

Exploring the Experiences of Female Teacher Trainees as Pupils in Schools in Ghana in the 1960s

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This article focuses on the lives and problems a group of young Ghanaian women faced as pupils pursuing a diploma course in Secondary Home Science. Relying on autobiographies, archival sources and interviews, the achievements of these women are contextualized in the social and political uncertainties of early post-colonial Ghana as well as the personal sacrifices made in the pursuit of education. Diploma qualifications positioned these women to achieve a measure of independence through the promise of individual incomes, community status and collective membership in a government supported professional association. Education also positioned them to avail themselves of more egalitarian (western), forms of marriage, favoured by the emerging middle class. Contemporary methods drawn from narrative research, critical inquiry, and family strengths, also inform this appraisal of how these women adapted themselves to the process of change as their society shed its colonial past.

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Introduction¹

This article focuses on the lives of young women in the newly independent Ghana of the 1960s. In their own words, a small group of teacher trainees provide some reflections on how their upbringing and early education prepared them for the challenge of making a place for themselves in a society where rapid change and resilient traditional values coexisted in uneasy rivalry. To elect to go into teacher training was not necessarily an easy choice. Relying on autobiographies, interviews with teachers involved in these students' training, and a variety of archival materials, usually the purview of historians, three complimentary modes of analysis: narrative research, critical inquiry, and family strengths, are brought into service for this project.

African women have often been excluded from educational venues in which they could be active and instrumental participants, their voices ignored or silenced and their lives rendered invisible (Dhunpath, 2000). The autobiographies used here, show this process at work during their scholastic careers. By bringing context and history to the fore, we hope to render these lives visible in all their complexities (Bono, 1997).

Narrative research has become a significant qualitative perspective in educational inquiry, informing our understandings of social class and gender (Gilligan, 1982, Taylor (1995), the contexts of institutionalized education and learning more generally (Bruner (1990, 1991, 1996), and the impact of poverty on development, schooling and life chances (Kozol, 1967, 1991). Narrative research posits that individuals reinterpret their life stories continuously, informed by a complex interaction between maturation, unfolding insight, experience, and awareness of audience (Lieblich, *et al.* 1998). The study of the subjectively meaningful experiences of lives Dhunpath (2000) terms a narradigm; a mode of analysis accepting changing subjective meanings with all their contradictions and evolving insights.

Such 'autobiographical occasions' as Marvin Zussman terms them, often involve tension between structure and agency as individuals strive to shape an imaginative and instrumental version of the self (Zussman, 2000). Individual stories may advance a particular self-perception but are often produced in the context and interests of institutions. Zussman's observation that '... the very act of articulating a self subjects that self to inspection and control of institutions', is particularly appropriate here although four decades after the fact our focus is on understanding these young women's lives and choices.

Deriving narrative meaning relies on interpretation. Theorists of narration suggest that the reliability and validity of interpretation can be strengthened by clearly articulating methodological choices. To facilitate this process, (Lieblich *et al.* 1998), have classified narrative analysis along two dimensions; *holistic* verses *categorical* and *content* verses *form*. A *holistic* approach refers to the reading of a narration or text as a whole, while a *categorical* examination looks for specific events or categories of experience. *Content* verses *form* distinguishes between analysis focusing on the content of a text or narration and one dealing with its formalistic aspects, like grammar and structure.

This article approaches narrative analysis using a primarily categorical-content perspective since analysing experiences relating to educational attainment is our primary focus. Our complimentary modes of analysis direct us to categories of experience relating to the capacity of these young women to engage in reflective, critical inquiry, particularly about

the education they were receiving. Content also directs us to identifying qualities associated with strong families, and how these qualities influenced the educational choices and attainments of these teacher trainees.

Ghana's Home Science students who came into teacher training during the early post-colonial period typically had not experienced a critical inquiry approach in their earlier education. The critical inquiry orientation suggests that knowledge is socially constructed and is not independent from the knower and those that assign value to their own body of knowledge (Engberg, 1994). The model, which '... seeks to promote enlightenment and action to overcome repressive social conditions' (Baldwin, 1989), provides another perspective on agency and structures. Coomer (1989) in summarizing the critical pursuit of knowledge writes that the pursuit of knowledge is guided by three integrated human interests: the technical, emancipatory and communicative. Much of Home Science experienced by the students in the past has been technical or instrumental, answering such questions as 'how to receive information and perform specific tasks such as needlework, laundry, cookery, child care'. These tasks are referred to in the students' autobiographies. The emancipatory dimension of 'knowing' requires self-reflection and the development of abilities enabling individuals to take actions bringing change for the better to the environment and all people. Communicative interests create understanding and shared meanings, values and beliefs (for example, views of rural and urban life, meaning of family or of sharing responsibilities). These dimensions of interest can be noted in the students' comments about their home and family life but not necessarily in their statements about Home Science.

As in other national venues, Home Science became the near exclusive domain of women, who recognized in careers as teachers of Home Science a vehicle for achieving professional status, greater financial security, more independence, and a new, more public way of contributing to society generally. Higher levels of education probably improved one's chances in the marriage market as well. If in an anxious time of vast social change, the direction of these students' life courses were uncertain, their modest successes to date rested in no small measure on the qualities inculcated in them as children through strong nurturing families and ties of kinship.

These qualities, perseverance, flexibility and self-reliance, among them, are the qualities one finds within strong families and extended kinship groups. Interest in identifying strengths that enable families and family members to cope with extreme circumstances began in therapeutic practice with the seminal work of Otto (1962, 1963), who recognized family strengths within troubled families. From its clinical origins family

strengths has been expanded theoretically to encompass strong families generally, and its tenets have been found applicable in a variety of cultural settings (Stinnett and DeFrain, 1985). Olsen and DeFrain (1997) have summarized the strong attributes of families to include; 1) commitment; 2) appreciation and affection; 3) positive communication; 4) spending time together; 5) spiritual well-being; and 6) the ability to cope with stress. Invariably these strengths are interrelated.

These strengths are valuable for families, and healthy, maturing families possess most, if not all, of these strengths in some measure. International venues such as the University of Newcastle's Annual Conference on Building Family Strengths (2001-03), are reaching new audiences for those ideas, and in turn, enriching the family strengths literature. Emphasizing the effective functioning and healthy qualities of families rather than their deficiencies, the family strengths literature identifies the commonalties of strong families across cultures.

By encouraging critical reflectivity, family strengths shares with *cultural relativism*, a construct first articulated by anthropologist Franz Boas, the belief that the complexities of culture and environment inform the internal logic and social meanings of a people and their social groupings. Like cultural relativism, family strengths posits that the culture and functioning of families must be accepted and understood on their own terms rather than by imposed, and often alien, standards driven by class, race and relations of power such as colonialism.

The African tradition of strong extended families has been admired and feared by Westerners. Colonial administrators early on recognized the strengths of African families, especially their potential capacity for resistance. In British West Africa the concept of *Indirect Rule*, was gradually perfected by Lord Lugard (1965) so that by the 1920s it was official, codified, policy. *Indirect Rule* relied on traditional leaders working under a parallel colonial administration, to govern colonial possessions. By threatening to depose uncooperative leaders in favour of their rivals, colonial officials harnessed the central features of African societies for the benefit of the colonial state. Indirect Rule distorted the complexities of reciprocal obligation, precedence, rank, kinship, gender and ethnicity. Moreover, an alternative culture, language and accompanying institutions, notably colonial education, were imposed as avenues for achieving [limited] status, wealth and power, in society (Bassey, 1999). Allman and Tashjian (2000), for example, have detailed how the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1924 brought marriage, divorce and adultery into the public arena of civil courts in Ashante, altering traditional structures and remedies. If indirect rule was ultimately unsuccessful, post-war decolonization left most African nations in a new,

twilight state in which values, paths of advancement and the place of traditional values were unclear.

The Gold Coast Colony, thought the most advanced of Britain's West African colonies, made the transition to an independent Ghana in 1957. Ghanaians would find however, as would African peoples elsewhere, that colonial infrastructure and an inherited educational system changed only slowly and at some cost. For the small numbers of Africans positioned to take advantage of opportunities for advancement in this transitional period, casting off culture, language, traditions and loyalties—and substituting 'Western' or 'modern' perspectives, was the price of entry into this new world. The novels of African writers of the period often portray the intense social conflicts bound up in the realities they observed around them (cf. Achebe, 1963, Armah, 1969).

Ghana at Independence

In the newly independent Ghana of the early 1960s, the introduction of Western style Home Economics provided a scientific secularized version of Western domestic values first introduced by missionaries in the 19th century (Graham, 1971). The technical, consumer and product oriented Home Science, common in British and many Ghanaian schools, offered a nascent middle class, perceived methods for reordering domestic life, opening up social space for the pursuit of salaried careers and social advancement. Attaining educational qualifications put substantial strains on the economic resources of families. For those entering the lower end of the middle class: primary school teachers, successful petty traders, civil servants and police officials, resources and employment were most precariously balanced. Gaining a stronger toe-hold in a changing economy for the next generation required substantial collective effort by families and their community.

Assistance from the West and the United Nations came to many newly independent African countries in the late 1950s and 1960s (Rhodes, 1988). The Cornell-Ghana Project, designed to assist in establishing a Home Science curriculum for training future secondary school teachers in teacher training colleges, was one such project. The project site, Winneba Teacher Training College, was a small institution 30 miles along the coast from Accra, Ghana's capital.

With elementary education compulsory, just over 500,000 children were at school, with many expecting to go on to post-primary education, also due to become compulsory in the future. While twice as many boys were at primary and middle school as girls, this represented a marked improvement over the previous decade, when the imbalance was more than three to one (Kay, 1972; Ajaye, Goma and Johnson, 1996). Secondary

education followed the British model, encouraging considerable specialization. Such schooling relied heavily on British courses of study in the areas of Health and Housecraft, although efforts were made to give precedence to Ghanaian needs, customs and conditions. But such needs had little status in the curriculum (Whitehead, 1995). School fees were burdensome, and the colonial education system was geared towards producing a small number of good scholars, rather than large numbers of competent graduates.

The Ghanaian Family Study

Professor Harold Feldman, of Cornell's Child and Family Studies Department, led the effort to build up a contemporary data base on family practices and structure. Feldman's first brief trip to Ghana in March of 1963 convinced him of the need for research at several levels. Rapid change in Ghanaian Society suggested that emphasis be placed on the continual process of data collection rather than 'received' knowledge. During his preliminary visit to Winneba in 1963, Feldman assigned students in the Housecraft Diploma course home visits to collect survey data on families. With the passage of time, Feldman's 1963 survey, unique in that he also collected autobiographies of his student-surveyors, has gained in historical significance.

In March 1963 eleven students in Winneba's Housecraft Diploma course were asked to each undertake two visits to local households, during which they were to survey families on a variety of topics. Feldman was quick to find that *family* in the western sense was a less useful term than *household*, which better articulated complex economic relations such as planning and income allocation, carried out among kin and non-kin alike within households (Bradley and Weisner, 1997, Berry, 1986, Luena, 1992, Smith and Wallerstein, 1992). The twenty-two families surveyed, comprised 182 persons, including children, stepchildren, extended relatives, servants and individuals with no specific relationship to their families (Feldman, 1963).

The surveyed families, divided by the students into three groups by educational level, underscored the rapid changes taking place in Ghanaian society, especially within better-educated households (Groups One and Two). The marked trend toward preference for smaller family size, modern technologies, life-styles and patterns of consumption, were underscored by the interest parents took in their children's formal education. The government's expansion of places in primary education had led to increased competition for scarcer places at the secondary level. Examinations introduced during the colonial period became crucial in the selection of students at all levels. In a harsh economic environment,

scholars failing, or those whose families could not afford to advance their scholastic careers, faced certain unemployment (Foster, 1965).

When asked what they had learned from the household survey assignment, Feldman's students were highly critical of their interview families, reflecting a top-down perception of the teacher's role. 'They focused on efficiency when the people wanted privacy and some gaiety in their lives', Feldman (1963) remarked. These students had little empathy with the daily problems of their householders, and were annoyed by deviance from their perception of 'sound household practices', and the householder's refusal to accept advice. In subsequent discussions the students evinced little grasp of how practical issues faced by families were related to broader social problems nor to differing opportunities for Home Science. This insistence on transmitting knowledge without dialogue or reflectivity was consistent with their own educational experiences. As future teachers they seemed destined to impart technical knowledge and skills, but without communicating or encouraging consideration of the broadest range of uses to which education might be put by students and their communities.

The reaction of these future teachers to their assignment intrigued Feldman. Their attitudes toward the clientele with whom they would most likely be working seemed ambivalent. Why did these young women want to become teachers? Providing guidelines for format and content, Feldman assigned his students short autobiographies in an effort to learn more about them. Written at home in 1963, these autobiographies survive in their original typed, single-spaced standardized form of about three pages each.

The autobiographies are written in English, essential for academic success, but not the first language of these students nor the one most likely spoken at home (Whitehead, 1995). The degree of individual fluency was influenced by the ethnic composition of one's school. Students from a common ethnic group could quickly switch to their vernacular language outside of school while students drawn from different parts of the country or different ethnic groups would be inclined to rely on English as a common language, thus achieving a higher level of English proficiency. While more *proficient* in English, their language is often stilted and nuances of meaning and feeling are lost. English was the language of officialdom, correct, precise and public. Akan, Ga, and Ewe, were the languages of home, social life, and self-expression. Numbers have been assigned to each autobiography as an ethical safeguard preserving anonymity (Josselson, 1996). The passages selected for illustration and analysis were edited for brevity's sake, especially where unrelated ideas or comments were interspersed in the text.

Some indication of how students took awareness of audience into account in writing these narrative autobiographies comes to us through their self-reports of satisfaction with strong group rapport and camaraderie among students. Norrick (1997) suggests that narratives built around stories familiar to the participants, foster group rapport, ratify group membership and convey group values. Students may well have been familiar with one another's life stories, and agreed either explicitly or less formally on how to go about writing *and editing* their life stories. Clearly, the values they convey are similar. Feldman was accorded respect and deference by these students, although he was adept at developing a genuine rapport with them (Interview, Margaret Feldman, January 20, 2001). The presumption that students' prose was entirely crafted to suit what they perceived to be expected of them is countered by the open quality of the writing itself. There is however an absence of commentary on the nature of educational institutions, many of which, including the Winneba Teacher Training College, were still run by British expatriate staff. Interestingly, only one writer refers to race, using the term 'Europeans', to describe whites, and only one person refers to a colonial institution, the Cocoa Marketing Board, put in quotation marks noting in parenthesis 'as it was called in those days'. Thus if students were candid about their early upbringing and schooling, they were sensitive to the structural tensions in their present situation.

These life histories are revealing. Of the eleven female students, eight were either the first born or the oldest daughter of the family, one was the youngest and two did not specify. Seven had earlier been in another type of teacher training course and half had prior teaching experience as teacher-pupils. Young children in the mid-1940s, their average age in 1963 was 25. Only one woman had lived continually with her parents while growing up. Ten of the students had been cared for intermittently by extended households and boarding schools, due to death, family crises or work related obligations of parents in another part of the country. Unusually high rates of geographic mobility in Ghanaian society were a response to pressures of employment (Oppong, 1974). Nine of the girls had at least one parent who was a teacher, low-level civil servant or minister, the rest were traders or agriculturalists. Family sizes ranged from modest extended families of 7-15 members, consisting of parents, children and a few relatives to large differentiated households. A chief's household included '... servers, horn blowers and ... chief's souls ...' swelling to over 40 persons at meal times. Another household also had over 40 members. Thus most of these women came from homes that were equivalent in education and occupation to the Group One and Group two households of the Housecraft Survey (Glotzer, 1998).

The autobiographies revealed that geographic separation of daughters from parents and siblings was often substantial, reflecting the growing importance of wages in the economy, and the practical hardships that such arrangements required. One of the unusual family strengths of these households was the degree to which grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, in-laws, and even unrelated householders, could be mobilized for active child rearing. From the family strengths perspective, an important theme that runs through the life histories of these young women involves the collective efforts of extended households to see to their educational and emotional needs. A serious expense, even among professionals and higher level civil servants, school fees and associated educational costs posed a substantial burden for those with modest incomes, a fact reflected in seven of these autobiographies.

In an age in which marital dissolution and fracturing of families have reached alarming proportions in Western societies, it is tempting to romanticize extended households elsewhere. As these autobiographies suggest, however, living in extended arrangements, if secure and generally nurturing, was not always happy or conflict free. The uniqueness of these women as young girls created controversy over what constituted appropriate child rearing practices. As these girls often occupied key positions in birth order, they filled important emotional and social needs among family members. Thus, from a family strengths perspective, reciprocity of emotional need and connectness brought adult family members and children together. As first daughters for 5 mothers, an 'only child' for a maiden aunt with child rearing responsibilities, and oldest daughters of several widowed fathers, they were friends and companions, symbolic markers on life's highway. Although young, they were active participants in the reciprocal social relations of their families. One student gained distinction as a first granddaughter, while another, raised in a chief's household with 15-20 children, was one of the few natural children of the household. Each was recognized as special in some way. They were nurtured and pampered, and often excused from the usual duties of cleaning, cooking and childcare, assigned to children in such households. As these students recounted:

I was the second child ... but the first one [a boy] ... died a few months after I arrived. I spent the first two years with my parents ... then I went to live with my aunt. She had no child of her own. They treated me with ... indulgence. I became almost a spoilt child. My mother did not like it very much but could not say it for fear she would hurt my aunt. My mother was very strict ... we were almost afraid to ask her anything (10).

I ... stayed at Cape Coast with my grandmother, four aunts and three uncles. These did everything they could to maintain my health and make me happy. I did

not know my parents till I reached Primary three. ... my mother used to beat me and treat me harshly whenever she visited us although she sent me a lot of clothes. I was doing practically nothing at home, my aunts petted me a lot and they never commented on my faults ... and so I thought my mother was an unkind woman who used to pay us some visits sometimes. Nevertheless, I usually wept whenever she was ready to leave (8).

Academic prowess reinforced exemption from household duties too, and conflicts arose over the wisdom of these exemptions. Daughters provide an important source of labour within the home, and such work was also an apprenticeship for assuming adult responsibilities in one's own home. Caught in a social transformation in which educational attainment was increasingly important, some parents and guardians thought it best to put traditional child rearing practices aside in favour of what they perceived as the looming demands of a changing society. This change in child rearing was not universally appreciated. As these students recalled:

My aunts did everything for me at home. I ... attended [school] ate and either went out to play or went to sit with my grandma who was very old then. ... I led a very free life ... apart from ... school. I did not do anything at home. My grandma died in 1947 and my mother came to stay with us at Cape Coast as my father was transferred to the north. ... during this time I received my home training. I was not uncouth though but I did not know anything about ... keeping the home tidy and so she made me practise these things. I usually wept whenever she asked me to grind vegetables and wash used utensils. I thought she was being unkind but afterwards I realized that she was rather doing me good. (8)

My father took up an appointment at Nkawkau ... and so my parents left the big family and my brother and myself were left behind. I was the favourite of my step grandfather and my brother was the favourite of my grandfather [who] loved us so much that he devoted all his time to us. He bathed us. There were many servants ... so at the age of ten, I could neither bath myself nor wash my things. Every teacher who maltreated us was checked by my grandpa so no teacher minded us even though we were late to classes. [After a parental separation, the children left their grandfather to attend a school where their mother taught.] ... my mother used strong hands on me because I was lazy and I was taught to do many things (1).

The teachers thought I was so good that I was moved one class ahead of my mates. This made my father so proud ... that he did not want me to work at home so I could get more time to read. My mother did not like the idea that I should not help with the household duties; this ended with a long argument [and] I was sent to a boarding school. I was then ten years. Things continued to be pleasant at school but at home ... mother made me work so hard I never enjoyed holidays. I did the cooking, laundry and other odd jobs when the family became large. Not that I did not want to work but I wanted to work in a happy atmosphere (10).

As these accounts suggest, privilege and exemption, whatever their origin, came with a price: conflict with competing adults' values—often personified by one's mother. Yet these conflicts in child rearing values must be seen in perspective. Mothers were concerned about process not the end result. None of these students' mothers, from the students' accounts, wanted their daughters to be primarily housewives. This view is paralleled by the students' household surveys; only one of the fourteen Group One and Two mothers put down 'housewife' as a career aspiration for a daughter (Glotzer, 1998). Thus, flexibility in accommodating new social conditions and social crisis emerges as it has in other studies, as an important family strength (Stinnett and DeFrain, 1985). Mothers, attuned to the traditional responsibilities of marriage and family, were seeking to balance modern education and occupational aspirations with traditional socialization.

For most students memories of schooling and family life were mixed, punctuated by school changes, the need to relocate and the death of parents, care givers and loved ones. The only ever-married student had lost her husband in a trucking accident a year and half after their marriage. Left with an infant, this experienced teacher was nonetheless freed from her husband's desire that she not work nor attend the housecraft diploma course. Interestingly, one of her motivations for study was the healing value of the college setting, and she was encouraged in this by fellow students. Only one student discussed a parent's death in detail, all the seven others mention deaths in a single sentence although these losses often brought substantial changes to their lives and living situations.

... one of the boys in my father's home came to the school and called my father's other two brothers ... then called me too. ... I asked why they were weeping and where we were going, but the answer I got was 'we are going home' from the older uncle. We ... found everybody outside of the house. ... I overheard some women ... expressing ... sympathy for my father. I did not understand, then ... my mother's best friend came into our house weeping bitterly, calling out my mother's name. Then I realized my mother was dead. ... the last time I saw my mother was when she was leaving us to have her fourth baby.(6)

Substantially abridged here, this account of a mother's death is unusual in that this student devotes nearly half a page to its retelling. The death is pivotal as a prelude to an unhappy stint at a boarding school followed by a much happier reestablishment at her old school, and the introduction of a stepmother into the family. The recounting of this student's educational progress is also the story of a ten-year old's deep loss, her father's remarriage, and her successfully developing an affectionate

relationship with a step-mother. In contrast, one is less certain of what to make of this pronouncement offered as a single sentence paragraph. 'Everybody was shocked one morning when we woke up to see our great grandmother dead on her bed at age of 119.'(1) Here, perhaps was an attempt to include family milestones in a colourful family history although not necessarily connected to family development.

Then there was the school experience itself. Teachers varied widely in their skill and knowledge levels, compassion for pupils and the amount of personal interest they took in their charges. In those few instances where a parent was attached to the same school as a daughter, the student's experiences tended to be happy ones. But a happy experience at one school might not be repeated at another. Corporal punishment or its threat was common. Without much direct family support, students developed resilience against school bullies, unfair teachers and unfamiliar surroundings, including unwelcome encounters with snakes and monkeys. All the while there was the pressure of their studies, and looming examinations which could determine the direction of their life course.

Most of the eleven students provided detail in recounting their previous school experiences, distinguishing between the scholastic and social aspects of schooling. Under the shadow of influential examinations, relations with one's teachers and being able to rely on assistance from fellow students were quite important. If discouraged from critical inquiry in their school subjects, students exercised critical reflection in evaluating their teachers and schools. Here the relationship between agency and institution as a subtext is quite personalized, and centred on social justice and morality.

I stopped liking Latin ... because the teacher was not sympathetic at all with us. She did not have the patience to teach us slowly and she always squeezed her face. Most of us were scared of her and we often gave wrong answers to the simplest questions. I had to stop taking Latin in form three when we were choosing our subjects for the school certificate because I had a very bad foundation. (11)

In our first year we had an energetic teacher and we all liked her. In the following year, some of us were asked to do arithmetic with those in Middle Form 3 and I was among them ... Most of the teachers in the school were very helpful ... and motherly but the senior girls were rather bullies. (4)

I was on good terms with most of the teachers but some of them like the mathematics teacher was always picking a quarrel with me about mathematics. Some of them were very nice to me and at times go [sic] to the extremes in favouring me. I liked this in those days but I now realize how dangerous such behaviour is. [from the view of alienating fellow students] (3)

... every teacher liked me and I liked ... them except one. This teacher liked me but I did not like her because she was always trying to find faults ... and ...

give bad impressions about people ... even when she knew she was not right. (5)

The ... nuns who ran the school were very wicked and strict disciplinaries [sic] so it was with iron hands that they ruled us. There was hardly any moment of happiness for us, for fear of being punished unnecessarily ... I prayed very hard to get out of the convent ... and my prayer was answered when I was offered a place at Achimota Secondary School ... (7)

Thus, in a few short pages accorded them for these autobiographies, these 11 students recounted the significant experiences of their lives to date. Only one student presented an entirely rosy picture of life, especially her present situation. For most the picture that emerges is of a life alternating between periods of relative happiness and stressful difficulties and anxieties about their futures. In their times at school, the commitment of families, expressed through letters, visits, presents etc., were family strengths that sustained and encouraged these students in environments lacking sustained nurturing and support.

Some students openly expressed ambivalence about their studies. There was universal agreement that overcrowding and poorly appointed housing (6-7 to a room) made life difficult. This too was a critical reflection of the perceived disparity between what students were taught about 'modern living' and their lives at the college. More than half the students acknowledged the Housecraft Diploma Course as a second best option. As these students explain:

I kept on repeating to her [a cousin] that nursing was not my line ... I was interested in needle work. ... she handed me an advertisement of the Housecraft diploma entrance examination ... and with joy I travelled to the principal. There is nothing in particular which I dislike or like, I enjoy everybody's company but I become disturbed when somebody hates me personally. [This student left nursing school when, after refusing a ward master's advances, she and another women were transferred to a Tuberculosis ward, where in time her companion came to test positive.] (1)

I suffered financial difficulties at Achimota ... to repeat the situation in the sixth form will bring worries ... I thought ... any woman who is fully equipped with knowledge about housecraft is a blessing to ... family, society, and the whole world ... , so I sat for the entrance exam ... there is nothing I like very much about the college except ... meeting interesting students and getting to exchange views and ideas ... that we have not been provided with facilities which enable us to practise what we learn for example, no hot water in the halls for washing clothes, being given the wrong cutlery to eat with in the dining hall, etc. makes me dislike the college at times. (7)

Students made the best of it and enjoyed staff and student company. There was universal belief in the usefulness of the skills they were being

taught, especially for serving one's community and the needs of other women (Rhodes, 1998). Recalling a high school demonstration project, one student expressed these sentiments this way:

I was happy I could impress Ghanaian illiterate women. ... these women are old and will die away soon, giving way to the young folk; ... why not help the young girls to develop in one way or another? I therefore concluded to try and have a housecraft course ... then I could teach the girls to become well-matured mothers in the future. (3)

With many having prior experience as lower form teachers, would they as mature women, unmarried, still want to teach? Repeatedly in the autobiographies, Feldman found the answer was 'yes'. As this student sums up.

Working as a housewife has always attracted me. I decided to come here so that after learning housecraft, I could teach and make others interested ... many people may learn and practise how to live economically, in health and enjoy life to the best. If one is healthy, she can endeavour to do everything she wants to do and good health starts from the home—good feeding and cleanliness are the key. (11., the same sentiments were expressed in 5 and 6.)

Acquiring Housecraft skills was also frequently mentioned in the context of one's own [future] marriage and responsibilities as a housewife. In Ghanaian Society, as in the rest of Africa, marriage and children were (and remain) central expectations in the lives of young women. It is striking that for most of these students the concept of teaching as a profession is detached from the acquisition of Housecraft skills. Teaching offered new opportunities and posed practical dilemmas.

The importance of women in national development was recognized by Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah's Congress People's Party (CPP). The CPP constitution specifically addressed the role of women in development and modernization (Nkrumah, 1957). Thus the new opportunities for women, symbolized by the establishment of a national Ghana Home Science Association in 1964, were government policy and real enough. But negotiating the social terrain between the self-sufficiency, independence and instrumental power offered by teaching, and the more traditional arenas of courtship, marriage and family, required careful thinking (Interview, Kathleen Rhodes, July 15th, 1998).

It was surely not lost on these women; especially those experiencing the death of a parent or caregiver in childhood, that teaching provided economic security. In the event of marital disruption, the Housecraft Diploma also provided an element of independence within a changing social structure. Mutual consent marriages, at one time identified with the

lower classes, were steadily increasing in number as traditionally formalized marriages regulated by extended kinship networks decreased (Robertson, 1984). Between 1960 and 1987 the proportion of households in Ghana formally headed by women also increased from 22 to 29 percent. Fifty percent of that increase occurred in a single decade, 1960-1970 (Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1993). With women disadvantaged in gaining access to land, credit, ownership of housing, and education, being educated and eligible for salaried employment, were important advantages. The government's promotion of Home Science as an educational and governmental career placed these students as new occupational cohorts from which they could draw strength through personal and professional association with other women (Interview, Kathleen Rhodes, July 15, 1998). Post-secondary education, if it offered independence, also increased one's eligibility in the marriage market.

Educated men look for wives of some education. Some choose brides from girls still at school. And ... are expected to contribute towards the cost of their education until it is completed. Some pay for them to take a training course in domestic science (Philips, 1953)

As these Housecraft Diploma students sought to extend women's roles in Ghanaian Society, by implication they also sought accommodation with the traditional structure of marriage. Changes in Ghanaian society since the 1930s had altered some of the formalities of traditional marriage, but had not yet reached into gender relations. For even educated men, accepting Western style marriage and monogamy *in principle* did not rule out maintaining traditional prerogatives, powers and loyalties, in practice (Little, 1973). If men sought wives capable of absorbing and reinforcing their own Western style upward mobility this did not necessarily signal a willingness to emphasize conjugal over traditional lineage obligations (whether patrilineal or matrilineal), or to share conjugal power and resources (Engberg, 1974, Clark 1994). Western style marital structures tended to shift obligations to the immediate family and away from extended kin, which proved difficult to accept for men schooled in the reciprocal obligations of kinship. The assumption that one's personal kinship obligations could be reduced through (presumptive) burden sharing, or governmental social welfare initiatives, could have dire consequences for children's education, the widowed, the ill or disabled, and elderly parents dependent on the remittances of grown children (Caldwell, 1966). Shifting focus and resources to the nuclear family invited both structural and interpersonal conflict. Women had to think through the complex trade-offs of shifting from lineage to more egalitarian nuclear family structures. (Interview, Margaret Feldman, January 20, 2001).

A nuclear family structure in itself was no guarantee of resources. As Engberg (1974) found, higher occupational and income levels among *traditionally* oriented men might actually translate into husbands sharing fewer resources with spouses. With women with children operating as a subsystem within the family, women's access to such resources as cash, knowledge, or opportunities to earn, really determined levels of child welfare (health). Thus, husbands with traditional perspectives, despite professional or semi-professional occupations and incomes, might place heavy responsibilities on spouses.

Meeting both kinship and family obligations (especially the education of children) stretched resources, encouraging planning if not consultative decision making between spouses. For families entering Ghana's middle class through salaried employment, reliance on hired servants and extended family for childcare and household maintenance, were costly undertakings, especially in urban environments (Oppong, 1974, Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984). Clark (1994, p.343) describes a young family man declining a potentially lucrative inheritance since it entailed raising a maternal uncle's ten surviving children. The efficient use of resources in the home achieved greater self-reliance, and strengthened the individual family unit in a variety of ways while diminishing dependence (and obligation) on extended kin.

The trade-off was distancing one's family from the extended bonds enabling families to cope with the stress of vast social change and the assurance of being able to rely on the depth of human and material resources of extended families. Paradoxically, the new opportunities being afforded Winneba's Housecraft Diploma trainees, and others like them, eroded the viability of the extended families and households that nurtured them as children.

The expansion of higher education in Home Science Education in Ghana opened social space for young women to institutionalize important concerns relating to families, allowing them to become the professional stewards of Home Science. As important as the changes home scientists sought to bring about in nutrition, child development, home management and human relations, were the hopes and anxieties they had about making a better place for women in Ghanaian society. Harnessing or reorienting the strengths of the traditional African family was an important process in this context.

If the technical and vocational orientation to Home Science provided these young women with new tools, critical inquiry remained absent as a formal component of the curriculum. Yet faced with complex choices, these women applied the tenets of critical inquiry to the broad outlines of their educational and personal lives in a time of national transition.

Moreover as the subsequent history of Home Science in Ghana has shown, critical inquiry has contributed to bettering the lives of the national community.

NOTES

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