

Speaking for Ourselves

Masculinities and Femininities Amongst
Students at the University of Zimbabwe



Edited by Rudo B. Gaidzanwa

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

© University of Zimbabwe Affirmative Action Project
Gender Studies Association
Ford Foundation, 2001

Published in 2001 by
University of Zimbabwe Affirmative Action Project
Gender Studies Association
Ford Foundation

ISBN 0-7974-2385-0

The views expressed in these chapters reflect those of the authors. They do not reflect the views of the University of Zimbabwe or the Ford Foundation.

Typeset by Dick Masala, University of Zimbabwe Publications

Contents

List of Contributors	iv
Acknowledgements	v
CHAPTER ONE	
Masculinities and Femininities: An Introduction	1
<i>Rudo B. Gaidzanwa</i>	
CHAPTER TWO	
Producing Men and Women: Gender Stereotyping in Secondary Schooling in Zimbabwe	10
<i>Nyasha Kajawu</i>	
CHAPTER THREE	
Making Student Men at the University of Zimbabwe: Politics, Masculinity and Democracy	29
<i>Allen Gore</i>	
CHAPTER FOUR	
Masculinities and Resident Male Students at the University of Zimbabwe: Gender and Democracy Issues	48
<i>Tapiwa Chagonda</i>	
CHAPTER FIVE	
Femininities amongst Resident Female Students at the University of Zimbabwe	62
<i>Sitheni Ndlovu</i>	
CHAPTER SIX	
Female non-resident students: Femininities under stress	77
<i>Precious Somerai</i>	
CHAPTER SEVEN	
The Affirmative Action Policy in Student Admissions at the University of Zimbabwe	93
<i>Irvine Chivaura</i>	
CHAPTER EIGHT	
Masculinities and Femininities at the University of Zimbabwe: Student perspectives and Responses through the Affirmative Action Project	111
<i>Rudo Gaidzanwa</i>	

List of contributors

RUDO GAIDZANWA, the editor of this volume, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe. She is the Coordinator of the Affirmative Action Project of the University of Zimbabwe. She has published nationally and internationally on gender issues. Her works include *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. She has also edited a volume entitled *Policy-Making Issues in Southern Africa*.

NYASHA KAJAWU, was an undergraduate student of the University of Zimbabwe when she undertook the research for this volume. She has since graduated with a BSc. Sociology (Honors) degree.

ALLEN GORE was a non-resident undergraduate student of the University of Zimbabwe when he undertook the research for this volume. He has since graduated with a BSc. Sociology (Honors) degree.

TAPIWA CHAGONDA was a resident undergraduate student of the University of Zimbabwe when he undertook the research for this volume. He has since graduated with a BSc. Sociology (Honors) degree.

SITHENI NDLOVU is a third year undergraduate student of linguistics at the University of Zimbabwe. She undertook the research for her chapter volume while she was in her second year of study.

PRECIOUS SOMERAI was a non-resident undergraduate student of the University of Zimbabwe when she undertook the research for this volume. She has since graduated with a BSc. Sociology (Honors) degree.

IRVINE CHIVAURA was an undergraduate student of the University of Zimbabwe when he undertook the research for his chapter in this volume. He has since graduated with a BSc. Sociology (Honors) degree.

Acknowledgements

The Ford Foundation funded the research and publication of this volume. I would like to thank the Foundation for their faith in the Affirmative Action Project and the Gender Studies Association. This funding facilitated the research and publication and hosting of the regional conference on Gender Equity, Human Rights and Democracy in Harare in August, 2 000 and the National Conference on Human Rights and Democracy in Institutions of Higher Education in Zimbabwe in December, 2 000. Several gender workshops with different sections of the University of Zimbabwe staff and students were held with the aid of the Ford Grant. This grant has helped push forward the struggle for the rights of different sections of the university community under very difficult circumstances.

Femininity, Gender Equity, Democracy and Human Rights in Higher Education: Non-resident female students at the University of Zimbabwe

PRECIOUS SOMERAI

Introduction

Generally, institutions of higher learning in Africa have been perceived as repositories of democracy and human rights. These institutions have been regarded as centres of friendly, interpersonal socialisation, career training, liberal thought and athletic achievement where the pursuit of truth and the exercise of reason prevail.

This chapter focuses on off-campus female students studying at the University of Zimbabwe. This group of students constitutes approximately 21% of the total student body. Mazini (1994) in Dwarf (1997:4) points out that academic freedom in Africa has had to confront three levels of constraints, which are global, national and campus-wide. This chapter is directed towards understanding the impact of these constraints on the off-campus female student, the meaning she attaches to such an environment and a critical analysis of her response. How this affects the teaching and learning environment is also another major area that will be analysed in this chapter.

Global constraints such as the AIDS pandemic, the introduction of the controversial Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, the massification of enrolment at the University of Zimbabwe, are the pertinent issues, which have been analysed in relation to equity, and democracy issues on campus.

Background

The following problems have arisen in African universities and are noted in a report to the Ford Foundation (1991:12) by African academics: the student accommodation squeeze, failure or decline of municipal services, financial deprivation of students, crowded classrooms, basic teaching confined to chalk and talk, teachers who must hustle for additional incomes and libraries whose acquisitions have been stagnant for years.

This chapter identifies the every day, accepted practice, which make Zimbabwean women ineffective in challenging their culturally accepted identities. Women, in the general African context, have been the custodians of community values. The spheres of activity of women including running the households, chores such as

washing clothes, seldom have been analysed to understand the impact these have on women. The identities of women in the society are still linked to the ability to carry out double roles within and outside the domestic sphere and the private domain. Rosaldo (1997) made a distinction between the public and the private. The domestic designates those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organised immediately around one or more mothers and their children in the private sphere. The public refers to activities, institutions and forms of association that link, rank and subsume particular mother-child groups. These two categories, if used analytically, explain the subordination of women precisely because women are confined to the domestic and excluded from the public. Thus as Holstein (1994) argues, the household, like the paid workplace, is a site of labour albeit unremunerated and often, unrecognised. Acceptance by society of men as public, political leaders has meant that even those women who are politically active, have their political orientation considered less authentic than that of men. This applies to female students who participate actively in student politics.

From an existentialist point of view where it is the society that interprets the body, women's 'otherness' and the social construction of gender, rest on society's interpretation of biological differences rather than the differences themselves. In other words, it is the value assigned to biological differences between males and females that make women the 'others'. This will be clarified in the discussion of the findings of the study on which this chapter is based. The perceptions of landlords towards female students and what they are expected to do in the home exemplify the point about social expectations of women by men in general. The social pressures on women emanate from a variety of cultural and institutional contexts, in this case the home and the university, and it is the different messages from these sources that oblige young students to live and make sense of contradictions in the social construction of feminine sexuality.

The institutions of higher learning are perceived as promoters of gender equity but what female students experience in and outside the institutional environment throws into doubt the basis of such beliefs.

The "education for all" policy adopted by the government of Zimbabwe soon after independence meant that at least the doors were open for both genders to acquire the same education. Such a policy did not analyse some of the cultural hindrances faced by females in the process of acquiring education. This is the problem that still assails institutions of higher learning. Mama, cited in Dwarf et al (1994) pointed out that investigations of the various forms of gender relations indicate that despite women's involvement in central aspects of the public sphere, even in contexts where their economic contributions are sustaining households, patriarchal ideologies ensure women's subordination by rendering men's and women's involvement unequal, devaluing and labelling women's contributions as "non- economic". An example of such attitudes is that of landlords who were interviewed and observed during the course of research on male and female off-campus students. The latter were expected to carry out domestic chores at homes where they rented rooms, as

part of the feminine duty. A clear division between the university and the home environments could easily be discerned.

The promotion of a girl child's education, even at university level, remains a problematic issue because of the conservatism of the socially constructed gender ideologies. The relatives of the students expect them to take more household chores in order to prove their femininity. Female students try to define themselves in positive ways but the norms and values within their home environments force them to conform to specific feminine identities that stress domesticity and docility in the service of men.

The University of Zimbabwe is experiencing a decline in real value of the institutional budget, an increase in undergraduate student numbers and deterioration in research facilities and library support. This has placed various sectors of the university under pressure. In such an environment, not only gender but also class stereotypes have arisen. In twenty years, the government grants to students, which managed to support all students, regardless of class, have declined in real value. Differentiation of female students by class has accelerated as a result of the economic climate. As Ng (1993:67) clearly states:

Class . . . is the embodiment of ideological and economic processes that structure how people relate to each other socially as well as how they are able to think about social relations.

The decline in the value of student loans and grants has created problems for many female students from working class backgrounds, as they are unable to provide for themselves like the middle class off-campus female students. The argument by the World Bank (1981:31) that universities must be financially self-sustaining and generate their own incomes without too much dependence on governments, does not take into consideration the fact that a large number of female and male students in African universities, have working class backgrounds. These students cannot secure higher education without government support. Thus the commoditisation and privatisation of education, which can now be accessed only by those with money, constrains the development of gender equity. In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, the institutions and international organisations cannot espouse the principles of gender equity amongst students unless they recognise the implications of the differences and variations in student backgrounds and experiences according to class.

Cultures and consumption amongst students

Youth cultures dominate the life styles of many students and this issue is related to students' dislike of economic reform programmes. Pressure to conform, in the university students' community, is prevalent especially in the areas of consumption. Students aspire to acquire cellular phones and the latest hairdos that the most expensive salons can offer, so that their peers can accept them. . Durkheim's concept

of social facts is useful because it explains how society is more than and above the individual. The society, which, in this case, is represented by the peer group, urges students to buy consumption goods such as cellular phones, out of a payout that is already insufficient for meeting basic needs. This style of consumption is part of the behaviour that contributes to acceptance by the peer group. This youth culture tends to be class structured, as it is the female students from affluent backgrounds who feel the pressure to retain their class identities by buying such goods.

However, this style of consumption has financial consequences for the student who conforms to peer pressure. Such students may have to acquire working boyfriends to retain their places in their peer groups. With the massification of the university, facilities which were generally meant for a lower number of students than the 10 000 already in existence, are now bursting at the seams. Off-campus female students are usually forced to find other venues for study, outside the library, because of its limited capacity. This is usually the case during examinations and all these are experiences that off-campus students have to deal with. The background discussion is meant to provide the context to the analysis of the off-campus students' socio-economic environment. The environment is influenced by global, national and local events and the members of that community feel the impacts and the pressures from these events.

Methodology

The research was carried out over a period of around three months. It involved various tools of research so as to elicit both qualitative and quantitative information. The most ideal sampling method used in this research project was cluster sampling. It was the ideal method in the sense that it reduced the cost and time requirements by surveying groups of respondents who were geographically close together. Generally speaking, sampling involves selecting a part of the population to represent the whole population. Calreck et al (1985:63) Cluster sampling was adopted because of two reasons. In this particular case, it reduced the cost and time requirements by surveying groups of respondents who were geographically close to one another. The three main residential areas picked were Hatcliffe, affectionately referred to as New Complex 7, Mount Pleasant and Bond Street.

This general survey method was undertaken to enhance the body of theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the issues under study. The study aimed to enhance the literature and the state of current thought within the area of student life. The researcher employed group discussion and in-depth interviews, with her acting as a complete participant so as to consolidate the research findings. These group discussions were useful in that they raised pertinent issues among students of both genders, issues which respondents, as individuals would not otherwise share or articulate without prompting. The in-depth interviewing, which was employed, gave the researcher room to probe more deeply some ambiguous and rather vague responses given during these group discussions.

The sample size, which totalled 42 students, consisted of 30 females and 12 males. The gender bias in the sample size can be explained by the fact that the general trend was and is still that more male than female students prefer to squat in residences rather than lodge or stay with parents or relatives. This may be due to the fact that male students do not have qualms about breaking residence rules and do not want to deal with the problem of loss of independence that results from dealing with landlords or staying with parents and relatives.

Findings

As indicated earlier, the decline in the real value of university budget, the increase in undergraduate student numbers and the deterioration in research facilities, including library support, have put universities under pressure. With the implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, privatisation of catering facilities has been one of the major sources of conflict between the university students and government. Students who come from working and poor class backgrounds have hitherto relied on government loans and grants for financing their university education. However, the government is under pressure from the World Bank and IMF, who have a market philosophy of making universities financially self-sustaining and self-generating, without too much dependence on the government for subventions. The discussion of the research findings is meant to highlight the impact of all these programmes on off-campus students and their reaction to such a harsh economic climate.

Accommodation

With the current economic climate, the University of Zimbabwe has experienced an "accommodation crisis." The ten halls of residence which the university has, have become inadequate for housing up to 10 000 students. However, the institution has increased its annual intake, resulting in large numbers of students having to secure alternative accommodation. The first table indicates the gender of the students, their year of study and their numbers in 1999.

In a bid to tackle the problem of lack of accommodation in residence halls, second year students who constitute about 21% of the total student population and females constituting 8%, second year student's body are given low priority for accommodation on campus. The main reason is that they are deemed not to be in a very demanding year. Therefore, it is assumed that they are not threatened by not staying in residence and that by second year, they are aware of the accommodation problem. The result of this system is that second year students have to seek alternative accommodation off campus. Table 2 shows the distribution of the types of accommodation among the students in the group interviews and the study, the numbers and gender of students in the sample.

Table 1: Gender of students, year of study and their numbers (1999)

Academic Year	Male	Female
1st year	1 962	756
2nd year	1 293	693
3rd year	1 221	575
4th year	361	116
5th year	83	25
Total undergraduates	4 920	2 261
Part-time undergraduates	55	34
Diploma students	368	176
Combined total undergraduates	5 343	2 471
Fulltime postgraduates		
Coursework	380	144
Research	122	51
Diploma/Certificate	263	116
Total full-time post graduates	765	311
Part time post-graduates		
Course work	428	119
Research	44	8
Diploma/Certificate	33	0
Total	505	127
Combined total post-grads	1 270	438
Occasional/Exchange	27	26
Overall total	6 640	2 936

Source: Deputy Registrar, Records and Registration, UZ.

Table 2: Distribution of types of accommodation

	Squatting	Lodging	Staying with parents/relatives
Males	5 (11.9%)	4 (9.52%)	3 (7.14%)
Females	2 (4.76%)	26 (61.9%)	2 (4.76%)
Total	7 (6.67%)	30 (71.43%)	5 (11.9%)
	14	60	10
Total	42 students		

The preference for the three main modes of residence is usually determined by the general impact of the prevailing economic climate. It also determines the students' experiences in relation to the teaching and learning environment in the university.

Squatting

Squatting is the practice whereby space or a room allocated to one student by the accommodation office is illegally sub-let or occupied by two or more students. The system is illegal but its harsh repercussions are deemed by students to be less significant than the hardships of squatting. Squatting is related to the student's status in society as revealed by the findings. The general trend is that those female students who squat are students whose families have a peasant background. With such a background, the family cannot afford to pay the required rent and feed that student. Amongst off-campus females, squatting has a demeaning quality. This originates from the accepted but questionable female youth norms through which female students are perceived to be people immune to the impact of SAPs because they are cushioned by their working boyfriends. Such a perception has had implications for female students who do not have enough resources to lodge but have to keep up appearances, especially among the middle class students.

Apart from squatting being a class phenomenon, it also has a gender aspect in the sense that high numbers of off-campus male students prefer such living conditions. As Gore (2000) has pointed out, the students with rural and peasant backgrounds, "SRBs" and the working class students, "born locations", are notorious for squatting with friends despite university regulations explicitly stipulating that no squatting is tolerated in the halls of residence. It is true that economic and social factors also contribute to this phenomenon of male students preferring to squat. However, there is also the perception amongst male students that a real university male student, a UBA, is a tough fellow and does not abide by the laws of the institution. This construction of what constitutes a real UBA corresponds to the prevailing norms of youth culture, which constructs youths as tough and beyond rules. Thus, male students live up to that image which also masks their economic inability to afford 'decent' accommodation.

However, the belief that the squatter has more access to facilities such as the library and more time to read is questionable. Their social conditions cannot be overlooked. One female squatter disclosed that she lived in fear of being "raided" when the particular hall of residence officials move are round at night in rooms, looking for squatters who are immediately evacuated when caught. One sociology student recounted:

"At one time, a rumour that circulated that there was going to be a raid one night and I had no choice but to go and sleep in the chapel on those hard benches"

The internalisation of domesticity is also apparent in that these female squatters have to do the dishes in the halls of residence and sweep the rooms. Such living conditions show that the socio-economic environment can play an influential role in making the teaching and learning environment a stressful one for students.

There are various reasons why female students lodge or stay with relatives. There are class issues influencing these choices. Female students from middle class backgrounds prefer to lodge especially if their parents stay outside Harare. One male student asserted that lodging is preferred by female students because of the students' desire to exploit the opportunities presented by limited parental control in the lodging situation. He was of the view that female students want to enjoy and exercise sexual choices, which are prohibited or foreclosed by staying with parents. Although this is true to some extent, it can also be argued that it is due to female students' intense displeasure with their physical and sexual roles. In other words, it is gender dissatisfaction with sexual oppression. These are females who are being socially assertive and are usually termed "unfeminine". Because they are trying to assert their own needs as individuals, they are perceived to be promiscuous. It is also vital to note that the preference to lodge by many females is also a way of shirking domestic responsibilities thus challenging the accepted gender division of labour. This was noted among some female students who paid maids to perform their household duties for them.

The preference to lodge or stay at home with parents or relatives, by female students, is related to the gender divisions of labour. The view by the community at large, that universities are places for exploring new ideas is very problematic. As Anderson (1997) noted,

The pursuit of knowledge has historically been considered the work of men.

In the history of education, women have been outsiders and despite their involvement in the academic field, the home was and is still perceived the woman's place. Given the prevailing division of labour, which includes cleaning, cooking and child-care by women, the off-campus female student has not been able to escape this gender division of labour. While female university students may define themselves as enlightened and question some of the socio-cultural traditions in Zimbabwe, the larger society has a different definition of the roles, which they expect women students to play. The society's expectations do not correspond with those of

the female students. Thus, what female students perceive as a democratic learning and teaching environment, which can accelerate and tolerate the evolution of new gender values, is simply perceived by society as nothing more than a way of improving a student's qualities in the male-dominated job market.

Female students' experiences of lodging

Students who are lodgers have had to contend with chores such as cleaning the landlord's house, cleaning bathrooms, toilets, the corridors and the yard. The female students, who were lodgers and were in the study, all come from working class backgrounds except for one student. The students were informed of these duties at the landlord's house the moment they set foot in it. Such duties were perceived not as work, but as part a female identity. This perception overlooked and disregarded the stressful nature of such activities. Female students in such situations often arrive late for early morning lectures because of the domestic responsibilities that constrain their time. The academic workload usually doubles for such students because they have to copy notes written by others, fabricate excuses for missing morning tutorials, which are compulsory and explain why they are not performing to the best of their capabilities. This clearly shows how gender equity is problematic because of the way society tends to perceive it as only applicable in the academic field but not in the home.

Freedom of movement of female students, who are lodgers, is also highly monitored. Surveys of landlords and relatives' opinions about university students' behaviour, particularly female students, have highlighted some conservative attitudes of the community in general. The homeowners, who were surveyed, asserted that university students are indecently behaved because of the freedom that they are accorded on campus. On campus, students are free to move and there are no restrictions on the types of visitors they can entertain at given hours. Their behaviour is only monitored insofar as it relates to attendance to class and there is no monitoring of the "general" behaviour of the students. Coming home late and bringing home relatives or friends of the opposite sex is usually met with disapproval. Students who arrive home late or entertain friends, especially those of the opposite sex, are threatened with a month's notice of eviction. One economics student stated,

"I moved from the home I stayed in simply because when any member of the opposite sex visited me, I was called names and the most popular one was *'hure'*, meaning, 'prostitute'.

Landlords in these residential areas have take it upon themselves to exercise parental roles of monitoring female students' behaviour and instilling what they believe are good morals, such as, coming home early, staying in your room when not in school and, above all, performing domestic work. Although the patriarchal ideology considers such conduct as acceptable, such female students are caught up in a situation where they would like to define themselves in positive ways as active agents of socio-cultural development and change especially in issues of gender equity

and democracy. However, acceptance of the existing male-biased gender roles by mainstream society hinders this.

The support for the regulation of female mobility can be located in many places. Socio-biological theories have argued that the male sex drive is stronger than that of the female. Such ideologies have been used as the foundation for gender inequalities. These theories also accept female passivity in issues of sexuality thus the 'need' to control women's sexuality. This explicit division of labour between the two genders is highly noticeable when comparing domestic chores between the genders. A male student stated:

"I am a man. What will society think of me after I am seen wearing an apron?"

Such a declaration highlights the various differences between the genders and the stance of mainstream society on the gender divisions of labour in different spheres of life and the impacts this stance has on females who want to assert their sexual independence.

Students staying at home

Middle class students usually constitute the largest number of those students staying with their parents and relatives. This class rarely shares the experiences that the peasant and working class female students undergo. Ng (1993:57) defined class as:

The embodiment of ideological and economic processes that structure how people relate to each other socially as well as how they are able to work about social relations.

For the middle class students, domestic chores are minimal due to the fact that there are domestic maids in these homes. The students do not face the same responsibilities that lodging female students face and to them, the home is a conducive area for studying. However, the issue of limited movement applies to both categories of students. Such differences also have a bearing on the amounts of time they devote to coursework such as projects and essays in the university and affect their academic performance. Thus it is vital to point out that gender ideologies, if not explicitly expressed in one field such as the domestic arena, often find expression in the regulation and control over female mobility.

Transport availability and cost

Generally, the availability of transport for off-campus students has been a major issue that needs to be addressed. However, the issue of class again plays a role in determining what types of students are heavily affected by this transport problem. However, taking into consideration the current fuel shortages that are being experienced by Zimbabwe, punctuality for lectures for those students who rely on public transport has been a problem. This is because the student usually arrives 20-30 minutes after a lecture has begun and may miss it because s/he is already late. This increases the student's workload since the student has to borrow notes and transcribe them.

As stated earlier, availability of transport is also heavily dependent on class thus determining what time a student has to leave the campus. The students with affluent backgrounds have relatives or parents who drop them off early at the campus gates on their way to work. Those lodging in high-density area such as Hatcliffe, where there is need to catch public transport, do not usually arrive on time and this is usually a direct result of the inability to afford private transport. Students staying in residential areas such as Mount Pleasant and Avondale, walk to campus in order to arrive on time and to save money. However being punctual does not necessarily translate into readiness for the lecture. The after effects of such long walks to the campus are physical and mental exhaustion by the time the student arrives for the lecture. Again, the socio-economic environment has a bearing on the teaching and learning environment. Democratic channels of trying to shift early morning lectures were not successful as the lecturers have other obligations to fulfil. Thus, a few students who are fresh and physical strong benefit maximally from the lectures.

The time a female student who is a lodger leaves the campus is different from the time another off-campus student from an affluent family leaves the institution. In a conference paper presented by Ndinda *et al* (2000), it is argued that students at the University of Durban-Natal are generally socialised into various roles and this defines their identity in profound ways. Female relatives of these female students expect them to be home to perform household chores so as to prove their femininity. Students who want to maximise their time on assignments finish lectures at 4 p.m. and by 4:30p.m, they are at the bus-stop, waiting for transport home. The student from an affluent background is usually told at home that the pick-up time is 8:30pm or 9pm and such a student manages to utilise a maximum number of hours in the library before being picked up. This is the problem that is being faced by female university students in Zimbabwe. Because of different class backgrounds, students cannot understand each other's problems and the issue of gender equity and democracy for all is not understood in the same way. The right to use library facilities is an issue to a poor student but not to another student who has better access to the library because of better transport.

The package of ESAP has also resulted in an unprecedented increase in transport fares. In February 1999, commuter omnibuses at the University of Zimbabwe cost \$15 but by September 2000, the fares had been raised to \$20. One male student, writing to the *Varsity Times* of September/November, 2 000), complained:

It now costs \$30 from Chitungwiza to town and \$20 from town to campus. This means I need \$100 per day for transport only. But you can't learn on an empty stomach. I also need money for food and the canteen is expensive. Imagine some of the trouble some of us are going through.

The teaching and learning environment is now being influenced by economic power. The resources that female students who are lodging have are not enough to meet their needs. These students sometimes miss lectures and do not go to campus because they might have only two lectures on a given day and they can get by through

copying other students' notes. Access to education is now determined by a student's economic standing.

The following table highlights the expenses per day of a female student who is a lodger.

Table 3: Daily expenses for a lodging female student

Item	Cost
Transport from Chitungwiza to town	\$28
Transport from town to UZ	\$20
Transport from UZ to town	\$20
Transport from town to Chitungwiza	\$28
Lunch at the University	\$45-50
Total spent per day	\$141-\$146

The following table shows the total costs, by gender and class, which students pay for necessary and basic items.

Table 4: Cost of basic items by gender and class

	Middle class		Working class	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Payout (12 800)				
Rent (x 4 months)	N/A	N/A	\$ 500	\$2 000
Transport costs	\$1 000	\$1 000	\$3 750	\$3 750
Food allowances	\$2 000	\$2 000	\$4 725	\$7 200
Deductions by UZ	\$2 063	\$2 063	\$2 063	\$2 063
Total	\$5 063	\$5 063	\$12 238	\$19 813

Due to the fact that male students who lodge usually stay three to four per single room, their rent costs are quite low. Female students are particular about whom they stay with and prefer not to share rooms. Although they attribute this reluctance to share to hygienic reasons such as not wanting to crowd in one room, a realistic assumption is that they want to retain their identities and independence and assert their sexual independence. Sharing rooms makes an active sex life more difficult. Stanford *et al* (1979) argued that every student faces social problems and among these is that about how to be accepted by or win the approval of peers. This is usually resolved by a change in opinion and behaviour. This clearly explains the youths' perceptions of their positions in specific communities and the need to retain those positions.

The inclusion of allowances for transport and food for students from middle class backgrounds is due to the fact that at times, such students might have afternoon

lectures and because their parents or relatives are at work. These students, therefore, use their money to pay for their transport.

A semester usually constitutes 105 days, including weekends and the total number of learning days is 75. This is the figure that is used as the basis for calculating students' expenses. Female students with middle class backgrounds tend to have more money to spend on hair styling, nice food and clothes in comparison to female students from working class backgrounds. UZ official deductions include medical aid contributions, (\$575) academic tuition fees, (\$1450) and a registration fee of \$38 giving a total of \$2063 in deductions.

Table 4 also indicates how class backgrounds determine the expenditure of students. Students from middle class backgrounds usually have other sources of income, such as transport allowances by parents and relatives and free food at home. Female students from working class backgrounds need the payout to cover rents, food and transport. This explains their high expenditures. However the income expenditure of the latter category of female students differs from that of male students of working class backgrounds because males usually share a room and eat in the campus canteens. Thus, they do not feel any need to buy foodstuffs and domestic appliances such as dishes, hot plates and cutlery to keep in their rented rooms.

Social relations and survival strategies

The social relations of off-campus female students have largely been determined by the economic conditions in which these students operate. The social relations have also been influenced by the cultural values attached to relationships between males and females.

The cultural perspectives towards men have assumed that men are breadwinners and are supposed to take care of the economic needs of their families. However, if a male student is unable to acquire enough resources to meet a female student's needs such as hairdos, costs of movie excursions, and clothes from boutiques once in a while, problems usually arise. Therefore, because female students feel that they are on an equal footing to male students with regard to resources, they prefer to date employed, non-student men, called NABAs (non-academic bachelor's association). Such behaviour also shows the extent to which some of these beliefs about men as breadwinners, have been consciously or unconsciously internalised by female students. While Gore and Chagonda, in this volume, argue that such economic dependence by female students disempowers female students in their relationships with men, it is ironic that they do not apply the same logic to analyse male students' dependence on employed females. Male students in such relationships are perceived to be using females merely for survival but these relationships are not considered disempowering for men. Such perceptions of social relations among these male and female students highlight the problematic nature of the issues of gender equity and democracy when the economic balance is tipped in favour of the male as well as the opposite.

This economic dependence of female students on the NABAs has been a source of tension between the two genders on campus. One male student pointed out:

"It is quite unfair when you love someone and you see her being taken by a NABA simply because he has the resources."

Thus, as Gore noted, in a bid to release this frustration, male non-resident students also date non-university women, referred to as NASAs, (Non-Academic Spinsters' Association).

The inadequacy of the grants offered by the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology has forced some students to work in various manual jobs so as to earn extra cash to supplement the grants. One female student staying in Avondale admitted that she usually spent an hour of her time working in the library. She disclosed that she was initially paid according to the current food prices in the dining halls, which she said ranged between \$30 and \$40. However, some students have taken more demanding jobs such as part-time teaching at private colleges. This usually affects a student's performance negatively as one of the respondents disclosed:

"As a teacher, I have to mark a heap of books submitted by pupils and evaluate their work. As a student, I have to study, research and write my assignments, a tough situation."

One of the most common survival strategies adopted by those students who would have managed to secure residence on campus although they stay in Harare, is to sub-let that accommodation. Rooms that are located in the complexes usually range between \$4500 and \$6000 in illegal rental. There are always tenants for these rooms because many students are usually stranded for accommodation. However, if the officials of that hall stage a raid, the illegal tenant is usually evicted without compensation because she is not the legitimate tenant of the room.

Minimising consumption of the basic food requirements per day, has led to some students coining a name to the new disease resulting from a diet of bread, "breadiosis." The sustained intake of starchy foods such as buns and bread to the near-exclusion of other foods is now very common. The majority of students have to deal with a diet called, 0-0-1, meaning that the person does without breakfast and lunch and only eats supper. Despite the contention that this only affects on-campus students, off-campus students of working class origin who lodge singly have admitted that they also have the same diet because the cost of food is high.

Pleas by the off-campus students to the students' body and the Students' Executive Council, (SEC), have resulted in the initiation of major negotiations between the university community and the commercial and industrial organisations that provide services to the university community. The SEC treasurer for the year 2 000, disclosed that, so far, the SEC have approached the bus company, ZUPCO and the National Railways of Zimbabwe regarding the transport issue. The intention is for the SEC to hire buses from either of the two companies and subsidise them and then the students

can pay a reasonable fare. The final results of the negotiations had not yet been made public by the time this chapter was published. The SEC treasurer also disclosed that the SEC try to help students, especially those in financial crises. He mentioned that large numbers of students approach the SEC during the last month of every semester when their funds have run out. These students usually do not have money for food and bus-fare. He pointed out that it usually the male students who are broke at the end of the semester. Female students are said to manage through other means.

Protection of females by UBAs

The perception that UBA's take care of female students during demonstrations can be explained. Much as the two genders may not agree on dating strategies, they recognise their common interests especially during strikes and class boycotts. It is acknowledged that most females are not able to run as fast as the males or as able to protect themselves from the riot police as male students. It is usually the manipulation of biological differences to suit social values that causes conflict between male and female students.

Conclusion

The practice and expansion of democracy, human rights and gender equity in institutions of higher learning, is an issue that needs the co-operation and collaboration of both sexes. Cultural conservatism on the part of males, be they students or landlords, and some females, has contributed to the stunting of the human rights of female students. Thus, gender equity is difficult to realise even in the academic institutions that claim to foster open-mindedness, liberalism and the pursuit of freedom for all.

Female students need to stand up for what they believe in especially on issues of culture, democracy, freedom and gender equity in the teaching and learning environment. The global, national and community-based hindrances to the development and expansion of democracy, gender equity and respect for female students, need to be addressed and acted upon by the university community, in alliance with other players in Zimbabwe.

Institutions of higher learning, such as the University of Zimbabwe, should promote creativity and challenge attitudes towards some of the traditional and cultural values that students tend to take for granted and accept uncritically. Students need to be part of the revolutionary change that fosters a peaceful and democratic environment for all.

References

- Anderson, M. L. *Thinking about gender: Sociological perspectives on gender*, Prentice Hall: New York, 1997.

- Calreck, B *et al.* *The Survey Research Handbook*, Richard Irvine Inc.: New York, 1985.
- Collier, J.F. 1973 "Women in politics" in Rosaldo, M. Z. *et al* (eds) *Women, Culture and Society*, Zed Books: London. 1973.
- Holstein, J.A. *et al* "Constructing Family: Prescriptive Practice and Domestic Order." in Sarbin, T.R. *et al* (eds) *Constructing the Social*, Routledge: London. 1994.
- Gore, A. "Issues of masculinity among non-resident male students at the University of Zimbabwe". Conference paper presented at the AAP/GSA Regional Conference on Gender Equity, Human Rights and Democracy, Harare Holiday Inn, July 27 -30, 2 000.
- Mazini, A. "Student Activism in Africa" in Dwarf, E. (eds) *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Prentice Hall: New York. 1994.
- Moser, C.A. *et al.* *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*, Gower Publishing Company: Hants. 1971.
- Ndinda, E. *et al.* "Perceptions of race, class and gender among black female students at the University of Natal Durban". Conference paper presented at the AAP/GSA Regional Conference on Gender Equity, Human Rights and Democracy. Harare Holiday Inn. July 27-30, 2 000.
- Ng, R. "Racism, Sexism and Nation Building" in McCarthy, C. (ed) *Race, Identity and Representation in Higher Education*. Routledge: New Jersey, 1993.
- Stanford, N. *Colleges and Universities*. Montoque Inc.: California, 1990.



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>