This can serve to reinforce conventional gender expectations and practices, and affect the agentic possibilities of adolescent girls in relation to educational participation; which links in with Bourdieu’s discussion about reproduction of dominant social norms and practices (2000). In addition, recreation of traditional norms and practices also works to reinforce existing dynamics between actors, and serves to continue the limited influence and restricted agentic practice adolescent girls can exercise in some areas of their lives. This particularly relates to adolescent girls who do not receive support from CWIN and the Girl Power Programme, and do not have the opportunity to engage in mechanisms which assist with expanding their influence, as is deliberated in the section below.

\(^2\) 500NPR equates to roughly €4.25
Changing structures: The ‘knock-on’ effect of the Girl Power Programme

As discussed in the findings chapter, there were also mechanisms available to adolescent girls in Makwanpur which provided more substantive support to adolescent girls, and assisted with ensuring their educational participation. These mechanisms showed evidence of changing or at least contributing to the alteration of, the barriers to Secondary and Higher-Secondary education for adolescent girls discussed above.

In particular, the Girl Power Programme and Girl Group Forums presented themselves as significant support mechanisms for adolescent girls in terms of assisting their educational participation. The GPP effectively provided assistance from all categories of capital – economic, social, political, school-based, and personal – many of which intersected with each other in various ways to facilitate the educational participation of adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district. Notably, by providing workshops and training sessions related to issues such as the benefits of education and the disadvantages of early marriage, the GPP equipped adolescent girls with knowledge-based socio-cultural capital (such as public speaking skills) to accumulate capital in other areas of their lives, such as economic and educational capital. This ability to gather capital in various areas of their lives opposes Bourdieu’s suggestion that women are typically capital bearers rather than capital accumulators; highlighting the potential some forms of capital offer in relation to escalating both the capital-accruing opportunities which are offered to adolescent girls, and the increased influence and power they have as a result of this capital accumulation.

An example of this capital accumulation is in relation to increased social capital and changing attitudes towards education for adolescent girls. Many girls received support from a variety of sources, including family, friends and community as a result of the various forms of assistance offered to them by the GPP and CWIN. For example, as discussed in the findings chapter, CWIN presented awareness-raising workshops for parents and communities that helped to encourage families to send daughters to school. These sessions served to reinforce the view that SE and HSE for girls is a positive investment, and effectively provided a “knock-on” effect in terms of changing social norms and practices, and expanding the agency girls exercise within various spheres of their lives. This “knock-on” effect, where garnering support in one sphere of their life incites increased support or assistance in another sphere, highlights the way in which the influence of adolescent girls is gradually expanding into areas where girls traditionally had little or no influence. This in turn affects the agentic practice adolescent girls can and do exercise in different areas of their lives, as a result of both extended influence and changes to attitudes towards SE and HSE for girls.

As discussed, capital is an important factor in shaping the agency which adolescent girls can exercise; providing different forms of mechanisms assists girls with accessing and completing SE and HSE. The section above seeks to point out the distinction between those forms of capital which are shaped by
existing norms and practices, and those which challenge or defy patriarchal attitudes and those factors which limit girls’ education. By acknowledging this, the section highlights the way in which these different types of capital consequently shape the agentic practice which adolescent girls exercise. The next section will discuss this resulting agency, and the different types of agentic opportunities which adolescent girls have in Makwanpur.

5.4. Continuum of agency: The agentic practice of adolescent girls in action

As discussed in the theoretical framework, Klocker (2008) refers to the “Continuum of agency”, deliberating on the variation in the extent to which young people can exercise agency. The continuum of agency refers to the spectrum of agency which social actors possess – ranging from thin agency to thick agency, as illustrated in the diagram below – and for the purpose of this thesis relates to the different forms of agentic practice which adolescent girls exercise.

![Continuum of agency diagram](image)

This section will set out the differing ways in which adolescent girls in Makwanpur exercised agentic practice, in order to access and complete SE and HSE.

The spectrum of agency: ranging from constraint to the ability to act freely

As discussed in the previous empirical findings chapter, adolescent girls exhibited a range of agentic practice. It was evident that the agency adolescent girls exercised, and the outcomes this produced in relation to educational participation, varied depending on the barriers they faced, mechanisms available to assist them, and their position within different spheres of their lives.

Although Bell suggests that young people typically exercise agency within constraint (2010), the findings of this research suggest this is not exclusively the case, and that adolescent girls in Makwanpur are able to exercise a range of different types of agency – from action within constrained circumstances to the ability to exercise agency with more options for action. The type of agency exercised appeared to be dependent on the norms and perceptions of adolescent girls, along with the extent to which adolescent girls received support in different areas of their lives.

“Thick agency” was apparent when girls had many opportunities to realise their access to and completion of SE and HSE, and appeared to particularly relate to the assistance they received from various actors, and their involvement in Girl Forums as part of the GPP. There were many instances when girls viewed their agentic practice as influential and considered themselves able to direct or control their futures and general educational participation, and at times challenged societal structures.
and norms; an example of which is confronting instances of early marriage within their communities. The examples of agency with a broad range of options tended to relate to those forms of capital which offered the potential to change existing structures, as discussed above.

In addition, there were many examples of girls’ using subtle agency to enable themselves to access and complete SE and HSE without directly changing structures or the general status quo. This often related to seeking assistance from other actors, and making use of the influence of actors such as CWIN, family members, teachers, and at times the local government. Subtle agency typically tied in with those forms of capital which did not necessarily challenge existing gender norms and practices, and instead operated alongside continued patriarchal gender roles and attitudes.

Relating to exercising agency in constraint, there are many instances where adolescent girls have very limited opportunity or influence in relation to affecting their educational participation. This “thin agency” was particularly evident where the social and economic status of adolescent girls in Makwanpur affected their ability to attend and complete their schooling. Early marriage (marriage under the legal age of 20) also restricted the ability of girls to continue with their education, and in the examples discussed it was evident that the domestic expectations of those adolescent girls who married often prevented them from completing SE and HSE, and they were typically expected to drop-out of school to fulfil their “roles” in the private sphere. In addition, these girls were very limited in their attempts to influence infrastructures and national policies, with some reporting no response from decision makers with regard to their school-specific request; something also suggested by Tisdall and Punch, who argue that young people’s constrained agency is acknowledged but “perhaps not sufficiently problematized” (2014,p14) in various contexts.

Finally, there are instances where adolescent girls have little opportunity to influence their educational participation, and generally appeared to be impacted by the influence other actors in their lives – such as parents demanding they complete household chores rather than attending school, or school management neglecting to implement facilities as promised. In these cases, girls sought to navigate around the various barriers or expectations they faced, and actively attempted to deal with these issues in order to continue to access and complete SE and HSE – for example, by holding a job to address financial issues, attempting to influence the views of other actors in their lives in order to receive support for their educational participation, and approach existing female staff in their schools for assistance.

Generally, it seemed that girls were aware that they had limited agency in comparison to other actors, and that the influence of adolescent girls was not particularly substantive. However, adolescent girls appeared to take advantage of many of the available opportunities to exercise agency, regardless of whether the agentic practice was limited or enhanced.
Collective agency: shared interests and group action

As discussed in the findings chapter; it is apparent that adolescent girls recognise the value of acting collectively, and they reported significant results from acting as a group in relation to shared concerns or interests. In particular, action in relation to challenging gender norms and practices was common amongst the Girl Groups as part of the Girl Power Programme, e.g. often in relation to preventing early marriage and seeking assistance relating to furthering assistance for adolescent girls in relation to educational participation and other prevalent issues girls in this age group faced in Nepal – often those set out as barriers to education in the introductory section to the thesis.

Adolescent girls as active social agents

The acknowledgement that adolescent girls often exercise agency within constraint does not suggest that people have “less agency when they have fewer choices” (Booth 2014, p2), but instead that social, infrastructural, and economic circumstances directly affect the agentic practice which people exercise.

This has significance in terms of international development. In particular, in order to facilitate adolescent girls’ access to and completion of SE and HSE, in the context of Nepal, but also elsewhere, we must take note of the factors which inhibit and enable their educational participation, as well as their perceptions of, and decisions made in relation to, the agentic practice they exercise. Therefore, this thesis is recognising that girls are social agents within their own right, and are not simply passive recipients of assistance or barriers within their lives. Rather, it is evident that adolescent girls are aware of factors which affects their educational participation, and act where possible in order to ensure this.

This section about the varying agentic practice exercised by adolescent girls seeks to discuss the range of agency adolescent girls exhibit in relation to educational participation. This section suggests that adolescent girls exercise agency in relation to the circumstances which either inhibit or assist their ability to access and complete SE and HSE, and while often limited, girls exercise ‘judicious opportunism’ (Murphy-Graham and Leal 2014, p14).

5.5. Addressing the main research statement: How do adolescent girls exercise agentic practice In relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE?

The aim of this discussion chapter is to consider the key findings and existing literature in relation to the sub-questions set out in the research design chapter of the thesis, and also to answer the main research question. This part of the chapter will summarise the argument made in the sections above, in order to determine how adolescent girls exercise agency in order to access and complete SE and HSE in the Makwanpur district of Nepal.
This section will set out those factors which shape agentic practice, and the agentic practice which results from this; in order to give an overview of the way in which adolescent girls exercise agentic practice in relation to their educational participation.

**Shaping agentic practice**

As set out in the first three sections of this chapter, it is clear that the concepts of habitus, field, and capital all intersect to shape the agentic practice of adolescent girls; indeed it is difficult to discuss each as separate factors considering the inherent intertwining of all three concepts, but they have been considered separately for analytical purposes.

The first section of the chapter, relating to the habitus, discussed the fact that gender and social position continue to act as highly stratifying factors, and often intersect to present additional barriers to education. The findings from this research suggest that although there have been shifts to attitudes towards education for adolescent girls, and the de-construction of some traditional barriers to education, social norms and practices continue to shape the agentic practice which girls exercise in order to ensure their educational participation. Relatively rapid changes to educational opportunities have led to many more adolescent girls enrolling in SE and HSE (Ministry of Education 2013, p4), yet newly emerging social, economic, and infrastructural challenges have had the effect of presenting a new set of barriers to education for adolescent girls. However, as discussed in the habitus section of this chapter, the issues adolescent girls face are arguably now less explicit than in previous years, and more nuanced than reported in literature on the topic.

Relating to the notion of changes within the habitus, the position of adolescent girls appears to be changing in various areas of their lives. As a result of shifting attitudes towards education, the second section, relating to the field, suggests that the influence of adolescent girls is “seeping into” other areas of their lives, e.g. gaining public speaking skills through Girl Forums enables girls to encourage parents to provide educational support within their domestic spheres. Despite this, educational infrastructures continue to neglect the needs of adolescent girls, and continue to present barriers to education, and effectively limit the ability of girls to exercise their agency in order to access and complete SE and HSE.

In addition, adolescent girls are now offered more substantial support at national and local level than in the past, and have the ability to accumulate influence through the Girl Power Project and expand their skills in relation to raising awareness and garnering support from actors in other areas of their lives. Therefore, due to extended support from various actors in their lives, the influence of adolescent girls is extending into other spheres of their lives, and affording them increased agentic possibilities, and therefore greater opportunity for educational participation. As the third section, relating to the concept of capital notes, this thesis suggests that there are mechanisms which reinforce gender roles and mechanisms which challenge social structures. Those mechanisms which reinforce gender roles in
Makwanpur typically provide adolescent girls with minimal assistance with educational participation in the short-term (such as government subsidies at SE and HSE level), and therefore limited agentic possibilities. On the other hand, it appears that those mechanisms which provide substantive assistance in a range of areas offer adolescent girls the opportunity to challenge gender roles in the long-term (such as the support offered by CWIN in several different areas of girls’ lives, including training workshops, economic support, and the opportunity to act as part of a group within Girl Forums), and therefore increase the agentic possibilities of adolescent girls.

The findings from this research suggest that Bourdieu’s three key concepts of habitus, capital, and field play a significant and interlinked role in shaping the agency of adolescent girls. This thesis is suggesting that the evolving nature of the barriers, mechanisms and position in different areas of their lives which adolescent girls experience, has culminated in a new contextual dynamic, and continues to shape the agentic practice which adolescent girls exercise in order to access and complete SE and HSE in Makwanpur. This thesis diverges from Bourdieu’s dismissal of the effects of social changes on gendered relations (2001), and instead suggests that adolescent girls are aware of both the opportunities on offer to them, and the limitations restricting these. Adolescent girls seek to utilise the opportunities they have in order to navigate around barriers they encounter in their educational participation, as evidenced in the agency they exercise in order to ensure their access to and completion of SE and HSE.

**Resulting agentic practice**

As a result of the combined effect of those factors which shape agentic possibilities (as discussed above), a range of agentic practices are exhibited by adolescent girls in relation to accessing and completing SE and HSE.

The different barriers and mechanisms experienced by adolescent girls in their efforts to attend and complete SE and HSE effectively lead to a spectrum of agentic practice; girls who experience many barriers and have access to few mechanisms will often exercise little or thin agency, whilst others are able to access many different forms of support, or who are not constrained by multiple barriers, are more likely to exercise thicker agency within a broad range of option, or at least successfully subtly navigate around those barriers which threaten to inhibit their educational participation.

As noted in the empirical findings chapter, adolescent girls exhibited a range of agentic practices in their day-to-day lives – limited actions such as attempting to juggle domestic requirements and schoolwork, subtle actions like appealing to others in their lives for assistance, and actions within a broader range of options, such as raising awareness about the benefits of girls’ education as part of their Girl Groups, and holding a part-time job in order to pay for school fees.
Limited but opportunistic
While the agentic practice of adolescent girls has “thickened” in recent years, effectively girls are still constrained by multiple societal, infrastructural, and economic barriers – this suggests that the agentic practice of adolescent girls in Makwanpur is limited but opportunistic (Murphy-Graham and Leal 2014).

Based on the barriers and mechanisms which adolescent girls experienced, as well as the varying degrees of agency they exhibited, it is apparent that adolescent girls actively seek to access and complete SE and HSE; making use of different forms of support offered to them, and seeking to navigate the various problems they face in order to achieve their educational goals and exert control over the future direction of their lives.

Often literature on the theme of agency, particularly the agency of women and girls, depicts those who are not in key positions of power as “weak” social agents, or unable to exercise agency – however this thesis is suggesting that adolescent girls in Makwanpur are increasingly making use of the few areas in which they do have thicker agency to overcome or address the challenges they face and the thin agency they have in other areas of their lives.

In addition, it is apparent that adolescent girls are aware of the limitations that their age, gender, and economic and social positions can bring in terms of achieving their educational goals, and instead seek to draw on the influence and power other actors in their lives have; these include the influence of CWIN, seeking assistance from teachers and school staff, and acting alongside other adolescent girls collectively through the Girl Power Programme and Girl Forum Groups.

Based on the final section above, the conceptual scheme included in the research design chapter has been edited to reflect the discussion included in this chapter.

In the figure below, the circle originally depicting the concept of agentic practice has been edited to illustrate the way on which “agentic practice” is shaped by barriers and mechanisms girls experience, resulting in a spectrum of agency; from “thick agency” to “thin agency”. Therefore, in the diagram, mechanisms lead to thicker agency, while barriers lead to thinner agency. The thin and thick arrows leading to the boxes depicting access and completion of education demonstrate the impact constrained agency (or fewer options for action) has versus a broad range of options on adolescent girls’ access to and completion of SE and HSE in the context of Makwanpur.
The next chapter will conclude the thesis, and set out the research implications and recommendations in relation to the agentic practice and educational participation of adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the thesis, and outline the main aspects of the study. First the chapter will summarise the key points made in the thesis, and will then discuss the implications and limitations of the research on the field of international development. Finally, the chapter will make recommendations for future research on the issue of the agentic practice and educational participation of adolescent girls in Nepal.

6.1. Key points of the thesis
The main aim of this thesis has been to investigate how adolescent girls exercise agentic practice in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-Secondary education. Bourdieu’s approach to agency suggests that it is shaped by social norms and practices (habitus), actors’ position in different areas of their lives (field), and the support or influence available to them (capital). Based on the findings of the fieldwork research, it is evident that while there is increased support for the education of adolescent girls in Nepal, social and domestic expectations, economic concerns, and infrastructural issues continue to hinder the ability of adolescent girls to access and complete SE and HSE. Despite this, it is evident that adolescent girls in the Makwanpur district of Nepal seek to utilise agentic opportunities available to them, in order to access and complete Secondary and Higher-secondary education.

Mechanisms in place to support the educational participation of girls has extended their agentic possibilities. It appears that for those girls involved in the Girl Power Programme, substantive support in different areas of their lives assists with addressing the different barriers to education, and enables them to exercise increased agency. This links with Robson et al’s Continuum of agency, and suggests that mechanisms which seek to alter gender norms, and provide comprehensive support to adolescent girls, “thickens” their agency and ability to access and complete SE and HSE. Throughout the research process it became apparent that, while adolescent girls are aware of their thin agency and limited position of influence in the context of Makwanpur, they were also willing to make use of any opportunities for support on offer to them, in order to achieve their educational goals – thereby illustrating the agentic practice of adolescent girls involved in the research process to be ‘limited but opportunistic’.

6.2. Research implications and limitations
As the focus of this thesis is on agency, the methods used were deliberately chosen to ensure participation of respondents, as well as providing the opportunity to view the actions taken by adolescent girls, and their interactions with other actors in their lives. The research design and project primarily included adolescent girls involved in the Girl Power Programme, as well as additional actors who work as part of or alongside CWIN in the Makwanpur district. All adolescent girls were currently involved in SE or HSE, in various part of the district. This provided insight into the
way in which substantive mechanisms (such as training workshops, Girl Forums, and economic assistance) can extend the agentic practice of adolescent girls in Makwanpur in relation to completing their education.

However, by involving only adolescent girls included in the GPP, the thesis was potentially limited in ensuring representation of young women and girls in the Makwanpur district, who are unable to access these types of substantive support mechanisms. Therefore, it would have been useful to investigate the agentic practice of adolescent who are not a part of the Girl Power Project, or not currently in SE or HSE. Furthermore, it would have been valuable to compare the agentic opportunities and practice of adolescent girls not involved in the Girl Power Programme with those girls who received support from the GPP and CWIN. This may have provided a more broadly representative notion of how adolescent girls exercise agentic practice in their attempts to access and/or complete their education in Makwanpur.

6.3. Recommendations for future research

As this thesis focused on the agency of adolescent girls and their educational participation in Makwanpur, several issues presented themselves as areas where additional research could be conducted, in order to determine how to further assist adolescent girls in accessing and completing SE and HSE. I believe further study into the contextual “clash” between increased support for education of adolescent girls with ongoing domestic expectations of women and girls in Nepal would illustrate those themes which continue to prevent adolescent girls from achieving their educational goals. While there is documentation on the gendered expectations of Nepali women, with more Nepali women and girls now entering into post-primary education, and the workforce in general, there has been little study on the contextual conflict this now has, and the resulting effect on dynamics in the public/private sphere. Therefore, investigation into the effect contextual juxtapositions and emerging challenges have on the agentic practice of adolescent girls would provide insight into how to assist with the future educational participation of young women and girls in Makwanpur.

In addition, further research on the influence of current national and international education initiatives (such as the global Education for All agenda, and the National Plan for Girls’ Education) on improving gender equity in education in Nepal would be useful. At present, the focus appears to be largely on Primary and Lower-Secondary level education in Nepal, and achieving gender parity in terms of improving enrolment rates amongst adolescent girls at Secondary ad Higher-Secondary levels. Yet, it appears that retention and completion rate of female students continues to drop at higher educational levels, and the findings of this thesis suggests that existing policies do not necessarily assist adolescent girls with staying in and completing SE and HSE. Therefore, further study into the consequences/result of these programmes would provide valuable feedback for global and national education initiatives, which could feed into future plans for comprehensive educational goals in the field of international development.
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Appendix 1: Interview Guides

Interview Guide – Adolescent girls

Description:
To begin, we will introduce ourselves to the participant and explain that we are going to ask them some questions about their secondary school experiences. We will give a short talk about what Frances is studying.

“For her masters thesis, Frances is investigating how young women and girls in the Makwanpur region use their agency to access and complete secondary education. She is studying the various barriers to education which adolescent girls face in going to and finishing secondary school, as well as the mechanisms which provide them with opportunities or support in going to secondary school. These contributing factors will shape the way in which young women act in their aim to access and complete secondary education.”

During this interview, we will ask you a series of questions which relate to how girls in the Makwanpur region are able to act in relation to accessing secondary school.”

In addition, we will tell them it is important that they give their honest opinions, and that they are free to stop the interview at any point if they wish. Permission to audio record will be requested and we will clarify what will happen with recordings, and that participants will be anonymous in any reports or publications relating to the research. Consent forms will be signed at this point.

We will then begin the interview. The questions below are intended to be used to guide the participant’s answers. The sub-questions under each main question refer to key topics Frances hopes to gain information on (if the participant does not give detail of their own accord, I would like the sub-questions to be asked to stimulate further response).

Questions:

1. Tell me about your experiences of going to secondary school
   - How often do you go to school?
   - Is the school good for female students?
     - What does she learn and in which ways are girls included in classroom participation?
     - How often do you go to school? Would you like to go more often (or not)?
     - Are there separate sanitation facilities for girls at your school? What are they like?
     - Do you have a favourite teacher? What makes her/him your favourite teacher?
     - How are boys and girls treated in school? Are there any differences?
   - What would make secondary school better for female students?

2. What makes it difficult for girls to go to school?
   - Is it normal for girls to go to secondary school in your community?
- Are both girls and boys encouraged to go to secondary school?
- Do school fees make it difficult to go to secondary school?
- Does household income play a role in affecting how girls differ from boys in going to secondary school?
- Has recent conflict affected your ability to participate in secondary schooling? In which ways? Has it affected boys attending school? (to same degree?)
- Have you noticed any changes in your community since the installation of the new government? Does this have any effect on schooling?
- How far do you have to travel to get to school?
  - How do you travel to school? (alone/with girls/with parents?)
  - Do you feel safe travelling to school? (why? Probe to find out more)
- How do you deal with problems (what kind?) you have in participating in secondary school? What do you do to make it easier to go to school?
- Does caste or ethnic group have any effect on secondary school participation for girls?

3. How supportive are your family of you going to secondary school?
- Do they agree with secondary level education for girls?
- Have any other women in your family gone to secondary school? (e.g. mother/sisters/cousins)
- Do you have brothers who go to secondary school?
- Is there a difference in how your family feel about boys going to secondary school in comparison to girls?
- Are there any reasons or situations where going to school is less important for women than men?
- How do you deal with any issues your family have about your participation in secondary school? Have you found ways to make it easier to go to school?

4. How supportive are your community of girls going to secondary school?
- Do significant figures in the community encourage/discourage girls from going to secondary school?
- Are girls from all groups and communities are given the chance to go to secondary school?
- Do many girls from your community go to secondary school?
- What do you think about being part of the Girl Forums?
  - Having a voice?
  - Being part of a group?
  - Opportunity to influence change?
  - Other?
- How do you deal with any issues your community have in relation to participation of girls in secondary school? Are there ways in which you have been able to make it easier for yourself?

5. Are there any factors which make it easier for you to go to secondary school?

- Does higher numbers of girls in the community going to secondary school make it easier for you to go to school?
- Does free lower secondary education help with attending school?
- Does being part of tutoring groups help with the costs of schooling?
  - Why did you get involved?
  - What could make the tutoring groups even better?
  - What influence do the Girl Forms have for you?
  - Why did you get involved?
  - What could make the Girl Forum even better?

- Has the post-conflict situation offered any opportunities for girls going to secondary school?
- Have you noticed any particular policies aimed at making secondary school more accessible for girls?
- How do you use opportunities to help you go to secondary school?
- Are there any areas of their lives where girls might act differently or have different opportunities in relation to going to school? (at home, in the community, at school, at district level)

6. What effect does secondary education have on girls’ lives?

- Were you encouraged to enrol in secondary education? By whom?
- Do you expect to finish secondary school? (and why?)
- Do many other girls in the community complete secondary school?
- What influence has the Girl Power Programme had on your ability to go secondary school?
- How do you expect completing secondary education will affect your life?
- Why is secondary education important to you?
- What do you plan to do after secondary school?

Once the participant has finished answering the questions, we will end the interview. We will ask her if there’s anything else she’d like to add, or if she has any questions. We will thank her for taking part, and that her input has been very helpful for Frances’ study. The interview will then end.
Interview Guide – Additional Actors

Description:

To begin, we will introduce ourselves to the participant and explain that we are going to ask them some questions about their secondary school experiences. We will give a short talk about what Frances is studying.

“For her masters thesis, Frances is investigating how young women and girls in the Makwanpur region use their agency to access and complete secondary education. She is studying the various barriers to education which adolescent girls face in going to and finishing secondary school, as well as the mechanisms which provide them with opportunities or support in going to secondary school. These contributing factors will shape the way in which young women act in their aim to access and complete secondary education.

During this interview, we will ask you a series of questions which relate to how girls in the Makwanpur region are able to act in relation to accessing secondary school.”

In addition, we will tell them it is important that they give their honest opinions, and that they are free to stop the interview at any point if they wish. Permission to audio record will be requested and we will clarify what will happen with recordings, and that participants will be anonymous in any reports or publications relating to the research. Consent forms will be signed at this point.

We will then begin the interview. The questions below are intended to be used to guide the participant’s answers. The sub-questions under each main question refer to key topics Frances hopes to gain information on (if the participant does not give detail of their own accord, I would like the sub-questions to be asked to stimulate further response).

Questions:

1. In your opinion, what makes it difficult for girls to go to school?
   - Do existing social norms/attitudes have an effect on girls’ participation in secondary school?
   - Are boy and girl students treated the same? (expand on this – how?)
   - How do significant community figures react in relation to girls going to secondary school? (expand on this – why, how?)
   - Are girls from all groups and communities able to participate to secondary school? (How?)
   - How do parents respond in relation to girls going to secondary school?
   - Do school fees have an effect on girls’ school participation? (How?)
   - Does household income affect how girls and boys go to secondary school? (How?)
   - Has recent conflict had any influence on girls’ participation in secondary schooling?
   - Has the new government had an effect on girls’ participation in secondary schooling (at national level, at district level?)
   - Does living far from school or in rural areas have any effect on girls’ going to school?
   - Does travelling to school pose have any effect on girls’ participation in schooling?

2. Would you say secondary schools are generally considerate of female students?
In your opinion/experience, are female students from certain groups/individuals treated differently in schools/classrooms. What interaction/experiences do female students have with
- Teachers/school staff?
- Male students?

Are there adequate sanitation facilities for girls?

In your opinion, is the curriculum and teaching in secondary schools “girl friendly”?

In your opinion, what are main reasons numbers of girls in secondary education fall with each grade?

How could secondary schools be more gender sensitive and aim to ensure girls finish secondary education?

3. How do you feel young women and girls address barriers to education?

In your experience, are there particular ways in which girls attempt to address issues/barriers they face in order to go to secondary school? Particular resources they draw on?

Do young women and girls take obvious action, or also make subtle attempts to address barriers to education?

Does the action girls take vary in different areas of their lives? (such as family, community, at regional level, as a group, in school?)

Do you think secondary schooling is important to young women and girls?

4. Are there any factors which make it easier for girls to go to secondary school?

Do you believe that higher numbers of girls in the community going to secondary school make it easier for girls to go to school?

Does free lower secondary education help girls with attending school?

Has the post-conflict situation offered any opportunities for girls going to secondary school?

Have you noticed any particular policies aimed at making secondary school more accessible for girls? In your opinion, have these had an impact (positive/negative)?

What are the policies at national level?

What at the policies at district level?

5. How effective do you think the Girl Power Programme is in assisting young women and girls with addressing educational barriers?

What effect do the Girl Forums have
- Having a voice?
- Being part of a group?
- Opportunity to influence change?
- Other

How do the tutoring groups help?
- With school fees?
- With confidence?
- Other?

- How does the GPP aim to assist girls in coping with educational barriers in less overt ways?
  - Counselling sessions?
  - Teacher training?
  - Inclusion of community members
  - Informing families about the importance of sending girls to school?
  - Other?

- How can the GPP further link with governance on the issue of female secondary education?
  - Education for All agenda?
  - Government policies and programmes
  - Other?

- In your view, are there any way the GPP could provide further support to young women and girls in accessing secondary education?

Once the participant has finished answering the questions, we will end the interview. We will ask them if there’s anything else they’d like to add, or if they have any questions. We will thank them for taking part, and that their input has been very helpful for Frances’ study. The interview will then end.
Appendix 2: Focus Group Guide

Description:

To begin, we will introduce ourselves to the girls and ask them to seat themselves in a small circle. Frances will provide some sweets and invite the girls to help themselves during the focus group.

Once the girls are seated in a circle formation, explain that we are going to ask them some questions about their secondary school experiences. We will give a short talk about what Frances is studying and why she wants to hold focus groups with them. Permission to audio record will be requested and we will clarify what will happen with recordings, and that participants will be anonymous in any reports or publications relating to the research. Consent forms will be signed at this point.

Because we want to make sure everyone gets opportunity to speak (and to ensure the focus group is recorded properly), please tell them that it’s important they don’t talk over each other and wait until the person has finished speaking before joining in. In addition, it is important that they give their honest opinions, and that if anyone feels they would like to stop at any point, that is fine. Frances will then turn on the voice recorder to capture the discussion.

Then, we will give them paper and the colouring pencils (provided by Frances), and ask them to draw a “lifeline” of their lives from age 10 to 18, which includes events in their lives which have happened or they expect to happen. We will demonstrate an example lifeline, made by Frances, to ensure they understand what to do.

We will give the girls 10 minutes to draw their lifelines, and then ask each girl to explain their lifelines to the group. In relation to this, we will then ask some questions and begin discussion...

1. Why is secondary school important for girls?
   - Do they hope to finish secondary school?
   - Ask them what effect do they think secondary school has on girls’ lives? (what are the positives, what are the negatives?)
   - What do they plan to do in their lives after secondary school?
   - What do most other girls do after secondary school? (and why is this?)

2. Do you think secondary school is good for female students?
   - Encourage them to talk about their experiences (e.g. “tell me about your experiences of secondary school”…)
   - Encourage them to go into detail about their answers (e.g. “can you tell me more about that?”…)
   - How is secondary school different for boys and girls? (and encourage them to give reasons or compare between boys and girls)

After roughly 20 minutes (this may be too short but see how it goes), we will stop the discussion and ask the girls to do another drawing, this time of “a day in my life”, which shows their day to day activities (such as school, housework, social time, looking after siblings, work etc). Again, we will demonstrate using Frances’ example “day in my life”, so they understand what they should do. We will give them 10 more minutes to draw, and then will ask each girl to present her drawing and tell us which are the most important activities in her life, and which take up the most time. Following this, we will ask some more discussion questions...

3. Is it easy or difficult for girls to go to secondary school?
4. **What helps girls to go to secondary school?**

- Have they experienced anything which makes it easier to go to school? (e.g. free lower secondary fees, tutoring groups, support from family and friends, the Girl Forums, help from the Girl Power Project)
- How do they try to handle any problems they face with going to secondary school? (How do they use opportunities to make it easier to go to school?)

We will allow the girls to discuss and voice their opinions and experiences for 20 minutes, and then will begin to round up the focus group. We will thank the girls for taking part, and that their input was very helpful for Frances’ study. We will ask them if there’s anything else they’d like to add, or if they have any questions. The focus group will then end.
Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Please take your time to read this information sheet, and feel free to ask me any questions you may have.

I confirm that I give my consent to take part in this research. I am free to stop at any point if I want to, and do not have to provide reason for doing so.

I understand the purpose of this research, and what the information I provide will be used for. Should the results of the interview with me or focus group I’ve participated in be used in scientific publications or be made public in any other way, this will be done on an anonymous basis. No third party will be given access to my personal data without my written permission.

If you would like to receive further information about the research, you can contact me at franceshague@live.co.uk. Should you have any complaints with regard to this study, please refer to my supervisor Dr. Esther Miedema at the University of Amsterdam (e-mail: e.a.j.miedema@uva.nl).

Name .................................................... Date.............................................

Signature....................................................
### Appendix 4: List of Participants

#### Interviews

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<td>11</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Department of Education representative</td>
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#### Focus Group 1

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