'God will help me'
Of hopes and uncertainties, tactics and futures among Kampalan A-level students

By
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2016
Abstract
This thesis investigates how A-level students (aged 17-26) in and around Kampala, Uganda, manage uncertainties in their present lives and futures. There are large discrepancies between international and national discourses on education, the students’ ambitious hopes and dreams, and the realities they witness. The research’s main source of data are 63 semi-structured interviews with high school students of various socio-economic backgrounds in four different schools. The thesis provides an analysis of the tactical agency the students display while negotiating with discourses, networks and steep competition. The main argument of the thesis is that uncertainty can be a productive force, and tactical agency necessary to navigate an African urban space at present.

Keywords: education, future, African youth, urban, tactics, agency, uncertainty.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Charlotta Widmark, my supervisor, for believing in me and keeping me to my word. Her critical thoughts and encouragement were essential in the researching and writing process. Mats Utas had my back until the very end. Sten Hagberg gave me the opportunity to learn more about academics, Africa and people skills. Sverker Finnström helped me find courage again after life won from anthropology for a while. Eren Zink provided valuable contacts, and Anna Baral commented on drafts.

In Uganda, I was helped and protected in every step of the way by a number of wonderful people. Mrs. and Mr. Kiganda and Sanyu gave me a place to live, food to eat and help with anything and everything. They constantly looked out for me and I owe them large amounts of gratitude for everything they did for and with me. It was the warmest welcome I ever could have dreamed of. Sanyu and Peter also took me out on the weekends, showed me the most beautiful island I have ever seen, and introduced me to all their great friends. Mrs. Mulumba kindly rented an apartment in her house out to me where I got to feel incredibly safe. Professor Khamalwa listened to my ideas, steered them when needed, and showed me the value of my research in subtle ways. Charles took me to his old school, his work, and to the best pizzeria in town.

I also owe gratitude to the research node Den Goda Staden, who provided me with funding for the fieldwork. Without the grant, I could not have made the research proposal a reality. The Anthropology Department at Uppsala University provided travel and health insurance.

My friends and my family encouraged and supported me tremendously throughout the last two and a half years. Thanks in particular to Lars Bädeker, Justine Smithuis and Sofia Sörner for commenting on drafts. Many others could or should be mentioned here, but will be thanked in person.

Lastly, special thanks goes to Henk Verheij, a wonderful human being who passed away this year before his time. He is and will be dearly missed by many, and by me; his encouragement, in life and in academics, which always gave me a little bit of extra confidence even when I did not call for six months, I will never forget.
Figure 1: Map of where the schools are located, in and around Kampala
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<tr>
<td>A-levels</td>
<td>Secondary school class 5 and 6, age 17-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baganda</td>
<td>The people who traditionally live in more or less the Central Region of Uganda, where Kampala is located</td>
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<td>Buganda</td>
<td>The kingdom of the Baganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornerstone LA</td>
<td>Cornerstone Leadership Academy for Girls (there is also one for boys, but in this thesis, the abbreviation is used solely to refer to the one for girls)</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All, a policy advocated for globally by the World Bank</td>
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<td>Gayaza</td>
<td>Gayaza Highschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headgirl/headboy</td>
<td>A term commonly used in Ugandan schools, to mean a class president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabaka</td>
<td>The traditional king of the Baganda people and the Buganda kingdom. Today the kabaka is more of a spiritual leader, as the role is now largely ceremonial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansanga SSS</td>
<td>Kansanga Senior Secondary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makerere College</td>
<td>This is a high school, located next to Makerere University. This is clearly stated in the text, but added here because the term 'college' can have a different meaning to non-local readers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makerere University</td>
<td>The biggest university in Kampala as well as Uganda. One of a handful of universities in the country that are public.</td>
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<td>O-levels</td>
<td>Secondary school class 1-4, age 12-16</td>
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<td>SAT</td>
<td>The American 'Scholarly Aptitude/Assessment Test'</td>
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<td>Senior One, Two, etc.</td>
<td>The name of the classes in O-levels and A-levels. This research took place among students in Senior Six, meaning the last class of A-levels</td>
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<td>UACE</td>
<td>Ugandan Advanced Certificate of Education, the national test at the end of A-levels</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>USE</td>
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<td>WB</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is about high school students in and around Kampala, Uganda. One of those students is Rachael. She is in some ways representative of the group of students this research is about, in other ways she is a little different. She is the kind of student that I expected to encounter in my field; she thinks far ahead, and actively builds up a CV through the use of social media and any other opportunity she can find. Rachael is 17 years old. On the day I met her, in the beginning of March 2014, I had come to her school, Makerere College, for the second day in a row to interview students. I was allowed to sit in an empty classroom and talk to the students one by one, and a lady who worked as an administrator assigned one student after the other to me. Rachael, like the others, came in looking a little shy and unsure about what was expected of her. But while some other students remained shy and soft spoken throughout the interview, it took Rachael only a moment until she started speaking up. Two minutes into the interview, she said this:

First of all I am passionate about media, social media, mass media, you name it. Another thing that I am passionate about is aviation. Not necessarily flying the plane, but I'd like to deal with things to do with flight operations or rather management. So I see myself going in for a course in Flight Operations as well as communications, because my big dream is to become a public relations officer in the aviation field. And that is something that the Ugandan society does not deem possible because they do not really have so many people in the aviation industry, or young people like us who want to be a part of the aviation industry because everyone wants to be a lawyer or a doctor or an engineer, they want to be a specific ehh... what should I call it, they want to have a specific occupations. So, I wouldn't lie to you that I really want a particular thing because I am a person that, should I say I'm ... multitalented, so at times it gets hard for me to decide where exactly I belong, do I belong to the performing arts, do I belong to a field that, lets say diplomatic studies...

Throughout the rest of the interview, she explained passionately how hard she was working to, as she put it, succeed in life. She talked about becoming Miss Mappa last year, a school award for the student who excels in music, drumming, dancing, and acting. She talked about being a public speaker and a member of the debate club. She talked about that the school tried to make her take Economics as a course, but she refused and took Food and Nutrition instead, and now was learning how to bake, which she found a good back-up skill to have in case her academic aspirations in other fields would not work out. She talked about that she wanted to attend the East African Civil Aviation Academy in Soroti, Uganda, (which has only 108 places and costs $9000 a year)^1, to follow a course in flight operations. She talked

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^1 These figures are not something that Rachael told me, I found them listed on the website of the school. East
about how she was a volunteer and a peer-educator in her holiday time, teaching boys and girls about self confidence and sexual health. She talked about flying to Dubai at the age of 16, to attend a conference with the organization she is a peer-educator for. She talked about wanting to be a diplomat, and how she wrote poetry that was okay but more for fun. She talked about being the 'headgirl', which is like a class president, and how much she worries about the girls in her class and how much she hopes that they get good grades. She talked about how she tries to guide other students, especially in building an online presence and building up an extracurricular resume, but she sighed that her efforts were mostly in vain, because some of the other students prefer to spend the little time they are allowed to use one of the computers in school on Facebook to chat with friends and romantic interests.

Most of the extracurricular opportunities that Rachael has had outside of what her school offers her, she has come across through social media. She uses Facebook to network and is actively building on an extracurricular CV, on top of the fourteen hours a day she mandatorily spends on attending class and doing homework.

Rachael's narrative is in accordance with what Ensor (2012: 244) writes on young Africans: 'the youngest generation of the world's youngest continent display enormous creativity in the various roles they play, and demonstrate remarkable determination in their efforts to overcome a turbulent climate of social instability, deprivation, and conflict'. Rachael displays creativity by using the internet and capitalizing on her access to information through it, and is trying to ensure a secure future for herself in this way. However, not all students that were interviewed for this thesis were like Rachael. Many of the other students had high ambitions, just like her, yet they were not building extracurricular CV's or even looking up on the internet how to apply for the university they wished to attend. On the other hand, also Rachael, with all her planned out trajectories, had no idea how she would afford to attend the Aviation Academy, or how the selection process for that school works, and she was not sure what courses they offered exactly.

At the beginning of this research process, I posed research questions that related to identity construction and belonging, mediating between roots and routes, how the students positioned themselves in society, what expectations they had for their futures, and how they were building towards those futures. Throughout the research process, it became clear that the lives of the students consisted of more complex realities than I anticipated.
The students in this thesis are surrounded by uncertainties. As will be elaborated upon below, they are in intense competition with one another, because the access to tertiary education is limited, and jobs are scarce in the Ugandan economy. As a result, they can't make a cohesive, detailed future plan and then stick to it. Nevertheless, they are hopeful, and envision bright, shining, successful futures, partially due to discourses that surround them.

During all of my interviews at the four different schools, the students were adamant on their hopes and dreams and gave descriptions of possible long-term futures, just like Rachael did above. However, when asked how they would solve a foreseen problem in the near future, their answer was: 'God will help me'. There are discrepancies here between discourse and reality, and between the futures they envision and the ways they plan to reach those futures.

Indeed, it became clear that an underlying, or overarching, question was more imminent than those I had initially posed. Finally my material thus led me to pose a new, enveloping as well as simplified, research question: How do high school students in and around Kampala manage uncertainties in their present lives and futures? The most brief answer would be the title of this thesis. The more detailed answer, is what the thesis is about.

In order to answer the research question, the thesis poses three sub questions: How are the schools instrumental in providing students with 'hot knowledge' and how do the students assess their access to information? How much agency do the students experience and in which ways is that agency being limited? In the face of discrepancies between discourse and reality, how do the students manage uncertainties, remain hopeful and persevere? The three questions and initial answers will be elaborated upon below. Through discussing the interviews that were held with the students in light of these subquestions, supplemented by observations, the thesis will answer its overarching research question as well. The thesis will argue overall that it is not possible for the students to employ strategies, but that they manage the uncertainties in their lives and futures by being prepared to employ tactics the moment they get the chance. In the rest of this introduction, the aspects and theoretical concepts and tools that were mentioned here, will be placed in context and elaborated upon.

**Relevance: African urbanity, Uganda, and education discourses**

In his article 'On the Worlding of African Cities', AbdouMaliq Simone writes:

Urban residents [in Africa] appear increasingly uncertain as to how to spatialize an assessment of their life chances - that is, where will they secure livelihood, where can they feel protected and looked after, where
will they acquire critical skills and capacities? When children across most African cities are asked about what they will do with their lives, the answer usually entails a life trajectory carried out far away from the place they consider 'home'. But the 'worlding' taking place is not only something that occurs by default. It is not simply the by-product of the implosion of urban Africa. To a certain extent, this 'worlding' is a process inherent in the very formation of African cities themselves. (Simone 2001: 16)

Simone argues here that increasingly uncertain environments in African cities are leading to a process of 'worlding', where the gaze on the future assumes more and more distant places. Descriptions of the modern condition in African urban environments such as this one, are prevalent in the domains of African Studies and Anthropology. What stands out in the above, is that Simone points to something significant, children and dreams, and argues that African children's dreams are impacted by the logic of the African cities, and not just by a sense of adventure, that many children on a global scale might share.

Studies on African urban life are abundant, and often focus on youth. However, '[t]he limited corpus of reliable research on Africa's youngest citizens has tended to adopt a negative outlook' (Ensor 2012: 1). Taking the category of (East-)African urban youth, most literature reviewed while writing this thesis discusses those youths who make a living for themselves, those whose lives have been impacted by HIV/AIDS or other diseases, or those who have suffered traumas due to violence, war or living in poverty. The future expectations of individuals in such studies are often less than optimistic. Youths in schools however, tend to be much more optimistic in their own outlook, but only a handful of studies have been conducted looking into those urban children who go to school and their dreams, especially in East-Africa.

Ugandan society, just like elsewhere in Africa, is rapidly urbanizing. 'Urban populations of Sub-Saharan Africa have increased by 600 percent in the last 35 years: a growth rate which has no precedent in human history' (Carael & Glynn 2008, as cited in Sommers 2010: 319). On top of that, the differences between rich and poor in African cities are growing, and 'access to education is unequal and often exclusive' (Sommers 2010: 320; see also Ensor 2012: 5). Sommers argues that '[u]nderstanding why youth are in cities and how they strive to survive and hopefully succeed there is essential to engaging successfully with them and providing them with effective support' (2010: 318). 'Yet', he continues, 'documentation on

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2 See among others Ferguson (1999), Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), Geschiere (2013), and Geschiere et al. (eds.) (2008). These are just a few examples, there are many to name.
many vital dimensions of sub-Saharan African youth is thin, and the lack of data on urban youth in Sub-Saharan Africa, and adolescents in particular, is still more serious despite the fact that approximately one in four Africans is between 10 and 19 years old' (ibid.).

In the least to contribute to Sommers' call for documentation, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth look into the lives, hopes and dreams of a small group of Kampalan high school youths. With data from the most prestigious school in the country, one of the cheapest schools in the city, one school that educates the children of intellectual elites, and a foreign-sponsored school that provides free education for rural children with good grades, a picture is formed with many different components that combine into a glimpse of what it is like to be in the last class of high school in or nearby Kampala. Even though competition is intense and increasing, still growing numbers of Ugandan youths stay in school, and thus it becomes urgent to look at their perspectives, dreams, and perception of uncertainties.

Furthermore, this thesis will discuss briefly the discrepancies between global education discourses and the lives of individual youths in Uganda. Supra- and international organizations, as well as bilateral aid agreements, spearhead the importance of Education For All, a term often heard in development discourses. The United Nations Millenium Development Goal number Two out of Eight, is Universal Primary Education. The World Bank has in recent decades re-branded itself as a 'knowledge bank' that promotes education strongly as an important component of development (Molla 2014, as cited in Mayengo et al. 2015: 305). Bilateral aid agreements with 'Western' nations often focus mainly on aid for education and health (Murphy 2005: 138). Uganda is one of the nations who have strongly responded to this call for education, and the numbers of educated youths are rising immensely.

Universal Primary Education was implemented in Uganda in January 1997 (Inter-Regional Inequality Facility 2006: 1). Uganda even adopted a policy of Universal Secondary Education in 2006, as the first Sub-Saharan African country to do so (Chapman et al. 2010: 77). By 2010, Uganda National Household Survey statistics show that in the category 'youth labour force' between the ages of 15 and 24, 7% had no formal education. This category excludes people who are involved in non-economic activities such as household work, as well as those who are still in school. In Kampala, separated out from the national data, only 2% of the youth labour force had had no formal education in 2010, 34% had some or completed primary education, 53% had some or completed secondary education, and 12%
had some or completed post-secondary education, meaning university or tertiary education. Looking at the same data for Kampala for different age-groups, out of youths between 18 and 30, 22% had post-secondary education, and in the age group 25-35, still in 2010, that number rises to 29% (Bbaale 2014: 39, 42-44). In other words, education is a big deal for Ugandan, and even more so Kampalan, youths of today.

However, out of Uganda's overall population of 37 million, 70% is under the age of 25, 48% under the age of 15, as of 2015. Youth unemployment rates in Kampala are estimated at 15%, underemployment rates, both in time and skills, are significant, and the large majority of the workforce works in the informal economy (Bbaale 2014: 57-60). To sum up, Kampala's population is rapidly growing, both with migration and increased numbers of births, and there is a stark increase in education in terms of percentages of the population. But, there is not necessarily an increase in opportunities once the education is completed.

Besides, there are big discrepancies between, mainly, the ideological outlook of the United Nations and the World Bank, where the United Nations wish for education to be free, and the World Bank's wish for it to be cost-shared by parents and communities. This will be further discussed in chapter 3. It serves to illustrate the discrepancies between discourse and reality.

**Theoretical point of departure: Strategies, tactics, 'waithood' and uncertainties**

This thesis will argue that it is not possible for the students to employ strategies, but that they manage the uncertainties in their lives and futures by being prepared to employ tactics the moment they get the chance. This section will introduce the most important concepts that will be used, and how the thesis is positioned in relation to other works that use these concepts.

The most important theoretical tools in the thesis are the concepts of 'hot knowledge' and aspirations, youth agency, tactics and uncertainty.

Michel de Certeau argues in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) that strategies are for people who find themselves in concrete, stable environments, and tactics are what is used by people to move forward with their plans in in-concrete, unstable ones. A strategy is a 'calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships' (ibid.: 35), whereas a tactic is a calculated action that must 'play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power' (ibid.: 37).

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4 CIA World Factbook (n.d.).
5 For 2010, youth as 15-24 years old. 'A person who worked for at least one hour in the reference week is regarded as employed' (Bbaale 2014: 57).
De Certeau writes that tactics are 'an art of the weak' (1984: 37). This part of his analysis often gets lifted out of his work. However, De Certeau's analysis continues to argue that a tactic is weak because it is 'determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power' (ibid.: 38, emphasis in original). His analysis is similar to what James Laidlaw (2010) has argued about a dominant use of the concept of agency in anthropological writing, 'to designate the creative and assertive capacities of individuals, as against the constraints of what are conceived as "larger" structures' (Laidlaw 2010: 143).

De Certeau's strategies and tactics, in combination with a conception of agency, have been applied by scholars to African youth in the past. Utas (2003: 30-31; 2005:75) writes that young ex-combatants in Sierra Leone employ tactics in everyday survival. Bjarnesen (2013: 40, 241) argues that migrant youths in Burkina Faso employ diaspo youth culture to get ahead in their competitive environment, which is a social performance as well as a tactic. Honwana (2005) writes that child soldiers in Angola display tactical agency:

These young soldiers are agents in their own right, but this agency is of a specific type. Drawing from De Certeau's (1984) distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics', I argue that child soldiers display what I call a 'tactical agency', one that is devised to cope with and maximize the concrete, immediate circumstances of the military environment in which they have to operate. They are not in positions of power, they may not be fully conscious of the ultimate goals of their actions, and may not expect any long-term gains or benefits from it - which would, in de Certeau's terms, make their actions 'strategic'. (2005: 32-33)

In the accounts of Honwana, Utas and Bjarnesen, the application of the concept of 'tactical agency' is perhaps more obvious than in the case presented here. The youths they describe are really down on their luck, to say the least. Tactical agency is necessary for these youths to survive, it can be a matter of life and death for them. Strategic agency on the other hand, would allow for long-term plans and a comprehension of how present-day actions logically have consequences down the road. It thus requires an environment that is at least to some extent predictable (Honwana 2005: 50).

It is clear that in a war-zone these kinds of conditions are hard, if not impossible, to come by. In the accounts of Honwana, Utas and Bjarnesen, among others, it tends to be assumed, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly (e.g. Utas 2005: 78), that if these youths would be in school, if they would receive or would have received education, their chances for a

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6 See also Christiansen et al. (eds.) (2006) on this topic.
successful or self-sufficient life would increase. The assumption is that education would provide the means for strategical thinking.

In *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change and Politics in Africa* (2012), Honwana, discussing African youth in general, employs the concept of 'waithood' to describe the situation that many African youths, across the continent, are in; they no longer are children, but they do not have the opportunities available to them to move into social adulthood (Honwana 2012: 4). He argues that 'waithood' for African youths is an aspect of modernity, even a contradiction that modernity brings about, 'in which young people's opportunities and expectations are simultaneously broadened and constrained' (ibid.: 4). Where youths can look over borders on the one hand and see what the world could offer them, on the other hand local conditions can prevent them from reaching those opportunities (see ibid.: 5).

One of Honwana's five main arguments in this book, is that waithood 'is not about geography but essentially about inequality' (Honwana 2012: 6). He writes that

waithood manifests itself differently among a small group of elite youths who are generally able to afford a good education in private schools and abroad and are often well connected to networks of the powerful that facilitate their access to secure jobs. (ibid.: 5)

Because Honwana reasons that educated youth are connected to networks that provide them security, he argues that privileged youth in Africa can be likened to privileged youth in the West (ibid.: 6). It is debatable whether Honwana included all youths who are in private schools in his argument, or only the most privileged, but either way this argument is based on the assumption that (private) education would provide the means to reach strategic forms of agency.

This thesis argues that this assumption cannot be sustained for Kampalan high school youths. The research conducted for this thesis covered four different schools with different class connotations, but all four were private schools. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, 'waithood' is all-pervasive and around the corner for the Ugandan youths who are still in school today, and the ascription of strategic agency to these students is unfounded. Especially chapter 5 will engage with the agency that the students do or do not have.
The students I interviewed are 'tactical' agents much more than 'strategic' ones. This is dictated by uncertainties that surround them. Although they all work hard to stay in and excel at school, there are too many variables in their situations that they cannot control. The competition is too high; a parent or older sibling could pass away suddenly; the university could go on strike again; you could fail the SAT; you could not get the absolute maximum score on the UACE; someone else might have a better network than you. Your father can have a good position at the government, but your father's boss' long lost niece who had migrated away could show up tomorrow and take your place in high school or in university. In no scenario for any of the students I spoke to, however privileged they were compared to others, were all the variables predictable enough to plan a strategy the way students in Western countries can. Therefore, I argue that all my informants are tacticians. They may have excellent 'hot knowledges' (Ball & Vincent 1998), 'aerial views' (Kenway & Hickey-Moody 2011), perseverance (Povinelli 2011) or pathways of hope (Nalkur 2009), all of which will be discussed in this thesis and introduced below, but the uncertainties they are surrounded by require a complex management, and the students adopt tactics to maximize their ability to reach forms of security in the future.

This line of thinking is in agreement with Cooper and Pratten (2015). In *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa* they write that they intend to focus on 'uncertainty as a structure of feeling - the lived experience of a pervasive sense of vulnerability, anxiety, hope and possibility mediated through the material assemblages that underpin, saturate and sustain everyday life' (Cooper & Pratten 2015: 1). What is remarkable about this approach is that they view uncertainty as a productive resource, that spurs people into action and drives them to make some choices over others (ibid.: 3). This opens up a new avenue of reasoning,

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7 Of course, I do not intend to suggest that the informants in this research are comparable to childsoldiers, ex-combatants or migrant youths in slums. Neither is it my intention to argue that they are 'the weak'. My informants were all, regardless of the differences between them, relative to their age-group and the country they live in, well-off. If I claim my students to be 'the weak', then those worse off in socio-economic terms would be inadvertently placed in brackets (See Povinelli 2011: 76-77). My argument here is that these authors have assumed that groups such as the students in this thesis have 'strategic agency', which, as this research will demonstrate, they do not.

8 Scholastic Aptitude/Assessment Test, a standardized national test in the United States which qualifies for entry to a United States college, also if a foreign student takes it.

9 Ugandan Advanced Certificate of Education, the national standardized test taken at the end of A-levels.

10 This is what Honwana argues furthermore. She writes (2012: 6): 'The experiences of youth transitioning to adulthood in the West show that underprivileged and working-class youths in Europe and North-America experience conditions very similar to those of poor and marginalized youths in Africa, in the same way that the condition of privileged young Africans corresponds to that of their Western counterparts'.

11 Cooper and Pratten are not the first or only ones with this approach. I found however that their formulation of the theoretical stance was the most fitting to my material.
where the search for security, the possibilities available to an individual, and the 'tactics' employed are not only analyzed in the present, but are inextricably linked to the future. This thesis deals extensively with the future, and the plans and hopes for it, which is why the main question posed (How do the students manage uncertainties) is formulated this way, in line with Cooper and Pratten's argumentation. Uncertainty in this thesis is viewed in line with how Cooper and Pratten view it, as a propelling force.

The concept of uncertainty also links together the three ethnographic chapters in this thesis. In chapter 4, the focus is on hot knowledge (Ball & Vincent 1998: 378), which is derived from 'the grapevine' and passed around in social networks, rather than official sources of knowledge. Cooper and Pratten write that 'while certainty and security are sought by investment in social relations, so those proximate, intimate social relations provide no guarantee and may produce further uncertainties' (ibid.: 4). Furthermore, 'differentiated access to knowledge makes possible different types of causative analysis of what is behind uncertainty' (ibid.: 5). Kenway and Hickey-Moody's (2011) argumentation on differentiated access to knowledge among rural youth in Australia will be drawn from in the chapter to highlight the students' ability to connect to knowledges available to them. The authors discuss how aspirations are informed by a student's social position, and systematic inequality influences differences in the tactics (or strategies) students adopt in their everyday lives (Kenway & Hickey-Moody 2011: 152). Together with 'hot knowledge', this demonstrates how access to information is a large factor in uncertainty. In the chapter, the students' experiences when it comes to quality of education and access to information are explored to accommodate the importance of networks for managing uncertainties. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate how the schools attempt to facilitate access to information and provide 'hot knowledge', and that some students possess 'hot knowledge' that they gained outside of school.

In chapter 5, the focus shifts to student ideas on family expectations, what courses you take in school or should take in school, gender, leadership, religion, ethnicity, and extracurricular activities, which all are parts of the identities the students have and are forming and thus define them as actors with a certain amount of agency. Conceptions of (African) youth and agency are explored extensively, because youth and agency as concepts have a complex, almost paradoxical relationship, which greatly influences possibilities for

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12 See also Geschiere (2013).
managing uncertainties and being tactical (or strategic). The main argument in the chapter is that although agency has been ascribed to them by previous authors, the students are currently not experiencing much agency; rather, they place their agency in the future.

In chapter 6 then, the future expectations of the students are highlighted. The students' plans and hopes and dreams for travel, love, activism, jobs and higher education point to dreams of security. The argument of this chapter is assisted by concepts of hopefulness and perseverance, but ultimately hinges on tactical agency. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that students manage uncertainties through negotiating between hopeful discourses that surround them, and the reality they witness in daily life as not always hopeful, by getting ready to employ tactics when the right moment arises.

**Overview of chapters**

Chapter 2 will focus on methodology. I will discuss the choice of methods, the use of interviews, focus groups and participant observation, and the advantages and limitations of this methodology. The chapter also contains an introduction to the field. In chapter 3, I will provide more context and background to the education system, by discussing a history of education in Uganda and several aspects of education today, such as international discourses and investments, the influence of Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education, the advantages of private or public schools, and persisting inequalities.

After the necessary backgrounds have been discussed, it becomes possible to dive into the material, structured into three ethnographic chapters that are interwoven with theory. Chapter 4 is structured around the schools that I visited. There, I will discuss the ways that each school attempts to provide 'hot knowledge', the importance of networks inside the school and outside of it, and how cultural capital can provide a heightened understanding of how to navigate the school system and networks more generally.

In Chapter 5, the agency of the students themselves and the expectations put upon them by others are the central focus. The expectations of their families are crucial in their outlooks on life, as well as their views on topics such as religion, ethnicity, gender, leadership and extracurricular activities. These will all be discussed, and followed by a discussion of youth and agency as concepts. It will be argued that agency cannot always be ascribed to an individual just because they have more privilege; especially when the individual is young.

Chapter 6 will focus on the students' futures. It will discuss hopes of stable, secure jobs, dreams of love and families, and wishes to travel abroad, short or long term. Furthermore the
students expressed often wishes to influence their environments in more or less activist ways. The chapter will also discuss concepts of hopefulness and perseverance. At this point, it becomes possible to tie access to information and choice, youth and agency, activism and hopefulness, all together, which will lead me to a final discussion on tactics and uncertainties.

The conclusion will bring all chapters together in a final overview. In sum, the thesis analyzes how students manage the uncertainties in their present lives and futures, by employing tactics and maintaining uncertainty as a productive, propelling force.
Chapter 2: Methodology

Kampala, Uganda. In this city of 4 million, the people are mixed up in space and place, young and old, rich and poor, side by side. A large shopping mall with marble floors next to a slum full of tiny houses with tin roofs. There are so many motorbikes, cars, and pedestrians, it is amazing they are not in an endless gridlock with one another. There are so many children. In school uniforms and with short hair, many look like little sailors with shiny black shoes, stepping through the red dust sidewalks and smaller streets. The city is filled with banter and laughter, hardly audible over the sounds of traffic and street preachers. The air smells like half-burnt gasoline and trash and steaming bananas and potatoes, and like red dust, a typical smell that is hard to describe or even remember. The sun beats down on everything, and goats roam free between all of this bustle and eat anything they can find.

I was in Kampala between January and April of 2014 for approximately ten weeks. In that time, I visited four different schools. The different schools are in different locations in and around the city, as can be seen in Figure 1. It is not possible to say that they were located in a neighborhood that was dominated by a certain social class, as in Kampala everybody lives and works side by side. Two of the schools were outside of town, in a calm rural area, the two others were in the middle of the city, but surrounded by a wall. In these four schools, I interviewed 63 students, attended several student and teacher meetings, study groups, prayer groups and assemblies, and hung out in schoolyards and teacher's lounges.

In the previous chapter, I have introduced my research questions, summarized as: ‘How do high school students in and around Kampala manage uncertainties in their present lives and futures?’ In order to answer this question, student interviews were conducted with 63 students. These form the bulk of the data. All the individual students had different constellations of uncertainties to manage, but because a large group were interviewed, similarities can be discussed and patterns can be distilled. The interviews were supplemented with various forms of participant observation, to enhance an understanding of the field sites and daily lives of the informants. In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the research was conducted, how I entered the field, and the limitations of this research.

Interviews
The students' lives were for the most part dominated by going to school, and they were busy people. Focusing on a small group and researching among them therefore did not seem like
the best option, as it would have put a strain on their school work. Talking to a student once however seemed like an excellent option, it helped not only the research but also the students, to take out a block of time to think about their lives and futures, before going back to studying. This is why this research for the most part is based on semi-structured interviews, rather than putting a lot of focus on participant observation or observant participation. Bernard advises that when you only get the opportunity to interview a person once, semi-structured interviews are considered the logical choice (2011: 157-8). Semi-structured interviewing proved an excellent choice in this case; it provided me with a 'dataset' of questions that all of the students answered, as well as a number of topics that the students brought up themselves (See ibid.: 154, 157-8). My interview guide has been reproduced in Addendum 1. Participant observation was used to complement the interview data and provide background information on the surroundings of the students, their day to day lives, and their ways of interacting with one another and their teachers.

Forsey (2010) points to the value of interviews in ethnography: 'consider the importance of listening to the ethnographic project and (..) open up the possibility of placing engaged listening on a similar footing to participant observation in our conceptualization of ethnographic practices. (...) [T]he aim is to (...) look again at what we say we do and consider this up against what we actually do' (2010: 560). Forsey argues that it is too often that anthropology is automatically equated with and limited to participant observation (ibid.: 559). But in a way, listening is just as important as observing: isn't the goal of anthropology the human experience, something that takes place in the mind and in communication, even more than in action?13

Some interviews happened exactly in the order of my interview guide. Most however flowed differently, for example when I asked which university the student wished to go to and they would respond: 'Kyambogo, because my boyfriend goes there too'. Learning my interview guide by heart quickly, gave the interviews a more relaxed atmosphere, where I had the freedom to go into any side information that was given and then slowly work back to the interview guide through a series of little probing questions in between. In some interviews, I hardly asked questions at all; me telling the student in the beginning that I wanted to hear about their life, their plans for the future and their hopes and dreams was enough for some to start a half-an-hour monologue. After we had discussed all the topics on the list, I would ask

13 See ibid.: 561, 566; Bernard (2011: 158).
every student if they wanted to bring up another topic that was important to them. Some talked about having a small business of their own or spending a lot of time on a hobby like a music club or dance troupe. Others emphasized how stressed they were about one or more aspects of their life, or how devoted they were in their religious beliefs. Then I asked if they had any questions for me. I told them they could ask me anything, and I would be honest and try my best to respond fully. The questions they asked provided further relevant information to the research. Some asked me about snow, my experience in Uganda or homework tips, others asked me about my personal life or returned the questions I had asked them, like what I wanted to be when I grew up or if I was married or wanted to marry. Some asked me what I thought about the World Bank, homosexuality, Al Jazeera, racism, religion or neocolonialism. Sometimes these topics spurred long conversations.

In sum, it can be said my methods were largely based on grounded theory. The amount of data gathered was immense, and the topics are widely varying. In a grounded theory approach, 'the aim is to discover theories - causal explanations - grounded in empirical data, about how things work' (Bernard 2011: 435). In other words, it is doing research and then extracting theory from it, rather than the other way around. In this research, this approach has resulted in many invaluable insights into the lives of the students. However, it also led to large amounts of qualitative data. Throughout the writing process, patterns have been distilled from the data, and those patterns are represented in the thesis. Not all avenues of research that arose could be followed, as will be discussed under Limitations.

**Participant observation**

Secondly, participant observation was chosen as a complementary method for a number of reasons. Participant observation leads to deeper understanding of daily lives and contexts, and is a good way to cross-check the answers people give to questions in interviews (Bernard 2011: 264-7). In this research, it provided a broader and deeper understanding of the students' lives. Kansanga Senior Secondary School, the first school that I visited, where I gathered about half of all my data, was a ten minute walk from the apartment that I had rented. Any day I did not travel to another school, I walked down the hill to hang around in the school yard for a while. The students had a lot of free hours between classes, wherein some sat in the schoolyard or in classrooms at desks doing their homework, and others took a break to hang around or play soccer or basketball. The students of that school also told me during interviews that they had started study groups together for the subjects they had trouble with,
and they asked me if I could attend the study groups. I also sat in during a few classes in
history and physics. Especially the history class and the history study group provided me with
a lot of additional information on the exact nature of their education. In addition, in that
school I built up a good rapport with many teachers, the headteacher and the headteacher's
secretary, the cleaning staff and the grounds keeper. This allowed me to go around in the
school on my own, and simply hang around and chat with everyone.

In the three other schools I visited, Gayaza Highschool, Makerere College and
Cornerstone Leadership Academy for Girls, my visits were more guided. Because they were
at least an hour drive away from where I stayed, I had to be creative to find means of
transport to those schools, and I was not able to go there for extended periods of time. I also
had to make appointments for specific days, rather than walk in and out in a more casual
manner. Once I arrived at these schools, I was in some instances more or less 'handed over' to
a teacher, who would sometimes appoint the first student that walked by, to show me around.
In Gayaza and Makerere College I visited several full days, and I took one two-day trip up to
Cornerstone, which is a few hours away from town, and stayed the night in a guesthouse that
is by the school, intended for old students who wish to come visit. These circumstances led to
less dropping by and hanging around, but opened different doors; in Makerere College and in
Cornerstone I attended teachers meetings that were held during lunch in the teachers lounge,
and in Cornerstone and Gayaza I attended general assemblies for students. These events
provided valuable background insights. I also got tours around the premises in all three
schools, allowing me to see the areas where the boarding students live, the activity and sports
areas, homework classrooms and areas, and the aforementioned teachers lounges. I was thus
able to gain a more complete picture of daily routines the students had.

In Gayaza Highschool, there was a mix-up that turned out extremely well. I had had an
initial meeting with the headteacher and she had agreed to let me do research in the school,
and decided that it was best that I would come the following Saturday to first briefly
introduce myself and my research to the whole Senior Six class, and then throughout the day
interview individual students. When I arrived that particular Saturday, it was the 'headgirl'
(class president) who was waiting for me, and she took me to the classroom where all sixty
Senior Six girls were waiting for me, and asked me to begin my lecture. When I asked what I
was supposed to lecture about, the class told me that every Saturday morning a successful
female adult came to speak to them on how to become successful or acquire a particular job.
Since I did not consider myself as a twenty-two year old student particularly 'adult' or 'successful', I asked if it was okay if I instead gave a brief introduction and then opened the floor for questions. This in a way turned into a sixty persons big focus group, where students asked questions to me, I asked questions back, and they had discussions with one another and with me, for over an hour. This provided me with valuable data and more in-depth understanding.

**Multi-sited ethnography and sampling**

To say that the field in this research consisted of 'high schools in Kampala' would of course be a simplification. There has been much debate in anthropology about what a field is or should be. Coleman and Collins (2006), in the introduction to the book *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, discuss this debate, and its central concept 'multi-sited ethnography', at length. Multi-sited ethnography as a concept was first used by Marcus (1995), who argued that '[t]he distinction between lifeworlds of subjects and the system does not hold' (Marcus 1995, as cited in Coleman & Collins 2006: 7), and by acknowledging that subjects are not bounded in a location, Coleman and Collins write that the ethnographer can 'accept[] the contingency of the ethnographic object but retain[] emphasis on the need to explore everyday consciousness of informants, including their 'system awareness' and knowledge of other sites and agents' (Coleman & Collins 2006: 7). In other words, if the informants are not bounded to one place, nor unaware of other places, it is the ethnographer's task to include that aspect of the informants' lives in the research. Especially in an urban setting, it would be futile to insist on one site of fieldwork (Bank 2006: 45, 48, 50). Hannerz also argues that 'social anthropology, conceptually, is primarily about social relationships, and only derivatively, and not necessarily, about places' (2006: 29). This research, although conducted in four specific sites, takes into account the social relationships of the informants, and acknowledges that the students have an awareness of, and are heavily connected to, other sites.

Because I did not define a single field site, I thought a lot about sampling. I was confident that I could use a non-probability sample because 'non-probability samples are always appropriate for labor-intensive, in-depth studies of a few cases' (Bernard 2011: 143). I used quota sampling, 'stratified sampling without random selection' (ibid.: 144) within the schools, but to find the four schools I did research at in the proverbial forest of Kampalan schools, I used three main contacts: my host, my neighbor and an anthropology professor. This is
known as referral or network sampling (ibid.: 147-148). My host, my neighbor and the professor guided me to the schools where they had personal connections, and accompanied me to meetings with headteachers. Since these three people did not personally know each other and came from three very different backgrounds, I felt confident that the sample of schools I took was not too biased. In the schools, teachers assigned students to interviews. The only request I made, was in the mixed-gender schools, to interview equal amounts of female and male students.

**Entering the Field**

Before arriving in Kampala, I came into contact with Mrs. Kiganda through family friends with Ugandan origins who live in the United Kingdom. Mrs. Kiganda is a lady in her seventies, who lives with her husband and daughter in a big house on a hill in Kampala. Mr. and Mrs. Kiganda own a business together, and their daughter Sanyu is an architect who started her own successful firm a few years ago. Throughout my stay, they formed my most valuable contacts, and helped me out with almost everything.

Mrs. Kiganda first took me to Kansanga Senior Secondary School, which is owned by a close family friend. Kansanga SSS is located at a ten minute walk from the apartment I had rented, and that school grew to be my main source of data. I conducted thirty interviews there,\(^{14}\) which was over half of their Senior Six class, and attended classes and the study groups of the students. I also, as described above, spent much time there in participant observation. I established good contact with the headmaster, and made sure I always went to see him in his office to show respect and keep him updated, so that he trusted me to walk in and out whenever I had the time. The school is one of the cheapest secondary schools in all of Kampala, and places students from lower to middle income families, as well as some migrants from outside of Uganda.

The second school Mrs. Kiganda took me to was Gayaza High School, a boarding school for girls, in the outskirts of Kampala. Mrs. Kiganda had attended this high school herself. It is the school that was started for the daughters of the royal family of the Buganda kingdom. Gayaza is one of the oldest schools in the country and considered the best school for girls. I interviewed nine students there. All of them spoke softly, wrote neatly and carried a handkerchief. Admittance to Gayaza is a tricky game, based on factors such as if you know a teacher there, how high up in the government your father works and if your mother went

\(^{14}\) Sixteen boys and fourteen girls.
there, and then in the last place you also have to have excellent grades. The fees are also high, on top of that.

Another person who was a great help to my research, was the professor at the Makerere Anthropology Department, Prof. Khamalwa, that I came in contact with via dr. Eren Zink, who was the Director of Studies for my masters program in Uppsala in the Fall of 2013. Professor Khamalwa met with me on a number of occasions, introduced me to people and consistently asked to receive updates about my progress. He advised me to go to Makerere College as the third school, and did not introduce me there personally, but allowed me to use his name as a reference. Makerere College is a mixed day and boarding school for both genders, located in the city centre of Kampala. Kampala is said, like many other cities the world over, to have seven hills, and Makerere Hill is the one with the country's main university on it. The hill is partially surrounded by a big wall, and there are official entrances to it, where security guards check your purse and ask why you have come to visit. Just inside the wall, at the bottom of the hill, is Makerere College. It houses students from middle to higher incomes, and although some of the places are given to children of government officials or university teachers, other students are admitted on only good grades. The fees are lower than at Gayaza, and the school has a reputation as a very decent and good quality school. I interviewed sixteen students here.15

My neighbor Charles, a social climbing business owner in his thirties, also became interested in my research after I had been his neighbor for a few weeks and told me about his own former high school, Cornerstone Leadership Academy, and offered to introduce me there. Cornerstone Leadership Academy became the fourth and last school I visited. Cornerstone is a large American Christian aid organization, that comprises other programs and schools around Kampala as well as a Leadership Academy for girls and one for boys. I visited the boarding school for girls, located about two hours out of Kampala by car, where I interviewed eight girls. The one for boys is about four hours out of town by car. They are very small schools, each school takes twenty-five to twenty-eight students each year into Senior Five, and thus consist of fifty to fifty-six students in total over Senior Five and Senior Six. The application process is competitive. One of the students told me that every year those twenty-five to twenty-eight students get selected out of about five hundred applicants, but once you are in, the school pays for your time there, including fees and all the boarding costs.

15 Eight boys and eight girls.
What is different about Cornerstone, is that they pick a student from each of the different districts of Uganda, based on grades for final O-level exams, as well as interviews. This means that they try to get the top student from each rural district together in one school. It is a school that creates a culture of social climbing, because they accept students who could not have afforded this quality of education by themselves. They also have a very active graduates-network, and speak of the school as 'one big family'. It seems this creates opportunities to circumvent the fact that their real family ties may not be very influential in the top layers of Ugandan society. By having ties to the other graduates and teachers from this school, the students and former students have many opportunities they may otherwise not have had. When Charles took me to the Head office of Cornerstone in Kampala, I saw a glimpse of the graduates-network in action; many people knew his name and asked questions about how his business was going, and it appeared that he and the people at the office had stayed in contact throughout the years.

As has become clear, these four schools have very different backgrounds and climates. The difference in fees is immense, from Cornerstone which is free for the students, to Gayaza where tuition is so high that a parent must be considerably wealthy to afford sending their child there. The difference in environment is also considerable. Kansanga SSS is a day school on the corner of a busy road, surrounded by little shops and vendors and loud traffic. Makerere College is by the university, so that when you leave the compound of the school you see only university students walking on the quiet lanes of Makerere Hill. Gayaza Highschool and Cornerstone Leadership Academy are both at the end of a road, in a rural location, and the compounds of both schools were serene and quiet places. Gayaza Highschool is the only one of the four schools that had a tennis court and a swimming pool on the premises.

Limitations
The main limitation to my study is that I did not acquire data on the exact socio-economic background of each student. I chose not to do that because it would have been considered inappropriate by the informants and their social environments, especially since the research was conducted in a short amount of time, so not much rapport could be built. It would have furthermore been necessary to talk to the parents, rather than the students, to gain reliable data on their financial situations. Since this research is focused on the students' perception of uncertainty and the world around them, it would also not have mattered much. Although due
to the different costs involved in attending the different schools, socio-economic backgrounds can to an extent be put into large categories, which will be done in this thesis, it must be noted that the exact levels of available funding for each student's ability to attend school or stay in school have not been assessed. More general data on family background were gathered instead, as can be seen in the Interview Guide in Addendum 1.

Another aspect I did not consider was the presence of health problems and access to healthcare, and, in the case of girl students, the inability to come to school or stay in school due to menstruation or pregnancy. During literature review conducted before and after fieldwork, the high prevalence rate of such factors in similar contexts became clear.  

Related, I also did not go into the topic of exact numbers of, or the payment process for, tuition fees. This is also because the value of money fluctuates in Uganda, and again, it would have been inappropriate to ask. It is noted here because the ability to pay tuition fees (in time) affects a student's performance in school. In many cases, students who have as of yet not been able to pay school fees, were sent home from school until they could pay. Zelezny-Green (2014) describes interviews with school girls in Nairobi, Kenya who state that being sent home because of the lack of school fees often leads to absences of one week (2014: 67). Afterwards, as well as after illness, it may be difficult to catch up (ibid.: 68). During participant observation in Kansanga SSS, I noticed that the school yard and the classrooms were much emptier from one day to the next. When I asked my informants where their classmates had gone, they replied that they were sent home 'to fetch the school fees'. Although 'to fetch' might sound like it would not take too long, the school would be significantly emptier for several days afterwards while the students gradually returned. This happened two times in one month.

**Ethics and doing research with minors**

Another important point to mention here is the fact that approximately half of my interviews were conducted with minors. Most students turn eighteen during the Senior Six school year, thus a number were still seventeen at the time when I spoke with them. One student I interviewed was fifteen and one was sixteen. I considered trying to get approval from parents for this, but the 'permission slip' system that I myself am familiar with is decidedly

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16 See e.g. Zelezny-Green (2014), Nimulola (2014) on girls, pregnancy and menstruation in relation to school attendance in Kenya and Uganda respectively, see e.g. Råssjö and Darj (2002), Löfgren et al. (2009), Harms et al. (2010), Beyeza-Kashesya et al. (2011) on various aspects of HIV prevalence and prevention in Uganda.
uncommon in Uganda, and many of the students were in boarding school, and their parents were in other cities, towns, even countries. A number of my informants that were not in boarding did not live with their parents either, some were orphans, and others lived with extended family members or older siblings. This is why I decided to get permission from their teachers instead. I gave the headmasters all a printed out letter containing the purposes and methods of my research, clarified to all the other involved teachers what my research was, and specifically mentioned that I intended to record their students' voices on tape and asked if that was okay. To the students themselves I explained that my recording device taped their voices but that nobody would hear it, it was just for me to listen to later. I also did not take pictures on school grounds or of anything related to the students and the schools, except for on one occasion in Kansanga SSS, when the students performed in a show and they explicitly asked me to film and take pictures.

Furthermore, when I started research in Kansanga SSS, where I knew I would be spending much time, I decided to let all my informants pick a name for themselves. I asked them for a nickname they had or would like to have, instead of for their real first names. Some told me their last names, but I never wrote them down anywhere. I spent enough time with the students to know both their real first names and their nicknames, but I only recorded the nicknames in my notes, and throughout this thesis, I will use those nicknames. I wished to protect their identities, both in my research and vis-a-vis their teachers.

However, in the other three schools, I spent only a few days in each school. Because I realized that the line between me and the teachers in the three schools was much longer, in those three schools I asked students for their first names. In hindsight, it would have been better to stick to one system, but at the time, this way of doing it seemed logical and legitimate. Some names are fictitious. Although I am aware that some identifiable details will still be mentioned, I will refrain from mentioning names when discussing anything that the students told me in confidence.

The researcher

Another important factor in any ethnographic research project are the background, ethnicity, age, and gender of the researcher. This project is no exception to that rule. Young and Barett (2001) conducted a research project among street children in Kampala, and I found similarities between their limitations and my own. Firstly, they point out that 'according to Howard (1995) unequal power relations can develop based on the personal characteristics of
the researcher. Race, gender, age, language use and class are cited as particularly influential' (Young & Barett 2001: 385). I, as a young, foreign female traveling alone, experienced limitations already in moving around in Kampala. There are parts of the city that I could not visit, either because the travel guide, or my important contacts, advised against me doing so. There were also schools that I hoped to visit, but could not, largely because of my gender and age. People felt it inappropriate for me as a young woman to, for example, stay overnight at a boys boarding school. In other instances, my ethnicity helped to open doors.

Young and Barett secondly point out how a potential problem lies in 'the(ir) previous constructions of foreigners in the city as 'rich tourists' (…) The children viewed the researcher as a 'visitor' and interspersed pleas for money or 'being taken to America to school' into conversations' (ibid.: 386). I was similarly viewed as a visitor, but more so as an NGO-worker. I deliberately chose to first introduce my research to the whole class in each school, and in the beginning of every interview I mentioned my age, that I was a student, and that I came to Uganda on a kind of scholarship (a research grant). Nevertheless in two instances students tried to plea with me directly for money in an interview, and in a few other instances students asked me if I had a contact for them in America. However, when I explained again that I did not come from the US and that I was a student in university and did not have a job, this usually changed their attitude towards me. All these instances took place in Kansanga SSS. Over time, as I spent more time in that school, and more importantly, students and others saw me walk around in the neighborhood every day, they came to trust my claimed position more and more. Young and Barett note a similar pattern when they state that when the researcher got acquainted with the children, the initial problems of gaining their trust diminished (ibid.: 389). Escobar (1991: 678) argues that what an anthropologist, especially in a development context, should strive for is '[a] type of practice (…) that is not threatened by otherness and difference, (…) but that, always aware of the power dynamics at play, searches for a more self-aware communication among different, yet equal, subjects'. I have taken Escobar's advice to heart, both in the field and throughout the writing process afterwards, but as being a white researcher in Africa is contested, I felt this highly important to mention here, because it obviously influences the research to a large extent.17

Also important to mention is the limitation of language. I conducted research in English without a translator. English is an official national language in Uganda, and the official

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17 For a further discussion on the relevance of race in African contexts, see Pierre (2013).
language in education, i.e. all schools and curricula, and all national tests, are in English. It must be noted however that for many students it is their second language. To use the official school language was fitting in a school setting, but arguably other answers would have been given if the research would have been conducted in Luganda and the other mother tongues the individual students had.\textsuperscript{18}

In this chapter, the methodology for the research has been discussed. The data that has been gathered consists mainly of semi-structured interviews, supplemented by participant observation, as this was the most accessible and appropriate way to gather the data necessary to answer the research question. Multi-sited ethnography and stratified as well as referral sampling were further instruments to gather the range of data that was required. Entering the field was facilitated by three individuals, who have been mentioned, and an initial discussion of some characteristics of each school was interwoven. In-depth descriptions of each school will be discussed in chapter 4, building on the information that was already given here. The section on limitations specified that this research does not discuss the topics of money and health. How I ensured the confidentiality and protected the identities of the informants was discussed, and my own influence on the field as a researcher was only touched upon. Much more could be said about that last topic, but there is a limitation of space in any thesis, so I hope this will suffice. In the next chapter, a look into the history of education in Uganda and previous and current inequalities in the system will be discussed. This will serve as a background to better understand the environment of the students.

\textsuperscript{18} This will be further discussed in chapter 4. Furthermore, national discourse on education and youth is also presented in English, as will be touched upon in chapter 3, and demonstrated in chapter 6.
Chapter 3: A History and Overview of the Education System in Uganda

In order to deepen the understanding of the context(s) of the informants this chapter will discuss a history of education in Uganda, from the beginning of colonial times up to the education system as it is today. The second half of the chapter will build on the introduction and demonstrate some of the conditions for education today, including inequalities and how decision making power as well as knowledges are spread out over different actors, agencies, ministries and organizations.

The aim of this chapter is to situate the students not only in a present day context but also in a point in history, because an awareness of this history complicates and deepens the understanding of debates today. It will become clear that two of the four schools I visited are around a century old, and the other two are much younger, both started in the last two decades. This greatly affects their prestige, for example. Other things that will be contextualized are denominational differences in Ugandan society, which affect students' lives, the Ugandan history of the difference between public and private schools, and the large scale brain drain that has been happening for decades, which affects not only the quality of education and the strength of the economy today, but also contextualizes the wish almost every single informant expressed to leave Uganda, either for studies or for professional purposes later in life. Lastly, it will be shown how many actors are actively trying to improve the situation in education for the country, with various levels of success.

A History of education in Uganda

Although before colonization there were of course forms of education in the area, formalized education in Uganda developed out of colonialism. In 1844, 1877 and 1879 respectively, Arab muslim traders, British Protestant missionaries and French Catholic missionaries arrived at the court of the Kabaka, the king of the Buganda Kingdom, which was located roughly in the central region of Uganda today (Ssekamwa 2000: 25-29). All three groups settled near the Kabaka's palace and started teaching their knowledges but foremost their respective religious beliefs, to the people, and converted many. By 1887, a war broke out between the Muslims and Christians, both with their Baganda followers (ibid.: 34-35). When the Muslims were defeated in 1888, the Catholics and Protestants turned against each other,

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19 Professor Ssekamwa of Makerere University Education Department, has written an extensive history of education in the country, History and Development of Education in Uganda (2000). This section is to a large extent based on this book, because it is an extensive and reliable resource.
which was ended when the Imperial British East African Company arrived and fired canons at both sides (ibid.: 35-36). The reason this is relevant to the history of education, is that 'the religious and political enmity was included in the Western education type of schools which were established from the very beginning to the time Uganda gained her independence on 9th October 1962' (ibid.: 36). In 1894 Britain 'officially took on Uganda as her protectorate' (ibid.: 37), and tried to calm the situation down, but 'the hatred which had been created during the mid 1880s and early 1890s continued to be observed in the way schools were being established and pupils were being taught' (ibid.).

Official schools started to be built by the missionaries, and all three religious groups created their own school systems, including supervisory organs and certification methods (ibid.: 44). From 1900, the first boarding schools were built for the children of chiefs. Gayaza High school, one of the schools included in this research, was built in 1905 for the daughters of chiefs and important Protestant families (ibid.: 46). Makerere College, also in this research, was built in 1922 by the Protectorate Government. It was intended to be turned into a university later, and meant for higher class pupils to enroll in after completing secondary school. Chiefs had started sending their sons abroad to be educated and the Protectorate Government 'feared that on return the sons of chiefs would not respect the British officials in Uganda' (ibid.: 49). The colonial government also gradually gave more financial aid to all the different missionary schools, until in 1925 they declared that they would start fully participating in the education sector (ibid.: 50, 52). They laid down a general structure of education of six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school and three years of senior secondary school, followed by Makerere College. If a student graduated from Makerere College, they were qualified to teach in the junior secondary school, become the headteacher of a primary school, or become a clerk or interpreter for departments of government (ibid.: 54, 41). On the countryside, little schools were built where children could attend the first two years or the first four years of primary school (ibid.: 54).

In 1925 as well, the first private schools arose. Although all schools up to this point were technically private schools, what is meant by the term here is that these new schools were started by African teachers who stepped outside of the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim curriculums. The missionaries were greatly opposed to this idea, and 'the schools got no financial assistance from the colonial government, professional supervision or advice until

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20 This is why it is still today called a 'College', even though it is a high school, which can be confusing for non-locals.
1953' (ibid.: 97). Throughout the rest of the century, private schools remained institutions where students of all denominations were welcome (ibid.: 176).

In 1940, the government decided that the standard curriculum should be based on Christian principles and ethics, further standardizing education in line with the British situation (ibid.: 125). From 1940 to 1962, the colonial administration started preparations for educating Ugandans to take positions of leadership. The expectation was however that independence was still years away, and they had a lot of time to accomplish this goal (ibid.: 160-1, 167). After independence in 1962, a great shortage of Ugandans trained and qualified for leadership, as well as qualified teachers at the higher levels of education, led the Ugandan government to employ large numbers of foreign teachers, mostly from Western countries, and to take big loans with the World Bank to expand the education system on all levels (ibid.: 173, 182-3). In 1963 and 1964, the government passed a number of Acts to ensure all students free enrollment in a school, regardless of denomination, as well as a new curriculum that included discourses on 'African identity' (ibid.: 176, 174).\(^{21}\) As will be shown in chapter 6, national discourses on education have nationalist and hopeful undertones to this day, containing the belief that the youth are the 'pillars of tomorrow' and that they will help build the nation. I suspect that these ideas stem from this time in the 1960's.

The government's hope was that the first batch of graduates from secondary schools and university would be 'job creators' rather than 'job seekers'. This did not happen as planned however; the economy developed slowly and the graduates were competing for the available jobs.\(^{22}\) In addition, the foreign teachers were given relatively high salaries and the best houses and facilities. This led to dissatisfaction in Ugandan educated groups (ibid.: 184-6). From the 1970s, foreign investment declined rapidly and inflation spiked, which meant that government and teaching salaries became too small to live off of (ibid.: 188). The reason foreign parties withdrew aid was Idi Amin's military regime, which ruled Uganda between 1971 and 1979 (ibid.: 190-191). In 1978-9 and again in 1985-6, civil wars raged in the country and guerilla soldiers used schools as camps to stay in, burning books and tables for a fire at night. Civilians looted libraries and government offices in an attempt to sell books and documents on the market so they could buy necessities (ibid.: 192).

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\(^{21}\) In 1964, the government also expanded primary education from six to seven years, and divided secondary education into four years of O-levels (Ordinary) and two years of A-levels (Advanced) (Ssekamwa 2000: 169-170).

\(^{22}\) See Musila and Belassi (2004) for a further discussion on this topic.
While the government had invested much money in educating people between 1962 and 1970, those graduates subsequently started leaving the country in the 1970s because of unrest and increased chances elsewhere. In neighboring Kenya for example, a qualified teacher could earn much more than at home. The Amin regime brought in teachers from countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan and Libya at first, but in 1972 Idi Amin suddenly expelled all Asian nationals from the country, including the Asian teachers. Although Makerere University and Kyambogo National Teachers College stepped up their intakes, nearly half of the graduates from both schools each year left the country upon graduation, as well as other highly qualified people such as doctors, lawyers and engineers. 'This brain drain is still going on today not so much for insecurity, but for seeking greener pastures outside the country' (ibid.: 193). Further on in this thesis, in chapter 5 and 6, the wishes to leave by the students, and by their parents, will be discussed from the students' perspectives.

In 1986, President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power, and he and his party are still in office until the present time of writing. In 1987, a revision commission for education was set up and proposed a new education structure in 1989, but that structure was never implemented (ibid.: 193-94). The main difference that the commission proposed was to create vocational secondary schools to go alongside the comprehensive schools, where students could learn an array of technical and practical skills and professions (ibid.). In the current system, a student can join a vocational school after completing O-levels or A-levels, but many students do not make it that far in the educational system. Today some voices still argue for the need for vocational secondary schools, and private and NGO initiatives do create such institutions, but those opportunities are not available for many teenagers, as the scale of such schools both in numbers and in locations is limited. During my research in 2014, I came across a few students who felt that education in general was too theoretical and more emphasis should be put on practical skills.

The 1990s and 2000s

Today, supra- and international institutions as well as bilateral donor countries continue to provide a large part of the funding for Ugandan education. In a policy article for the World Bank, Murphy (2005) writes that the World Bank provides general budget support in Uganda for education, health and water and sanitation (2005:138). He names Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Canada, the African Development Bank and the Commission of the European Union as other donors who line up with the World
Bank's general budget support plan (ibid.). This policy of the World Bank, the 'sector-wide approach' requires a semi-annual education review process, which brings together 'all of the education stakeholders, Parliamentarians, NGOs, District practitioners, Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Public Service and Local Government, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Sports' (ibid.: 139). In addition to general budget support, the education sector is further supported by targeted budget support, traditional project support and initiatives such as technical assistance, human resource development and NGO implementation (ibid.). Although this situation has been further complicated in the past few years by the adopting and overturning of Anti-Homosexuality Acts, which made donors freeze and unfreeze funds, what is clear from this brief summation is that Ugandan policy when it comes to education, as well as its funding, is intricately complicated and composed by many different actors in- and outside the country.

All together, the last two decades have seen many changes in Ugandan education policy, while other aspects remain the same and certain problems persist. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Universal Primary Education (UPE) was passed in government in 1996 and implemented in Uganda from January 1997. It was specifically funded by the World Bank from 1998 (Murphy 2005: 139). Since implementation, attendance rates for children from poor households and for girls have significantly increased (Mayengo et al. 2015: 296). Especially orphans and children from female-headed households have benefitted from the policy (ibid., Yamano et al. 2006: 854). The government shows its commitment to education, by allocating about 30% of the total national budget to education (Chapman et al. 2010: 78).

However, the rapid implementation of UPE came with a set of problems. Chapman et al. discuss that enrollment skyrocketed but the amounts of teachers and schools increased at a much slower rate:

The UPE policy was successful in increasing access (...). Net enrollment rates increased from 62.3% in 2000 to 91.4% of girls and 95.3% of boys in 2007 (World Bank 2008) Yet, while enrollment increased by 171% during this time, the number of teachers and schools increased by only 41% (MoES, 2005). Essentially, enrollment grew faster than new teachers could be recruited and trained, schools built, and textbooks procured and distributed. Primary school head teachers were faced with burgeoning enrollments, declining teacher qualifications, and higher teacher workloads. Maintaining morale was a challenge. Access rose but quality suffered. (Chapman et al 2010: 78)
Another consequence of UPE was that the other parts of the education sector received less attention in the years when the policy was being implemented. 'Between 1992 and 2002, the share of education funding going to primary education changed from 33 per cent to 70 per cent' (Murphy 2005: 139). Some authors state that the other levels of education suffered as a result. 'The introduction of UPE has tilted public funding towards basic education to the detriment of higher education institutions' (Kwesiga 2002: 89). Kwesiga describes how before the 1990s, the government was able to provide funding for all university students, and higher education was in effect completely free. Of course it must be kept in mind here that the actual number of university students was much smaller back then. The personal allowances for students that the government provided were abolished over time, and the university was opened up to those who could afford to pay with private means (Kwesiga 2002: 89). Kwesiga states that in 2002 the government only provided tuition fees for about 10% of the students eligible to higher education (ibid.). It can safely be assumed that this percentage is even smaller today. 'The steady filtering of students as they go up the educational ladder means that over time restricted access is creating a small group of privileged people, instead of widening opportunities for the majority' (ibid.: 92).

The argument by Kwesiga resonates with Sommers' (2010: 320) argument quoted in the introduction, that the gap between the rich and poor in Africa is increasing. Admittedly, Ugandan universities are trying to rapidly expand at least the amount of available places each year, which can be seen as a good thing, since there have never been enough places to absorb all the A-level graduates who qualify for entry. Kwesiga maps out the distribution of students in 1996:

For a long time, only a third of those who qualified at A-levels could enter university. A large number of them would be absorbed by other higher education institutions. In 1996, students were distributed across the higher education sector as 59% level 5 (diplomas and certificates [vocational schools]), 38% level 5 (undergraduates) and only 3% for level 6 (postgraduate). (Kwesiga 2002: 90)

Today, the numbers are similar. Makerere University, by far the largest in the country, admitted 23,000 new students in mid 2014, out of almost 62,000 high school leavers who qualified for entry. The other students still get absorbed by vocational schools, or go abroad. Vocational schools and private universities are springing up everywhere in the

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23 See Anguyo (2014) and Ahimbisibwe (2014).
country, especially in Kampala. At this point, there is not much information yet about the quality of education in these new institutions.

In 2006, a policy of Universal Secondary Education (USE) was also adopted in Uganda. Chapman et al. (2010) argue that this was mostly a political move due to upcoming elections, and 'the policy was adopted with little attention to system capacity and with little or no involvement of headteachers (including deputy head teachers) who would be on the front line of implementing the policy' (2010: 77). Moreover, although it was rolled out more conservatively than UPE, there were still gaps in planning that were recognized, but not resolved. For example, about 90,000 new teachers were needed by 2010, too many to be trained by the institutions in place for teacher training. Funding was also unclear (Chapman et al. 2010: 78). Chapman et al. did extensive research among headteachers in secondary schools in all regions of the country, who reported feeling doubts about the effectiveness of the policy, were afraid of the problems that had occurred during implementation of UPE, and were not sure how to implement USE in their schools (ibid.: 79-81).

Private schools versus public schools
The problems described above in relation to UPE have not been fixed yet. '[P]oor, rural children are left under-schooled and public education is burdened in ways that seem virtually irreparable' (Mayengo et al. 2015: 293). One solution that has been found is to create low-fee private schools, especially in rural places that are difficult to access. Some of those schools are undocumented as well. Mayengo et al. (2015) describe an instance of a such an undocumented, low-fee, private primary school, in a rural area very close to Kampala. In this area, the UPE school is too far away to walk and transportation is a problem, thus the access to the UPE school is in effect limited (ibid.: 299). In their interviews with parents, the parents express that the quality of education and the level of accountability are higher in private schools, because the schools competes with other private schools and with UPE schools, whereas UPE schools do not have to compete with private schools (ibid.: 304). Important is that the interviewed parents express their decision to send their children to the private school as a choice, although for some the choice may be between no school at all and this school. Others switched their children to this school when it started or became convinced of its
efficacy after hearing good things about it and subsequently enrolled their children (ibid.: 299-302).  

Mayengo et al. furthermore point out that there is a discrepancy between the United Nations philosophy of free education for all, and the World Bank who provide loans, directly to schools, that are dependent on capitalist growth in a country. The World Bank believes cost-sharing models are better than models of entirely free education, because parents and communities will feel responsibility and remain invested in the positive outcomes of the schools (ibid.: 295-296, 302). In a country like Uganda, where the public education system does not (yet) fulfill standards of quality and equity, private schools are necessary to supplement the UPE system. Private schools are moreover not dependent on loans by the World Bank, and thus not as dependent on economic growth of Uganda as a whole. 'In a weird twist, privatization (…) is less directly linked with capital entrepreneurship than UPE schools, whose financial indebtedness to the WB tether public schools, rather than private schools, to market economics and the business model of privatization for profit with corporate sponsorship/administration like we find in the West' (ibid.: 306, emphasis in original). This article thus demonstrates that the dichotomy private schools/public schools is not the same everywhere, and possible Western assumptions readers may have do not necessarily apply to the case of Uganda. Furthermore, it shows that supra- and international actors influence education in Uganda, whereby public schools become more controlled by economic ebbs and flows than private schools. Private schools are more directly controlled by their owners, since they tend to be locally owned, and can provide higher quality of education as there is less fluctuation in funding.

**Inequalities**

In this chapter so far, it has been shown that the Ugandan government has for the past two decades attempted to diminish gender and socio-economic inequalities in the education sector, most notably in primary education. One of the things that helped tremendously was implementing Universal Primary and Secondary Education, which considerably lowered the cost of sending all children to school. In this thesis, in chapter 4, an instance will be discussed of a female student who felt that without UPE and USE, she would have never made it this

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24 In chapter 4 the topic of choice will be further discussed, and linked to the 'hot knowledge' that a choice such as for a school tends to be based upon.

25 See Murphy (2005: 139).
far in school. It must also be noted though that the UPE and USE systems do not mean that education is currently either universal or free (Chapman et al. 2010: 78). Tuition fees are covered by the program wherever it is in place, but there are still mandatory fees for parent-teacher associations, uniforms, and the students are asked to bring supplies to the school as well, sometimes even bricks for the school walls (ibid.). Those kinds of requirements can exist in public as well as in private schools. In Kansanga SSS, a relatively low-fee private school, the students told me they had to pay tuition and buy uniforms, and also bring brooms, crayons and toilet paper to school, as well as their own materials such as notebooks and pens. From what I observed, the amount of textbooks present at school was limited, although they would presumably add to the quality of education. Apart from the fees, whether schools are public or private, there is of course the aspect that children who are in school, are not working or helping around the house, which can pose a real problem for poorer families (Mayengo et al. 2015: 299). I have gotten the impression however that the government is really enforcing children's rights to go to primary school. During my stay in Uganda, I saw on the national news at least two different reports about children who are found working out on a field during school hours being arrested and taken to the police station. That way, the parents have to come pick the children up from the police station and the officers try to engage in conversation with them and explain why educating their children is important, and make them promise to send the children to school from now on. These types of interventions and a number of national policies such as the 'Gender in Education Policy and Programme' of 2002 as well as many others, have been effective to a certain extent, but there still remains work to be done (Kwesiga 2002: 89, 99-102)²⁶.

Furthermore, because the USE policy has not been implemented on a large scale yet, it can be argued that inequalities persist to a larger extent in secondary and tertiary education than in primary education. Certain aspects of gender difference are also more prevalent in secondary school. Pregnancy or the onset of menstruation can be reasons for students to drop out of school or miss school. The topic of gender will be further discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

A final point of inequality, is between the city and the countryside. As demonstrated in the introduction, enrollment and graduation rates in Kampala are significantly higher than in the remote rural areas. The city also provides better training opportunities to the teachers and

²⁶ See for example Mwesigwa (2015) for a recent critique on the UPE system in Uganda.
school staff, who are in turn better equipped for their respective professional tasks. Chapman et al. point out in their study among headteachers that 'those farther away from the capital city expressed the lowest levels of confidence in their knowledge and skills as headteachers' (Chapman et al. 2010: 80). Although arguably competition may be higher in cities, the opportunities are multiplied. Another aspect of that is language; daily life in Kampala takes place in Luganda and English, and for many professional positions it is an asset to speak both of those fluently. I will touch more upon another aspect of language in chapter 4. Suffice to say here, that in many ways, Kampala is full of opportunities that the countryside may not provide or may not provide as easily, most notably, quality education.

In this chapter, it has been shown that the specific history of education in Uganda has shaped the present situation, where funding, equality and brain drain pose serious problems. Inequalities have been discussed to highlight that the informants in this research are in some ways more fortunate than others in the same age-group in Uganda. It is not meant to put them on any type of hierarchical scale, rather, it is mentioned for reasons of integrity. The aim of the chapter, to provide a background and situate the students not only in the present but also in a point in an ever progressing history, would not be completely fulfilled without pointing out the situations the students are not in. In the next chapter, the discussion on each specific school, that was started in chapter 2, will be continued. The discussions in the current chapter provide a deepened understanding of those schools, which is useful when the focus in the next chapter broadens to show how the schools provide various types of 'hot knowledge'.
Chapter 4: 'Hot Knowledge' and Aspirations

In the last chapter, I have discussed a more general background of the history of education and the current education system in Uganda. In the current chapter, the first of three ethnography-based chapters, my focus will turn to the schools that I conducted research in. The aim of this chapter is two-fold; it will on the one hand go deeper into life at the different schools and how the schools facilitate access to 'hot knowledge', and on the other hand into the student's perspectives on quality of education and access to information. Gayaza Highschool is the first school that will be discussed, as one of the oldest schools in the country and today still nationally considered one of the most prestigious school for girls. It is followed by Makereere College, which is prestigious and tends to hold children of intellectual elites rather than old money families. Thirdly, Kansanga Senior Secondary School will be discussed, an inner-city school with children from widely varying, loosely 'middle-class' backgrounds, and lastly, Cornerstone Leadership Academy will close the list with its largely originally rural student population. The chapter is tied together by the concept of 'hot knowledge' (Ball and Vincent 1998), which will be extensively discussed. My informants spoke a lot about their networks and how those could be helpful in moving forward in life, and more often about information. The access to reliable information seemed crucial to them. To demonstrate how 'hot knowledge' relates to agency (chapter 5's theme), and tactics and strategies (chapter 6's theme) this chapter will start with a discussion on Kenway and Hickey-Moody's (2011) article on strategies and tactics among rural male secondary school students in Australia, which they term educational aspirations, and draw parallels to their approach throughout. Next, 'hot knowledge' will be introduced. Then both of these concepts will be applied to each school. Finally, both concepts shall be connected to uncertainties, as was first done in the introduction.

Educational aspirations

Kenway and Hickey-Moody (2011) write that Australian government policy actively aims to raise the aspirations of students of lower socio-economic status to try and enhance their participation and success in higher education (2011: 151). They argue that in order to effectively raise aspirations, however, it must be considered how these relate to changing life experiences of students, 'particularly with regard to the "hidden intricate operations of power, privilege and inequality” ([Burke 2009]: 40)' (Kenway & Hickey-Moody 2011: 151-152).
Aspiration is informed by an individual's social position and influenced by inequality (ibid.: 152). Normalization of aspiration in policy discourse is 'a form of 'symbolic violence' which downplays the systematically unequal strategies, and tactics of aspiration that school students adopt in their everyday lives' (ibid.: 152).

Since aspiration is 'rooted in social, cultural and spatial inequalities' (ibid), it follows that it is linked to an individual's socio-economic background. Aspirations are also informed by the current environment (in school). Especially attending a boarding school, as the sections on Gayaza Highschool and Cornerstone Leadership Academy in this chapter will demonstrate, is significant in this respect, because a student is away from the family home and absorbed into the school environment for months at a time.

Kenway and Hickey-Moody, drawing from De Certeau (1984), describe different approaches to aspirations of students, in their case boys in high schools in rural Australia. Some students have an 'aerial vision', who 'see school knowledge from above and within a broader and somewhat fluid socio-economic context' (Kenway & Hickey-Moody 2011: 153). These students are actively seeking out in the present the 'formalized and credentialized knowledges' (ibid.: 154) that they need 'to be secure and successful in later life' (ibid.: 154). These boys possess a strategic agency (ibid.: 153-154). Secondly, there are 'gridlocked boys', who know that they need to stay in school, but not always exactly why they need to (ibid.: 154-55). There are also 'sensory tacticians', who try and build up contacts and networks outside of school, and several different groups of boys who focus on lifestyle and 'coolness' in the present rather than focus on the future (ibid.: 156-157). The latter two groups, according to the authors, are tactical. In this chapter, parallels will be drawn with Kenway and Hickey-Moody's categories of 'aerial vision', 'gridlocked boys' and 'sensory tacticians'. Although in the classification of Kenway and Hickey-Moody 'aerial vision' and 'gridlocked' are considered strategic students, I will argue here and in chapter 6 that even Ugandan students with relatively high degrees of 'aerial vision' are tactical agents.27

Hot knowledge

Ball and Vincent (1998) discuss how 'the grapevine' plays a big role in parents' school choice for their children, in a case study in a city in Britain.28 The grapevine is described as 'a

27 The difference here with Kenway and Hickey-Moody is of course also a difference in education system and population composition between Australia and Uganda.

28 Ball and Vincent are sociologists of education. The article on hot knowledge and the grapevine (1998) is based on qualitative data from the United Kingdom.
particular manifestation of social networks, and one which clearly arises from the private realm in order to address the public arena' (Ball & Vincent 1998: 378). The grapevine is the source of 'hot knowledge', as opposed to cold knowledge that comes from a brochure. The authors point out that 'the grapevine is often seen as more reliable than other 'official' sources of information, especially those provided by the schools themselves' (ibid.: 380, emphasis in original). A possible reason why the grapevine can be so influential is described by the authors. They state that rumors are most often prevalent 'in the absence of other, more reliable sources of information … It is a way of filling in missing information' (Shibutani 1966, as cited in Ball & Vincent 1998: 380). Rumor and the grapevine thus become more important, the more other sources of information are hard to find.

Additionally, Ball and Vincent argue, there is not a single grapevine. They write:

To talk of 'the grapevine' is of course inaccurate. There are many different grapevines and an individual's access to them is structured primarily by class-related factors. Where you live, who you know and what community you belong to are vital determinants of the particular grapevine that is open to you. (…) Different networks, different grapevines can and do exist within one small locality. (…) They are placed differently in relation to sources of knowledge, are marked by different concerns and priorities, and contain different social resources. (Ball & Vincent 1998: 381)

To sum up, an individual, who occupies a specific position in a specific grapevine, and has a specific amount of cultural capital available to them, has a range of choice from that specific vantage point. 'Hot knowledge' thus is connected to socio-economic class through cultural capital. In the sections below on each school, students' voices on 'hot knowledge' will be presented. In the end of the chapter, general points on how 'hot knowledge' relates to uncertainties, will follow.

**Gayaza Highschool**

'In Uganda, it's .. good education is not free and .. most good schools are boarding schools. If you go for UPE or USE you are not going to go very far ... 'cause apparently the government thinks that if you put a child in a universal primary education school, and the kid goes to a universal secondary education school, they are going to get a government scholarship, but that's not true and (…) we have more chance of getting the scholarships than them .. so for me I believe that my business [that she wants to start later in life] is actually helping them [rural, poor people] because (…) if you show the people the value of their produce they will have enough money to take their kids to good schools.' (Emma, 18, Gayaza Highschool)
Emma's quote ties what was mentioned in the last chapter, UPE, USE and inequality, in with the topics of this chapter. It demonstrates opinions on the quality of education that students in other schools receive (schools that have no boarding facilities like Kansanga SSS, or schools that take students who went to UPE and USE schools before like Cornerstone Leadership Academy). Her narrative furthermore shows both 'hot knowledge' that Gayaza students possess (we have more chance of getting the scholarships) as well as educational aspirations on her part (individual 'aerial vision' on how to excel at school, and help others). Now, I will first discuss instances that made me realize how important Gayaza Highschool can be, before I discuss more student opinions and general characteristics of the 'hot knowledge' and aspirations in the school.

Whenever I would be interviewing students in Gayaza, I would sit in the hallway of a quiet building with an individual student and interview. Afterwards I would ask the student to please find me the next student to interview. The new one would usually arrive within five minutes, so this gave me a moment to look around and observe others on the campus each time. One time, on the first day I spent at Gayaza, the next student took particularly long to arrive, about twenty minutes, and so I walked out of the building onto the footpath in front of it, to see if I could see her coming. By the side of that path was a big bulletin board with school news and other information. Because it was the beginning of the semester, and the classes Senior One and Senior Five start later than the rest, the bulletin board held a list of all the students that had been accepted into Senior One and Five. Throughout the days I was at Gayaza, parents would arrive by car, walk to the bulletin board by the footpath and look at the list to find out if their daughters had been accepted.

Now that I was standing around hesitantly near this bulletin board, a man in his late thirties or early forties in a grey suit walked up to the board and looked at the list. Apparently he did not find his daughter's name, because while he was reading he started shaking his head, and by the time he was finished reading the list he let out a wail. He walked over to the little office with guards by the entrance of the building, and requested to speak with the Headmistress. Because it was a Saturday and the Headmistress did not see people on Saturdays, the guard replied that this was not possible. The man then requested to see a teacher, any teacher, that he could talk to. The guard and the man argued over this for a while, and finally the guard walked over to the teachers' lounge and asked one of them to come out and talk to the man. The teacher, a man in his early thirties, dressed much classier
than the man in the suit, came out of the lounge and walked over slowly with his arms crossed over his chest. The man in the suit, which looked worn down and not very expensive, and did not fit him exactly right, was by now quite frustrated from arguing with the guard, so he immediately got angry with the teacher and requested to know why his daughter was not accepted. The teacher, in a pristinely pressed buttoned shirt and trousers and a gold necklace and watch and beautiful Italian leather shoes, just shook his head and calmly said that the decision was final. The man pleaded with him, said that he had just gotten the money together for tuition and that he wanted his daughter to go to this school. The teacher did not let the man convince him and did not give in an inch.

This whole conversation between the parent and the teacher went on for at least ten minutes and although the teacher spoke English the whole time, the man switched back and forth between Luganda and English. All this time, I was sheepishly standing about ten meters away from them, looking around for the student who was supposed to come to the interview, and considering if I should go look for her, although I did not know in which building I should look. The man in the suit tried to get me to involve myself in the conversation, but I only understood half of what he said, let alone what the underlying meaning of it was. In the end, the teacher switched to Luganda for the first time in the conversation, said something that sounded decisive, and then said what I recognized as a greeting for when you are leaving. He turned around and walked back into the teachers' lounge. The man in the suit shrugged his shoulders and sighed a desperate sigh, and started walking back to his car.

This whole situation puzzled me. I wanted to grasp the meaning of it, but I did not understand the amount of desperation the father seemed to feel. 'Then you just enroll your daughter in one of the other schools, right?' I thought. I had heard that Gayaza was a prestigious school, but I assumed that there must have been more of those, since there are many secondary schools in Kampala in general. One minute later, my intended interviewee finally arrived, and I went inside and started my interview with her.

Only a few weeks later did I start to understand how important getting into Gayaza really was. Priscilla, a 17 year old student in Gayaza, is an only child from both her parents, although her father has more children with his current wife. Priscilla's mother died when she was in Primary 7, and she was and is still not very close with her father. She went through difficult times the years after that.
'You know, God just picked up the pieces, I struggled to fit in and everything... and then at S4... My friends paid my school fees. I went back home, my friends paid my school fees. The headmistress helped me out, she was there, emotionally, it's just... she was there the whole time, and you know it's just... It has been an array of everything, it has just been a bunch of people raising me, and it's like everyone has just been trying to make sure, of Priscilla go to school, you know... my friend's dad puts in effort (...) teachers praying for me, it is all just so much. I may not exactly have a picture of, I may not have a particular thing of I want to be this, but I know that I want to have a really good future you know, I want them to look and see it has not all gone to waste. I want to give back and I want to make them proud of me.'

Priscilla's story shows how getting your child into a certain social network can potentially help them stay in that network even while you are no longer around. Getting your daughter into Gayaza is a big deal not only because of the high quality of education.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Gayaza is one of the oldest schools in the country and originally intended for princesses and girls from very high class families. Today, the school still has an exquisite reputation. When a girl attends Gayaza, she gets high quality education, as well as a range of extracurricular knowledges and forms of guidance in life. Patricia, 18, told me that 'the school gives us different newspapers every day, and encourages us to read them and get informed.' The school also organizes bus trips to the campus of Makerere University, so that the students can talk with advisors on what kind of bachelor programs they could apply for with the combination of courses they are currently taking. Marina, 19, told me that she had found out on such an occasion that Makerere University had created a new bachelor program called 'Petroleum Studies', in response to the oil that had been found in recent years near Lake Albert in the west of Uganda. Marina said she was very interested in that program because she could be one of the first to graduate from it and thus secure a good job.

There is a focus in Gayaza on creating and encouraging leadership. All the girls at the boarding school live in dormitories of mixed ages, and the Senior Six girls are in charge of the dormitory. It is inspected by teachers for cleanliness and tidiness at random times. This means that the Senior Six girls usually delegate all the tasks involved in keeping the dormitories clean to the younger girls. There are a further myriad of leadership tasks for many of the girls in the last class, such as being in charge of the songbooks in the chapel or
organizing some activity. In addition, every Friday evening or Saturday morning the students in Senior 6 get a lecture from an 'old girl', a former student of the school, on her own life and career experience. This is usually also the mother of one of the girls in the class; families often have been sending girls to Gayaza for generations. These mothers or ladies could for example be high ranking politicians or successful business women. They discuss the challenges that they have overcome to get where they are today, their tips on how to get certain scholarships, or their experience with studying abroad. Like Emma, 18, said: 'Career, skills, life skills, setting goals, just different talks to help you set you guide to life'.

Sperandio, who discussed leadership amongst girls in Ugandan high schools, noted that '[o]ne of the many variables external to the school situation that could influence the way in which teenage girls in Uganda assess their life chances and plan their futures is contact with women involved in professions other than teaching, and political activism' (Sperandio 2000: 63). In her large quantitative comparative study, Sperandio witnessed that '[i]t was noticeable that female students in schools that had been visited by a group of women lawyers on career days articulated a higher level of interest in careers in the profession' (Sperandio 2000: 63-4). Student views on leadership will be further discussed in chapter 5. However, what Sperandio points at here is that 'hot knowledge' can arise from having access to people who have accomplished the goals one is dreaming of.

The students that were interviewed in Gayaza Highschool exemplified mostly what Kenway and Hickey-Moody call 'aerial vision'. The girls seemed 'highly reflexive about their life chances' (2011: 154), and they seemed to 'understand the macro geographies of school knowledge and plot their best routes to success on the grids of knowledge/power' (ibid.). They seemed for example much more aware of challenges that lie ahead than some of the students in other schools. Although many students in all the schools told me they wished to study law, only Patricia, 18, at Gayaza, mentioned that the law program at Makerere has an entry exam that is very tough. She said that if you want to get into the law program, 'you want to be the top student'. She also described that generally in Gayaza 'it is survival of the fittest here'.

When it came to where to get reliable information, Gayaza girls trusted their networks. Peace, 17, felt that 'personal information is better than the internet, because they [the people

29 There were leadership tasks and roles in all four schools, as will be discussed in chapter 5. However, Gayaza had many more different tasks within the school than the others, and the prestige students were ascribed for getting a leadership task seemed to be higher than in the other schools.
in your network] will also tell you the downsides'. She said that if she would just read a flyer or a webpage, she would not know anything about what it was really like at that school. On the other hand, if she has for example a cousin who goes there, she will feel trust that her cousin will tell her the truth about what the school is like, so she will be able to make a decision. Dorcus, 17, also felt that personal information is better than the internet. Sandy, 21, explained that it is important as a young girl (or boy) to make a good impression on the people you come into contact with in your network. 'In Uganda', she said, 'it's all about who knows you. If they know you, you can get ahead'.

**Makerere College**

Makerere College is prestigious, but not as prestigious as Gayaza is. In Makerere College I met Christine, 17, who was in Gayaza in O-levels but did not have good enough grades to stay. Christine, whose parents come from Kenya, told me that there is a government list and then another list. She said that if you know someone in the government, you can go to Gayaza without necessarily having good grades, but if you do not know someone in the government, you have to have good grades. We continued talking:

*Me: Do you think that people who go to the good schools get better grades?*
*C: Yeah, they do.*
*Me: Why?*
*C: It's just a mentality, you know the school scores well so when you go there you expect to get that.*
*Me: So do you think that people from good schools are more motivated?*
*C: No, I actually think they are more lax, more relaxed. If you are from a bad school, you have to prove a point, so you work hard.*
*Me: And here?*
*C: Here also, well no, I think it depends on the individual .. no matter the school.*

Christine told me that she missed Gayaza, she said that she missed the swimming pool, and also that the girls there were more disciplined. Nelson, 19, also went to another school in O-levels before coming to Makerere College for A-levels. Nelson felt that Makerere College was not strict enough compared to his other school; he said there was not enough pressure and too much freedom, which could lead to laziness. These examples point to how a school can imprint values onto a student, and shape their expectations. Christine's narrative also highlights that access to the best school in the country for girls is provided through networks
more often than based upon a student's academic talents. However, Amanda, 18, also transferred from Gayaza to Makerere College after O-levels, but she said that her parents simply wanted her to go to a mixed school with boys and girls together. She seemed to have no problems with the transfer, and did not say anything about either school being good or bad. It could thus on the other hand be argued that a school's attempt to imprint expectations does not always take effect in each student. So maybe Christine is right and it does depend on the individual.

Rachael, who was discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, also attended Makerere College. She was a boarder, meaning that she lived at the school during the semesters, for three to four months at a time. She was also the headgirl of Senior 6, the class president, along with a headboy. She was thus in charge of keeping the girls in her class, approximately forty of them, focused and studying. She was also in charge of keeping the girls dormitory, which is one big building for all the girls in boarding in the whole school, clean and tidy, and making sure all the girls follow the daily schedule. This means that if for example a girl did not show up for silent study or for a class, Rachael had to go find the girl in question and get her to come to class.

In Makerere College there are also day-students who live at home. However, the schedule for the students is very packed, as it is in all of the schools, school starts at seven o'clock in the morning and runs all day until nine in the evening, after which the students still have to do homework. On Saturday the school ends at seven o'clock in the evening, and on Sunday it is only in the afternoon, between one and seven. Many students I talked to preferred to live at the school, because traveling home and back every day takes up valuable time. Others live at the school because their parents are abroad, in another city, or have passed away. Some students said that they preferred living at home, because this way they could leave school and have a separate place to relax. I noted however, that the students who said that were all boys, while girls seemed to have more household tasks when living at home than boys did.

Makerere College is on the same hill as Makerere University. The students in Makerere College were the only ones that seemed to have extensive, 'up-close' knowledge of the workings of the university. Many of them told me that the university regularly goes on strike and shuts down, and many seemed reluctant to attend it for that reason. In chapter 6, I will discuss views on Makerere University more thoroughly, as they differ widely and Makerere University came up in more than half of the student interviews.
'Hot knowledge' among students in Makerere College did not always reach the student through school channels. Of all my interviewees, only one student, Beth, 18, from Makerere College, said that she had applied to Oxford, a week previous to the interview. This 'hot knowledge' that Beth had surprised me, as not many students seem to know all that much about Oxford or the UK in general, let alone how to apply. Yet Beth had applied and felt that she had a chance of getting accepted there. 'I give it a 4 out of 10 chance', she said, 'but I like taking risks'. A possible explanation for why and how Beth had access to this 'hot knowledge', is that Beth's mother works as a registrar in the Korean School in Kampala. Although the formerly Asian school is today open to any student, it still can work as a separate or different grapevine. Back in the day when many Asian people of different nationalities lived in Uganda, before Idi Amin expelled all Asian people from the country in 1972, they formed almost a separate class in Ugandan society, often involved with trade and providing services, and were generally successful, established members of society. This is also what made Idi Amin expel them, he wanted those powerful positions in society to be occupied by Ugandans. Today, Korean and other Asian people are returning to, and investing heavily in, the booming economy of Uganda. Their children get sent to the former Korean and other Asian schools, even though now they go there together with Ugandan children. This separate grapevine of the Korean School may be how Beth accessed the knowledge needed to apply for Oxford.

Another student, Amanda, 18, told me she had already been signing up for different scholarships in the US. She wanted to take the SATs (the American final high school exam) right after her Ugandan final exams. She said that you need to show a statement that you could potentially afford the cost of living in the US, and then you can take the SATs, and then if you do well on those you will get scholarships. Amanda knew all this, because she is an orphan who is in the African Children's Choir, an American aid organization. The organization was actively helping her seek out these knowledges.

Thirdly, John, 20, is also a student in Makerere College. When he was eight years old, his parents sent him to live with an auntie in Belgium. He lived close to Brussels, attended school there, chose a specialty, and was heading down a clear path to an engineering school. He talked about how his parents sent money from Uganda to help his auntie buy him 'special engineering-LEGO's'. John also has aunties in Guyana and in Canada, so his family seems to

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be rather successful at moving abroad, which is something many Ugandans dream of.\textsuperscript{31} When John was 15 however, after seven years in Belgium, his mother got sick and passed away, so he had to return to Uganda. He said that in Belgium there is a law that if you are there for eight years you can apply for permanent residence, so he came close, but did not obtain that. If he would have, he could have studied for a low, EU citizen fee in Belgium. Now, he was considering both studying in Uganda at Makerere University, or returning to Belgium and studying there on private means, for a high non-EU citizen fee. Neither one of those were optimal choices for John. He said that he was not used to Ugandan ways of living, even after he had been back in Uganda for five years, and he was not performing as a top student at Makerere University because the school systems differ and he was not caught up on all the required knowledge for the Ugandan school system. Going back to Belgium would mean relying heavily on family members' financial contributions. Therefore, he said: 'I am looking for an opportunity to open doors, countrywide and worldwide'. He seemed to be hoping that some better solution would come along, to solve the choice impasse he was facing. In John's story, the uncertainty and unpredictability, regardless of your position in the grapevine, is demonstrated. Leaving Uganda, which is something that the majority of the students interviewed in all four schools dreamed of, can make your dreams come true, but can also limit your chances if something happens later on. When you leave the country, you also limit your exposure to the network back home, which can be a precarious position.

Students in Makerere College have 'hot knowledge' as well as those in Gayaza do, but there is a slight difference. In Gayaza all students interviewed seemed to have an equal amount, whereas in Makerere College, not all students did. Students like Beth, Amanda and John seemed to possess more than some of the others.

When it comes to Kenway and Hickey-Moody's (2011) classification, there was a mix of types of students in Makerere College. Students such as Rachael, Christine, Beth and Amanda demonstrated forms of 'aerial vision', whereas others fell in the categories of 'sensory tactician'. Sensory tacticians 'seek to build life chances outside school' (ibid.: 156), 'grasp opportunities' (ibid.) and 'know how to read for practical possibility' (ibid.). These students try to create their own opportunities outside of their school's structures or discourses.

Enoch, 18, from Makerere College, is an example of a sensory tactician. Enoch, just like Amanda who was mentioned on the previous page, is an orphan who has been placed in the

\textsuperscript{31} See chapter 3, 5 and 6 on this topic as well.
African Children's Choir program, an American organization that takes the children (students) on intercontinental choir tours in holidays, and puts them in good boarding schools during semesters. Enoch seemed really grateful that he was in school, but when I asked him about university, he said he would rather not go. He said that he did not have the best grades, and would not know who to loan the money from to pay for it. On the other hand, he had a big passion for art, and already worked as an artist in his spare time. He said that when he noticed that glass is not recycled in Uganda like in other countries, he decided to make drinking glasses out of glass bottles. He invested in a tool with which he can cut and polish the glasses, and asked all his neighbors and his family's neighbors to save their glass bottles for him. Once a month, he would ask for leave from school to go to a day market in front of a high-end shopping mall, and sell his glasses 'to the tourists'. Enoch said that when he would finish school, he would keep making the glasses, as he had a storage space full of bottles by now, and he would also start making other kinds of art. Just like the sensory tacticians in Kenway and Hickey-Moody's article (2011), Enoch 'hold[s] the view that 'you have to make your own future' ', and he is 'intent on invention through the use of their [his] own social, sensory, sensibilities' (ibid.: 156).

Kansanga Senior Secondary School
In Kansanga SSS, 'hot knowledge' seemed to be less explicitly present or provided, and sometimes the students' views demonstrated access to alternate grapevines. In this school I met Prince, 18, who felt that the quality of education was not so high. Prince and his family were originally from India, and at the time of the interview they were a few months away from getting all the papers together to move to Canada. Prince felt that in Canada everything would be better for him than it was in Uganda, including the quality of education. However, I also talked to three students who had migrated to Uganda from Rwanda and the Congo because the quality of education in Uganda is better, and they felt like they were getting really good education at Kansanga SSS. I furthermore met Kamusa, 18, whose mother passed away shortly before the semester started. He had not paid school fees yet for the semester, and he did not know how he could get the money together. He dreamed of becoming a doctor or a civil engineer, and had his heart set on attending Makerere University on a government
He almost cried during the interview, stating 'I am so worried, I don't know what I will do'.

Dolphy, 18, from Kansanga SSS, dropped out of school during O-levels because her parents were no longer willing to pay. She got a job in an office emptying trash bins and cleaning, and while working there she met an office worker who was willing to help her get back to school, and now that stranger was paying for her school fees. She was very grateful to be in Kansanga SSS, and expressed that she worked as hard as she could to 'make it'.

Kansanga SSS is not a boarding school, and most students said that they walked to school, meaning that they had to live close by. The school day in Kansanga SSS started at seven o'clock in the morning, and ran until seven o'clock at night. After that the students would stay at the school for study group. Many students described coming home at about nine o'clock, eating, washing their uniform, and then going to bed. Many would get up at five in the morning to do homework before school, others did the homework at night. Some reported having to do household chores in the evening or morning hours as well, such as making breakfast for other family members, sweeping in the house, or doing more laundry than just their own uniforms. In the weekends, there was also class, but less than during the week. Depending on which subjects the students were taking, they had to go to school on Saturday at the longest from nine in the morning to five or six in the afternoon, and on Sunday afternoon from about one o'clock until four o'clock. However, fewer subjects were taught in the weekends and there was time allotted for group projects, which the students were not continuously involved in. As a result, sometimes the weekend school days were shorter. During the week, the students were not allowed to leave the school premises until the day was over. They did not attend classes every hour, as the students took different combinations, and the schedule had to allow for all the different combinations. This is why they did homework individually or in pairs or small groups during the day, and study group with all the students who took the subject had to wait until the end of the day, when everyone was free at the same time. During the day there were also always students who took breaks and hung around or played some sports.

At Kansanga SSS, I attended a few classes in history, and one in physics. The classroom featured a blackboard and crayons, and benches for the students to sit in. When it was time

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32 These government scholarships have been mentioned before, on page 45 by Emma, but here it is important to point out, that a student needs to have very high grades to get one of those. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.
for the class to start, all the students entered, sat down and got out their books, and then started chatting with each other. At all occasions that I attended, the teacher would arrive a few minutes after the students were ready. The moment the teacher walked in, the students would become quiet, turn to their books and get their pens ready. The teacher would greet them, and ask a few questions about what they had talked about last class, to refresh the students' memories. Then he would open his big notebook, and would start reading aloud, while the students wrote down what he read. The reading aloud by the teacher could be described as dictating, he would read a part of the sentence until a comma, then say comma, then repeat the sentence part slowly, and then move on to the next part of the sentence. For example:

'In Italy in 1932, in… Italy… in… 19… 32…comma…'

The entire class was taught in this way. When the bell rang signaling that the class was over, the teacher would finish reading the sentence he was reading and then close his big notebook, pick it up, and leave. After the school day was over, the students would meet for study group, and talk about everything they learned during the class. Sometimes they would ask the teacher to borrow his notebook, for sentences that they had missed, or they would review with one another and look at the spelling of words or names to complete all the sentences in their own notes.

These observations tie in to the question of language. Mulumba and Masaazi discuss the use of English as the language of instruction in Ugandan schools, from Primary Five up through all further education (2012: 437-8). They point out that 'English is perceived as a classroom language and not used beyond the school. Outside the school compound, it is the local or area language which is mostly used' (ibid.: 444). This is something that I noted in my observations. Many conversations in the schoolyard in Kansanga SSS took place in Luganda, or in English interspersed with words in Luganda. Outside of the class room, and even right before the teacher came in, students were constantly speaking in Luganda. All their banter and laughter and gossip took place in Luganda, to the point where I thought that they appeared much more fluent in Luganda to me than in English. Mulumba and Masaazi point out that this could lead to problems with understanding the material of study. 'Children and adults are likely to grasp concepts better in a familiar language' (ibid.: 438). In their study,

33 Kansanga SSS is the only school in which I attended classes. I do not know how classes in other schools are organized. I did not get a chance observe any practicals. 
34 Both teachers I observed were male, but there were of course also female teachers present in all four schools. 
35 In a normal trajectory, the student would be aged 9 or 10 in Primary Five.
they found that '[i]n instances where learners found themselves unable to grasp the meaning of a concept and either schemata or context could be of any assistance (to arrive at the meaning), then cramming became the only alternative' (ibid.: 442). Their study however took place in all of Secondary school, and they noted most problems in the lower classes. 'This [teachers switching back to Luganda to make students understand better] was not the case in upper secondary school (Senior Five) where students seemed to be following the teachers' communication' (ibid.: 445-6). In the history classes I observed, complicated terms in English were used and not explained, such as a 'restricted policy of protectionism', and also very context specific words were used, such as 'bayonet', when talking about European wars in the 19th century. In the physics class there was a little bit more explanation, but if I would not have already been familiar with the concepts that happened to be discussed that day, Johannes Kepler's principles of light, I am not sure I would have understood. After the physics class, the students and I stayed for study group, and I ended up drawing the sun and the earth on the blackboard to explain it better, because they seemed to not fully grasp the material yet.36 Another day, in history study group, I drew a big map of Europe on the blackboard to help them in the discussion they were having with each other on the politics of Bismarck and all the treaties that were signed in French and German towns around the 1880s. I am not certain that the students were given enough context information in these instances, such as pictures or schemata or longer explanations of specific concepts, to not end up cramming and repeating the exact phrases that were dictated to them on the test, like some students that are quoted in Mulumba and Masaazi's article (ibid.: 442-3).37

The reason I brought up the forms of instruction and the question of language here is to demonstrate that although in theory all schools teach the same material in the same subjects and prepare the students for the same exam, what a student learns can differ greatly among students and among schools. The way in which students are taught and the background they come from are highly influential, even when we only consider the narrow 'factual' knowledge that the school is teaching.

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36 The students and I had an almost heated discussion on whether there were seasonal differences in daylight in the world or not. I told them that although in Uganda the day and the night are both twelve hours long all year round, in a country such as Sweden the winter is dark and the summer is light. They did not believe me, and suggested creative explanations such as: 'maybe it rained in winter so you thought it was dark'.

37 Mulumba and Masaazi, based on their findings, advocate for the development of a national language, that could emerge from the six area languages that have been noted in the National Language Policy of 1992, and then be implemented as the language of instruction in Ugandan schools (Mulumba & Masaazi 2012: 448).
Perhaps there was a quality difference in teaching between Kansanga SSS and the previous two schools in this chapter. In any case, many of the students I encountered in Kansanga SSS can be described as 'gridlocked'. Kenway and Hickey-Moody (2011) argue that a 'gridlocked' student does not possess the same overview as a student with 'aerial vision', but nonetheless places their trust in the education system:

These gridlocked boys know that they need to stay at school, work hard and 'get an education'. Indeed, such notions have an almost mantra like status for them. They place a high degree of trust in the education system and in the capacity of qualifications to translate into work. However, they know a great deal less about the expert and abstract systems associated with education, training and employment than do the highly strategic boys with aerial vision. (ibid.: 154-55, emphasis in original)

Cindy, 18, in Kansanga SSS, said: 'yeah of course I will get a scholarship' for Kyambogo University, Kampala's second largest university. She did not know how she was going to get it or how the scholarship system for Kyambogo works, but she felt confident anyway that she would reach her goal of studying Business Accounting at that university. When I interviewed Cindy, I was not aware of this myself, but later on I realized that all students in the other three schools took Mathematics, regardless of their further combination. I will come back to this topic in chapter 5. Suffice to say for now that Cindy was not taking Mathematics, and that it is needed for studying a program in the finance sector. There were many other students in Kansanga SSS who, similar to Cindy, trusted in the system but did not oversee it, and thus were gridlocked in it. Sonya Lillien, 18, wanted to study Law at Mukumba University, because she was convinced that they do not offer a Law program in Makerere University. The reason why she thought they don't offer one was because she had never heard anyone in her environment mention a Law program at Makerere, so she assumed it was not offered. The idea of information from your network being worth more than anything else will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Another version of a 'high degree of trust in the system' that was visible among some students in Kansanga SSS, is a trust in an international aid system. Tokyo Ronex, 24, had a younger sister who was being sponsored by a private American donor to stay in school. He was waiting for the same thing to happen to him. He told me that 'Europeans from outside countries like the US, Russia, China, they like to help people in Africa to study'. He furthermore thought that there are free universities in California where they pay for all the student's expenses. Sonya Lillien told me that she wanted to live in Canada, because in
Canada the government provides you with pocket money for each of your children every Saturday.

Kenway and Hickey-Moody describe another type of gridlocked boys, who trust more in practical knowledges than in school knowledges (2011: 155). Juma Saf, 18, is an example. He felt that education in Uganda is not good, because it has too much theory. He argued for the need of practical skills and said that they should be taught in high school. In this, he agreed with the government commission that proposed a revised education system in 1989, that was mentioned in chapter 3.38

As will become clear throughout this thesis, '[k]nowing the geography of school knowledge is essential to leveraging life chances' (ibid.). Kenway and Hickey-Moody suggest that gridlocked boys do not manage to successfully work the grid because that 'requires the sorts of cultural capital they and their families do not have' (ibid.). They thus ascribe these differences in knowledge between different students partially to socio-economic class differences.

Differences in knowledge and cultural capital lead to a different perceived availability of choices. Ball and Vincent quote Bowe et al., who describe choice as a landscape:

The experience of 'choice' is of a landscape that is neither flat nor unidimensional, nor linear, nor ordered, nor tidy … Information is rarely complete, decisions often seem only to be 'the best that can be done', provisional and fragile. From where you stand aspects of the landscape may be 'out of sight', and moving across the landscape changes the 'way things look'. Decisions are made about the possibilities available on the basis of look, feel and judgement as well as rational reflection. (Bowe et al. 1994, as cited in Ball & Vincent 1998: 391)

Because information is not usually complete, choice changes depending on where you stand. In other words, the amount of options you see as an individual, depends on your vantage point, or, your place in the grapevine or the societal network and who you are in contact with. Whereas we tend to assume that choice (in a Western context like Ball and Vincent's) is neutral, when we look at it in the metaphor of the landscape it becomes apparent that 'choice' is not a form of selfish behavior that is natural to the human condition (…), it is a socio-political construct of its times' (ibid.: 393). Now that choice is linked to socio-politics, it follows that choice, and by extent the knowledge that is taken into account when a choice is

38 The significance of this similarity is hard to determine with only limited knowledge of Ugandan public discourse. National ideas on education will be slightly elaborated upon in chapter 6 however.
being made, are tied to the standpoint of the individual and thus their socio-economic position.

Just like Kenway and Hickey-Moody (2011: 155) discussed that a lack of cultural capital prevented students and parents from obtaining an 'aerial view', Ball and Vincent discuss parents who have trouble making the optimal choices and processing the necessary information for those choices, with regards to their cultural capital. '[T]heir cultural capital is in the wrong currency' (Gerwirtz et al. 1995, as cited in Ball & Vincent 1998: 389). Nevertheless, students in Kansanga SSS possessed 'hot knowledge', although arguably in a different grapevine. For example, Babyshow, 23, said that he wanted to work in border customs, as his uncle worked there and could get him a job. There was also the same kind of awareness of the importance of networks in Kansanga SSS as in the other schools. Fabulous Nicole, 18, said that if you want a job or any type of information, you should rely on your network and not on anybody else. The grapevine(s) that the Kansanga students were connected to, seemed however of a fundamentally different nature and to contain different knowledges, than in the first two schools.

**Cornerstone Leadership Academy for Girls**

The last school I visited and the last school discussed here is Cornerstone Leadership Academy for Girls. As described in chapter 2, it is a school that takes top students from rural areas in Uganda and provides them with two years of fully paid boarding school. The larger umbrella organization Cornerstone also assists the students further after they graduate from the Leadership Academy. Cornerstone seems to provide an alternative path to success, outside of generations-long networks of 'hot knowledge' that students in the other three schools possessed in various degrees.

The backgrounds of the students in Cornerstone LA were noticeably different from those of students in the other three schools. Many of them came from polygamous families with several wives and many children, and said that their fathers could not provide for them or the other children because there were too many. Lillian, 18, for example, told me that her father had worked himself up through a company and earned a lot of money, and then took several wives. Eventually however, he lost the money again. Lillian said: 'my dad was a big man, but he lost all the money because of polygamy. The wives bewitched each other, so he lost all the money'. Lillian explained that wives often get jealous when the husband takes a new wife, but 'they can't say anything', so they 'bewitch each other and bring misfortune'. In the other
three schools there were also children from polygamous families and children with divorced parents and stepparents, but in Cornerstone LA over half of the interviewees came from polygamous families and told stories of jealousy and bewitchment, whereas in the other schools there seemed to be less problems associated with the polygamy. It is possible that jealousy is linked here to scarcity of resources.

Another remarkable difference was that in Cornerstone LA, many of the girls were the highest educated individual in their families. In Gayaza, the other girls-only boarding school in this research, often all siblings in a family were in universities and boarding schools, even if there were seven or nine children in the family. Most of the Cornerstone girls were the only one of their siblings to make it past Senior 4. For example Emily, 18, is the youngest of nine children. Her parents are 'peasants', living in a rural area by the Kenyan border. Her oldest sister came to Senior 4 and then got married, and most other siblings finished Senior 4, except for one brother who finished Senior 6. All the girls were already married and had young children, and some of the boys were married with families as well. Emily talked about how, as the youngest of nine, she did not exactly have much to say at home, because 'in Uganda you have to respect your elders, so you don't talk when they talk. When they talk, you listen.' She also talked about UPE and USE: 'For me, I can see that how the world is going ahead it needs just education. If it wasn't for the government program of supporting the children and the students, I know that I wouldn't go [have gone] to school. I know that in my heart.'

Lillian, introduced on the previous page, told me about the grading system for the final exam of O-levels, in which a lower number is better. Anything between 1 and 36 is considered 'first grade', in other words, a good performance. Lillian described how in her O-level school, for four years she always got 11 or 13. Her teachers told her she could maybe get a scholarship or a sponsorship to study medicine in Oxford, which she believes is in America. But when she took the national exam at the end of O-level, she scored 31. Even though that still is a good grade, she felt very disappointed in her achievement, because it is a big drop. She said that one reason why she thinks she scored lower than before was that in her school they did not finish the syllabus in time before the exam.

These examples serve to demonstrate that the backgrounds of the Cornerstone girls, in terms of both family backgrounds and school backgrounds, can be very different from the others, especially from girls at Gayaza or students at Makerere College. What is interesting
however, is that the students in Cornerstone LA seemed to be catching up with a lot of extracurricular knowledges by attending the boarding school. In each of the classrooms in the school, there was a section on the side of the blackboard that contained news on the school, and below it, there was a bullet-point list written in crayon, titled 'What you can be', with a square drawn around it. The list included the bullet points: Lawyer, banker, teacher, doctor, engineer, business administrator, accountant, business lady and statistician. It was clear from the list in each classroom that it had been on the blackboard for a while, where most of the blackboard was used and wiped constantly. It seems that the school was actively trying to instill certain aspirations in its students. As Lillian attested: 'This school can change your plans'.

Emily, mentioned on the previous page as the youngest out of nine children, wants to become a lawyer or a banker, because 'our family are suffering and others too'. She wants to support her siblings' children and other children in the village where she is from financially. 'In the future when I [have] got a job that is well-paid, I can help them'. But before ascribing 'aerial vision' here, it must also be noted that when I asked: 'Makerere is expensive right? How do you think you could pay for it?', Emily replied: 'I don't know what I will do but I need to go there', and then repeated that phrase two more times.

As previously mentioned, the umbrella organization of Cornerstone creates graduates-networks and helps the students financially after they leave the Academy. Jacky, 21, told me: 'I heard that Cornerstone can provide you loans for half the tuition for Makerere. I also heard that the best girl in the class gets tuition paid'. Thus, Cornerstone Leadership Academy seems to provide its students with a somewhat alternative path towards 'success'. At the same time, it must be noted that the students from these four schools as well as all other schools in Kampala are in the end all in the same competition for the limited places in universities both in and outside of Uganda.39

Educational aspirations, hot knowledge and uncertainty

In the sections above, I have ascribed different categories from Kenway and Hickey-Moody's (2011) work to students in different schools. I would like to stress that this does not mean all students in the respective school fall into that category. All students come from individually unique backgrounds. However, a certain type of student (in Kenway and Hickey-Moody's classification) tends to be concentrated in each school, and the choice that was made by them

39 See p.37.
or their parents for attending the school they currently attend, was informed by not only amounts of money or education levels in their environment, but also specific combinations of cultural capital and 'hot knowledge'.

This same pattern also becomes evident when further on in this thesis we look at their future plans. Some examples of exceptionally informed students have been given in this chapter, to demonstrate that 'hot knowledge' can arise from school environments as well as from a student's family background. However, the uncertainties in their environments remain present and should not be forgotten. Cooper and Pratten write, as was first discussed in the introduction, that 'while certainty and security are sought by investment in social relations, so those proximate, intimate social relations provide no guarantee and may produce further uncertainties' (2015: 4). Furthermore, 'differentiated access to knowledge makes possible different types of causative analysis of what is behind uncertainty' (ibid.: 5). From the individual's point of view, uncertainty can thus be negotiated through networks, but there is no guarantee there. The vantage point of the individual also decides what they consider possible, not only when it comes to choice, but also in terms of a 'causative analysis' (ibid.) of their surroundings.

In this chapter, I have explained how the different schools offer differentiated access to 'hot knowledge', and tend to create a certain type of tactic in most of their students. It has been discussed that in Gayaza, there is a lot of 'hot knowledge', and the formation of networks of students and graduates is actively encouraged by the school by bringing in parents and former students for talks on a weekly basis. In Makerere College, there was a mix of highly informed students and others who were less informed or took a more tactical approach. In Kansanga SSS, networks were considered important as well, but students were often 'gridlocked', they believed in the education system but were not always sure exactly why. Lastly, Cornerstone LA is attempting to create alternative pathways to success for the students by actively supporting a graduate network and giving students opportunities in the form of loans. Apart from discussing in which ways 'hot knowledge' is provided through the schools, I have hinted at family backgrounds as important providers of cultural capital, and how being embedded in

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40 Ball and Vincent relate school choice to 'general class-related strategies of consumption' (1998: 393). It is important to point out that this is not applicable in the Ugandan setting because of high competition.

41 See also Geschiere (2013).
networks creates both access to information and opportunities. In the next chapter, family backgrounds will be discussed further, in relation to the student's degree of agency.
Chapter 5: Agency and Expectations

In the last chapter, we saw how 'hot knowledge' plays a central role in the students' lives. In this chapter then, the focus shifts to the students themselves, and different aspects of their agency and limits to it. There is a section on family which highlights how the students are embedded into larger communities that place constraints and expectations on them, but can also support and motivate them. Next, nationality, ethnicity and migration will be discussed, as these can be a decisively important factors in a student's identity formation. Religion is important in their lives as well. From there, the focus of the chapter turns to the pressure students feel and their daily schedules. This flows into what courses one takes or should take in school, and is followed by a description of extracurricular activities and hobbies. Gender is of course also a factor in their range of agency as well as their identity construction, but the topic will be discussed in two parts; in this chapter, gender in relation to leadership and role models is presented, whereas in the next chapter, student opinions on gender connected to love and marriage shall be described.

All these different topics may not seem related at first glance, but they are all part of the identities the students have and are forming, and thus define them as actors with a certain amount of agency. Throughout the chapter, a discussion of literature on identity formation and agency among youth in Africa will be carried out. As first mentioned in the introduction, youth and agency as concepts have a complex, almost paradoxical relationship, which greatly influences possibilities for negating uncertainties and being tactical (or strategic). To highlight the paradoxicality, this chapter will start with a short discussion on anthropological definitions of agency, so that the rest of the chapter can be framed in that light. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that the students experience only limited agency in their present situations, but that they place their own power to act in the future. This is how the chapter will logically flow into the next, where their plans of independence and dreams for success and individuality will be discussed.

Agency and Responsibility

James Laidlaw (2010) states that there are two different definitions of agency that are currently used most widely in anthropology (2010: 143). The first group of authors, usually
ascribed to 'practice theory'\textsuperscript{42}, defines agency as 'to designate the creative and assertive capacities of individuals, as against the constraints of what are conceived of as "larger" structures' (ibid.). The second use of the term sees 'an agent conceived simply as an entity that plays a causal role in bringing about change' (ibid.: 145). This use is common in Actor-Network Theory (See Latour 2005, as cited in Laidlaw 2010: 145). In the current and the next chapter, I will demonstrate that many of the students interviewed for this thesis, would be happy if either quality was ascribed to them in the future. They hope and wish to bring about change in different ways.

Although the two definitions of agency may appear similar at first glance, Laidlaw discusses how the two seemingly related definitions have significantly different implications. In the 'practice theory' definition, agency is placed in opposition to structure. This means that 'this conception of agency recognizes as efficaciousness only actions conducive towards certain ends and outcomes: empowerment, liberation, equality and so on, these ends being imputed as values and interests to all members of the human race as such' (Laidlaw 2010: 144). To be recognized, agency here must oppose existing structures of morals and values and power, and whenever an individual or group actively tries to embed itself deeper into an existing structure, this poses problems to the logic of the definition (ibid.).

In the Actor-Network Theory definition, the core idea is causality. Agency is ascribed when an entity does not simply play a part in a chain of cause and effect but 'makes an unpredictable difference in how things go' (ibid: 145). This entity does not have to be human, it can be a mosquito that makes people ill or a computer that crashes (ibid.). Here, the agent is not primarily defined by his or her or its inner beliefs, but in relation to networks and communication (ibid: 146). However, it is assumed that it is always clear who or what is responsible or most responsible for the change that takes place, and even that it is clear what exactly has happened (ibid: 146-7).

Neither of these definitions of agency can be fully embraced in the present thesis. Laidlaw concludes that 'any discussion about how much agency "the acting subject" may or may not have is, roughly speaking, meaningless' (ibid: 163). The youths in this chapter are not independently changing the status quo, nor are they opposing anything. Laidlaw suggests that an alternative to the above discussed definitions of agency can be an ascribed

\textsuperscript{42} According to Laidlaw, this builds on Sherry Ortner (1984; 2006), and Ortner's work was inspired by Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1979) and Sahlins (1981). (Laidlaw 2010:144) I wonder whether Laidlaw includes De Certeau (1984) in this group. It seems likely, as his 1984 book is called 'The Practice of Everyday Life' and his theoretical assumptions are somewhat in a similar vein to the other writers mentioned.
'responsibility for particular happenings or states of affairs' (ibid.). For the informants in this thesis, as for anyone, 'these may include states of affairs they have rather limited capacity to influence' (ibid.). In this chapter, I focus on how they are embedded in structures and how they negotiate their positions simultaneously, whether in the present moment or in their future plans. This is discussed mostly through their own narratives. As we will see in the end of this chapter, when it comes to agency, just like when it comes to tactics, researchers tend to record actions that oppose structures. In the Introduction, Honwana was quoted as writing that educated students have powerful positions and do not experience waithood the way other young people do. At the time of the interviews in this thesis, the students were not directly opposing any kind of structure, nor directly changing the direction things are going. As this chapter and the next will show however, although they negotiate with structures to an extent in the present, most of their perceived agency lies in the future. Now, family expectations will be discussed, followed by nationality, ethnicity and migration, as outside influences on identity formation for the individual, as well as their perceived amount of agency.

Family Expectations

'You know, life is really tough, it is not easy since my dad passed [away], but somehow you find a way to make it work. And most of my relatives, they really depend on her [my mother], they come around [our] home and eat our food, sleep over, and you know .. they don't really help a lot .. But my mom can't really say anything, so she just goes with it. Yeah, that's why she wants to leave the country, so she can help her kids first and then the rest can follow. But that's Uganda, life is hard because so many people are suffering.' (Ryan, 15, Makerere College)

This quote from Ryan touches on a lot of interrelated topics. First of all it demonstrates that Ryan does not give up, even though she sees problems happening that she cannot influence. 'Somehow you find a way to make it work' recurs in the collection of data for this thesis almost like a mantra. Secondly, Ryan was currently living in boarding school, but it becomes apparent here that what happens at home still can make a student worry while they are at school; they are not isolated. Thirdly, since Ryan's mother is a doctor, her wish to leave the country shows not only that the brain drain first mentioned in chapter 3 is still going on, but also that dreaming of leaving the country is done by Ugandans of all ages. Fourthly, the quote displays the level of interrelatedness of not only the students and their parents, but also how other family members and community members can be highly influential in one's affairs.
Lastly, it demonstrates how the prevalent problem of high poverty rates in Uganda infiltrates any citizen's life, even if that individual him- or herself is in a high-ranking secondary school next to the most prestigious university in the country.

Expectations of parents and others are thus highly influential in the student's lives. Those expectations are however not always realistic. Lillian, 18, from Cornerstone LA, told me that she foresees a problem that will occur once she graduates university. We were talking about how to find a job after university, when she said: 'The moment you graduate[,] your family, they expect you to have much money, and if you don't give to them, they will say you are not my daughter anymore because you can't even support them.' In Lillian's case, her family is big and not rich, so she could end up in a similar situation as Ryan's mother, assuming that she procures an income for herself.

But expectations are not limited to certain kinds of families. Marina, 19, in Gayaza Highschool, told me that she feels guilty that her parents have to pay so much money for her schooling, which is why she planned to work as hard as she possibly could in school. 'You can never repay the school fees that your parents pay for you so you have to perform.' Marina was cited in the last chapter because she wants to study Petroleum Studies. She also told me that she initially dreamed of becoming a pilot. When she talked about being a pilot, her eyes started sparkling and her face lit up, and she said that she wanted to fly ever since she was a little girl, but at the end of the sentence she trailed off, sighed and said that her mother felt it was not a good career for her. So, she decidedly said, she had moved on to considering other options.

Stanley, 17, from Makerere College, would like to study psychology, and is currently taking the right combination of courses to follow that path. His father however works in Army Intelligence, and wants Stanley to study computer science, so he could have a future in Army Intelligence as well. In order to be able to apply for Computer Science, Stanley said he will take a course in computers in his holidays, after he finishes high school. He said he would find it hard because he did not really know much about computers, but he had to listen to his father.

Emma, 18, in Gayaza, wants to study agricultural business, and help farmers in Uganda get fair prices for their products. Her parents however want her to study law. She had tried to explain to her parents that she felt that it would be a waste of her time to study law, but her parents insisted that it could be a safety net. Therefore she hoped to study both subjects at the
same time, so that she could still pursue her dream job and at the same time respect her parents' wishes.

Expectations can come from extended family as well. Amanda, 18, in Makerere College, is an orphan supported by the American aid organization African Children's Choir. She initially said during the interview that she would either study Public Relations or Family Law. She seemed much more enthusiastic about PR though, and when I asked if law was a plan B, she said: 'If I do law it is for my grandma .. It would make her happy and she has suffered so much'.

Another Amanda who also attends Makerere College, also 18, said that the main topic she discusses with her girlfriends is how their parents do not understand them. She said that parents are against laptops and mobile phones and she felt that those items were important for her future. 'Our parents are holding us back and not changing with the times', she said, and she continued to explain that she wanted more freedom and less restrictions from her parents when it came to daily life as well as future expectations.

Some students however had no problems following their parents or families' expectations. John, 18, in Makerere College as well, wants to study Industrial Chemistry, because his father is a manager at Ugandan Breweries (a large beverages company). He has two older siblings, the first is a doctor, and the second is already studying Industrial Chemistry. He said he could either study in Algiers, where his brother studies Industrial Chemistry already, or at Makerere, and he still felt that that was a tough decision he had to further consider, but the topic of study was decided. I asked him whether his following his father and brother had to do with securing the right connections or with seeing what they do and liking it, but he shook his head and simply answered: 'I don't look further than Uganda and Algiers. Uganda is a growing nation, my future is here'.

Other students had creative dreams and were being supported by their parents on those. Lugs Redra, a student in Kansanga SSS, spent his free time performing in a dance troupe with his brothers. His dream was to inspire other youths with his dancing, and so he wanted to keep dancing after high school. He said that his mother lives in the Netherlands, and calls once in a while and listens to him and his brothers and shows great support for their plans. 'My mom encourages us to be creative', he said. VanVillia, 19, also in Kansanga wanted to

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43 Because this section is on families, it seems fitting to point out here that there are many orphans in Uganda, due to civil conflict and disease. See e.g. Yamano et al. (2006) and Harms et al. (2010) for studies on the high prevalence rates of orphans, their school enrollment rates, experiences and living conditions in rural Uganda.
become a lawyer, or an actress, or both. She felt that she would succeed at going to law school and acting school at the same time, and her parents would help her get through that successfully. 'My parents believe in me', she said with a big smile, 'they will support me whatever I choose'.

To sum up, parent and family attitudes can differ greatly. Mostly though, students expressed that their parents had plans for them to become successful in the future and although they were appreciative, they also experienced it as pressure at times. In this section it has thus been demonstrated that family expectations have a big influence when it comes to a student's identity formation and future plans, as well as that they have a big effect on the amount of agency a student experiences. Some students felt supported by their parents to follow whichever path they want, whereas others felt that their parents or families had strong opinions on what they should do in the future. Either way, they did not currently resist any structures, and whether they thought they were going to listen to their family's wishes or not, both options were in the future for them.

**Nationality, ethnicity and migration**

Since all four schools were in or near Kampala, a majority of all the students interviewed came from this region of Uganda. The students in Cornerstone LA came from all regions of the country, and in the other schools some students came from elsewhere as well. Uganda consists of course of different tribes, and sometimes tribal identity formed an identity marker for the students. Many also identified a 'home region', whether they had ever been there or not. Some said their parents or their mothers travelled 'back to the village', usually to keep some kind of business there going. An example of a student who stressed his 'tribal origin' is Helloboy, 17, in Kansanga SSS. He comes from a small tribe in Gulu district. He wished to study Tourism and Agriculture, and then become a tour guide in his district. He wanted to show his tribe's culture and how they live to tourists, in particular the ritual dances, of which he seemed extremely proud. He also wished to have 20 children when he was grown up, to help his tribe continue, because the tribe had become smaller in recent decades and he did not want his culture to disappear. Helloboy lived with an uncle in Kampala while his parents lived back in Gulu district, and he was expected to return home after attending university, preferably with a girl who he could marry. He planned to do exactly that, and seemed very enthusiastic about the plan.
A whole number of students came from other countries than Uganda. Students came from Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Sudan, and as earlier discussed one student had been born in India. Most of them had visited their respective home countries at least a number of times during holidays. The way they felt about the countries they had originally come from differed greatly, however. For example, Peter, 18, in Kansanga SSS, was from Rwanda and planned to not ever go back. He felt that Rwandan people were lazy, and he felt no respect for them, he said. On the other hand, MariaClara, also 18, in Kansanga SSS and from Rwanda, wanted to return at the age of 22, because then she hoped to have finished a tertiary degree. She said that it could still be dangerous there at times, but she felt at home there and loved the country and the people.

Other students had parents who already moved back to the home country, and as soon as they finished school they intended to do the same. Sammy, 20, from Kansanga SSS, was from Tanzania, and while his parents lived in Dar Es Salaam, Sammy lived with his uncle in Kampala. He dreamed of being a successful soccer player in Dar Es Salaam. He believed that to be an option there, unlike in Uganda, where he saw no money in soccer. He also wished to study in Dar Es Salaam, because there he could get a scholarship based on his nationality, he said. He gave the impression of feeling impatient about going back to Tanzania. Christine, 17, from Makerere College, gave a similar impatient impression. She is from Kenya, and while her father already moved back there, her mother was waiting for Christine to finish school before she would move back as well. Christine herself said that she wished to travel and live 'anywhere but here'. She did not really give a reason why, but she said a few times that she was 'tired of Uganda'. If she could not move to London, which she dreamed of, she would move back to Kenya.

Lastly Savanna, 18, at Cornerstone, is from Sudan, and came to Uganda for boarding school when she started secondary school. Her parents never lived in Uganda, but came to visit her a few times in the past five years. She also travelled back to Sudan in her holidays once a year. When I asked her if she wanted to move back to Sudan one day, she said:

In Sudan, people are not yet stable, things happened and they had to close the university, so it's better to study from here. (...) But of course I want to go back, I can't run away from my homeland, even if it's not

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44 Savanna did not clarify whether she came from what is since 2011 South Sudan, or 'regular' Sudan, and I did not ask, as I felt it was a sensitive topic and it was not crucial to her story. Therefore, note that technically, I am not sure of which Sudan she is speaking.
what people expect it to be, because you can't run away from your problem, the problem will catch up with you. (…) But I am afraid when I travel there because it's not safe.'

Another aspect to mention here is that many of the students, also many of the 'Ugandan' students, had parents who worked or lived abroad. Many mothers and fathers worked in surrounding African countries, as businessmen and women who in most cases imported goods, or as customs officers, chefs, or administrators. One parent was on a mission for the Ugandan army in the Democratic Republic of Congo, fighting against the Lord's Resistance Army. In two cases one of the parents lived in Europe. On the other hand though, as mentioned above, there were parents who lived 'back in the village', and some of those were described by the students as 'peasants' meaning most likely they are involved in subsistence farming. A third group of parents worked in Kampala in offices, the government, or were simply described as 'businessman' and 'business lady'. Some of the students who gave that answer were not exactly sure what kind of business that parent did, it was 'just business'.

As has been discussed in this section and the previous one, the identity of the individual student is embedded in their social environment. Widmark (2012) discusses identity formation in the context of the city, urbanization and migration in Bolivia. She states that '[i]t seems that questions concerning the role of identity and its consequences for power relations become more manifest in the city and in relation to urbanization processes' (2012: 82). This is visible for example in the accounts of Helloboy from Gulu district and the students who came from other countries than Uganda, whether they were positive or negative towards their homelands. Widmark additionally points out that 'personal and collective identities are shaped in a dialogue between ascribed, aspired and experienced identity' (ibid.: 83).

Furthermore, as Jorgensen and Phillips argue,

Even though knowledge and identities are always contingent in principle, they are always relatively inflexible in specific situations. Specific situations place restrictions on the identities which an individual can assume and on the statements which can be accepted as meaningful. (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 6, italics in original)

45 The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a group of rebel fighters or a guerilla army, depending on who you ask, that was very active in northern Uganda in recent decades, but has today dissipated and fled over several of Uganda's borders with neighbouring countries and is said to 'hide out in the bush' there. See Finnström (2008) for an extensive anthropological account of the LRA.

46 See Bbaale (2014) for a discussion on how big a percentage of the Ugandan population is involved in subsistence farming. Although the exact number is unknown, it is likely to be at the very least more than half of the population.
When discussing identity formation among youth, these are useful points to keep in mind. Just as in the last chapter choice was placed in the metaphor of a landscape in which an individual has a certain position and cannot oversee the whole, here Widmark as well as Jorgensen and Phillips point out that individual agency when it comes to identity formation is limited. In the next two sections, influence on agency by the schools will be further investigated.

**Schedules, Stress and Pressure**

Stress and pressure can run high when the school schedule is intense. Priscilla, 17, at Gayaza, first introduced in the last chapter as the girl whose friends help her pay for school, recently found out that she suffers from migraines. When the migraines would come up, she could not keep studying anymore, but had to lie down and close her eyes. She was very worried about this, and gave the impression that she felt that it was impeding on all her tasks, both in the schedule of the school, as well as the leadership tasks she was involved in. We will look more at leadership, role models and gender later in this chapter. For now, it is relevant to point out that the students worry intensely about their presents and futures, and that they all find different ways to deal with the stress and the pressure of being at school.

As hinted at in chapters 2 and 4, the daily schedules of all the students are intense. The school day in Gayaza Highschool is the longest out of the four schools. The girls at Gayaza have to start what they called 'silent study' in a homework room at five in the morning. At seven o'clock they get breakfast, and at eight the classes start. The classes run all day until seven in the evening, and then they have to go to the homework room again and do silent study until minimally nine o'clock, and they have to leave the room and go to the dormitory by eleven. After that, they still have to wash their uniforms and polish their shoes, but also sometimes do their hair, since in Gayaza the girls are allowed to grow their hair out, which is not the case in every school.

The students thus spend many hours a day in school. At this point, it is important to note what exactly they are working so hard for. To obtain A-levels in Uganda and gain the qualification to enter into a university, a student must sit for the UACE (Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education) exams at the end of Senior Six. During Senior Five and Six, a student takes five different courses, three main ones and two subsidiary ones. Since they only take five courses, the students often have several classes for each course in a day. Science
courses also have practical classes, outside of the more traditional lecture-style classes. One of the subsidiary courses is General Paper, which all students take, and for the other one, they take either Mathematics or Computer. The two subsidiary subjects each qualify for one point. The three main subjects, of which many combinations are possible but the combination of which generally leans either towards the Sciences, or towards the Arts, are each worth six points. This means that if you pass the UACE with the highest score you have obtained twenty points.

If you want to qualify for Makerere University, especially if you want to receive a government scholarship, you need the full twenty points and usually also come from a reputable school. The likelihood of admittance also depends on which major the student intends to choose. Some majors are very popular and they seem to have a system where they offer some qualified applicants a spot in another major than they initially intended. Passing both the subsidiary courses and one out of the three main subjects qualifies for admittance to other tertiary institutions, such as vocational schools.

What courses one takes and how important that is
In this section, how the students decided on what subjects to take in A-levels and what subjects they were taking will be discussed. As will be shown, this has important consequences for future options.

The subjects that were offered in all the schools were: Divinity, Economics, Entrepreneurship, Geography, History, Literature, Mathematics, Physics, and IT. Art was offered in Gayaza, Kansanga SSS and Makerere College but not in Cornerstone LA. In Kansanga SSS, students could also take Agriculture and Luganda. In Gayaza and Makerere College, Biology and Chemistry were offered; and in Makerere College, students could also take Food and Nutrition, Technical Drawing and French. In addendum 2, a table can be read that lists all students that were interviewed, and what combinations of subjects they took. There are too many possible combinations to be useful to list them all here, but a few will be highlighted.

Generally, there is a divide between Arts and Sciences. In Gayaza and Makerere College a common combination in Sciences was Biology, Chemistry and Physics with subsidiary Maths, and the students who took that usually wanted to become doctors. In Makerere College another common Science combination was Physics, Maths and Technical Drawing with subsidiary Computer, and those students dreamed of becoming architects. In Arts,
History, Economics and Literature or Divinity with subsidiary Maths was a common combination in Gayaza, Makerere College and Cornerstone LA, and those students generally wanted to become lawyers. Students who wanted to get involved in varieties of trade and business and administration usually took Economics, Geography and Maths, the latter either as a main subject (which implies that as a subsidiary you must take Computer), or as a subsidiary and then the third main subject was usually History, and a few times Art. With some students, Economics was substituted for Entrepreneurship, and some of those also did not take any Maths at all. Generally though, almost every single student in those three schools took Mathematics, if not as a main subject then as a subsidiary, regardless of whether they had an Arts or a Sciences combination. In Makerere College, only three out of 16 interviewed students did not take Maths at all, and those three wanted to become a manager, a journalist and an artist respectively. In Cornerstone LA, all interviewed students took Maths, and in Gayaza Highschool, one girl did not take Maths, but she did take Entrepreneurship, and accordingly wanted to become an entrepreneur.

Kansanga SSS forms the exception here. A majority (25) of the 30 interviewed students there took Arts combinations, and a total of 19 did not take any Maths at all, even though many of them wanted to study accounting or business administration. One of the students with the combination Geography, History, Art and Computer wanted to become either an engineer or an architect. In Sciences in Kansanga SSS, because subjects such as Biology, Chemistry or Technical Drawing are not offered, only two combinations were possible: Physics, Maths and Economics, or Physics, Maths and Entrepreneurship. The five students who took Sciences all wanted to become engineers, which is possible with that combination, if we leave grades and access out of the equation for the moment. It seems though that studying accounting without a basis of Mathematics in A-levels is significantly challenging.

In Makerere College, Gayaza and Cornerstone LA, the students said that they were recommended combinations depending on how they scored on their O-level exams. Subjects that they scored high on were chosen. In some cases this led to less common combinations, like in the case of Rachael (Makerere College) who took History and Literature in combination with Foods and Nutrition, which is a Science subject usually taken in combination with Chemistry. John who lived in Belgium for seven years, discussed in chapter 4, took Physics, Mathematics and French. Dorcus in Gayaza, wanted to become an accountant, yet she took Physics, Economics and Maths, which leans more towards
Engineering. Some students also said that they changed their future plans and expectations because of the subjects they had been recommend. In Kansanga SSS, the students were not guided as much, in my impression. Many students there said that they took subjects like Divinity, Literature or Luganda because they liked them. Generally, what courses a student took, which was not usually decided upon by the student him or herself, seemed to shape their future plans for studies and professions to a large extent. So far, this chapter has thus demonstrated how students are steered by their environments: their families and their schools.

Jeffrey (2012) in his article on 'Global Youth Agency', writes: 'The idea that young people have agency has become a type of mantra within social science … We are now well accustomed to reading stories of children and youth who protest against injustice … or who express agency simply through their own resourcefulness' (2012: 245). Jeffrey goes on to state that the definition of agency in social science when it comes to youth is changing. Where before, agency was often imagined as opposing 'the structure' (as also called the 'practice theory' approach by Laidlaw, discussed in the beginning of this chapter), now 'scholars have come to imagine agency in relation to multiple structures of dominance rather than with respect to a single form of oppression' (Jeffrey 2012: 246). As will be discussed below, this holds true when it comes to youth agency in Africa. Jeffrey lastly argues that 'youth agency can only be apprehended by understanding how children and youth navigate plural, intersecting structures of power, including, for example, neoliberal economic change, governmental disciplinary regimes and global hierarchies of educational capital' (ibid.). In the next three sections, aspects of life in which students have relatively more agency will be focused on.

Religion

Religion plays a big role in the lives of many of the students. It can be seen as something that can both limit and motivate a student's perception of agency. Of the Ugandan population, the majority is Christian, and a minority is Muslim. Muslim and Christian students at times had different views, most notably when it came to whether they considered polygamy as a future option. This will be further discussed in chapter 6. However, all the Christian denominations and Muslim students studied in the same schools, and that seemed not to matter to anyone. In Kansanga SSS for example, there was an hour set aside for prayer on Wednesday afternoon. There were about ten different classrooms in the school, and all classrooms were assigned a
denomination. When prayer hour came, all students and teachers and other staff of the school walked over to the classroom of their respective denomination, and prayed there. Smaller denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses or followers of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints were assigned the small classrooms, and bigger denominations such as Pentecostalism or the Church of Uganda (derived from the Church of England) got the biggest classrooms.

Similarly Cornerstone LA, a school owned by a Christian American organization, does not mind what religion the students follow. Esther, 18, said: 'They don't discriminate religions [in Cornerstone], all can come here and we pray together.' In Cornerstone LA they had 'fellowships' in the morning, of which I attended one. A student preached for about 15 minutes, and then all students sang together for the rest of the hour, mostly American popular gospel songs that I recognized from churches I attended as a teenager. A few students played drums in a corner of the classroom, and some students danced in front of the class and in the paths between the benches.

What seemed to matter most throughout all four schools was not which religion one follows, but that one is religious. In Gayaza, I interviewed Dorcus, 17, and when I had asked her all of my questions and asked if there was anything I had forgotten or left out, she looked up surprised, blinked a couple of times, and said: 'You have not asked about God … God, yes, I like God. He is good'. A similar thing happened with a student in Kansanga SSS, who seemed almost offended that I did not ask about her faith.

The faith that the students had seemed generally to help them and give them courage. Emily, 18, in Cornerstone LA, when talking about how her future plan would unfold, said, kind of between the lines: 'God makes way for those who serve', implying that she would be given opportunities in the future that she could not yet oversee today. Many students implied similar things. Prayer was also seen by many as a tool in reaching the things they dreamed of. Mercy, 18, in Makerere College for example, said that she wanted to go to Cambridge. I asked how she was preparing for that, and she fell silent and said hesitantly: 'I think I have to pray a lot'. By the end of that sentence, her face turned decisive again, and she added resolutely: 'Yes. Then it will work'.

Sometimes, faith also prevented students from certain actions. When I asked Lillian, 18, from Cornerstone LA, what kind of music she liked, she said that she only listened to Ugandan music, because that was safer. When asked to elaborate on that statement, she said:
'Westlife, Jay-Z, Beyonce, Rihanna, they are Illuminati and devil worshippers, so I don't listen to them for my safety'. She told me how she had heard the song 'Alejandro' by Lady Gaga on the radio and had thought it to be catchy, so she hummed it around her dormitory one time. She was told by another student that the song was bad and evil so she should not sing it anymore. I asked how she knew that those people were Illuminati, and she said that others had done research on the internet and told her about this to protect her from harm, therefore she felt that she should listen to their advice. She added, unsolicited, that if she would look it up herself she may see things she should not see, so it was better to 'believe those guys on their word'.

Another type of action that was sometimes prevented by faith, was having a girlfriend or boyfriend from a different denomination. Especially Christian-Muslim couples did not seem to always work out. Nobian Carol for example, 20, from Kansanga SSS, used to date a Muslim boy, but the young couple were separated by both sets of parents. Other students however had parents from two different denominations, including three students who had one Muslim parent and one Christian parent, so it seems that that is not always a problem. In chapter 6, the topic of love will be further discussed, since the majority of students were not currently in love or hoping to be, but did have plans for it in the future. In this section however, it has been demonstrated that religious beliefs can limit a student's experience of agency in both the present and the future, when they dictate who they can date or what music they can listen to. It has been furthermore argued that a student's faith can give them courage, to follow their dreams no matter what. 'God will help me', the title of this thesis, was a phrase said by an overwhelming number of students, when they were not sure how a part of their future plan was going to turn out.

**Extracurricular activities**

The schools tend to view sociality as something that is important to teach the students. They encourage the students to interact in numerous ways with one another outside of class. Esther, 18, said that to get into Cornerstone LA, a student is evaluated on their social skills during the interviews the school holds with them beforehand. 'They want to know your character and that you can socialize with everyone', she said, and she went on to stress the importance of getting along with all the students at the school, in order to be successful in school, and in later life.
All four schools had their own methods to try and get the students involved in extracurricular activities. Most focus was put on making music and dancing together. In Cornerstone LA, as discussed above, there were the morning fellowships, wherein the students danced and sung and prayed together with the whole class. In Kansanga SSS, the whole school together organized a music, dance and drumming festival on a Sunday afternoon in March 2014. All of the students were divided into four 'houses', with each house containing students from Senior One to Senior Six. Each house had to perform three different songs at the festival, and there were special dance numbers by all the students from the DRC, and all the students from Rwanda, regardless of their house. The houses practiced for weeks beforehand, and were secretive and giggled about it. The students told me a number of times in those weeks to go home now, because it was time to practice, and they did not want me to see the performances until the day of the festival. The students also felt competitive about it since the best house would win a trophy, and some students told me in informal conversations in the schoolyard that they really wanted to win that trophy because it was so 'big and shiny'.

As first mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Rachael's school Makerere College had a 'Miss Mappa' contest, which a student could win if she excelled at music, drumming, dancing and public speaking. Rachael said winning 'Miss Mappa' was a big honour, and she felt very proud of the achievement. In Makerere College there was also a music club, a drama club and a debate team.

In the interviews, I also inquired about the students' hobbies. Most of them mentioned reading, sports or music. Some students had specific interests; Brian, 18, from Makerere College, said that his hobbies were drawing, playing the piano and astronomy. All the students seemed to have been encouraged by the schools to read a lot of novels and other books in their free time, and while some enjoyed reading a lot, others told me that they felt like they had to read novels but they did not really enjoy them. A lot of students also mentioned listening to music (often American or African gospel music, some strongly preferred the one, others strongly preferred the other), or chatting with friends, in real life in the holidays or with fellow students during school, or on Facebook.

Extracurricular activities can also come in the form of little business ventures. Like Enoch, who makes glasses for tourists, who was discussed in the last chapter, some students actively are trying to create income for themselves already during school, so that they might
be able to fall back on that income after school. Miicrock An, 18, in Kansanga SSS for example, said that he had saved some money and bought a few pigs. He fed them and took care of them every day after school. This helped to supplement his own and his family's income, now and in the future.

**Leadership, role models and gender**

Generally, leadership roles and role models were divided along gender lines. In Makerere College for example, there were leadership tasks for boys, and equivalent leadership tasks for girls. Rachael, 17, was the 'headgirl' there, and there was also a 'headboy', who both were like class presidents. Rachael was also a peer-educator and a volunteer in her holidays. As a peer-educator, she informed girls about risks like pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, but also about topics such as their right to education. She expressed that girls in the countryside are taught to be quiet and that they should be helped to stand up for themselves, and that one way to do that is to inform them of their rights. In the Ugandan countryside, there is still a discrepancy between girls and boys when it comes to schooling. Jacky, 21, from Cornerstone LA, for example, attested to this difference with her personal background. She is a few years older than most students in Senior 6, and she explained why: 'I come from a village and my parents did not put me in school [at] first, because I am a girl. They put my brother first and then later I could go'. This happens more often, and girls also have a higher rate of dropping out during high school and never returning because of pregnancy or even menstruation, when they do not have access to sanitary products and do not want to go to school with blood on their uniform. Rachael however did not only wish to educate and develop girls, but equally boys should be paid attention to. She said that people from outside Uganda tended to favor girls when it came to creating opportunities. She wished to develop 'the confidence of all youths', so that they would be inspired to create or find opportunities for themselves. Other students with similar aspirations will be discussed in chapter 6, under Activism.

Wanting to be a good role model for others was something a few students other than Rachael expressed as well. Priscilla, 17, at Gayaza, earlier in this chapter mentioned because she feels a lot of pressure, talked extensively about how she wanted to be a good role model

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47 See Wells (2009).
48 See Wells (2009), Muhanguzi (2011) and Nimulola (2014) for studies on gender differences in schools in rural Uganda and Zelezny-Green (2014) for a study on gender differences in a school in Nairobi.
for younger students. She told me a lot about her own personal challenges, but stressed that she will not give up and keep working as hard as she can, because 'younger girls look up to you, so you have to set the good example'.

Other students found role models that they themselves could look up to. Brian, 18, at Makerere College, had read about a pediatric neurosurgeon, which had inspired him. He really looked up to that man and wanted to follow his example. In my interview with him, I asked what profession or job he would like to have, and he said: 'A doctor, well .. a surgeon actually .. yeah a surgeon .. (sigh) desperately…'.

Until relatively recently, gender differences in Uganda were quite traditional. It was common for husbands to work and wives to stay at home with the children. That situation has been changing, as more and more girls go to school and women work to support their family's income. As will be discussed further in chapter 6 when it will elaborate upon marriage and love, the students of both genders assumed that as grown-ups, they and their spouses would both work. Nana, 18, from Kansanga SSS, phrased it like this: 'these days are hard, a woman has to be working'. The majority of all the students interviewed were girls, and none of them wished to solely be housewives after getting married. The boys also did not want housewives. But we will come back to this topic in chapter 6. Here, it is important to note that even though all the girls wanted to be educated and work, some of them seemed to feel that their gender formed a limit to their ambition. Peace, 17, at Gayaza, told me that she planned to get a bachelors degree and then a masters degree, but that she had to get married before she graduated from the master's degree, otherwise it would become hard to find a husband. 'Men don't want an overqualified girl'. She said that she secretly wished she could also get a PhD, but felt that then men would be threatened by her, including her own (by then) husband, so she said she would not pursue a PhD. Her classmate Emma, 18, similarly said that it is hard for a career lady to find a good husband, as 'successful men want to marry uneducated or semi-educated women who will stay home and take care of the kids'.

Lastly, some female students were slightly feminist in their opinions, in a loose and non-academic definition of that term. Amanda, 18, from Makerere College, for example said that Uganda should have a female president and more women in leadership. She said: 'Britain has a queen and that works fine and she leads well .. so women in Uganda could lead too'. Patricia from Gayaza actually wanted to become the first female president of Uganda. Both of these girls' narratives will be further discussed in the next chapter. Clearly though, both of
these girls, as well as many others in Gayaza and Makerere College in particular, felt empowered to have successful careers, and although they acknowledged the traditional gender roles in Ugandan society, they had decided to change them through their own example. Education was surely a factor in this process, and possibly their school environments provided them with an enhanced experience of agency when it came to gender roles, relative to peers on a national level in their age-group.

**Identity Formation, Youth and Agency again**

In general, this chapter has shown so far that although students experience expectations and constraints, at the same time they can and do feel empowered to change things when they believe they should change. That experience of agency in their narratives however never relates to the present moment, but is always placed in a future. And thus the amount of agency that is sometimes ascribed to them by scholars, which is imagined to take place in the present, seems to be overestimated.

Bjarnesen (2013), in his dissertation on Burkinabé people who have remigrated to Burkina Faso after spending decades in Côte d'Ivoire, discusses works of earlier scholars on youth identities and agency in Africa at length. The first point he makes that is relevant to this thesis, is that the category of youth implies a hierarchy, where other members of society or the family who are older have influence over the individual. The position of a youth is thus 'a socially vulnerable position characterized by the lack of influence and independence' (Bjarnesen 2013: 195). This has been demonstrated in this chapter, by showing how the opinions of parents and teachers structured the individual's plans for the future to a significant extent. Secondly, Bjarnesen states, in accordance with Jeffrey above, that '[r]ecent works have shown that the position of youth should be understood as an actively constructed, and negotiable, social position rather than a fixed age or generational grouping' (ibid.). This also links back to Widmark's and Jorgensen and Phillip's accounts of identity formation more generally; identity, as well as positioning towards others, is renegotiated continuously. Bjarnesen thirdly discusses a number of previous works on African youth, and summarizes:

In these works, young Africans are actively trying to escape this [subordinate] position [in the hierarchy] by searching for employment opportunities, connections to influential and powerful patrons, by achieving different socially recognized roles through religious piety or political success. (…) In this sense, the literature on African youth focuses on individual social action: people do what they can to progress to a more desirable position that is often understood in generational terms. (2012: 195, emphasis added)
As Bjarnesen states, much of the literature on African youth is focused on individual social action. It follows that in the context of African youth, agency is thus assumed to stem from individual action and to actively go against the structure (the position in the hierarchy). Following this logic then, on the surface, very few of the students in this thesis can be ascribed any agency. Their school schedules (and in the case of the two boarding schools outside of the city, their physical locations) do not allow them to go out and actively seek opportunities and connections or achieve different types of status. They are instead working towards a form of status that the system or society already acknowledges, and if they complete their final exams as successfully as they intend to, this status will be ascribed to them. Like it was stated in the beginning of this chapter when Laidlaw was quoted, they can be viewed as one of those categories of people which social scientists can find troublesome to analyze: people that use their energy to succeed within the system. This first 'practice theory' definition of agency thus does not apply to the students.

The second definition of agency that Laidlaw discussed, the Actor-Network Theory focus on causality, does not apply to the students either. In the next chapter, we will see how they dream of changing things in their surroundings and leading the Uganda of tomorrow, but in their present moment in life, they do not (yet) have the ability to affect the state of affairs. This is why agency when it comes to youth is paradoxical, specifically in the present case. The youths do not (yet) possess the power or the knowledge to exhibit what social science defines as agency. Thus far in literature on African youth however, youths such as the ones in this thesis have (arguably inadvertently) been ascribed responsibility for things they have no control over, as in Laidlaw's third category of agency. The assumption that because they have more opportunities available to them than others, therefore they must have strategic agency, as first discussed in chapter 1, contains built into it the assumption that they can control their environment more than those others can. Although they are of course 'blessed' with useful networks and amounts of cultural capital, they themselves are not the ones that influence anything. All they themselves can do is pray that 'God will help them', in the face of uncertainty that surrounds them and is a constant factor in their lives.

In this chapter, the notions of youth and agency, as well as aspects of daily life and different markers in the students' forming identities have been discussed. The aim of the chapter has been to demonstrate that most of the agency the students experience, is placed by them in future scenarios, rather than in the present. Although the chapter in itself only contains a
limited and rather obvious argument, it seems necessary to have laid the ground work here for the theory in the next chapter and the conclusion. Agency especially is such a widely used concept in today's anthropology that I felt it necessary to discuss in which ways it is problematic, but also crucial in the present line of argumentation. In the last chapter, the student has been placed in the context of their access to information and their network(s). In this chapter, the student has been ascribed agency but not limitless or oppositional agency. In the next chapter then, the student's tactical thinking when it comes to their future plans, can be embedded into those frameworks of the individual and the group. It will also be clarified in that chapter how the present and the future are related through a theory on uncertainty, as was first mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.
Chapter 6: Future Plans

In this third and last ethnographic chapter, the futures the students were planning and hoping for are the central focus. I will discuss hopes of stable, secure jobs, dreams of love and families, and wishes to travel abroad, short or long term. Furthermore, the students expressed many wishes to influence their environments in more or less activist ways. In the last chapter, it was argued that the students' experience of agency lies mainly in the future, and this chapter will demonstrate many instances of students who dream of freedom or success. However, the central focus of demonstration in the chapter, is that the students negotiate between discourses on hope and uncertainties that surround them in daily life, to shape their future plans. The students' plans often point to a search for security. Perseverance, conceptualized by Povinelli (2011: 103) as a striving to change the conditions of an individual's present life, will be brought in as a concept to further analyze how the students keep dreaming of security in the face of uncertainty. Finally, conceptions of tactical agency and a return to uncertainty as conceptualized by Cooper and Pratten (2015: 2), as a productive force, complete my account of how students manage uncertainties. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that students manage uncertainties through negotiating between hopeful discourses that surround them, and the reality they witness in daily life as not always hopeful, by getting ready to employ tactics when the right moment arises.

I will start this chapter with a glimpse of discourse that surrounds the students, as well as a short discussion on the psychology of hope among Tanzanian school youths (Nalkur 2009).49 The discourse of hope that is internalized by individuals, explains some of the students' dreams. After the different dreams of futures have been laid out, the discussion will turn to the concept of perseverance, and the conceptions of tactical agency and uncertainty, which form the final theoretical point of this thesis.

The National School Anthem (Marching Song)

Chorus: We young men and women of Uganda
Are marching along the path of Education
Singing and dancing with joy together
Uniting for a better Uganda

49 Nalkur is a psychologist. I found that her research in this article is very relevant for the present thesis. In the article, she looks at the context surrounding the informants, in a large comparative qualitative study.
Part I: We are the pillars of tomorrow's Uganda
Let's rise now, embrace true knowledge
Yielding discipline, resourcefulness
To rebuild the Great Great Pearl. **Chorus**

Part II: We know the way into the land of enlightenment
Has thorns, Creepers, Vales and Mountains
Come what may, we shall overcome
For the glorious times to come. **Chorus**

Part III: Parents and Teachers and Youths of this Nation
Rise with us to support our endeavours
Led by God who's the source of Life
To Uplift Our Motherland. **Chorus**
(Cited from Ssekamwa (2001, n.p.))

As becomes apparent from the lyrics of this national school song, and as was also hinted at in chapter 3, Ugandan education is surrounded by discourses on youth being 'the pillars of the nation' and having extremely bright futures ahead for themselves and the country. This discourse is relevant in the context of the students' futures. It ties into their own expectations but also those of others, which have been illustrated in the last chapter. It is good to keep in mind during this chapter that the students are surrounded by this extremely hopeful discourse.

**The psychology of hope among youths and strategic agency**

In an article on hopefulness among Tanzanian youth, Nalkur (2009) compares three groups of youths in towns in the Kilimanjaro region: street youths, former street youths and in-school youths. She contends that 'hope is relative to the context in which youth live' (2009: 672). The mean age of her groups lies around 14 years old (ibid.: 673). The results of her large scale research suggest that among street youths, hope tends to come from others caring for you or about you; whereas with school youths, hope came from within, informed by the idea that working hard for academic goals would lead to success (ibid.: 678-9). Former street youth display a mix of those, and stressed a desire for belonging, being accepted as 'normal' by
society (ibid.: 678). Nalkur writes that the former street youth both wished to be helped and to help others, and said things like: 'When I am grown up, I will have a good job and I will help other children, just as I am being helped' (ibid.: 683). They were also the group with the strongest tendency to 'rel[y] on a belief in God to bring about hope' (ibid.). The school youths generally were self-assured and believed that if they worked hard, they would succeed (ibid.: 684).

One would expect that the Ugandan students in this thesis would give similar answers to those of the in-school youths in Nalkur's research, but this is not the case. A possible reason why the school youths in Nalkur's research and in my own do not have the same outlook, is that the Kampalan A-level students are a few years older. There is an obvious difference between being in the last year of primary school or the early years of secondary school, and being in the last year of secondary school, both in terms of maturity of the individual, and in terms of having an obvious path laid out ahead of you. Another possible reason is that the students in Kampala are in a larger scale of competition than students in a small town in a rural area, and they are possibly also more aware of the competition because it is present in the city all around them.

A final reason can be found in the way hope is defined in Nalkur's research. She writes:

> According to hope theory (Snyder 1994), hope involves three components: first, an individual has goal-oriented thoughts; second, the individual produces strategies to achieve those goals (called pathway thinking); and finally, the individual has motivational thoughts that sustain effort toward goals (called agency thinking). (Nalkur 2009: 670)

As we will see in this chapter, the first component, goal-oriented thoughts, and the third component, agency thinking, are more than present in the A-level students. They have five and ten year plans, follow courses that lead to a certain specialty, and have specific ideas on how to reach the futures they are wishing for. But as also will be demonstrated below, the second requirement (producing strategies) is not met in their environments, because big gaps keep existing in the strategy that are filled in by 'God will help me' or 'then I will pray hard'. Although that can arguably be called a strategy, it cannot be equated with strategic agency. To reiterate, Honwana (2005), drawing on De Certeau, writes that 'the exercise of a 'strategic' agency would imply a basis of power (…). It would also require mastery of the larger picture, of the long term consequences of (…) actions, in the form of political gain or benefits/profits'
As chapter 5 has argued, the students do not possess this kind of power or agency. The rest of this chapter will demonstrate a negotiation between students' hopefulness, expressed in goal-oriented and motivational thoughts, and uncertainties that prevent strategic agency.\footnote{Since the concept of uncertainties has been extensively discussed in the introduction to the thesis as one of the central arguments of the thesis, and in the introduction to this chapter, this discussion will not be reiterated here; rather, at the end of the chapter when all theory is tied together, it will be discussed again.}

**Hopes for professions and jobs**

The most common professions that students aspired to were business administration (or accounting), law and engineering. These three jobs were considered by the students to be the most stable jobs in the Ugandan economy.\footnote{I would like to acknowledge that at a party that I attended during my stay in Kampala, a Ugandan acquaintance pointed out to me that the jobs mentioned here also resemble the professions Ugandans could have under the colonial administration. The acquaintance said that back in the day, one could aspire to be a teacher, an engineer, an administrator for the colonial government, or a lawyer's assistant. I have not found any literature on this topic, and I do not want to build an argument based on a single statement; therefore I chose to leave this aspect out of my line of argumentation altogether. As I do see the relevance of this statement, I note it here as something that might be researched in the future.} Business administration was, most times it was mentioned, a goal because it was seen as a secure job. Many students said things like 'There will always be businesses, so administrators will always be needed'.

Lawyers also were seen as something that will always be needed, but the job was additionally desired because it involved exerting influence. Many students who wanted to be lawyers wanted to do so because they had 'a passion for justice' or because they wanted to 'fight for the weak'. Pauline for example, 18, Cornerstone LA, wants to be a lawyer and 'fight for the rights of women and children'. She said that she had witnessed a lot of domestic violence growing up, and she also wanted to 'fight against domestic violence'. She stressed that 'children have a right to education and a right to a good life', and she felt that becoming a lawyer would give her the power to fight for these human rights.

Students who wanted to become engineers, often wanted to be civil engineers. Some knew that term, others said 'I want to construct roads and bridges'. In this direction, a level of job security was also imagined, because there would always need to be more roads and bridges.

These three aspired professions together, administrator, lawyer and engineer, were named by almost two-thirds of the students (39 out of 63 interviewees). It must be noted that many named several options though, and that the mention was one of their options. Three students named lawyer and business administrator as the two options they were choosing.
between. One student named both engineering and law. Clearly, security in a job is high on the wish list for the students.

In Cornerstone LA, seven out of eight mentioned one of these three. In Kansanga SSS, about a third of the thirty interviewed students named one of the three, but eight students also mentioned wanting to be a journalist or radio/tv presenter. Seven wanted to own a small or large business, and two wanted to be fashion designers.

In Gayaza and Makerere Highschool, there was somewhat more variety, likely due to the fact that they offer more combinations. In Gayaza, three out of nine wanted to be lawyers, one a business administrator and one an engineer. One wanted to be a doctor, two wanted to be business ladies, and one wanted to be a fashion designer. In Makerere College, out of the sixteen interviewed, three wanted to be doctors, three architects, two computer scientists and two wanted to work in Public Relations.

Sometimes, students named something very specific, and that was usually because they knew someone who had that job. Babyshow, 23, in Kansanga SSS, was adamant that he wanted to work at border customs. When I asked why, he said his uncle worked there and could get him a job. Another example is the aforementioned John, 18, from Makerere College, who wanted to be an Industrial Chemist, because his older brother studied that and his father worked for Ugandan Breweries. Others however seemed to have come up with their specific ideas on their own. Mercy, 18, Makerere College, wanted to be a lawyer at first but then changed her mind to a forensic detective or criminologist. I will come back to why later in this chapter, under Activism. Rachael, also at Makerere College and discussed in the introduction, wanted to become a 'Public Relations officer in the field of Aviation', because she liked both public speaking and airplanes. Airplanes seemed to attract more interest, as two girls at Gayaza also named working for an airline as one of their options. All three of these girls felt that a profession in aviation was to be found outside of Africa, because 'in Africa aviation is small'.

Some students dreamed more of artistic professions. Enoch, from Makerere College, who was mentioned before, wanted to be an artist. Lugs Redra, from Kansanga, wanted to be a dancer. Two female students dreamed of acting careers (one in Kansanga SSS and one in Makerere College), and one young man in Kansanga SSS wanted to be a musician. As mentioned above, a number of students wanted to design fashion, both boys and girls.
There was a difference in opinion among students whether owning your own business or working for a company was more beneficial. Some students wanted to get work experience in a company and then start their own business as soon as possible, so that they had 'more freedom'. Others, particularly a few 'future business administrators' from Kansanga SSS, said that they wanted to work in a big firm, as big as possible. They felt that then there was less chance of the firm going bankrupt, and there were more ways to 'advance' (get ahead) and to keep doing new interesting work as one goes higher up in the firm.

Some students were planning on having small businesses in the holidays between Senior 6 and university. Sonya Lillien from Kansanga SSS wanted to bake cakes, Savanna from Cornerstone LA wanted to sell chapatis by the side of the road, and Miirock An, who was stated in chapter 5 to already keep pigs at home, wanted to start making and selling soap. Some seemed excited about the prospect of their own little business, but others, including some who said they would become businessmen and women later in life as well, seemed to feel that they had no other choice. Jacky in Cornerstone LA said: 'Many in Uganda are self-employed, it is hard to get jobs … so you have to self-employ'. Many of the students who took the subject Entrepreneurship gave as a reason for taking the subject, that it was important for them to know how they could start their own business, if it was needed in the future. This is an example of how students manage uncertainties by considering alternate paths in the future.

**A small note on successfulness**

At this point, it is useful to point out that many of the students interviewed talked about wanting to be successful. During my interview with Miirock An in Kansanga, which was early on in the research, he talked about how he felt it was very important to be successful and a 'big man', and I asked him: 'successful how? … What area do you want to have success in?' He did not understand my question. I tried to clarify: I mean, do you want to be successful in academics, like maybe be a professor, or do you want to be a musician that everybody knows, or do you want to play sports, or … what do you want to be successful in?' I could see in his face that he still did not really understand. He thought for a while, and said: 'I want to be successful and have money.' I, stubbornly, asked: 'yeah but how do you want to make that money? How will you be successful?' All of a sudden he seemed to understand what was going wrong in the communication. 'Here in Uganda, having money *is* being
successful’, he said. ‘Money is important.’ He left it at that, folded his hands, and waited patiently for the next question.

**Dreams of love**

‘This school can change your plans. I wanted to get married after university but Madam Sara [the headmistress of the school] told us it is bad to get married right after university, you may forget about your family, you may only care about your husband, you may not be able to go for further studies, for masters, you may not advance or get the good career. So now I don’t know what I will do.’ (Lillian, 18, Cornerstone LA)

Honwana (2012) writes with regard to youth in Africa that:

Sexuality and courtship constitute important sites of identity formation and the negotiation of notions of manhood and womanhood, and formerly unquestioned gender norms and identities are altered to fit young people’s unprecedented social positions. These new emerging patterns of sexuality, courtship and marriage are challenging dominant notions of masculinity and femininity in these societies. (Honwana 2012: 17)

In other words, because society structures are rapidly changing, gender norms and identities are changing as well, and a new space appears for challenging older generations' ideas. In the case of high school students in Kampala, Honwana's statement appears to be relevant. An example is the question of how many children the students wanted to have. Generally, students replied that they wanted 'a few' or 'not many' children, most students wanted two or four. A single exception to this pattern was Helloboy, discussed in chapter 5, who wanted to have twenty children (with one wife) to help his tribe repopulate. Some students said that they wanted four children, but if they would not have much money, they would only have two. Many of them stressed that it was important to have relatively few children so that you can properly provide for each one of them. This was never overtly positioned as a critique on their parents, but can be understood as such. A majority of students came from large families, with six to twelve children. Some came from polygamous families in which the father had taken several wives at the same time; others had a single mom because their parents had divorced, and their father had moved away or married a new woman. There were students who were vague about how many siblings they had, and others who genuinely did not know how many there were, because they had lost contact with their fathers, or sometimes their mothers, or because the father or mother themselves was vague about how many children
they had. Other students were orphans, as was briefly touched upon in chapter 5. Amanda, 18, from Makerere College for example, had three older sisters in Makerere university and was being sponsored by the African Children's Choir. Her parents had had six children together, but had unknowingly become infected with HIV after the third child was born. Amanda herself was the fifth-born child, and said that the fact that she was not HIV-positive was 'a miracle from God'. The siblings directly above and below her had passed away, as well as her parents, and so now, she had her three sisters in Makerere University. Some students lived with an auntie or uncle, or an older sibling, because parents had passed away or left. A few of those students said that they had been illegitimate children, born outside of the marriage of their parent, and so they had been sent to live with another family member. Three female students with single moms said that their fathers leaving their mothers had really hurt their mothers, so now they themselves were doubting whether they should get married in the future at all.

For the majority of students, love was a matter for the future. Some said they had a boyfriend or girlfriend, but those couples generally did not get to see each other very much during the school year, because of distance, but also because the school schedules simply did not allow it. It also did not always seem to be very serious relationships. One of the girls at Cornerstone LA told me a long and complicated story about how a boy that she was friends with had asked her to be his girlfriend, and she felt that she could not refuse, so now she had a boyfriend, but it was not the boy she had wanted in the first place, and she had moved away to Cornerstone LA, so now she had not seen him in over a year, and she wondered whether they would break up after high school, but she assumed that they would. I am not sure she experienced a lot of choice in these matters. On the other hand, she was only 18, and still figuring it out, like all teenagers the world over. Relatively, the highest number of students who said they were in a relationship were in Kansanga SSS. This is possibly also because that was the only school with no boarding facilities, and all the students are day students. A girl in Kansanga SSS told me for example that she had a boyfriend in the first year of university who lived on campus in a dorm room, and sometimes on Sunday night, she would tell her parents that she went to her friend's house to study, but she would really go to her boyfriend's dorm room and they would kiss. These kinds of things are significantly harder to do if you are living at a boarding school. Makerere College, although in the city, had a fence around the compound with a guard by the entrance, so it would be equally difficult for a student to
leave. Other students seemed to have had bad experiences already. Peace, 18, from Kansanga SSS, used to have a boyfriend that she really liked, but he cheated on her. Now, she said softly, she was not sure anymore that anyone would want to marry her. She did still hope to get married though, 'some day'. Dolphy, 18, in Kansanga SSS, said that she wanted to get married, but that her best friend had a boyfriend and sometimes came to school crying. So, Dolphy was not sure yet if love is for her, and not ready yet. Rachael from Makerere College said that she would start thinking about marriage when she was 'ready to deal with the consequences … like pregnancy … then I will think about it, when the right time comes'.

Generally, students said they wanted to get married in their late twenties. Girls said on average that 26 was a good age, boys wanted to get married around 29. Many students thought that near the end of university was a good time to get a girlfriend or boyfriend. The plan implied that one would get to know that person for several years and then get married in the late twenties. Although many students came from polygamous families and a number of Muslim male students were interviewed, only one said that he would want more than one wife, 'but', he added shyly, 'only two'. He even had thought out a plan in which he would sleep at the one wife's house three nights a week, at the other wife's house three nights a week, and then on Sunday he would sleep alone. He had not figured out where the bed to sleep alone in would be located, maybe he needed to rent an apartment for that, but he was not sure he would be able to afford three houses. He would think about it more, he said. Other students had specific ideas about who to marry, like Gracevic, 19, from Kansanga, who thought that 'you should only marry doctors or bankers'. She said that this is because they have stable jobs. Sonya Lillien, 18, from Kansanga SSS, wanted to marry a 'pregnant ladies doctor' as she called it, because he would have a stable job ('ladies always get pregnant') and he could help her deliver their children at the same time. He would also have respect for women, she thought. MariaPaira, 18, also from Kansanga SSS, was the only female student who wanted to get married at the age of 40. Her plan was to marry a white man, that she would meet in church. I asked her if there were currently any white men attending her church, and she said no, but added that God would provide her with the right one. Wycleff, 16, at Makerere College, hoped to marry a white lady. Isaacs Goody, 18, Kansanga SSS, also wanted to marry a white girl, and move back to Gulu with her and start a farm. He was very negative about love however, he said girls were not to be trusted, they 'just love boys for their

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52 Polygamy in Uganda is most often seen in Muslim families.
money', and 'love sucks'. Marrying a white lady was 'his only chance to find love', he felt. On the other hand, Marina, 19, at Gayaza, did not want to get married at all because 'I grew up knowing that boys are liars'. Trust issues seemed to play a part on either side of the gender divide, as more students mentioned them. Patricia from Gayaza, the one who wanted to become the first female president of Uganda, did not want to get married because 'there is not enough time in a lifetime'. She had so many career related hopes and dreams that she felt that she would not have time to get married.

Esther, 18, from Cornerstone LA, said: 'I don't like marriage. I want to stay single. My mom got hurt when my father left. I want to make a school for disadvantaged children and then I can care for them'. Even though many students told me that it is not really accepted for a young woman to live alone, because she traditionally lives in her parents house until marriage, Esther saw no problem with that. I asked her if she would move to campus, and after that where she would move, and she replied: 'After university, when I start working and earning, then I can move and live alone'.

None of the girls or guys thought that they would be in a marriage in which the woman did not work. Nana was quoted in the last chapter as saying that married women should work, and here two boys' opinions will be discussed. When I asked Babyshow, 23, Kansanga SSS, whether he thought his future wife should work, he yelled, surprised at the question perhaps, 'yes of course!' He then paused for a moment, before he added: 'she has to work, whether she wants [it] or not. When a woman who doesn't work comes into your family, it's the beginning of poverty'. Journalist 53, 19, from Kansanga SSS, said that he wanted to get married at 30, to a girl who was 18. She would have to work, 'you have to have a working wife', but he also said that 'men think if the woman works she will cheat [on] you'. He did not know how to solve this dilemma himself.

Wishes to travel
The most common topic students brought up, as there were no questions about this in my interview guide at all, was wishing to travel abroad. Some wanted to study abroad, others wanted to migrate later on in life, or just go on vacations. Some wanted to return to Uganda, others hoped they never had to.

53 That's the nickname this student chose.
First we will take a look at studying. When talking about universities, the majority of the students said that they aspired to study at Makerere University. This makes sense, as it is by far the largest university in the city and in the country. However, as will be discussed in the next section, some saw studying at Makerere University as the ultimate goal; others saw it as a last resort. Those who saw it as a last resort, had extended plans to study abroad.

Sandy, 21, from Gayaza, had probably the most definitive plans on studying abroad. She wanted to study airline business management or fashion and interior design at the University of Kansas. In the holidays before Senior Six, her father took her on a tour of colleges in America, and she liked the University of Kansas the best. After university, she wanted to work for an airline, 'but of course not in Africa', and also wanted to open up boutiques all over the world with her fashion designs. Rachel, 18, in Gayaza, wanted to be either a doctor or a nutritionist. She wished to study in Canada or in Australia, but she had heard that Australians are racist, and she was worried about that. She hoped she could also have a pleasant stay in whichever country she would study.

Sometimes the students' logic was hard to follow. Dorcus, 17, from Gayaza, wanted to study anywhere abroad, except for India or China. When I asked why not those countries, she replied: 'China is basically an engineering country'. Dorcus, who wanted to study Auditing and Accounting, felt like China would not be the right place to do that. Brian, 18, from Makerere College, wished to study in Abu Dhabi or Sasquetchuan, to become a surgeon. When I asked him why he wanted to go to those two places specifically, he replied that you have 'the freedom to express yourself outside [outside Uganda]'. How he had heard of Sasquetchuan and Abu Dhabi specifically, or why he had stuck to those ideas, is a mystery to me. Similarly, Christine, 17, Makerere College, dreamed of living and studying in London, because she loves dancing. She thought that in London she could go dancing a lot and that would make her happy. She also wanted to see the buildings there, as she wished to become an architect. London would give her inspiration, and then when she came home to Uganda, she would design beautiful buildings, she said. Vanessa, 18, Makerere College, also wanted to travel to see the buildings; but she preferred to study architecture at Makerere University rather than abroad.

Some students, like Stanley, 17, Makerere College, wanted to do a bachelors program in Makerere University and then go abroad for a masters. This is generally an easier route than
going abroad straight after high school; also in terms of finding funding for the high cost of studying abroad.

Miirock An, 18, Kansanga SSS, planned to go to vocational school in Uganda and get skills. He either wanted to be an engineer, make soap, or design posters. He dreamed of going to the US one day and building a better life there from scratch. Sheilah Shantel, 19, Kansanga SSS, dreamed of one day living in Switzerland and owning her own big hotel.

As the reader may have noticed, the students' dreams of going abroad are heavily tilted towards the 'West', and are based on assumptions of 'better lives'. As was discussed in chapter 3, this is far from a new attitude in the Ugandan context. Amanda, 18, from Makerere College, put the sentiment into words: 'In Uganda jobs are scarce, many people have the same degree, so if you go out [abroad] at least you have a chance'. At the end of this chapter this will be further discussed.

One university viewed from nearly opposite perspectives
As mentioned briefly in the last section, Makerere University holds a double position in terms of esteem. In the richer schools, Makerere was considered the Plan B if all else failed, in the poorer ones, it was considered the ultimate dream.

Christine, 17, Makerere College, would only go to Makerere if there was no other choice. Emma, 18, from Gayaza even said: 'If you have to go to Makerere, you have to accept your situation. That is not what you are working for .. but it happens'. Some students felt there was a problem with the education one would get at Makerere. Rachel, 17, at Gayaza, said that she would rather go study in Mbarara (in western Uganda), because 'It is not good to study at Makerere, because in Kampala there are too many distractions.' However, Nelson, 19, from Makerere College, said that 'Mbarara is not as good as Makerere'. Nelson, who wishes to become a dental surgeon, told a long story about how the quality of Makerere has gone down in the past decades, but that it is still ranked 10th in Africa, and therefore, it was good enough, and better than the other universities in Uganda. On the other hand, Nelson's classmate John, 18, said: 'I am a person who values quality, so I can't study medicine from [at] Makerere. There is no quality there'. John wished to move to Algiers for his studies instead. Their other classmate Wycleff, 16 (he skipped a class), also thought that Makerere is

Note that in vernacular use, Makerere University tends to get shortened to Makerere, whereas Makerere College, the high school, gets shortened to Macos. When in this section it says Makerere, the university is meant; when referring to the high school, I will write it out as Makerere College, as I have done throughout this thesis. This is also mentioned in the List of terms in the beginning of the thesis.
declining in quality, and therefore did not consider it as an option. He was also not interested in any kind of scholarships, because 'they come with constraints and I do not feel like doing what they tell me to do'. He researched schools online, and felt that Abu Dhabi, Shanghai or Malaysia were good places to study in.

The other view of Makerere makes it sound almost like a heavenly place. From the interview with Esther at Cornerstone LA:

Me: Which university do you think you want to study from [at]?
E: I want to go to Makerere, I went there one time when I was in O-levels. I love the school, the compound is great .. so yeah .. I want to go there. (…)  
Me: Do you hope to get a scholarship for Makerere?
E: I hope so .. yes  
Me: If you wouldn't get one, can you still go?
E: If there is money I can, but I think there will be money so I can go, because I love that university

Esther seems to judge the university by a different set of standards than the students above. Her classmate Emily said: 'I don't know what I will do but I need to go there [Makerere]'. The sentiment and undertones here are opposite to those of the students described above.

One negative aspect of Makerere that only the students in Makerere College mentioned, was that they felt there were too many strikes on campus. When I asked them who was striking on the campus, they did not seem to know exactly. Since their school is on the same hill as the university, I assume that any time there was any kind of strike, news of this reached the students in the high school as well. The students of the other schools never mentioned anything about strikes. The students at Gayaza also seemed not aware of them at all. This is an example of how 'hot knowledge', discussed in chapter 4, can reach some networks but not others, and it does not necessarily follow that those with the most assumed cultural capital have the most accurate information.

**Activism**

The last constellation of future plans discussed in this chapter, I have dubbed activism. Note that this is my term, not the students'. The plans in this section link most strongly back to the National School Anthem quoted in the beginning of this chapter. In the song, youths that are 'marching along the path of education' are described as the 'pillars of tomorrow's Uganda',
who will together with their parents, teachers and peers, 'rebuild the Great Great Pearl' and 'uplift our Motherland'. The plans clearly reflect such hopeful intentions.

Some of the students were dissatisfied with national politics in different ways. Patricia from Gayaza, who was earlier quoted as wanting to be the first female president of Uganda, had an elaborate plan on how she would influence the state. Before becoming president, she intended to both study law and be a military soldier. Patricia stated that the army had been 'antagonizing the people' in the north of the country in recent history, and as a lawyer and soldier, she could exert her influence to make sure that would not happen again. Her wish was to 'use the law to put the army right'.

Mistrust in politicians or government was present among other students too. Fabulous Nicole, 18, from Kansanga SSS, said she wanted nothing to do with politics ever, because 'politicians aren't good'. Her classmate Sharock Holms on the other hand, also 18, wanted to become a politician and a talkshow host. She said 'I want to be the voice of the poor'. She even felt that 'we need a revolution', and that she could help in bringing it about if she was on television.

Mercy, 18, Makerere College, wished to become a criminologist, or as she called it a 'forensic detective psychologist'. She wanted to be a lawyer first, but changed her mind because she has 'a passion for justice'. She said that many people get framed for crimes they did not commit because the government officials have money, 'and these people, poor people, are suffering for them'. As a criminologist or forensic detective psychologist, she could discover and scientifically prove who had really committed the crime. She furthermore wanted to become involved in politics by becoming an independent youth MP. She had already considered starting with that last year, but had decided to put it off and focus on school first. She stressed that she wanted to run independently, and not with the NRM because 'they are all about money and corruption'.

Other students had wishes for development regardless of politics. John, 18, in Makerere College, wanted to be an architect. Even if he would go abroad for studies, which he hoped for, he would definitely return to Uganda afterwards. 'I would like to develop my country ..

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55 See Finnström (2008).
56 National Resistance Movement, the party of President Museveni, who has been in power since 1986. The party is in effect the only political party, as the government inhibits opposition parties from forming. See Goodfellow and Titeca (2012: 266).
Uganda is a peaceful place, I would like to see it grow up'. He dreamed of designing new big buildings in downtown Kampala. Emma, 18, at Gayaza, similar to John, wanted to combine her business aspirations in the field of agriculture with a type of activism. She wanted to develop the processing of agricultural products in Uganda, so that people could get a fair price for the products they are selling. In particular for poor farmers from Gulu, northern Uganda, her 'home region', she wanted to do this. Her plan was to get education abroad, 'in an unpopular country' (a country that most of her peers would not think to apply in) and then come home. 'Get advancement there, bring it over here'.

Amanda, 18, Makerere College, did not wish to study abroad, but wanted to study at Makerere, just like her three older sisters. She had a plan to start a small business during her bachelors where she would train and employ street children as typists. She explained that many students in Makerere have to hand in their assignments typed, but prefer to do the writing by hand. So, she planned to buy a few laptops that the children would be able to use for typing up written assignments for a fee. This way, the children would learn a skill, and get a wage for their work, while she would earn a little bit of money and the students did not need to rent equipment to type up their assignments. She felt like it was a win-win situation for everybody.

Beth, 18, Makerere College, had a similar win-win type of plan. She wanted to make a movie in her next vacation. The movie would be about a poor rural child who finds a sponsor who helps the child afford to go to school. She hoped to inspire Western people to start sponsoring or keep sponsoring children in Uganda. At the same time, she wanted to send the movie in to Oxford, which she had already applied for, hoping that it would help her get into their Journalism program.

Other students had plans in earlier stages of development. Juma Saf, 18, Kansanga SSS, wanted to start a charity. He did not know exactly what the charity would be for, but he just really wanted to help the people in his environment. He also dreamed of becoming a lawyer. He said: 'I know I have to take care of many people, so I have to get a good job. Then, when I have a good job, I can help others.'

A last type of activism was more in terms of personally inspiring others with a certain point of view. Lugs Redra, 18, Kansanga SSS, wanted to earn his living as a dancer. He was

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57 I would like to point out that that is not a far-fetched idea; at the time of fieldwork, new big buildings were constantly being built in Kampala.
already in a dance troupe which he formed together with his brothers. Through the performances that they did during various community and church events, he wanted to 'inspire the youth to not do drugs'.

Kagame, 19, Kansanga SSS, took a religious approach. He talked about how he felt that people were focusing too much on the problems in life and not the good things. He was an orphan himself, and had seen some hard times, but tried to get others to not focus on the sad things in life, but instead only on the happy ones. He became a born-again christian a few years ago, and he said that his church taught him that 'you have to be positive in everything'. He now tried to teach others the same, and to inspire them with his own story of overcoming challenges.

**Perseverance**

Kagame's inspirationally intended story of overcoming challenges, ties in with the concept of perseverance. Povinelli (2011), in her book on endurance and perseverance in 'late liberalism', discusses a film called *Killer of Sheep*, by Charles Burnett, produced in the late 1970s. The film is about Stan, who works in a slaughterhouse that is 'Fordist in its mode of production, racist in its stratification of skills' (ibid.: 102). The film shows Stan trying to build a car,58 and failing to get the needed parts to where the car is being built, without the parts breaking on the way (Povinelli 2011: 102-103). At the end of the film, Stan is in the same position, working at the slaughterhouse, but nonetheless Burnett argues that his film was hopeful. Povinelli writes:

> What is hopeful about Stan is his perseverance - he "has decided to persevere and fight on despite society's place for him." (…) We might say that Stan stares in the face the question of how to endure as he strives to persevere. But it is important to note that Stan himself would like to change the conditions in which he strives - he is striving to change the conditions in which his perseverance occurs. (ibid.: 103, emphasis in original)

This also applies to the Ugandan students. They work day and night to get the best grades, to get the funds needed for university, to get a good job. Stan and the Ugandan students alike are trying to get to a place where they need no longer to endure and persevere, and are working as hard as they can to get there. In the students' case, this requires them to compete

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58 The car is symbolic here as a sign of potential upward mobility, see also Gilroy (2010: 5-54) for an analysis on how the car played a vital role in African-American upward mobility throughout the twentieth century.
with one another, praying and waiting for better conditions, or for good conditions to continue.

The Gayaza girls told me: 'They [the students from other schools] want to get the scholarships for university, but we will get them. They want to go out [outside of Uganda, usually meaning towards a Western country] but we will go'.\(^{59}\) Most likely, they were right in their predictions. At the same time, stories of the unexpected loss of one or both parents (a few examples are Priscilla in Gayaza; Kamusa in Kansanga SSS; Amanda in Makerere College; Savanna in Cornerstone LA), of an unexpected drop in grades (among others Christine in Makerere College; Lillian in Cornerstone LA), or even of simply a family background in which resources have to be shared and there are not enough to go around, make apparent that the statement from the Gayaza girls can be interpreted alternatively as 'wishful thinking'. It becomes then another form of negotiation with the same uncertainty.

**Uncertainty and tactical agency**

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated that 'present and future are not disconnected horizons of social practice' (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 9-10). The components of the psychology of hope that Nalkur (2009: 670) paraphrases, discussed in the beginning of this chapter, are not all applicable to the students in this thesis. No planned out strategies are possible in the face of extreme competition within the school system, and uncertainty outside of it. Nevertheless, the students are optimistic about their futures; they believe that things will work out great for them. The concept of perseverance by Povinelli, and the viewpoint on uncertainty by Cooper and Pratten, help to understand the seeming paradox. If perseverance is informed by 'striving to change the conditions in which .. perseverance occurs' (Povinelli 2011: 103), and uncertainty is a 'productive resource' (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 3), then it follows that the students manage uncertainty in the most sensible manner possible: work as hard as they can today, and pray for good fortunes tomorrow.

De Certeau (1984) suggests that tactics 'pin their hopes .. on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into power' (1984: 38-39, emphasis in original), and that tactics are 'the starting point for an intellectual creativity as persistent as it is subtle, tireless, ready for every opportunity, scattered over the terrain of the dominant order' (ibid.: 38) The students thus will at some point in time possess an agency, with which they will seize the opportunities the moment they are in sight. Until then, they

\(^{59}\) This quote is from the interview with Patricia, three other Gayaza girls said very similar things.
utilize perseverance and negotiate with the uncertainty, so that they can use it as a productive force.

In the Introduction to this thesis, a quote by Simone (2001) was discussed that is useful to reiterate here. Simone argues that increasingly uncertain environments in African cities are leading to a process of 'worlding', where the gaze on the future assumes more and more distant places (Simone 2001: 16). I pointed out that in Simone's analysis, African children's dreams are impacted by the logic of the African cities, and I added that while many children on a global scale may dream of distant places, in African urban contexts this dreaming is not only informed by a sense of adventure. In this chapter, building on the two previous ones, I have demonstrated by what aspects dreaming of the Kampalan A-level students is informed instead. Although the students in this research look abroad for possible futures, they look there for freedom, agency, success and security, not only for adventure. It could even be argued that they almost do not look abroad for reasons of seeking adventure at all.

Rather, I argue, the students negotiate between discourses of hope, that leave almost no room for failure or ordinariness, and realities that do not appear all hopeful, and in which the students, their family members, their classmates, or their 'home regions' experience trauma, loss and poverty. They are aware that the competition is immense, and a bad mark on a test can be the difference between having it all and having nothing at all. They also know that the expectations on them, whether from the schools, the parents or the society, are high and it is possible that they will not live up to them. This is why the majority of the students focuses on dreams of security, and not adventure. They lack one of the components of hope as discussed by Nalkur (2009), but they have perseverance instead. In their wish to find stability and 'survive' their extremely competitive environments, they do not give up even when the going gets tough. Once they have reached successfulness, or financial wealth, they intend to reach out to help others 'advance' as well.

Cooper and Pratten (2015) discuss an instance of people with 'uncertain futures' who live in Addis Abeba. They write that, even though it is not currently looking so positive for them, '[t]heir hope, configured through idioms of chance and God's fortune, is premised on the fact that things can change in uncertain times. To seize the opportunities that luck or fate may bestow requires anticipation and mobility - a propensity to being in the right place at the right time' (2015: 11). This is exactly the case for the students discussed in this thesis as well. They
use uncertainty as a propelling force that leaves all possibilities open until the right one comes along. Their management of uncertainty is thus based on tactical agency.
Conclusion

In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that students in the last class of four different high schools in and around Kampala, Uganda, experience uncertainties in their lives, which they are trying to manage. Their narratives have been placed into a larger perspective in which they are compared with one another, and linked to literature on the topic. In this conclusion, the arguments made throughout the thesis will be summed up once more.

In chapter 1, the introduction, I discussed my thinking process towards a new research question, how this thesis contributes to scientific knowledge on African youth and Ugandan youth, and how this thesis fits in with the field of anthropology and African Studies. I set out a theoretical outline, where the main question 'How do high school students in and around Kampala manage uncertainties in their present lives and futures?' was answered as: students manage the uncertainties in their lives by using tactics in face of the lack of strategies, and by using uncertainty as a productive force. These two theoretical tools were chosen after a long process of reading different theories. For a long time, I did not know how to 'solve' the discrepancy between the statistics that predicted that most of the students I interviewed will never make it to university or further, and the students' adamant statements that they would. Of course, their precarious position is due to the inability of Uganda's current capitalist system to accommodate the immense youth population that wishes to study and work. The economy is booming, but not (yet) fast enough to create certainties for the students in this thesis. The discrepancy between worldwide discourses on education being a necessity for a country's welfare and economic growth, and the reality on the ground where education is no guarantee for economic growth of the nation or individual 'success', is easily overlooked. Of course education is a human right, and an important one; but the African youth of today may put more focus on their right to life; they may wish to eat more than to study physics. The problem of African youth in 'waithood' (Honwana 2012) is immense, and I in no means have a solution for it. This thesis has simply tried to demonstrate how the assumptions that education leads to prosperity, and privilege leads to security, are not necessarily straightforward in real life.

In chapter 2, I discussed methodology and the field. The main limitations of this study are that it does not discuss the topics of health and money. Ethical considerations include doing research with minors and protecting sensitive information. It is furthermore a study based on
a small sample of youths from different socio-economic backgrounds, conducted by a young female white researcher, in English, the 'school language', and in a limited period of time.

Chapter 3 is a background chapter, and although it goes quite deep into the history of education, I felt that it was a necessary piece of the puzzle in understanding the present day situation. Aspects such as religion, old prestigious schools under colonialism, brain drain, nationalism in education discourse, neoliberalism in development, policy changes in the last decades and the public-private school dichotomy have a specific history in Uganda, and that history has a tremendous influence on shaping the landscape of education in 2015. Prevailing inequalities in the system are relevant to situate the A-level students in relation to their age-group in the country, but also to the students' activism and perseverance, as demonstrated in chapter 6.

In chapter 4, the students are placed in the context of each individual school, and placed in relation to their environments through the concepts of the grapevine and 'hot knowledge' (Ball & Vincent 1998). Their capacity to translate cultural capital into decision-making is further demonstrated by applying the categories of 'aerial vision', 'gridlock' and 'sensory tacticians' (Kenway & Hickey-Moody 2011). These categories help the interpretation of their different knowledges tremendously, and also demonstrate a beginning of why tactics are necessary in the students' context.

The students furthermore are embedded in expectations from their parents and teachers, and are in the process of forming identities for which they use markers as leadership, ethnicity, role models, extracurricular activities, but also which combination they are taking and what that combination opens doors towards. How they deal with stress and pressure is another factor in their current level of experienced agency, but also ties into the concept of hopefulness that is discussed in chapter 6. Chapter 5 limited its theoretical discussion to notions of identity formation but more importantly youth and agency, and argued that the students are ascribed more agency by scholars than they in reality (currently) have.

But if you have limited agency and tremendous competition and pressure, how does that resolve into an outlook on the future? In chapter 6, nationalist ideas of the young 'pillars of tomorrow's Uganda' are only displayed, but not analyzed. This is because the students did not mention them directly in any way. However, the students negotiate their pathways of hope, their perseverance and uncertainty in a dialogue with expectations that come from the schools, as in chapter 4, or from their families, as in chapter 5, but also from national official
discourse, that is present in the education system at large and in the material that is studied in the confines of a classroom. The dialogue with national(ist) discourse is most crucially visible in the students’ plans for activism and change, but also in their opinions on marriage and children. The majority of the students’ dreams however, whether the dreams concerned jobs, travel, university or love, were informed by a search for a sense of security. The reason, I postulate in the chapter, that the students look for security and stability far more than alternative pathways such as adventure and experimentation, is because their ability to access pathways of hope is limited, their perseverance is not infinite, and they wish to escape the extremely competitive environment where no strategies can be planned. But the uncertainty that drives them towards trying to create stable lives, still drives them. It is productive, and enables them to get ready to employ tactics the moment the situation allows them to. In this environment where knowledge depends on your network, your agency is limited, and the competition is steep, uncertainty is ever present. Managing the uncertainty involves perseverance, using the uncertainty itself as a productive force, and tactical agency. And finally, to come full circle, the assumption that that education leads to prosperity, postulated by the United Nations and the World Bank, and the assumption that privilege leads to security, implied by previous literature on African youth, are thus not valid for the case of a group of sixty-three A-level students in and around Kampala. It follows that both assumptions could be in need of reexamination elsewhere too.
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Beyeza-Kashesya, Jolly, Frank Kaharuza, Anna Mia Ekström, Stella Neema, Asli Kulane and Florence Mirembe (2011) To Use or Not to Use a Condom: A Prospective Cohort Study Comparing Contraceptive Practices among HIV-Infected and HIV-Negative Youth in Uganda, *BMC Infectious Diseases* 11:144, retrieved from: http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/11/144


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Råssjö, Eva-Britta and Elisabeth Darj (2002) "Safe Sex Advice Is Good - But So Difficult To Follow": Views And Experiences of the Youth in a Health Centre in Kampala, *African Health Sciences* 2:3, pp. 107-113


Zelezny-Green (2014) She called, she Googled, she knew: Girls' Secondary Education, Interrupted School Attendance, and Educational Use of Mobile Phones in Nairobi, Gender & Development, 22:1, pp. 63-74
Addendum 1: Interview guide

Nickname/First name  Age  Gender

1. Subjects taken in A-levels, why did you choose them, do you like them? What do you want to do straight after finishing school? (university, working, what kind, which profession, plan for several years, reaching university eventually)

2. What is your dream profession, and will you reach that goal or choose something else, why?

3. Which university do you wish to attend, will you reach that one, how will you afford to go there? Will you move house?

4. Where do you live now? Can you tell me about how you grew up? (siblings, family members, profession of parents or caretakers, sometimes country of origin)

5. Do you have hobbies? What are they? Do you spend much time on them?

6. Can you describe your daily activities? (household work, work, homework, hobbies, friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, religious activities, sleep)

7. Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend? Do you want to marry at some point? At what age? Do you want to have children? Do you want to stop/start working when this happens or at any other time in life? What kind of person do you want to marry, important qualities?

8. Is there anything else I have not asked you?

9. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
**Addendum 2: Tables of interviews**

Note: in this addendum, a part of the tables of interviews I made is reproduced. The aim is to give an overview of academic ambitions of students. The abbreviations used in the tables are listed first (some of them are obvious, others are my own):

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<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Aspired profession</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Miirock An</td>
<td>B - 18</td>
<td>GeoHisArt/M</td>
<td>Architect / Engineer/ Soapmaker / Poster Design</td>
<td>Says he may not go, lack of grades and money</td>
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<td>Babushow</td>
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<td>Kampala International University</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Uganda Matters, on Masaka Road</td>
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<td>Nobian Carol</td>
<td>G - 20</td>
<td>GeoEcoArt/M</td>
<td>Accountant in big firm/ business woman / supermarket</td>
<td>Kyambogo</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Makerere</td>
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<td>GeoEntAgr/IT</td>
<td>Business accountant / agriculture</td>
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<td>Can't afford big ones / Mukamba (small)</td>
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<td>B - 24</td>
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**Kansanga Senior Secondary School**

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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1:01:42</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>G</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>PhyEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Auditing and accounting (Direction within business admin)</td>
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Gayaza Higschool
**Makererere College**

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<td>10</td>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>54:25</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisLitDiv/IT</td>
<td>Journalism/Actress/Lawyer</td>
<td>Oxford/Makerere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>25:28</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>GeoEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Math teacher (Statistics) or Accountant (business statistics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Wycleff</td>
<td>38:50</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>GeoEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Procurement and Logistics/Computer Science/Business Admin</td>
<td>Abu Dhabi/Shanghai/Malaysia</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Stanley</td>
<td>29:47</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisLitEco/M</td>
<td>Computer Science/Law</td>
<td>Makerere, abroad for masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mercy</td>
<td>56:52</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisLitEco/M</td>
<td>Criminologist</td>
<td>Makerere/Cambridge (they offer the course in Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>43:56</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisLitEco/M</td>
<td>Business woman/Lawyer/Musician</td>
<td>Abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>27:46</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>PhyMTech.draw/IT</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>Makerere</td>
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**Cornerstone Leadership Academy for Girls**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Length of rec.</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>S/A</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Aspired profession</th>
<th>Aspired university</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Esther</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>GeoEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Math teacher (Statistics) or Accountant (business statistics)</td>
<td>Makerere</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jacky</td>
<td>58:55</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>EntMGeo/IT</td>
<td>Business Admin/business lady with engineering/Fashion design/Statistics</td>
<td>First Mbarara now Makerere</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>1:08:35</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisEcoDiv/M</td>
<td>Lawyer/Banking and Finance</td>
<td>Cambridge or Makerere</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lillian</td>
<td>1:07:07</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>PhyEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Civil Engineer (doctor first but failed to get good grades)</td>
<td>Kyambogo/Makerere</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>39:52</td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>HisEcoGeo/M</td>
<td>Accounting/Business admin/Tourism/Office Management</td>
<td>Kyambogo/Makerere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Savanna</td>
<td>54:29</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisEcoGeo/M</td>
<td>Business/Population Studies</td>
<td>Makerere</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>52:26</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>PhyEcoM/IT</td>
<td>Something technical, maybe engineering in aviation</td>
<td>Makerere</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Pauline</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>HisEcoDiv/M</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Makerere</td>
</tr>
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