

‘EDUCATING A GIRL IS LIKE REPAIRING  
SOMEONE ELSE’S WALL’: ASSESSING WOMEN’S  
MOTIVATION FOR ATTENDING SECONDARY  
SCHOOL IN KATHMANDU, NEPAL

By

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Abstract: Women in Nepal face numerous cultural and social constraints. Lately, a number of women's secondary schools have opened in Nepal and women are attending these schools irrespective of the challenges they face. Using in-depth interviews with 35 married women students who have completed their secondary education or who are still pursuing their secondary education in Utprerana Women Secondary School, the study assesses women's motivation to receive education. Furthermore, it examines various influences and changes in social capital as women started their education. The study finds four salient factors motivating these women: a desire to master functional literacy; grown-up children and availability of unstructured time; their love for learning; and wish to have employment opportunities. Women feel empowered as they start attending education. Further, education is helping to enhance physical, mental, social and financial wellbeing. Respondents note enhanced knowledge and skills on the use of technologies. This study identifies numerous forms of social capital influencing women's access to education; a nuclear family is more advantageous for women continuing secondary education. However, women experience ridicule from their extended family, friends and neighbors. Women are able to expand their social capital after coming to the school refine their bonding social capital by preserving their closest relationships and sacrificing their weaker relationships. Bonding social capital marginally declined as women start to pursue education, though they continuously struggle to maintain it. Additionally, women are able to increase their stock of bridging social capital by establishing relationships with teachers and classmates.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a fundamental human right, but it is not equally accessible across different genders, races, castes and ethnic groups. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women (UNESCO 2011a). Women's access to education has been hindered by several socio-economic factors. Women hold a secondary status in numerous societies and their education is less valued, or perceived as generating lower returns (UNESCO 2011:8). South Asia remains the most gender-unequal region in the world (UNICEF 2005).

Nepal is one of several developing countries located in South Asia. The majority of the population in Nepal is Hindu and the society follows a patriarchal system. It is a patrilineal society and follows patrilocal residence, where a couple at marriage moves in with the groom's family (Stone 2014). Hence, sons in Nepal are given high preference over daughters. Nepal is one of the countries where caste has played an important role in defining social structure and guiding the lives of the people. According to a 2011 census, there are 125 castes and ethnicities residing in Nepal. The Hindu caste system divides people into four different *varnas* on the basis of ritual purity, "the Brahman priests, the Kshatriya kings and warriors, the Vaisya traders and businessmen and the Sudra peasants

and laborers- with an additional group technically ‘outside’ the caste system because of their ritually defiling occupations which rendered them ‘untouchable’ by others” (Bennet et al. 2008). In Nepal, caste and ethnic groups are commonly denoted by the term *jat* and it is common even to treat various ethnic groups as castes (Rothchild 2006). Rothchild defines “ethnicity as one’s cultural/racial affiliation while caste as the system of social classification as defined in the Hindu religion” (2006:31). The caste system in Nepal has acted as a crucial factor for determining the identity, social status and opportunities of the people (Bennet et al. 2008). Nepali society is also divided into classes based on wealth and political influence. Caste plays a major role even to divide people into class based strata. The society gives more importance to caste based identity.

Expansion of formal education started in Nepal after the 1950s (Wood 1958). Nepal’s literacy, which began with a mere 5% in the 1950s, has reached 65.9 percent (Savada 1991). In 2011 male literacy rate was at 75.1% and female literacy rate at 57.4% (CBS 2011). Men, believed to hold the higher status in the Nepalese society, have easier access to the educational system. Women hold a secondary status in the society, and their role has historically been limited to the domestic arena and their access to education limited. Disparity between men and women’s educational attainment has been observed throughout the history of the educational system in Nepal.

Women’s access to education is hindered by several socio-economic factors and is considered unnecessary and not a rewarding investment for the family (Reinhold 1993). A survey conducted during the 1990s showed that by the time girls are 5 or 6 years old, they begin to participate in domestic work (Grover 1991). Literacy rates increased rapidly after the 1951 revolution, and much importance was placed on the

development of education within the country. Although the educational status of the country improved, a huge disparity between men and women's educational status could be observed. During the same era, governmental and non-governmental organizations started several adult literacy programs to improve access to basic education. These programs were essentially attempting to improve literacy among socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Given the new opportunities, large numbers of women started to attend literacy classes.

Women in Nepal are attending non-formal education or adult literacy classes at higher rates which has increased the overall literacy rate for women. However, the retention rate in schools is still low for girls. In the last decade, a number of schools have been opened in several parts of the country where women are provided a second chance to complete their studies (secondary level of education up to grade ten). The schools not only provide opportunities for women to complete their secondary education, but also offer a chance for previously illiterate women to be educated in the latter half of their lives. Women from all age groups, castes, and social status are attending these schools. In a society where women's education is not given much priority, and importance is placed on domestic chores, their decision to go back to school can be challenging. A number of women previously unable to complete their schooling are attending schools in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Nepal's primary and secondary education is based on a ten plus two system where the primary level includes grade one to five; lower secondary consists of grade six to eight; grades nine and ten are considered secondary level; and higher secondary education includes grades eleven and twelve. The secondary education is completed with a national level exam known as School Leaving Certificate

(SLC). SLC, also known as “iron gate” in Nepal is one of the most important examinations for pursuing higher studies. It is also considered as one of the most difficult examinations where students appear exams for 8 subjects. Students appearing for the SLC exams sit for six compulsory subjects: English, Nepali, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Health, Population and Environment. In addition they also appear for exams in two optional subjects. In the year 2014-2015, 47.43% of students successfully completed their SLC exams, which is the highest since 2011.

A significant body of literature is available addressing issues of women returning to higher education in developing nations (Brandenburg 1974; Clayton and Smith 1987; Scott 1992; Mohny and Anderson 1998 and Reay 2003). Some of the works have also offered insights into the issues and aspirations of women attending literacy classes in developing countries like Nepal (Pramod and Enslin 1990; Reinhold 1993; Pant 2000 and Pant 2004). Women’s secondary school is a relatively new phenomenon which started only a decade ago in Kathmandu. Several schools have been created in various parts of the capital and its periphery. Schools are catering to the needs of nontraditional women students, enrolling women from various marital statuses: single, married, divorced, and widowed. The schools also include students from diverse castes, ethnicities, and age groups (between 16 to 65 years). Although there is a significant body of literature addressing women’s motivations to return to higher education and literacy classes, few studies have been done to analyze motivation of women attending secondary school and the emerging social implications.

Various studies illustrate the relationship between social capital and educational development ((Dika and Singh 2002; Teachman, Paasch and Craver 1996; Buchmann

2002). Social capital like family structure, parent-child discussion, number of siblings and parent expectations (Coleman 1988) have strong influences on educational outcomes of children and youth. “Social capital is defined as the resources that actors derive from social structures and use to pursue their interests” (Baker 1990:619). Social capital includes the social networks that individuals have and the benefits they derive from those networks. Various scholars have claimed that women have greater access to bonding social capital (Lowndes 2004; Agarwal 2000; Reay 2004 and Russell 1999). Bonding social capital encompasses the social networks existing between families, friends, neighbors, and other socially close individuals.

Although numerous types of capital have been delineated in the literature, (Flora and Flora 2013), for the purpose of this research I focus primarily on the influences of social capital on educational access and attainment. Women contribute to and maintain a stock of social capital from which she and other family members benefit. This research examines how women’s return to education influences existing social networks. In addition, it addresses the influence of social capital either to support or discourage women’s attendance and return to school.

For this project I analyze the motivational aspects of married women attending a secondary school in Kathmandu, Nepal, given existing social and cultural challenges. In Nepal, women are considered as someone else’s property and their education in several parts of Nepal is not considered a smart investment because married women will live with and work for the benefits of their husband’s family (Reinhold 1993 and Rothchild 2006). Likewise, women also hold a lower status in their husband’s family. Women’s access to education is further limited once they get married. Married women attending

literacy classes face opposition from their in-laws, as they are worried women will learn many things and begin to lead the family (Reinhold 1993). I consider the factors motivating married women to attend secondary education, and examine various types of social capital available to women and the influence on women's access to education. Further, I analyze the changes in social capital as women enter and continue engagement with educational institutions. Thus, I ask: Given the social and cultural limitations impacting women in Nepal, what factors motivate women to return to school to complete their secondary education? What are the types of social capital enabling or limiting women's access to school, and how does a woman's social capital change when she enters into and/or remains in educational institutions?

Several women's schools have opened in Kathmandu. I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews in one school located in the capital city. Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal and consists of a total population of 1,744,240 (CBS 2011), comprising 24.3% of the total urban population in Nepal (CBS 2011). Being the capital city, Kathmandu's population is formed of diverse social backgrounds and consists of a large migrant population. Similarly, the school is located in one of the prime locations in the capital city, allowing access to people from all over the country.

Stratified snowball sampling was used to identify respondents. Women were divided into two different categories. The first category included women who joined the institution who were pursuing their education in the secondary school. The second group included women who had completed their secondary education from the school. This research adds to existing work by addressing various motivating factors for women attending secondary education. Further, it also identifies various social capitals available

to Nepalese women, and the role social capital may play in ensuring or limiting access to education.

In the following chapters, I review literature on social capital, women in non-formal education and women returning to higher education. I begin by discussing existing literature on women and education at the global level, followed by motivation to return to higher education. Additionally, I discuss women and education in Nepal, and motivation to attend literacy classes to offer context to my work. I further discuss various literatures on social capital and its influence on access to education. I include literatures on women and social capital in order to provide a framework for my project. In Chapter III, I turn to a discussion of my research design and methods. In the fourth chapter, I discuss the background of Utpreerana Women Secondary School and the situation of the country when the study was being conducted. The fourth chapter will also cover several motivating factors for women to return to the school. I then look at the influences of social capital on women's access to education in chapter five. Finally, in Chapter VI, I close the study by providing conclusions and suggest areas for future studies.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I begin by discussing the global status of women's education. I further present the gender inequality prevalent in education and reasons for women discontinuing their education and address the motivations of women returning to higher education, as well as women attending adult literacy classes in developing nations. I then address the concept of social capital considering roles of women and the various types of social capital available to them. Social capital has been identified as one of the crucial factors influencing access to education. As such, I address the relationship between education and social capital. Finally, I close the chapter by providing further directions to my studies.

#### **Women and Education: A Cross National Assessment**

The social, political, and economic benefits of education to individuals and societies are well known. In developing countries, every additional year of schooling increases an individual's income by 10% or more (Cohen 2008). Similarly, women's education plays an important role in ensuring a family's wellbeing. Women have higher return on their schooling investment compared to men (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos

2004) and each additional year of a mother's schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5 to 10% (UNESCO 2011A; GCE 2012). The numerous benefits of educating a girl is shown by various statistics and includes improved maternal health, reduced infant mortality and fertility rates, and prevention against HIV and AIDS (UNESCO 2012). The increase in women's education also improves agricultural production as a majority of farmers in the developing world are women. Even though numerous benefits exist to educating girls, two thirds of the 774 million adult illiterates are women (UN 2010). The majority of illiteracy is concentrated in the developing world where the secondary status of women is the major cause of women's illiteracy in many societies.

Inequality in education has a direct impact on the economic growth of a nation. "Female education has a strong and significant positive effect on growth in developing economies, and the effect is weaker or even nonexistent in industrial countries" (Klasen 2002:369). Similarly, inequality in education results in lower average human capital and high population growth rates (Klasen 2002). Likewise, women's education is important in increasing the ability of the developing economies to participate in the development process. Closing the gender gap in education and closing it at a quicker pace are important developmental challenges to policy makers (King and Alderman 2001).

"The overall proportion of adult female literates in 2009 remains below what the rate was for men in 1990" (UNESCO 2012:94). Inequality in education is more prominent among women living in rural areas. "Poor girls living in rural areas are sixteen times less likely to be in school than boys from the wealthiest households living in urban areas" (UNESCO 2011:43). Girls from 47 out of 54 African countries have less than 50%

chance of completing primary level of education (GCE 2012). Similarly, in South Asia, girls' enrollment rates at the secondary level are only two thirds of boys' rates (King and Alderman 2001). Klasen's (2002) panel dataset restricted to within 1970 to 1990, shows that areas with the highest gender inequality in education and in its expansion include Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and North America. South Asia lags far behind and women have only half as many years of education as men. In South Asia more than 40% of girls, aged 15 to 19 from poor households, never complete first grade (Herz and Sperling 2004).

Statistics show that “the extent to which girls are disproportionately excluded from education is higher at the secondary level than in primary education and increases further from the lower to the upper secondary level” (UNESCO 2012:58). Gender inequality in education increases at higher levels of education. Fewer girls than boys get secondary schooling (Cohen 2008). Secondary schooling is more costly and it forces the household to wisely ration their resources. In such instances, “where girls' education is less valued, or perceived as generating lower returns, parents may favor sons over daughters” (UNESCO 2011b:8).

### **Motivations of Women Returning to Higher Education**

In developed nations, studies have been conducted to analyze needs, issues, and motivations of women returning to complete their education (Brandenburg 1974; Reay 2003; Clayton and Smith 1987 and Scott et al. 1992). Brandenburg (1974) states that some of the psychological needs driving women to higher education are self-fulfillment and a desire to find one's identity. Similarly, Reay (2003) finds that women returning to

higher education place more emphasis on completing the degree rather than instrumental goal orientation. Love of learning was one of the prime motivational factors for women attending higher education. Another factor encouraging women to continue higher education is the desire to make a contribution to society. Pascall and Cox (1993) point out various factors influencing women's decisions to return to education, including decreasing demands from children, economic reasons, and mental health. Education is seen as a method to address financial and personal crisis.

Further, Clayton and Smith (1987) go on to identify eight factors influencing women's decisions to continue education in developed nations, including self-improvement, self-actualization, vocational, roles, family, social, altruistic, and knowledge. The authors introduce factors of motivation on the basis of patterns of motivation prevalent in previous studies. Similarly, Scott et al. (1992) propose five factors motivating women to continue education: altruistic self-development, compensatory, vocational/family advancement, role questioning and autonomous self-development. The study showed a strong relationships between motivation and two education variables: previous level of education and secondary school attended. Likewise, demographic variables like age, marital status and change of marital status were also significantly related to motivation. Additionally, the family life cycle stage, as measured by age of the youngest child, was strongly related with motivation of women to continue education (Scott et al. 1998). Further, women's motivation to return to the educational system was related to work satisfaction and career potential of one's previous job. Participants whose previous jobs were not satisfactory had higher levels of motivation. However, Mohny and Anderson (1988) note that women's entry into college

was significantly influenced by the state of relationships and major life events rather than by personal motives

### **Women and Education in Nepal**

Women's education in Nepal is a recent development and follows a similar pattern with South Asia. The educational system in Nepal developed during the mid-twentieth century. During the 1950s, the literacy rate of Nepal was a mere 5%, with male literacy rate at 10% and female literacy rate at 1% (Savada 1991). Literacy rates started to increase rapidly after the 1951 revolution, and much importance was placed on the development of education within the country. According to the 1981 census, the total literacy rate was found to be 24%, where 35% of male and 11.5% of female were literate. By the 2011 census, the overall literacy rate of Nepal had increased to 65.9%, with male literacy rate at 75.1% and female literacy rate at 57.4%. The overall educational status of the country has been improving over the last few decades, but still huge disparities in educational attainment can be observed between various ethnicities, castes, and genders.

Women's education in Nepal has significantly increased in the past few decades, although the pace of growth may differ by region, caste, and ethnic group. Low retention rates are still one of the major challenges for women's education in Nepal. A large proportion of women leave the educational system due to various social and economic problems. Stash and Hannum state that "in many societies, social traditions and financial incentives exert positive pressure on parents to invest in the long-term economic viability of sons over that of their daughters" (2001:355). Similarly, Rothchild, in a study conducted in one of the villages of Nepal, states that "sons married and lived with their

parents whereas daughters went to ‘others’ house,’ meaning they went to live with their husband’s family once their marriages were arranged” (2006:80). The above statement shows that social construct may motivate parents to see investment in their son’s and daughter’s future differently -- whereby investment in boy’s education is considered future security, while a girl’s is an obligation. This social construct also places different educational expectations for girls and boys. Girls as future wives, mothers, and housekeepers are believed to need less education to fulfill gender obligations. However, boys are considered future bread winners and are assumed to require higher levels of education (Rothchild 2006).

A vast difference exists in the socially constructed expectations for girls and boys. Nepali society usually places heavier and earlier obligations on girls, which could have a negative effect on educational achievement in school. On the contrary, “boys had few responsibilities in the existing Nepali gendered order” (Rothchild: 2006:83-89). Likewise, priority is placed on girls excelling in domestic chores with academic achievements as secondary. Stash and Hannum mention that for girls learning to perform domestic activities is viewed by parents as better preparation for their marital roles than pursuing formal education. (2001). Parents place much more emphasis on finding a suitable husband for their daughters rather than their education. Girls have conflicting priorities resulting in fewer opportunities to attend schools and low retention rates when they do (Reinhold 1993). In addition early marriage is another factor, resulting in high dropout rates among girls. According to a UNESCO report “in Nepal, 40% of girls are already married by the time they are 15” (2003:124). Thus, numerous social factors

placing huge importance on women's roles within the household undermine the importance of women's education in Nepalese society.

Similarly, Stash and Hannum state that "although some level of education for girls may enhance their value on the marriage market, too much schooling could result in reduced marital opportunities for them" (2001:356). In Nepal, it is like an implied agreement for marriage in which the men should be as highly educated as women. Hence, when resources are scarce in the family, girls are more likely to not attend school in order to look after their younger siblings and to help with domestic chores. Papanek (1985) notes that where numerous challenges are posed towards children's education, family decisions about schooling is not merely based on available resources, but rather on the benefits of education on children's life and on the household.

### **Women's Motivation to Attend Literacy Classes**

During the 1980s, various governmental and non-governmental organizations in Nepal started adult literacy classes to improve the basic literacy status of the country resulting in the offering of large numbers of literacy classes across the nation. Such classes were mostly targeted towards women. "Being literate refers to achieving a level of competence in reading, writing and doing everyday math" (Kehrberg 1996). Classes not only taught women how to read and write but they gave women moral strength and a legitimate space to retell their untold stories and reassert their subjugated knowledge (Parajuli and Enslin 1990). Adult literacy programs in Nepal seek to impart functional literacy and other life skills to participants. In addition to requirements of reading, writing and math, functional literacy also includes "acquiring a series of competencies in life

enhancing skills: care of the children and family; care of animals and the environment; increased production and use of locally produced nutritious food in the diet; hygiene; sanitation; use of a smokeless stove and income producing skills” (Kehrberg 1996).

Several studies have been conducted to analyze women’s motivation behind attending literacy classes, discovering that a majority of attendees concentrated primarily on learning how to read, write, and feel educated. Pant (2006), in her study of adult literacy classes conducted in a Nepali village, mentions that women place much emphasis on learning to read and write rather than being informed about other aspects of the literacy program such as gender issues or health care information. Similarly, many young women attending literacy classes indicate a desire to learn English like their brothers (Pant 2004). Apart from a desire to learn how to read and write, women also attend classes in search of social space and network opportunities. Reinhold (1993) emphasizes the importance women placed in the companionship and camaraderie they find through literacy classes. Likewise, Pant states that “women participants valued the literacy programme more for their expanding social networks, than for the increased access to knowledge” (2006:485). Women attending literacy classes mention an increase in their level of confidence and self-esteem. Reinhold (1993) suggests that as the participants from the literacy classes learn to sign their names, they no longer face the embarrassment of using a thumbprint. Women feel they gain a new identity by becoming literate and value the additional social space that the class gives them as a group of women from differing backgrounds (Pant 2000).

Pant (2000) identifies young children asleep in the classroom and women’s lack of time for studying at home as some of the major constraints faced by women attending

literacy classes. Women are also taunted with a Nepali proverb “Kukurlai Kaasi?” which literally means “are dogs going to Benares now?” Pramod and Enslin (1990) elaborate that the word Kaasi refers to Benaras which is a place where men from high caste families go to study the Hindu scriptures and women here are analogous with dogs in regards to their low status in the society. Another major problem participants of literacy classes experience is that completion of classes does not easily lead to a specific career path. After completion of literacy classes, students are offered the option to join the third grade in normal school, but participants rarely do so.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital is a concept around which much inquiry has been initiated. Bourdieu defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (1985:248). Coleman further expands the notion and defines it by its function as “a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure” (1990:302). Lee offers differences in the way that Bourdieu and Coleman define social capital. He notes that Bourdieu conceptualizes social capital as a means to maintain socio-economical superiority among the elites, whereas Coleman views it as a source of opportunity. Hence, social capital can be defined as the social connections available to individuals to help to enhance their well-being, while it can also work to maintain disparity within a society.

Putnam offers additional insight into the complexity of social capital considering “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1995:66). He also states that life is easier in communities with a large stock of social capital because there is a high level of communication and cooperation among members of the society. Interactions among community members increase the chances of collaboration, and enhance social trust and norms of reciprocity. Lin focuses on relationships as an aspect of social capital, arguing that the term reflects the “quantity and quality of resources that an actor (be it an individual or group or community) can access or use through its location in a social network” (2000:786). Further, Glaeser explains social capital at the individual level, noting that individual social capital is “the set of social attributes possessed by an individual – including charisma, contacts and linguistic skill – that increase the return to that individual in his dealing with others” (2001:5).

Various scholars have identified sources of social capital (Coleman 1988; Schiff 1992; Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993 and Portes 1998). The first source of social capital inheres in the structure of relationships. For an individual to possess social capital, he/she must be related to others and it is those others who are the actual source of his or her advantage (Portes 1998). Generally guided by the norms that regulate the behavior of other members of the community, Coleman refers to this source as norms and sanctions (1988:S104). The second source of social capital is the norm of reciprocity. Social capital is primarily directed by the accumulation of obligations from others that needs to be reciprocated in due time (Portes 1998). The third source of social capital is bounded solidarity. Bounded solidarity is a mechanism where group identity works as a

motivational force (Portes 1998). The fourth source of social capital is enforceable trust. It is when “someone extends a favor to a fellow member in expectation of both guaranteed repayment and group approval” (Portes 1998:9). Further, Coleman (1988) identifies three forms of social capital: obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms.

Portes distinguishes three basic functions of social capital: as a source of social control, as a source of family support and as a source of benefits through extra familial networks (1998:9). However, social capital may not always have positive effects. Based on current literature, Portes identifies four major consequences of social capital. First, “the same strong ties that bring benefits to members of a group commonly enable it to bar others from access” (Portes 1998:15). Monopolization of certain groups or ethnicities may occur in certain sectors. Secondly, within a close group, under certain circumstances, the other group members may prevent the success of business initiatives. This case arises when less diligent members of the group start acting as free-riders (Portes 1998). Thirdly, “community or group participation necessarily creates demands for conformity” (Portes 1998:16). In such situations, social control is so strong that it starts to affect personal freedom. Lastly, “there are situations in which group solidarity is cemented by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society” (Portes 1998:17).

### **Women and Social Capital**

The share of social capital is unevenly distributed among various social groups (Lin 2001; Moore 1990; McPherson and Smith 1982). Lin states that there is a significant difference in the social networks and associated resources between men and women

(2001:787). One factor resulting in different shares of social capital for men and women is differential acquisition of capital, which is explained in terms of varying access to opportunities and investment. Differential opportunities involve instances when a boy might be encouraged to extend his social ties while girls may be restricted from doing so. Differential investment refers to differences in the level of investment including time, money, and other resources for a boy and a girl. One of the prime examples is disparity in the resources allocated for education for boys versus girls (Lin 2001).

Moore (1990) mentions that women's networks consist primarily of kin and neighbors. On the contrary, men's networks consist of more non-kin and coworkers. The difference in network composition is reduced when the variables of employment, family, and age are controlled. Nonetheless, some degree of difference persists even when women are working full-time. Further, women with a youngest child age three or four have significantly smaller networks compared to women with adult children (Munch et al. 1997). Similarly, Eriksson et al. (2010) point out differential access to structural and cognitive social capital according to level of education and gender. Individuals completing secondary and higher secondary education have more access to structural and cognitive social capital compared to those with basic education. Further, "men were more likely to have access to some forms of structural and cognitive social capital compared to women" (Eriksson et al. 2010: 11).

Several types and sources of social capital exist. Putnam (2000) identifies two major types of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Similarly, Szreter and Woolcock introduce the concept of linking social capital (Erikson et al. 2010:2). Bonding social capital is associated with emotional support and exists within

close social networks such as family, friends, and neighbors. Bridging social capital is associated with building beneficial networks among heterogeneous groups such as races, genders, castes, and class groups. Linking social capital is associated with building networks among people associated and affiliated with various organizations. Individuals have different amounts of each of these social capitals. Various scholars claim that women have greater access to bonding social capital linked with managing domestic activities. (Lowndes 2004; Agarwal 2000; Reay 2004 and Russel 1999). Further, Russell states that “women’s continued responsibility for caring and domestic work tends to restrict the range of social activity they are involved in, but it does provide an opportunity to build up supportive social networks in the community” (1999: 219).

Research asserts that women have more access to bonding types of social capital. Agarwal (2000) reveals that women depend more on informal relationships and traditionally, women have played a central role as homemaker which enables them to form close social networks with their extended family and through their children. Bourdieu also argues that women’s roles are crucial in maintaining the devotion, generosity, and solidarity necessary in the preservation of relationships (Reay 2004). Women’s social capital is strongly based on their informal social connections (Lowndes 2004).

### **Education and Social Capital**

Several studies illustrate the relationship between education and social capital (Dika and Singh 2002; Teachman, Paasch and Craver 1996; Buchmann 2002). A study conducted by Dika and Singh (2002), reveals that social capital is positively linked to

educational achievement, educational attainment, and psychological factors that affect educational development. Studies have adopted Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital to explain differential experiences in schools based on class, gender and race/ethnicity (Dika and Singh 2002:35). Bourdieu emphasizes disparities in social capital based on class, gender, race/ethnicity which further influences educational attainment. Coleman uses social capital to assess the effects of various factors on school achievement among children (Applerouth and Edles 1965), identifying family background as the single most important factor affecting a child's performance. Coleman (1988) analyzes dropout rates and their relationship to various forms of social capital available to the student, including family structure, number of siblings, mother's expectations, and parent-child discussions. Crosnoe (2004) mentions that adolescents with higher amounts of social capital within families also attend schools with higher social capital. Students with more social capital at home are more likely to benefit from social capital at school (Crosnoe 2004).

Coleman further recognizes three dimensions of family background: financial capital, human capital and social capital. Financial capital is measured through family income and it provides the required physical resources to the child. Similarly, human capital is measured by the parent's education, which provides a beneficial cognitive environment to enhance a child's learning process. Finally, social capital of the family is the relationship of the child with its parents and other members of the family. Coleman emphasizes the important role played by social capital in a child's performance.

In her study of school achievement in Kenya, Buchmann (2002) assessed influences of social and cultural capital, analyzing the consequences of shadow education (tutoring

and exam preparation classes) and the capital levels of family members on grade repetition and educational performance. The study finds that boys and children in urban areas were more likely to participate in shadow educational activities. Further, participation in shadow education contributes to lower incidence of grade repetition and higher academic performances. Likewise, a study by Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, using the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, examines the effects of various measures of social capital on the chances of dropping out of school early (1996:773). The study reveals that changing schools was harmful to school age children, and the impact of the number of school changes was assessed within the social capital framework. The authors suggest that changing schools reduced the ability of parents and children to make wise decisions about children's education.

Croninger and Lee (2001), using the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, focused on analyzing the effects that social capital generated within the school has on the likelihood of dropping out. The study concluded that adolescents who trust their teachers and receive guidance from them were more likely to persist through graduation. Further, authors note that students who benefitted the most from increased social capital were those who were most at risk of dropping out. Hence, educational attainment has been linked with social capital generated both in the family and in educational institutions.

Studies reveal that gender disparity is prevalent in South Asia. Numerous informal education programs and adult literacy programs are being organized in developing countries of South Asia to overcome educational inequalities. Similarly, there is ample research done to analyze present conditions and to identify and acknowledge the benefit of women's education in the developing world. Women returning to school is not

a new phenomenon in developed nations; however, women returning to complete primary or secondary levels of education is a recently developed notion in developing countries like Nepal. This study focus on identifying the motivational aspects of women returning to complete primary and secondary education in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Women attending literacy classes expressed their desire to learn English and feel educated as some of the inspiring factors for attending such programs (Pant 2004). However, they expressed their concerns regarding limited career opportunities available upon completion of the course. Similarly, women returning to higher education place importance on completion of their degree rather than on some instrumental goal. The love of learning and desire to contribute to society were some of the major motivational aspects guiding women's decisions to return to higher education (Reay 2003).

For the purpose of this study, I define social capital as the "ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of being a member in social networks or other social structures" (Portes 1998:6). Women have greater access to bonding social capital as creation of this capital is largely based on maintaining informal relationships with family, neighbors, and community and generating emotional capital for the family. Similarly, various scholars have argued that a decrease in social capital has occurred as women enter the workforce (Coleman 1988; Lowndes 2004). Likewise, women attending secondary school spend a significant number of hours outside their house, which might reduce their time spent to build social networks. With respect to the reviewed literatures, my project identifies various factors motivating women to return to school either to complete their secondary education or to start their education at a later point in life. I examine various social

capitals available to women and analyze the changes in social capital when women enter/remain in educational institutions.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

For this project, I adopt a qualitative semi-structured interview methodology for data collection. I conducted interviews with 35 women attending an adult women's secondary school in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu. The city comprises a population migrating from numerous districts across Nepal, reflecting a diverse population. I conducted interviews at Utrprerana Women Secondary School, which is located in the Subidhanagar of Kathmandu district as well as in women's homes. In the past decade, the number of schools operating within the district has increased. This particular school is a purposeful selection as the main motivation to conduct this study is my mother, who has been attending this school for the past three years. Further, the school is also located in Kathmandu district, which consists of a huge number of migrant populations representing diverse regional and socio-economic backgrounds from across Nepal. I drew my study sample using a non-random sampling technique. Respondents included only married women between the ages of 25 and 65, although several girls in their teens and unmarried women attended this school. This research solely focuses on the motivations of married women and the social and cultural factors influencing the choices they make.

Stratified snowball sampling was used and interviews were conducted between June and July of 2015. Nepal was struck by a devastating earthquake of 8.1 on the Richter scale on April 25, 2015 which killed more than 8,000 people and injured more than 21,000. The disaster incited terror among the survivors as the country was continuously shaken by aftershocks measuring above 5 on the Richter scale. Kathmandu is one of the most severely impacted areas from the April 2015 earthquake. As of March 11, 2016, the *Kathmandu Post* (the local newspaper) reported 439 aftershocks measuring above 4 on the Richter scale had jolted the country. The interviews were scheduled to start in May; however the continuous aftershocks delayed the project by several weeks due to significant social and infrastructural disruption. Interviews were conducted when the school resumed due to closure for a month after the earthquake. .

The sample consists of women from two groups: those who were still attending the school and those who completed their secondary education from the school. Interviews were also conducted with several teachers, but for this project I primarily focus on the perspectives of students. The interviews were conducted either in school or in the respondent's home depending on their convenience. Respondents were provided with full details about the research and it was the individual's choice to participate. The length of the interviews was between 15 to 35 minutes. Interviews were conducted before, during breaks, or after school hours to ensure privacy for the respondents and not to hamper the respondent's time-schedule. All the data collected from the respondents were handled with care and high confidentiality was maintained. Participation in the study was voluntary. The interviews were conducted in Nepali language and were transcribed into English.

I read all the transcripts and coded them according to the emerging themes. I used a line by line coding approach to code all the transcripts. Glaser (1978) explains line by line coding as naming each line of your written data. Charmaz (2004) remarks that line by line coding helps us to remain open to the data which in turn enables us to look at it critically and analytically. I coded the transcripts line by line and the codes were divided into two sections: motivations and social capital. The motivation section includes respondents' previous school experiences and reasons for leaving or not going to school before. Further, this section includes challenges and benefits of currently attending the school in addition to the motivational factors. Some of the themes in the motivation section were: reasons for leaving school before; reasons for not receiving any education before; number of years attending the school; women's expectations from the education; and women's perceptions on cost for schooling. The social capital section focuses on various familial and social ties and the role they play on determining women's access to education. Some of the themes that emerged in the social capital section were: family structure and family circumstances; support from the husband; support from children; emerging social networks; and affiliations with voluntary organizations.

Among all the respondents interviewed, 31.4% were pursuing primary, 22.8% were attending lower secondary, 22.8% were continuing secondary, 17.1% were pursuing higher secondary, and 5.7% women were continuing undergraduate levels of education. All the respondents who had completed their secondary level of education and were pursuing higher studies had previously received at least primary level of education. The age range of women interviewed was from 25 to 60 years. A majority of respondents were below the age of 50 and only 14.2% respondents were above 50 years of age.

Among the 35 respondents, 57% were from Brahmin and Chhetri community, 26 % were from ethnic groups which historically migrated from Tibet, 11.4% were from ethnic groups residing near Indian borders and only 3% of respondents belonged to the Newar community, the native ethnic group of Kathmandu. The respondent who belonged to the Newar community had an inter-caste marriage and was disowned by a majority of her family members and relatives. Likewise, only 3% of respondents were from the untouchable caste category. A majority of respondents followed Hinduism, 8.6% identified themselves as Buddhist, 5.7% as Christian, and 3% respondent followed Kirat religion.

Among the 35 women interviewed, 48.5% had previously received some level of education. Seventeen percent of the respondents had received primary level of education, 14.2 % had received lower secondary level of education, and 17% had received secondary level of education. Among respondents who had received some level of education, 76% were from high caste Hindu families (Brahmin and Chhettri). Likewise, among the respondents who had received secondary level of education, only 17% belonged to an ethnic group and five of the respondents were from high caste Hindu families. Fifty-one percent of respondents had never been to school. Only one respondent stated that, although she was enrolled in school, she had never been to school before. The number of years after which women started continuing their education ranges from ten to forty-two years. Among women who had never been to school before, there was an equal representation of women from all caste groups. However, none of the women belonged to the Newar Ethnic group.

The nominal average annual household income across the country is Nepalese Rupees (NPR.) 202,374, resulting in NPR. 16,864.5 Per month (\$1U.S. = Rs.109.64 as of 22 February 2016) (Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11). A majority of respondents were hesitant to talk about their household income. Twenty-three percent of respondents mentioned that they were unaware of the household income because they were aware of only the certain portion of income which was given to them to manage the household expenses. Considering the husband's level of education and profession pursued, a majority of respondents belonged to the middle income group. From their responses, it seems only 11.5% of respondents belonged to a lower income group as their husband had an education below the secondary level and were working as a driver, barber, or working in middle-eastern countries. Only a couple of respondents seemed to belong to a high income groups as they mentioned their household income above NPR. 100,000 monthly.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS I: MOTIVATION FOR ATTENDING SECONDARY SCHOOL

In this section, I start with concise description and background of Utprerana Women Secondary School. In the first part of my analysis I ask: given the social and cultural limitations impacting women in Nepal, what factors motivate women to return to school to complete their secondary education? Here, I delineate the numerous factors encouraging women to attend school and the major challenges they face.

#### **Background: Utprerana Women Secondary School**

Utprerana Women Secondary School is located in Kathmandu and was established in 2003. The principal of the school notes that four other secondary schools targeting women are in operation in Kathmandu. Utprerana Women Secondary School is located in a newly commercialized area. The school occupies the first and second floors in a four story building. Due to 2015 earthquake damage, the building in front of the school and the building next to the school were in the process of demolition at the time of the interviews. Women needed to pass these buildings while going to the school despite the continuously falling rubble. Women generally ran while crossing these buildings to avoid an accident. Students could continuously hear the noise from drilling in their classrooms. Women have a strong desire to learn even under such challenging conditions.

During the interviews, none of the respondents mentioned being bothered by the continuously falling rubble or associated construction noise.

Taking up two floors of the building, the ten rooms (approximately 8ft by 12ft each) in the school include an office and a computer lab. The computer lab consists of two computers, although they seem largely unused. Five to eight wooden benches are set up in each class with ten to twenty women studying there. The school operates two shifts of classes: 6 am to 9:30 am, and 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. In the morning shift, the school operates grade one to grade eight. Four different classes run during the morning shift: grades two and three, grade five, grade six, and grade eight. Grades two and three are placed in the same room and taught simultaneously by the same individual due to scarcity of teachers. In the day shift, the school maintains functioning classes from grade one to grade ten. Seven different classes run for this shift: grades one and two, grade three, grade four, grade five, grade seven, grade eight and grade ten. Grades one and two are operated in the same manner as above mentioned grades two and three. The school can choose to skip certain classes as the government of Nepal has provided a special provision for women's schools where women can complete their secondary education in seven years. Under normal conditions, ten years of education is required before appearing for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC).

During my interviews, 50 women students attended classes during the morning shift and 125 women students attended classes in the day shift. Three hundred students were attending the school before the earthquake. Some students remark that they are scared to come to the school as it is located on the first and second floor and there is no open space near the school. Each classroom has a white board and every morning

teachers refill their markers. Overall, the school lacks resources – and there is always a scarcity of markers.

Aside from earthquake damage, issues with building structure are also a point of concern. Two restrooms are located in the school - both washrooms lacking running water. A huge plastic water container in each washroom is filled daily by the school administration when the municipality supplies running water. During my visit, the plastic container in one of the restrooms was leaking. So, all the women were using only one restroom. I helped them buy a new plastic container. A water jar containing drinking water is located in the hallway of the building. However, the majority of students bring their own water to the school because the water provided by school was inadequate and unsanitary. Only the office and the computer lab are carpeted and no trashcans exist in the classes.

The school charges students a minimum amount. The monthly fees range from NPR. 450 to NPR. 700. The school also charges NPR. 1,000 in annual fees. In addition, the students' pay admission fees at the beginning of the academic year, which range from NPR. 2,000 to NPR. 3,000. Public schools in Nepal provide free education up until tenth grade. Utprerana Women Secondary School provides similar courses as those offered by public schools. Although the school is charging only nominal fees from women students, the cost is high compared to public schools. One of the teachers discusses low retention rates as a major problem faced by the school. She further elaborates that if 300 students enroll in the school at the beginning of the academic year, by the end of the year, only 200 will be coming to the school regularly. Cost of education can be one of the factors

resulting in lower retention rates for women. Table 1 presents annual and monthly fees for students from first to tenth grade.

Table 1: Annual and Monthly Fee in Nepali Currency According to Level of Education

Grade	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth	Tenth
Annual Fee	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2500	2500	2500	3000	3000
Monthly Fee	450	500	500	550	550	600	600	700	700	700

Six permanent teachers are assigned to the school as well as a number of temporary teachers. The school is currently operating with 13 temporary and permanent teachers. The majority of women who attend this school are married. Around 60 to 65 women students have successfully completed the SLC exams from the school since its inception. Among 16 women who appeared for the SLC exams in 2014/15 from the Utprerana Women Secondary School, only four completed successfully. Despite the lack of adequate resources, the school is operated by enthusiastic teachers who are motivated by women students' desire to learn.

### **Motivations**

In this section I address respondents' motivation for attending the secondary school. I begin by analyzing various reasons for respondents leaving or not attending school before enrollment. I further describe various factors motivating respondents to attend school. I then briefly address the challenges faced by women attending secondary school. Finally, I discuss the numerous benefits of attending Utprerana Women Secondary School.

## **‘Educating a girl is like repairing someone else’s wall’: Reasons for leaving or not attending school before**

Early marriage was one of the major causes for both leaving education incomplete and not attending school during childhood. Among women age 25 to 49, 55% were married by age 18 in Nepal (Demographic and Health Survey 2011). The average age at marriage for my respondents is approximately 17 years. The range of age at marriage is 11 to 26 years. Twenty-two percent women married at the age of 15, followed by 20% who married at the age of 16. Women who never attended school had a lower age of marriage averaging 15.7 years. A majority of women in this group married before they were 17. However, women who had at least some level of education had a comparatively higher age at marriage averaging 18.2 years.

A majority of women left the educational system after getting married. Early marriage was one of the reasons why women did not attend school at all. One of the respondents, age 38 and currently studying in grade eight, recollected her reason for leaving school before at a young age:

While I was studying in fifth grade, I married at the age of 16. Even in my fifth grade, I scored highest in three schools. My father and my brother in-law convinced me to get married. After getting married, we shifted to Kathmandu and had kids. After that, most of my time was invested in raising kids and taking care of the family.

The respondent further added, “I was really sad. I told my dad that I will get married only after completing my SLC exams and he told me if you don’t need to call

me father anymore. After that I was unable to argue further. I was really young back then and I could not argue more than that.” A majority of participants mention that they were unable to protest their parent’s decision of getting married. In many parts of Nepal, the elders of the family still decide the marital union and in a few cases the bride and groom may not have any say in that matter. One of the respondents studying in grade seven, who has been married for 23 years, talks about her feelings during her marriage. She states, “I had no idea whom I was getting married to. These days’ children are aware right from a very young age. I had no idea when to give birth to kids or to whom I should get married.” A majority of respondents pointed out that it was nearly impossible for women to continue education once they married. One of the respondents, studying in grade one, expresses similar concerns, “After you get married you cannot even imagine going to school. You do not have time even to talk to your friends and studying is out of the question.”

Some of the other reasons for leaving education and not attending school before were distance to school, financial problems in the family, preferential treatment given to sons, and family obligations like helping with domestic chores or taking care of younger siblings. One of the respondents studying in grade ten, who has three children explains how an increase in the distance to school became the reason for leaving her education.

During those times, people did not focus on educating girls, more emphasis was placed on educating boys. My brother and I used to study together, and after completing his fourth grade he started going to school which was two hours away from our place and this school had up until

grade ten. I stopped going to school then. After I left school, I married at the age of 15.

Distance to school is also one of the reasons as to why women do not attend school at all. A 31- year- old respondent, married at the age of 12 and currently studying in grade eight explains reasons why she was unable to attend school before:

Previously, the school was really far and they were planning to send me to school after I grew up. My younger brother used to study in grade two back then. I had to work at home because my parents were busy working on the farm and I used to take care of my younger brothers. They had decided to send me to school once I grew up. And before I could go to school my grandmother got me married.

This particular experience shows how each of the causes for not sending girls to school are interrelated and each reinforces the other. Distance to school is the major cause for the respondent nonattendance in school, which further leads to getting married at a very young age. Both of the above cases also show that the influence of distance to educational institutions has not changed their brothers' educational opportunities. Preferential treatment given to sons had influence on both women not attending any school or leaving school during childhood. One of the respondents studying in grade two, who has two children, elaborates on the differential treatment between her siblings during childhood:

I have never been to school before. I got married at a very young age, I was just 15. I have three brothers and four sisters. During my elder

brothers' time, there weren't schools around here. My father took them to India for their education. All my brothers hold higher posts in governmental organizations. For us sisters, they thought it was not appropriate to educate girls as they might write letters to boys, socialize with them, and elope.

A similar story was narrated by a woman who had never been to school and now is studying in grade one, "I have three younger brothers, one elder brother and an elder sister. My parents would encourage my brothers to go to school, but for us they would say "educating a girl is like repairing someone else's wall." Investing in women's education is not considered a smart choice when resources are scarce in the family. In a patriarchal society like Nepal more importance is placed on educating boys whereas girls' are discouraged as they would get married and ultimately go to someone else's house. Lower importance placed on girl's education has also been identified as one of the major causes for girls' absence from the school in past literature (Reinhold 1993; Stash and Hannum 2001; UNESCO 2003; Rothchild 2006). Several participants during the interview mention that even they thought that it was normal for women not to receive an education. One of the respondents who is studying in grade seven expresses her perspective on education as a child, "I felt being a girl, and it was natural for me not to attend school."

A few participants state that it is their decision not to attend school or to discontinue education. One of the respondents, who had never been to school before and currently studying in grade one, mentions that it is her choice, "I remember my parents briefly telling me to go to school but I was not interested. I told them instead to buy me a

buffalo and I will look after it. I never realized the importance of studying.” The respondent was married at the age of 11. A few participants also stated that it was their decision to discontinue education and most of these decisions were guided by either failing to get passing grades on some exams or due to lack of women friends attending school. One of the respondents pursuing higher secondary education, elaborates on her decision to stop going to school during her childhood:

When I was studying in fifth grade, I had lots of girl friends in the school. From the sixth grade, we had to walk one and a half hours to the school and none of my girl friends were attending. The majority of students in this school were boys and I was scared to walk to school along with boys. So, I stopped going to school after completing my seventh grade.

This demonstrates the influence of social setting in individual decisions to pursue education. Women are more likely to leave school by being influenced by their peer group. Due to inadequate emphasis on girl’s education, women’s decisions not to attend school or discontinue their education was easily accepted by family members. Girls are largely considered an extra-helping hand in household and childcare activities. A few respondents suggest involvement in domestic chores as one of the prime reasons for not being able to attend education or discontinuing education. One of the respondents, studying in grade seven, discusses how she was trained to do domestic chores, “They sent my brother to school but I was trained to work at home right from a very young age.” Another participant studying in grade ten, who had never been to school before, shares a similar experience during her childhood, “Every day there would be a list of works that I

needed to get done during the day.” One of the major tasks that young girls perform within the household is taking care of younger siblings.

Birth order for girls is crucial for determining the probability of entering educational institutions. One of the participants studying in grade five, recalls her reason for not attending school, “I did not go to school because my younger siblings were attending school and I had to help with domestic chores.” Similarly, one of the respondents, who had previously completed fourth grade and currently studying in grade eight, elaborates on how she had to leave school to take care of her siblings, “I have lots of younger siblings and there was no one in the house to prepare lunch for them. Our family was facing lots of difficulty because my mom was sick most of the times. So, I had to leave school to take care of my younger siblings.” Hence, early marriage, distance to school, preferential treatment given to sons, and burden of domestic activities are some of the major factors that create hindrances in women’s access to education. Similar causes are identified by the past literature on girls’ absence or leaving the school system early (Reinhold 1993; Stash and Hannum 2001; UNESCO 2003; Rothchild 2006).

#### **‘Without education our hearts were dark’: Reasons for pursuit of education**

The respondents list four major motivating factors for pursuing education, including: to obtain functional literacy; having grown-up children and available unstructured time; love for learning; and to obtain employment opportunities. A majority of women state that their major reason for attending school is to obtain functional literacy. Among 40% of women who attend school to gain functional literacy, only 14% had received a primary level education and a majority of them had never been to school

before. Respondents emphasize the importance of education in day-to-day functioning and elaborate that without education they feel “lost” while going outside. One of the participants studying in grade three, emphasizes several functional advantages of being educated:

Wherever you go, you need education to function. If you are travelling you need to know the bus number and you should be able to read the name of your destination. If you are going to the hospital, you should be able to read names of doctors and the room number you are supposed to visit. In banks you need to fill vouchers.

Further, women believe that having some level of education enables them to independently handle their money. Participants comment that it is crucial to be able to print and sign their names properly, “If I am not able to sign my name properly, I will not be able to maintain privacy of my bank account. Someone from the family will always have access to the information of my account.” Women face numerous challenges when they are not able to sign and print their names properly. One of the respondents studying in grade one, recalls how her husband forged her signature, “My husband taught me to sign my name but sometimes he forges my signature and withdraws money from my bank account.” Being able to print and sign names is also important for women while visiting their children’s school. One of the respondents studying in grade three and whose in-laws are unaware about her attendance, reveals how embarrassed she was to use finger prints in her children’s school, “Previously, when I went to my children’s school, I didn’t know even how to write my name so I had to use finger prints. My kids would ask me, “how come you cannot write your own name?” The majority of respondents are also sad

about the fact that they are not able to help their children with their home-assignments. Women consider having no education as a state of ignorance. They metaphorically link illiteracy with darkness. One of the respondents currently studying in grade three, highlights the importance of education, “Without education our hearts were dark. You are not able understand what people are talking about, and it is especially difficult to follow what educated people are talking about. It’s like being deaf. You need to share everything you have but it is just education that is solely yours.” Participants emphasize that having functional literacy has enabled them to function independently. It also helps to increase their confidence to deal with people in day-to-day life.

Around 49% respondents report that their youngest child is 16 years or above, 20% of respondents have children eleven to fifteen years, and 28.57% mention children ten years or younger. Only 5.71% of respondents report having a youngest child below five years of age. The number of children that each respondent has ranged from one to five children per woman. Sixty percent of respondents note that they have two children, followed by 20% of women stating that they have only one child. The average number of children the respondents participating in this study have is approximately two, which is lower than the national average per household (Nepal Demographic Survey 2011).

Around 37% of respondents note that the main reason for coming back to school is having grown-up children and lot of unstructured time. One of the respondents who has three children and is studying in grade eight, expresses her view on going to school, “When kids were small, there used to be lots of work at home, but now it is difficult to spend the day as the workload has decreased. So, it has been really easy to spend the time after coming to school.” Participants state that they have lots of unstructured time during

the day once they send off their children to school. One of the respondents studying in grade eight and who has a nine year old son, elaborates on why she took a few years away from secondary school, “I had to leave school before in grade six due to family problems. My son is small, he studies in fourth grade and after sending him to school, I have free time. So, I came back to study again.” The respondents emphasize that they have been coming to school only after completing all their all domestic responsibilities.

Approximately 31.5% of respondents consider the love for learning as the main reason to pursue education. Respondents indicate that they are very happy to come back to school and enjoy their fellow classmates’ company. A respondent who just completed her SLC exams in 2015, expresses her love for learning, “I was very young when I stopped going to school and there was no one to support me. But I always felt, if someone could help me enroll in a school, I would agree to work for even someone who is from a lower caste.” This shows the respondent’s intensity of desire to learn, as the idea of working for someone who belongs to a lower caste than yours is inconceivable for someone who strictly follows the caste system. Another respondent, who had previously completed seventh grade and is currently pursuing higher secondary level of education, remembers that she had a similar longing to go back to school, “Those who fall asleep thirsty will not be able to speak without water even when they wake up. I was really sad when I stopped going to the school. I was stopped from going to school when I was well aware about the importance of being educated. My thirst for learning was never quenched.” Likewise a respondent who recently sat for the higher secondary exams, reminisces about the factors that motivated her to study, “I was really interested in learning accounts, as my husband is a Chartered Accountant. I wanted to learn about

debit and credit. I found the place to study, so it was actually fun studying here.” A participant, who successfully completed her SLC exams in 2015, expresses her immense love for learning. “Even if you cover me from head to toe with jewels, I will never feel complete. I feel a lot better after completing my secondary education. I might not be able to get a job or do some extra ordinary work, but still I hope to study further.”

Respondents note feeling more satisfied and content once they started their education.

Twenty percent of respondents consider education as crucial to employment. Respondents emphasize the importance of functional literacy to acquire vocational training. One of the respondents, who had never been to school before and currently studying in grade three, recalls the challenges she faced while trying to learn tailoring without education, “I started learning how to stitch clothes. I learned how to cut clothes and stitch it. But I could not take the measurements and without it, I was unable to start my own business.” Respondents further state that without education they are at high risk of being laid off. It also increased their chances of being limited to minion jobs. One of the respondents, who had been employed via her familial connections and studying in grade two, expresses her concern regarding these issues, “It is different being educated and holding a job than being uneducated. Without education you will be given minion jobs. If you are educated you get an opportunity to hold higher posts and without education you need to do whatever task people ask you to do.” This respondent has been employed for the past thirteen years.

Respondents pursue education to increase their confidence and to be able to function in day to day activities independently. They also consider education as a property belonging solely to the individual. Respondents seek their financial

independence through education. A participant who has never been employed and studying in grade ten, expresses her desire to learn and contribute to the family income, “Everyone goes to office and it’s only me at home. If I get educated I would also be able to stand on my feet and I will be able to earn. I do not have to depend on anyone for my expenses.” Hence, four salient factors motivating women to pursue education are a desire to master functional literacy, grown-up children and availability of unstructured time, their love for learning, and wish to have employment opportunities.

**‘When you have weakness inside, you are scared to express your thoughts’: Benefits**

Respondents consider school as a get away from their day-to-day problems. Women feel empowered as they attend education. Further, they add that education is helping to enhance their physical and mental wellbeing. One of the respondents who had never been to school before and studying in grade three, reveals numerous benefits of coming to school, “I feel refreshed and my body is more active coming to school. All my attention is diverted towards learning new things. While in school, I am more concerned about the chapters that I need to learn. I rarely think about my domestic problems during the class hour.” The participant above excellently put forward the mental and physical benefits she experiences since returning to school. Respondents add that pursuing education has also increased access to technologies. One of the respondents, age 29 and studying in grade three, shares how she learned how to use a mobile phone after coming to school, “Previously, when I went outside I could not make a call even though I had a mobile. I was not sure which key to dial to receive the call or how to make a call. I had to ask for someone else’s help but now I can do it all by myself.” The majority of participants are able to use mobile phones after coming to school and they are hopeful

that they will be able to use computers as they increase their knowledge in the English language.

Likewise, respondents also discuss that coming to school has increased their capabilities to deal with financial issues like using banking services or doing basic calculations required on a daily basis. A respondent, who is currently in grade five, indicates how her banking experience has changed after coming to the school, “When I go to the bank I am able to make deposits and withdraw money myself and I am really happy about it. Previously, when I went to the bank, I did not know how to fill the voucher and I was hesitant to ask for help and several times I just returned back.” Similarly, one of the participants who is 56 years old and studying in grade three, elaborates on how coming to school has made her capable of doing basic calculations, “People of my age are using finger prints but me, I am able to write my name in English. I can even do basic mathematic calculations.”

Women feel confident as they acquire these basic skills. Such skills enable them to put forward their ideas in various social realms. The participants express an increased level of confidence to attend parent- teacher meetings without their husbands accompanying them. One of the respondents studying in grade ten, elaborates on this benefit, “I can go to children’s school to get their report cards even without my husband.” Likewise, one of the respondents who appeared for the higher secondary level exams, elaborates on her increased level of self-confidence:

I was scared to talk to the masses because I thought people were more educated and knowledgeable than me and I do not know anything. But

now I can openly go to the masses without any hesitation to participate because even me, I am educated. Before I considered myself weak, but I do not think I am weak anymore. I am confident and my inner strength has increased.

Further, respondents feel that a lack of education pushes women to the periphery of social events and works to suppress their views regarding various social issues as women are hesitant to participate. One of the participants, pursuing her undergraduate degree, addresses the increase in the level of confidence after pursuing education, “Previously, even if I knew something, I preferred to stay at the back, but now even if I do not know anything about it, I am able to stay at the front row and participate. I now have the courage to express my thoughts. When you have weakness inside, you are scared to express your thoughts.”

Women express an increase in their level of inner strength as they start attending the school. A few respondents facing opposition from their family also comment that they are confident enough to make their own choices. One of the respondents studying in grade one, mentions that her husband is unaware of her school attendance, but that she has a strong determination to pursue education, “I can study freely and gone are those days when people would yell at me.” Women are proud about their achievements in education. They further add that education has helped to increase their self-worth. A majority of respondents attending secondary or higher secondary education indicate that they are not hesitant to talk about their level of education. One of the participants studying in grade ten states that she is pleased that she appeared for the SLC exams once, even though she was not able to successfully complete it, “I feel proud of myself. If

people ask how far you have studied, I feel really glad to say that I have appeared for the SLC once.” Women experience enhanced social, physical, mental, and financial wellbeing as they start pursuing education. They also note that it has enhanced their knowledge and skills on the use of technologies.

**‘Children’s brains are free from problems . . . but for us, our brains are thinking about all kinds of things’: Challenges**

Forty-two percent of respondents initially stated that they did not face any challenges while going to school. A number of these participants, during interviews, expressed their concern regarding time management, cost, and learning difficulties for non-traditional students. Time management is one of the major challenges faced by the majority of respondents. One of the respondents, studying in grade ten, recalls how her class schedules initially conflicted with her younger daughter’s time schedule, “At first, I joined for morning classes and my husband would also be out for his job early morning. It was really difficult for my younger daughter to get ready for school all by herself.” Time management for women becomes more difficult when competing social functions exist in households. Some of the major problems the school faces are irregular attendance and low retention rates. One of the participants studying in grade ten, elaborates on problems she faces for time management, “When my mother passed away, I could not come for two months. Sometimes there are guests in the house and sometimes you need to go outside. I am not able to come regularly to school. When there is a problem back home you are not able to come for one to two months.” The respondent was supposed to appear for her SLC exams a year ago, but was unable to do so as she was busy planning her sons’ weddings. Time management has always been a concern for women returning

to education whether it is adult literacy classes (Pant 2000), higher education (Reay 2010) or attending secondary school. Participants are managing their time to study by working late at night or waking up early in the morning. A respondent who has recently taken the higher secondary exams, elaborates on her study time while pursuing secondary education in the school, “My study time was from 10 pm to 3 am. My son was small back then and he would ask me to sleep along with him. But I had assignments to complete and there were lots of difficulties.”

Women constantly face situations where their school and maternal responsibilities are clashing. In addition, women are embarrassed to let people know they are pursuing education. Women related the embarrassment with the stigmas associated with not having an education and continuing education late in life. A majority of participants did not discuss their educational attainment in order to avoid embarrassment. Women generally did not ask each other about their level of education. Two respondents who are now pursuing their higher secondary level of education, confess that although they have been neighbors for years, they were totally unaware about each other’s level of education attainment. In conversation with one of the participants, studying in grade one, she was initially hesitant to mention her husband’s level of education. Later she elaborates why she felt uncomfortable doing so, “People might think even wife of such educated men is uneducated and how they even got married. They fail to realize our problems and acknowledge our struggles like how we have been involved in farm activities, tending animals and raising kids.” The respondents highlight how domestic chores performed by women are less valued and the stigma of being an uneducated member in the family. One of the women, studying in grade ten, expresses similar concerns about being the only

uneducated member in the family, “I need to study as all family members are educated. I felt bad that it was only me in the family who was uneducated.” Being the only uneducated member in the family is also one of the motivating factors for women returning to education. A couple of respondents also share that they have never been out of the house without their husbands accompanying them. A participant studying in grade seven, shares similar experiences, “I was really scared to come to the school. I had never been outside home without my husband. But I gained courage and started attending. I am really scared to talk to people, even now I am not confident enough to talk to teachers.”

Respondents also note initial hesitation to attend this school. In conversation one respondent studying in grade eight, notes “At first when I started attending this school I was really scared and ashamed. I was already so old and had just started coming to school. So that idea was really scary.” The respondent has now been attending school for the last four years. Participants also suggest that they are gradually able to overcome inhibitions within the classroom. However, women are also self-conscious about letting people in their networks know about their continuing education. A woman studying in grade eight, recalls how she is able to overcome the feeling of embarrassment, “I was ashamed to let people know that I was studying again. But the motivation to study further helped me increase my confidence. I realized that I shouldn’t feel ashamed to get an education and gradually that feeling disappeared.” Only 6 percent of women I spoke with mention that they did not feel ashamed of attending school.

A majority of respondents emphasize that it is a lot more comfortable attending a women’s school than attending a normal school, adding that it would be embarrassing to attend school along with school age children. Around 23% state that even their in-laws

are unaware that they are attending school. Respondents attempt to secretly attend school as much as possible. One woman studying in grade five remembers her initial shock to see so many women attending the school, “I never knew so many women were uneducated, but when I came here I saw a lot more women who had started studying at this age. They appeared to be very educated but they had never been to school.”

Women I spoke with agree that they use physical appearance to judge whether people are educated or uneducated. A respondent studying in grade one recollects how she is mistaken to be educated by many people, “While looking at me, no one can guess that I am uneducated, people keep asking me “are you a teacher or a civil servant”? My husband jokingly replies that ‘she used to be a teacher before but she quit teaching a couple of years ago’.” Women state that they let people believe they are going to the office. This provides them an escape from the embarrassment of letting people know about their lack of education and going back to school at a later age. One of the participants, who has been employed for the last 13 years and studying in grade one, says that people believe she has completed her undergraduate degree, “Apart from my immediate family, no one knows about me coming to school. I have been working for more than 10 years and everyone thinks I am going to the office every day. How can I tell anyone? Everyone thinks I work in a big office, so I have at least completed my undergraduate degree.”

A majority of my interviewees are worried that people will know about them continuing their education and will mock them. In conversation with one participant who sat for the higher secondary level exams, she remembers how stressful it is to maintain the secret, “Whenever, you walk on the street around school time, people would ask

“where are you going?” I would lie saying office and they would ask which office? And this question would really bother me. People would come to my house to visit me and then I would hide my books.” The respondent told only her father and husband that she was attending school. A majority of women express concern that people will know about them having no education or limited education. They are hesitant to share the information about returning to school for fear of ridicule. Participants consider the state of being without education as a weakness and they constantly try to hide this weakness from others. In addition, women also mention difficulties they face while trying to learn at the latter phase of their lives. Participants state that studying as a non-traditional student after marriage is more challenging than studying under normal circumstances. A respondent remembers how she was unable to complete her exams due to her health conditions:

My main problem is I am a diabetic. One of the main reasons why I got second division in the SLC exams is not that I am less capable than my friends in understanding lessons. I take a lot of time to understand the question. My friends, they can instantly read the question and start answering it, but I cannot do that. It is not easy for me. I am already 53 years old, even my hands cannot work like theirs.

Respondents agree that studying at the latter phase of their life is more difficult and the learning process is slow and demanding. Women returning to higher education also face similar problems where they feel “rusty and inadequate with respect to studying, taking notes, writing papers, using the library, and devising schedules” (Brandenburg 1974). A 44 year old student, studying in grade one, elaborates on numerous challenges she is facing while trying to learn, “We face numerous domestic problems, so our

teachers might teach some lessons a moment ago but we tend to forget. Children's brains are free from problems, but for us our brains are thinking about all kinds of things."

Women relate their learning difficulties to several health problems they are facing and numerous domestic responsibilities within the household. A respondent pursuing her undergraduate degree, explains how women need to act both like a guardian and student when returning to education:

At home, you need to do all the activities related to child rearing all by yourself. You need to solely deal with your husband's problems, children's problems, and all the problems in the household. For us, we are the guardian and we are the student. We do not have time like the rest of our classmates in the college. While taking our SLC exams, we slept four hours in a day.

The respondent addresses the challenges that non-traditional married women students face while returning to education where their role as a homemaker and a student poses conflicting demands on them. Another challenge women identify during the interview is cost of education. The school charges monthly NPR. 450 to NPR. 700, monthly fees increase along with the increase in the level of education. Further, the school charges NPR. 1000 as an annual fee and NPR. 2000 to NPR. 3000 admission fees. Women have two distinct concerns regarding the cost of education. A few students, state that if the school is able to provide education free of charge, more women will have access to it. In conversation with one of the respondents, studying in grade five, she points out that having a monthly fee reduces the pool of women who may have educational access, "There are lots of women in this school who face numerous

challenges at home. So, for such women it would be better if the school provided free services. Most of the women can afford it but some women even if they desire to come to school they cannot make it due to financial problems.” The majority of women who emphasize lowering school fees and providing free education study in the primary and secondary levels of education.

Another major concern women express is the school’s failure to appoint permanent teachers. The school is a private institution running with limited fees collected from students. A majority of participants noting such concerns are pursuing secondary level of education. A respondent who recently completed her SLC exams, notes similar concerns, “Although the school management committee is working hard, but they are not able to retain teachers. This is a private institution and if the school is not able to give a good salary, teachers leave and go to another school. Teachers keep changing.” Women are particularly concerned about changing teachers during the academic year for subjects like Science, Math and English. A majority of women fail to get passing grades in SLC exams for these subjects. Concerns about obtaining passing grades in these subjects are not just related to women’s school -- schools operated by the government or located in rural areas also face similar challenges. Thus, numerous challenges faced by women while pursuing secondary education are: time management, stigmas related to not being educated and pursuing education latter at life, learning difficulties for non-traditional students, and cost of education.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS II: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

In this section, I focus on the types of social capital enabling or limiting women's access to school and consider how a woman's social capital changes when she enters into and/or remains in educational institutions. I analyze numerous existing types of social capital available to women, including family, friends, involvement in voluntary organizations, and women's networks, all of which encourage or discourage respondent's decisions. Within this context, I also consider if changes have occurred in women's existing networks.

#### **Social Capital**

Various types of social capital influence women's decisions to return to school. Some of the social networks support women's choice to return, whereas others are constantly discouraging them. Changes do occur in women's former social connections and, in turn, women are extending their networks through school interactions. In the following sections, I will elaborate on different types of social capital available to women and their impact on women's decisions to pursue education. Throughout, I relate my findings to those of prior studies.

## **‘I have lied to my extended family that I go to learn stitching every day’: Family Structure**

Family structure plays a crucial role in determining women’s access to education. Living in a nuclear family provides women the opportunity to make their own decisions, where they need to get consent only from their husbands. Around 83% of women report living in a nuclear family, 8.5% women state that they live in an extended family along with their mother and father in-law, 6% women live in an extended family along with their son and daughter in-law, and only 3% woman lived alone. Nuclear family for this study is defined as a family consisting of two biological parents and their children. A little over 14% of interviewees note that though they are living in a nuclear family, some cousins co-reside with their family. Apart from one case, where a woman’s mother lives with her, all other students mention that they have young cousins living with them who are pursuing education in Kathmandu. It is commonplace in Nepal to live with cousins in cities where better educational facilities are available. Nearly, 6% of those interviewed note that they are living in an extended family with a son and daughter in-law. Women uniformly indicate that they are not facing any opposition from their family members. There is an increase in woman’s status as they move up in the hierarchy existing within a family, such as going from a daughter-in-law to a mother-in-law. A mother-in-law holds more power and she acts like a leader in various household activities. Approximately, 9% women state that they are living in a family extended by a father-in-law or a mother-in-law or both. Three percent of the women recall that their in-laws are supportive about their decisions, 3% note that their in-laws are indifferent, and 3% indicate that their mother-in-law is against their decision.

All the respondents have been married for at least 10 years. The number of years within their marital relationship also provides them with some power to make their own decisions. Influence within the family increases along with the increasing number of years into the marital relationship. Three women report being in polygynous relationships. Among them, one is living alone after her husband's death, one woman is living along with her husband's first wife and her children, and one woman is living with her children and the children of her husband's second wife. The order of marriage to a large extent determines the power wives hold in a marital relationship, where the second wife has more power because she is married when the man finds something missing in his first marriage. One of the respondents who is the first wife mentions being neglected by her husband. However, another woman who is the second wife of her husband recalls being highly favored by her husband and he encourages her to attend school. Her husband's first wife even helps her with the domestic chores. Polygyny under existing Nepali laws is restricted and punishable. However 4% of married women and 2% of married men are living in polygynous unions (Demographic and Health Survey 2011).

Living in a nuclear family provides women with autonomy to make their own decisions. It also provides women the opportunity to maintain secrecy from her extended family. One woman studying in grade three, explains why and how she maintains the secret about seeking education from her extended family:

My extended family are not aware about me going to school. We separated (division of household and property) from them years ago. My father-in-law died a couple of years ago and my mother-in-law lives with my brother-in-law. I have lied to my extended family that I go to learn

stitching every day. I do not want them to know about it because if the news spreads in my village, people will start gossiping about it.

The respondent is able to maintain secrecy with her extended family as she is living away from them in a nuclear family. This shows that gaining support from the immediate family is lot easier than trying to convince extended family. Coleman (1988) emphasizes the roles of the family in the educational attainment of children. Several studies over the years analyze the effect of family structure on the educational attainment of children and verify the relationship between educational attainment and family structure (Teachman, Paasch and Craver 1996; Buchmann 2002). Results from my interviews suggest that family structure also plays a vital role even in women's education, where a nuclear structure creates a favorable environment for women's education. A majority of the women live in the capital city in a nuclear family, which reduces the influence of their extended family in their lives. The respondents' extended families may seek conformity to the norms (for women, to take care of the household) of the society. Portes (1998) mentions that one of the negative effects of social capital is that it demands conformity from members of the group. The level of social control is strong and it restricts personal freedoms and this can be one of the reasons for young people's migration. Participants living in a city away from their extended family are able to excuse themselves from existing demands for conformity, potentially opening up opportunities to pursue education.

**‘You are going to fetch a lot studying, maybe you will have your name in the Guinness Book of records’: Support from the Family (Nuclear and Extended)**

Support from family members is crucial for respondents to return back to education. Ninety-one percent of women reported receiving support from their family. Support here refers to respecting and encouraging women’s decisions to return to school, financial support and creating a conducive environment for them to study. Support from family includes a supportive husband or supportive children or both. In cases where women were living in an extended family, it also includes support from their in-laws. Less than 10% of women indicate receiving no support from their family members.

Husbands of most of the women in the study supported their decision about attending school. A majority of respondents state that their husband had attended at least secondary level of education. Husbands of 35% of the women I interviewed had completed postgraduate degrees, 20% completed undergraduate, 9% had completed high school, 20% had finished secondary level of education and only 11% had education below secondary level. A husband’s higher level of education enhanced women’s probabilities of returning to school. Around 57% of respondents’ husbands supported their decision. Support here refers to permission to attend school and offer and payment of financial resources. In a few instances, husbands also showed their support by helping with domestic chores and by providing transportation to and from the school. One woman who successfully completed the SLC exams this year, recalls her husband’s support during school attendance, “Sometimes, I needed to cook early and leave for school, if he had not supported me and said ‘why do you need to take all these troubles’, then I

wouldn't be able to do this. Whenever he had time he would drop me and pick me up from school. Sometimes, when he had time, he would even cook for the family.”

Around 14% of interviewees mention that their husbands are partially supportive about their decision to pursue education. Husbands who are categorized as partially supportive were, to a large extent, indifferent about their wives attending school. A student studying in grade ten, notes that her husband partially supports her decision, “My husband says, as you have already enrolled in the school, complete the SLC exams.” Another of the women states that her husband partially supports her decision to continue education after she successfully completed the SLC exams. However, failing the SLC exams could also result in reduced support from their husbands. One of the respondents, who was not able to complete the SLC exams this year mentions that her husband is against her taking the exams again, “Now that I failed the SLC exams, all the family members are very mad at me. Now even my husband is angry with me and told me not to take the exams again.”

Approximately 23% of women I interviewed indicate that their husbands are against their decision to pursue education and they constantly experience discouraging comments and actions from their husbands. A conversation with a woman, who is currently studying in grade eight, reveals that her husband condemns her decision to continue education, “My husband is against my decision to pursue education. He wants me to stay home and take care of household activities. He does not understand why I want to study at this age.” Students with unsupportive husbands reveal that they are constantly being ridiculed by them. One woman who is studying in grade eight, recalls

how her husband initially backup her decision, “Initially, my husband supported my decision to go to school. But after I learned to read and write basic Nepali, he told me that, since you can read and write basic Nepali, it’s time to leave the school. I have been coming to the school against his will and things have gone sour with him after that.”

Attending functional literacy courses which makes daily work easier, is considered more desirable for women rather than pursuing formal education. In this particular case, we can observe a similar attitude from the husband. Some of the women even mention that their husbands cajole them not to attend school, giving the reason that they were too naïve and could be swayed by anyone. Only one woman revealed that her husband is unaware about her attending the school. The respondent started attending the school only a few weeks ago.

A husband’s support is crucial for women to return to education. A majority of the women I interviewed have supportive husbands and a large number of them have completed at least secondary level of education. Pascall and Cox (1993) also note that support of husbands as a key factor in women’s decisions to return to education. Students whose husbands are against their decision to pursue their education experience constant discouragement and criticism. However, most of these respondents are being supported by their children. In a few cases, when husbands totally reject their wives’ decisions, their sons take a stand.

A majority of the women I spoke with indicate that their children are encouraging them to pursue education. Apart from one case, all respondents with unsupportive husbands receive immense support from their children. One woman who is studying in

grade eight, narrates how she experiences ridicule from her husband and the way her children have become her support system.

My husband is against me attending school. My husband is a different type. My sole reason to come to this school is my son, who admitted me to this school and also convinced his dad. So here I am. Now he [husband] does not say anything about me attending school but previously he would mock me saying “you are going to fetch a lot studying, maybe you will have your name in the Guinness Book of records.” Now that my son totally supports my decision, he never says anything.

Support from children encourages women to pursue their education. A student currently studying in grade five, who is the first wife of her husband shares a similar story. She discusses being criticized and neglected by her husband and recollects her son’s support:

We had a fight after I enrolled in the school. Everyone was really mad at me. They asked me where did I get the money to start studying. My husband’s second wife keeps asking him why he is allowing me to study. Previously, my husband was supportive about it, but now listening to his second wife, he is against my decision. He says, why do you want to study at this age? My son, who is going to the medical school in Bangladesh, told my husband that I am going to school and if anyone has anything to say against it, they should come talk to him. My son is very supportive.

Both the respondents above emphasize the encouragement they are receiving from their sons. Their sons support their decision. Sons hold a higher status within the Nepalese family and their decisions are more likely to be accepted by other members of the family. Children's cooperation and support are crucial for women to return to education.

Apart from the immediate family, in-laws also play an important role in a woman's life in Nepal irrespective of living in a nuclear or an extended family. Around 25% of interviewees mention receiving encouragement from their in-laws to continue education. A participant studying in grade three, who is living in an extended family, explains how her in-laws are promoting her decision, "My in-laws are very supportive about me going to school. My mother-in-law keeps encouraging me to go to school and sometimes she even helps me with the domestic chores." Around 20% respondents state that their in-laws are deceased and most of their extended family are unaware about their return to education. Similarly, approximately 22% of students report that their in-laws are unaware about them attending school. Respondents explain that it is more convenient not to tell their in-laws and extended family about returning to school because letting people know about their decision provides an opportunity for gossip. One woman studying in grade three, explains how she maintains this secret from her extended family, "I do not live with my in-laws and they are unaware about me going to school. Apart from my husband, my extended family is not aware about me going to school."

Students prefer to keep the secret from their in-laws and extended family because they worry about being ridiculed. Around 23% note that their in-laws are against their decision to pursue education. A woman studying in grade eight, indicates her in-laws

reaction to her going back to school, “I do not live with my in-laws. But my in-laws want me to move back to the village with them. They do not want me to study ahead.” Students also recall being mocked by their in-laws upon their failure. One of the respondents, who successfully completed the SLC exams this year, shares a similar experience, “I failed in the preparatory exams but my brother-in-law passed the exams. My mother-in-law mocked me and said you are going to fail again. Now, I passed my SLC exam and my brother-in-law failed and they are unhappy about it.”

Similarly, one participant remarks that her in-laws who previously disapproved of her decision to go back to school, are now mad at her after she was not able to successfully complete the SLC exams. She also mentions asking for help from her in-laws during the exams, “During my SLC exams, I requested my mother-in-law to come and help me out with the domestic work. I asked her a couple of times but she never came.” Around 9 percent of respondents noted that their in-laws are indifferent towards their decision to continue education. One woman states that her in-laws, who were previously against her decision to attend school, are now indifferent about her decision as she successfully completed the SLC exams. Students are more likely to maintain confidentiality about their school attendance to avoid being derided by their in-laws. Hence, support from family members is crucial for women to pursue secondary education. Women are more likely to gain support from their nuclear family. Several women are being criticized by their in-laws for continuing education.

**‘Most of my relatives make fun about the fact that I am attending school so late in my life’: Perspective from Distant Relatives, Friends, and Neighbors**

Forty-six percent of interviewees suggest that they face opposition from their extended family, friends, and neighbors. Among the women who state that they did not face any kind of oppositions, 63% kept their attendance to the school confidential. Students mention that they share information about continuing education only to a few people close to them. One woman who recently completed her secondary level of education shares a similar story, “Only a few of my family members know about me going to school. My sister-in-law is always encouraging me to study. My maternal family also knows about it. Apart from that no one is aware about me going back to school.”

A majority of women with whom I spoke indicate that only their immediate families are aware of their continuing education. All the women interviewed had migrated to Kathmandu. A majority of them remark that they migrated for their children’s education. Living in a capital city, away from their close network, gave women some liberty to pursue their interest. A woman who is currently studying in grade one, elaborates on how it is easier to maintain her confidentiality in the city, “Kathmandu is a really big city, when you are leaving home early in the morning people ask you where you are going. You can answer that, you are going out for shopping, no one actually cares.”

Further, living in city also enhances the importance of education among the respondents. Women comment that everyday functioning in the city is difficult without education. Nonetheless, students facing opposition from extended family, friends, and

neighbors, are ridiculed using a Nepali proverb “*Marne bela ma hariyo kakro*” which means “Why eat green cucumber at the time of dying?” In this proverb, education is analogous to cucumber, which is reserved to only certain groups of the society. In this particular context, education is considered mostly useful for young and men. Pant (2000) discusses the use of this proverb while studying women and literacy classes in Nepal. She elaborate that the cucumber is considered a delicacy in rural areas, but it is very hard to eat when you are old. Living away from the extended family provides women engaging in schooling with some relief. However, women recall being disparaged by their cousins and relatives. One participant, studying in grade three, remembers comments from her extended family, “Most of my relatives make fun about the fact that I am attending school so late in my life. They mock me about my future plans. No matter what people say, I will keep attending school. I have lived without knowledge for the last 40 years and now I have an opportunity to learn and be independent.” Several students reveal that their neighbors are talking about them attending school behind their back. However, women paid much less attention to those comments. Brandenburg (1974), while studying women returning to higher education, finds that women are often challenged by friends who are not returning to school. She further notes that “these friends may see a returning women’s reevaluation of her life style as a threat to their own situation” (1974:13). Similar circumstances are faced by women attending secondary education where they have friends who are constantly demotivating them. Hence, women are being ridiculed by their distance relative, friends, and neighbors for pursuing education.

### **‘A woman needs to properly manage the household first’: Domestic Chores**

Around 46% of women state that they manage all the domestic chores by themselves. Approximately 54% receive help from other family members like sons, daughters, mothers, and in a few instances, from husbands or had helpers to complete the household activities. A respondent studying in grade ten recalls receiving help from all the family members, “All the family members contribute to complete the domestic chores and they have been really helpful. We all take turns to complete household chores.” Most of the women share the belief that they should complete all their domestic obligations before pursuing their interests. One participant, studying in grade ten, explains how women are solely responsible for their time management, “I feel to a larger extent that it depends on the women, whether or not she would be able to continue her education. A woman needs to properly manage the household first. I cannot leave the domestic activities astray and come to the school. I need to complete it on time before coming to school. Our children’s futures are more important than ours.”

There is an implicit uniformity among the majority of women’s responses that the management of the domestic arena is primarily their responsibility. A majority of students note that they limited their children’s involvement in domestic activities as much as possible because they want their children to have ample time to focus on education. The participants place more value on their children’s education than their own. One woman studying in grade ten, explains why she does not allow her children to help her with domestic chores, “If I ask my children to help me with domestic work, it will hamper their studies. I am doing this to learn new things. They have their future ahead

and for them I maintain an environment where they do not have to contribute to household work”.

Respondents make an effort to run their family in the same manner as they did when not attending the school. A woman studying in grade eight, emphasizes how her family continues to function in the same fashion, “My family functions in the same way as it used to function before. It all depends on me and I am energetic because I am studying.” She further adds that the woman must be able to complete all her responsibilities before attending the school. “You need to fulfill all your responsibilities at home. You need to fulfill your duties as a wife, a mother, and as a boss to your housemaid. So, after completing all these responsibilities, if you still have that energy, then you will be able to study.” Reay (2010) argues that mothers express feelings of guilt, as their own learning process takes time and energy away from their maternal responsibility. Likewise, I found that respondents in this study attempt to overcome guilt by fulfilling all their domestic responsibilities themselves before coming to school or working late at night. Further, Pascall and Cox (1993) indicate that education is not associated with a rejection of domesticity. They find that women attending education maintain their responsibilities towards children as a priority.

The majority of the women in the study manage time to go to school and do their home assignments by reducing sleeping hours. Only 20% report having paid assistance to complete domestic chores. Six percent of respondents express their concern that they were not receiving any support from their husbands to complete domestic responsibilities. One woman, whose husband supported her decision to go back to school, continues working towards an undergraduate degree after completing the secondary education from

the school. She discusses how household chores have been considered a responsibility exclusive to women.

Previously, I and my husband both were working. I would wake up early to prepare food and get our son ready for school before leaving for work. My husband would wake up, read the newspaper, drink tea, and go to work. Later in the evening, when we returned, my husband would be tired but I was not allowed to be tired. We have the same body, but women need to do all the domestic work whether or not they are working outside.

Few women emphasize inequality in the division of household labor because they consider it as their duty. They struggle to balance domestic duties and education. Participants are able to maintain this balance utilizing their unstructured time and sleep hours. Interviewees ensure that other members of the household make no or limited compromises to their time schedule. Thus, women prioritized completing their domestic responsibilities before pursuing education.

**‘You need to maintain relationships (*bewarr*) with your close ones’: Previously Existing Social Connections**

A majority of women discuss that they experience less time for social activities. Their school schedule clashes with time to attend outside programs. Most agree that time management is a prime concern. However, many students emphasize the need to attend those programs, even if they have to miss a day at school. A majority of women attend only social activities which come across as an obligation. A woman studying in grade seven, explains the importance of maintaining relationships with the people close to you,

“If it is really necessary to go, then I go. You need to maintain relationships (*bewarr*) with your close ones. After attending those programs the rest of the time I come to school.” Participants are more likely to attend functions at their close relatives’ and friends’ homes. A woman studying in grade three, explains her time management, “If the function is being organized by someone in the family or close to the family, I manage my time to attend such programs. I miss lots of programs organized by my distant relatives.”

A few interviewees indicate that their involvement in social activities is drastically reduced since beginning school. One woman, studying in grade three remarks on her reduced desire to attend social activities, “I do not feel like attending social activities any more. For so many years I have been solely concentrated on social activities related to the family, home, children, relatives and there is nothing you get out of those social activities.” A number of students note that they attend very few or no social functions for a year while appearing for the SLC exams. However, their participation in social functions increased after completing the SLC exams. A woman currently pursuing higher secondary education, recalls how she stopped attending social activities while attending the secondary school, “I stopped going to any social activities when I was studying in grade nine and ten. Now, as I am pursuing higher secondary education, I participate more in social functions, but before when I was in school I never attended any wedding or any other kinds of social functions.” Women mention being criticized by their friends and relatives for not being able to attend all the social activities.

Around 49% of respondents touch on their involvement in a voluntary organization. A majority of women are members of a cooperative group (women saving and credit groups) and a few are involved in political organizations and a beautician association.

About 26% mention that their time to be involved in these organizations has been impacted after they started to attend the school. Women still engage in such groups because the group only meets once monthly. Approximately 6% of participants note that they are encouraged by their group to continue education. A respondent studying in grade eight, recalls one of the factors that motivated her to attend the school, “We have a cooperative and I am a shareholder. I am actively involved in that cooperative and I need an SLC certificate to be fully involved in it. So, I am here to complete my studies.” A majority of women who stopped participating in such organizations suggest that migration from hometown and marriage are some of the prime reasons for not being affiliated with those organizations anymore.

In a few cases, women discuss discontinuing their involvement in a voluntary organization before attending the school. One student, pursuing higher secondary education, recalls how she stopped participating in social activities while attending secondary level of education, “I was a secretary in one of the women’s savings group. I resigned and started going to the school.” However, the woman further adds that she rejoined a voluntary organization after completing the secondary education. Among women with affiliations to a voluntary organization, around 65% had some level of education before attending school. About 51% indicate that they had never been involved in any voluntary organization. Some of the reasons for not being involved in a voluntary organization include: constant travelling with husband, not being allowed to join one, and hesitancy to join. Currently studying in grade eight, a student elaborates on her earlier hesitancy to join a voluntary organization, “Even when people invited me to be members of such organizations I was scared that they might ask me to write, read and I do not

know how to do it. I would run away from such places. That was because I was illiterate. I was in constant fear that people might ask me something I am not aware about and it might be a shameful situation.”

Basic literacy is crucial for women to participate in such organizations. Likewise, in a few cases, participants are not allowed to be involved in any organization while living in their hometown along with their in-laws. One of the respondents studying in grade one, mentions how her access to such organizations was limited when she was living in the village, “When I was living in the village they were organizing adult education but my in-laws did not allow me to go to such classes. They told me, ‘you did not go to a school in your own house then so why do you need to learn here?’ They never allowed me to get involved in any groups.” Approximately 63 percent of women note that they have never been employed. They also state that they have a huge workload within the household, limiting their opportunities to work outside. A student in grade one, elaborates on her workload while she was living in the village, “I used to live in a village with my in-laws. There I worked very hard and helped to complete domestic chores and cultivate land. Our family used to raise livestock and I did most of the work like collecting fodders and feeding them.” Eriksson et al. (2010) illustrate the link between education and involvement in various network activities. In the current study we can see that women with at least basic education are more likely to join a voluntary organization and add to their bridging social capital.

Further, 17% of women mention that they are, or had been, employed at some point of time. Amongst the students who were employed, more than 60% previously received education until grade ten and rest were illiterate. One participant, who was previously

illiterate, has been working for the past thirteen years after receiving the job through referral from one of her family members. Another women received her job through a quota system. A student who is studying in grade one, after working for twelve years, describes the challenges of holding a job without having some level of education. “I got into the job through a government quota system. I worked there for twelve years. So I and five other men from my district got an opportunity to work. Those who were educated got better chances, but those who were not got stuck with the same job.” Around 20% of respondents note having business ventures or conducting piecemeal jobs. Among these more than 55% had previously received some level of education. A majority of women are not employed after the start of their education, but are still managing their time to be involved in voluntary organizations. Similarly, women emphasize maintaining relationships, with close ties. However, some choose to sacrifice the time they previously invested socializing with their distant relatives and friends to attend the school.

### **‘It was our teacher’s love that motivated us all along’: Emerging Social Networks**

The school provides a platform for women to build new social networks. All the respondents indicate that they enjoy spending time with their classmates. One of the women, studying in grade one, explains her time spent at the school, “It is really fun coming to school. You get to meet friends and you don’t realize how the time flies.” The school provides women with some personal space away from their domestic responsibilities. Participants consider the school as an opportunity to temporarily detach from their household problems and being at school as a kind of liberation. A woman who recently completed her secondary education, recalls her experiences being a student at the

secondary school, “I never felt like a poor housewife at school. There is some freedom and peace studying here. You have friends from various age groups and I felt like I was one of them.”

Women also suggest that they are happier after coming to the school. The school administration mentions that the school organizes an annual picnic and the majority of women participate in this program. Many respondents state that they meet their classmates during the school hours and rarely see them outside of school. Even though women enjoy their classmates’ company, they are unable to meet after class due to time constraints. The school administration also notes that they organize extracurricular (like debates, quiz contests) activities on every alternate Friday but women from primary grades are reluctant to attend the programs. Furthermore, the principal adds that the students from higher grades stay back to attend the programs as they better understand their importance. Students’ initial unwillingness to attend such programs can also be attributed to time constraints. Pant (2000), while studying literacy classes in Nepal, finds that women value the new social space that the class provides them for discussion, recreation, and spending time with women from diverse backgrounds.

All the study participants’ recount sharing a warm relationship with their teachers. The women appreciate that the teachers acknowledge the work that women complete at home before coming to the school. One of the students, currently studying in grade ten, elaborates on how teachers treated students at the school, “Teachers’ behavior towards students is really good. They acknowledge the fact that we have come to school

managing our work back home. They constantly appreciate our efforts and motivate us to study further.”

Women appreciate that their teachers treat them with love and respect. A student pursuing her undergraduate degree, elaborates on the importance of love and respect provided by the teachers to complete her secondary education. “If our teachers had yelled at us that would have been too discouraging, because being yelled at here and also at home would have made the situation demotivating. We would never be able to study. We never got yelled at here. It was our teacher’s love that motivated us all along.”

Respondents consider teachers as one of the prime motivations for continuing their education. A participant who recently sat for higher secondary exams, recalls being constantly encouraged by the teachers, “My mind was dull after sixteen years and it was difficult for me to study but still I worked hard and our teachers constantly supported me. Whenever I said, ‘I cannot do it’, they always responded, ‘yes, you can’. Every time when I was tired of trying, our teachers time and again motivated and forced me to keep trying.” Women recall being treated by teachers with love and respect and appreciate teacher acknowledgments. All the graduates completing their secondary education from the school recount friendly relationships with the teachers and remain in regular contact.

The impressions the teachers make is so significant that students worked to form a voluntary organization to keep the students and teachers better connected. A woman pursuing higher secondary education elaborates on her project to create the organization, “This is a collaborative effort of some of the graduates from the school. It was previously a savings group. All the teachers from the school committed to lifetime membership from the organization. They are really supportive. All my friends from the school have

supported our efforts and I am happy about it.” All the participants with voluntary organizational ties also note being involved with this group.

Eriksson et al. find that individuals completing secondary and higher secondary education have more access to structural and cognitive social capital compared to those with basic education. (2010: 11). Such findings are reflected in this study as well.

Women who complete their secondary education are improving their stock of structural social capital which is related to connections and participation in various network activities. Similarly these women are adding to their cognitive social capital which includes trust, reciprocity norms, and sense of security. Support from the teachers and fellow students to form a voluntary organization can be considered an addition to cognitive social capital. The relationship with fellow classmates provides temporary respite for the students. Engagement with teachers offers an opportunity for strong and long-term relationships with helpful and willing mentors.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Women in the study identify four major causes for not attending or leaving the school before attaining a higher level of education: early marriage, distance to education, preferential treatment given to sons, and the burden of domestic chores. Women face numerous challenges while pursuing secondary education. Some major challenges include time management, cost, and learning difficulties for non-traditional students. Women constantly struggle to maintain a balance between household and maternal responsibilities with their role as a student. Additionally, women attending the secondary school face learning difficulties as some of them have never been to school before, while others are returning after decades away from school. Another major challenge faced by women attending secondary education is the stigma of not being educated and the stigma of returning back to school late in life. Women who experience this triple-bind of stigma, are demoralized for lack of educational attainment, limited in their ability to seek and receive education, and in turn ridiculed for making efforts to achieve it. Women make frequent attempts to maintain confidentiality about their attendance to the school and their current level of education. They strive to create an impression of being educated.

Women are motivated to pursue secondary education to master functional literacy, because they have grown-up children and available unstructured time, and also because they have a love for learning and wish to have employment opportunities. Since the respondents live in Kathmandu, they acknowledge the value of education for making their daily functioning easier. They are able to print and sign their names after attending school; do basic reading and writing which enables them to confidently go to hospitals, visit new places or use banking facilities; and increase their access to technologies by being able to use cell phones and computers. Women feel more satisfied and content once they started attending the school. The respondents are motivated to attend the school, as they feel that education is important for employment; that's why they emphasize the importance of functional literacy to acquire vocational training. Furthermore, women who are already employed highlight the significance of education to ensure progress and security in a particular job. Those women who had completed their secondary education from the school noted some instrumental goals and a desire for self-fulfillment as their aspirations for studying ahead. Women are also looking forward to gaining financial independence.

My findings indicate numerous similarities and differences among the motivational factors encouraging women to attend secondary school, compared to the motivational factors for women attending literacy classes or getting higher education. Women attending literacy classes in rural areas concentrated more on learning to read and write (Pant 2000). The women in this study meanwhile, seek to acquire functional literacy. Women pursuing secondary education believe that education helps them to build their identity. Similar views are expressed by women attending literacy classes or

pursuing higher education (Pant 2000; Brandenburg 1974). A desire to find one's identity is one of the common motivational factors for women attending either literacy classes, secondary school, or higher education. Pascall and Cox (1993) identify decreasing demands from children as one of the major factors influencing women's return to higher education. A majority of women in this study also remark that grown-up children and unstructured time are motivating factors to pursue education.

Reay (2010), in her study of women attending higher education, indicates that as much value is placed on completing a degree as on its uses. However, women in this study are hoping to gain financial independence. All the respondents in Reay's study were employed, which might be one of the factors resulting in variation in women's motivation to return to education. In addition, women attending literacy classes in the rural part of Nepal are unable to obtain employment opportunities upon completion of coursework, despite their strong desire. Although, literacy classes enabled women to join grade three in a normal school, this concept ignores women's hesitancy and feeling of shyness to study along with school-age children (Pant 2006). Additionally, a normal school is not capable of accommodating women's needs, including the ability to take care of family members while completing one's studies.

Social capital is crucial in defining women's access to education. This study identifies numerous social capitals influencing women's access to education. A nuclear family is more advantageous for women continuing secondary education. Likewise, support from one's husband is crucial for women to be able to attend school. However, in situations where husbands are against women's decisions, having supportive children helps them to continue their education. The majority of women who share information

about attending school with their families, friends, and neighbors face opposition and constant ridicule. Living away from the village in the capital city provides women with some liberty to pursue their interests and escape from the burden of conformity. However, members from close social networks living in close physical proximity can still impact women's decisions.

Most of the women in the study manage all the domestic chores by themselves. A majority of the women believe that the domestic arena is primarily their responsibility and that they should complete home work properly before pursuing other interests. Finally, most of the respondents agree that they have limited time to attend social activities and attend only those which are an absolute need for them. The respondents mention facing time constraints preventing them from attending social activities. Women have to manage time to attend social events at their close relative's places. However, they appear not to be able to attend such events at their distant relatives place, and they experience criticism for it. Participants emphasize the importance of maintaining relationships with close relatives but are willing to sacrifice time spent with their weak ties or distant relatives in order to pursue education. Respondents involved in voluntary organizations manage their time to ensure continued engagement. Women are able to build new social networks by coming to the school. They treasure their relationships with classmates and teachers. The majority of women value the social space provided by the school. Women consider time spent at the school as a liberation from their domestic activities. Additionally, alumni are forming a voluntary organization to establish a network between graduates and recent students from the school.

Family structure and mother's expectations function as some of the most important social capitals influencing children's education (Coleman 1988). In this study, children, especially sons, act as a source of social capital and enable mothers to go back to school. Furthermore, living in a nuclear family creates a more favorable environment for women to pursue education. At the same time, respondents emphasize that completion of domestic duties before coming to school is central. This finding reinforces Pascall and Cox's (1993) discovery that education does not correlate with denial of domestic responsibilities. Women are able to expand their social capital after coming to the school. As shown by previous research, women in this study also have more access to bonding social capital and they are playing important role in its preservation (Agarwal 2000 and Reay 2004). Women attending the secondary school are refining their bonding social capital in that they are preserving their closest relationships and sacrificing their weaker relationships. The bonding social capital marginally declines as women start to pursue education, though they are continuously struggling to maintain it. This finding supports previous studies where women experience a decrease in bonding social capital as they enter the workforce (Coleman 1988 and Lowndes 2004). Here women are not entering the workforce but pursuing education - thus compromising time spent previously to nurture those relationships. Additionally, they are also able to increase their stock of bridging social capital by establishing relationships with teachers and classmates.

The present study identifies numerous area for future research including social capital, education, and other pertinent issues influencing women in Nepal. Though a question related to the 2015 earthquake was included in the interview schedule, those severely affected by the 2015 earthquake were not available for interview. Women

pursuing secondary education and affected by the disaster and their perspectives on social capital may be of interest for future studies. This study concentrates solely on the married women population, and future studies can focus on the influence of social capital on girls' access to education. A comparative study can be conducted of married and unmarried populations. This study is one of the few studies analyzing the role of social capital on women's access to education in Nepal. The project can support future research analyzing women's education and social capital. Furthermore, very few studies have been conducted analyzing the influence of social capital in various spheres of women's life like health and employment in Nepal. Future studies can analyze the impact of social capital in those areas.

Moreover, several other women's schools are in operation in Kathmandu, and this study only focuses on Utpreerana Women Secondary School. This study should be regarded as a first step for future research, and its findings may be used to compare and contrast experiences of women studying at other schools in Kathmandu or other urban areas of Nepal. Women in this study often note that they are ashamed to tell people that they have never been to school before and discuss how they make attempts to appear educated. How women engage in impression management, as well as further exploration into the triple bind of educational stigma, may also be an area ripe for future research. Among the 35 respondents interviewed, three respondents indicated being in a polygynous relationship, and one of the wives in this type of marital relationship reported being neglected. Future studies can focus on the prevalence of polygynous relationships in Nepal and how this impacts women's status in society. Future studies may also focus

on perceptions of polygynous relationships, as they are considered illegal by the Government of Nepal.

Women's secondary school is able to play a dual role since it provides literacy for those who have never been to school before and gives an opportunity for those who were not able to complete their school earlier. Women's participation in secondary education is refining their bonding social capital while it is helping them to create bridging social capital. Overall, the secondary school is able to empower women through education and by providing opportunities for social networking.

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## APPENDICES

### Pictures: Utprerana Women Secondary School





## Appendix A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Discussion of informed consent narrative and documents

**Let's first start by talking about your experience with schooling. ...**

When did you first attend school?

What was your experience like then?

1. What is the level of education you previously completed?
2. Describe the reason for previously leaving the educational system?
  - How long ago?
  - Who guided your decision about leaving school?
  - What was your reaction?

**Now, let's discuss your experience attending Utprerana Women Secondary School.**

3. When did you start attending this specific school?
4. What do you think is the most interesting factor about attending the school?
5. What do you like most?
6. What do you like least?
7. Why did you decide to attend school (again)?
8. Is your family supportive about you attending school?
  - a. If yes, how are they expressing their support towards your decision?
  - b. If no, how are you managing this situation at home?
9. Is your extended family and friends' circle supportive of your attending school?
10. How are you managing the domestic chores at home?

- Are you doing it alone?
  - Do you have a housemaid?
  - Support from children, husband and in-laws in completing domestic activities?
11. What are some of the major challenges you faced when you decided to attend school?
- Major challenges faced while initially deciding to attend these schools
  - Major challenges faced on a day-to-day basis while in school.
12. What are some of the most important benefits that have occurred since attending school?
- Probes (Initial benefits/benefits in everyday life)
13. Have you experienced less available time for social activities?
14. What opposition did you experience from family? From Friends?
15. Have you ever been employed?
- Probes (Kinds of job/duration...)
16. Do you have affiliation to any voluntary organization (like NGO, temple committee, yoga committee, women's group, cooperative, community development groups)?
- a. Has your involvement been impacted by attending school?
17. Have you been affiliated with any voluntary organizations through your school?

**I would like to ask some questions about you....**

Demographic Variables

- Age:
- Religion:
- Caste:
- Monthly or Annual Family Income:
- Number of children:
- Family Size:

S.N	Relationship	Age	Education	Occupation

Family Chart

Is there anything you would like to add about your school experience that I did not ask you about?

When did you start coming to the school after the earthquake?

Srijana Karki

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science  
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682-701-7598

**Current Address:**

306 S Ramsey Apt. 208  
Stillwater, OK, 74074, USA

**OBJECTIVE**

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- To pursue a PhD in Sociology

**EDUCATION**

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**Oklahoma State University**, Stillwater, OK/*Master in Sociology, May 2016 (expected)*

- GPA : 3.88

**Annamalai University**, India, *Master in Development Studies, May 2013*

- GPA: 8.58 (GPA out of 10)

**Kathmandu University**, Nepal, Bachelor in Development Studies, October 2009

- GPA: 3.62

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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- Presented paper on *Assessing Women's Motivation for Returning to School: A Study Among Women Attending Secondary School in Kathmandu, Nepal* at the 2016 Sociology Research Symposium, Oklahoma State University
- Presented paper on *Social Capital and Women Returning to School: A Study Among Women Attending Secondary School in Kathmandu, Nepal* at the Oklahoma State University Research Symposium, Spring 2016
- Presented paper on *Role of Menstrual Taboos in Determining Gender Roles* at the International Conference on Combating Abuse on Women and Children: Challenges in the Changing Gender Role and Cultural Contexts, Periyar Maniammai University, 2013

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

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**Graduate Teaching Assistant**, *Oklahoma State University*, Stillwater, OK August 2014-present

- Teaching assistant for ANTH 4883 (Comparative Culture)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 4213-1 (Sexuality in American Society)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 3993 (Sociology of Aging)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 3223 (Social Psychology)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 1113-21 (Introduction to Sociology)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 113-701 (Introduction to Sociology)
- Teaching assistant for SOC 4043-001 (Gender and Work)

**Project Assistant**, READ Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal June 2010- June 2011

- Supported Country Director
- Conducted administrative duties for National Community Library Association

**Enumerator**, Alliance for Peace, Kathmandu, Nepal March 2010-May 2010

- Worked as data enumerator
- Contributed to enter data in SPSS

**Monitoring and Evaluation Intern**, READ Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal Aug 2009-Feb 2010

- Contributed to prepare reports for the patrons and baseline survey

**SKILLS**

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**Statistical Program:** STATA, SPSS

**General Software:** Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint