THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN ACADEMICS IN KENYA

by

Margaret Njoki Kamau
Graduate Department of Education

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Toronto.

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Margaret Njoki Kamau
Doctor of Philosophy, 1996
Graduate Department of Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

This study focuses on the daily lived experiences of academic women in Kenya. The purpose is to examine how formal education has enabled academic women to question their situations, to challenge and organize collectively for a better life for themselves and for other women and to make important decisions concerning their career and families.

This study is based on seven months’ interviewing and observation of twenty-four academic women in five Kenyan national universities. In-depth interviews were conducted, tape recorded, transcribed and coded with analytical categories emerging from the data. The study was conducted qualitatively utilizing aspects of the ethnographic approach. For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the respondents.

My findings indicate that although the academic women I interviewed are a part of the tiny Kenyan elite, their lives are marked with glaring contradictions. Possession of a higher education and a high status career leads to many social and personal gains, but these very gains cause social and personal pain. The women experience marital strain, denial of affiliative needs, socio-cultural strain and excessive demands from their relatives on account of their being thought to be overeducated, too independent and uncontrollable.

At the university, their careers lag behind those of their male colleagues. The women are excluded from male academic networks, and they lack mentors, sponsors and critical resources such as time and finances for accelerating their academic careers. Divisions between
and among women and a strong culture of fear prevent the academic women from collectivizing their voices with those of the grassroots women for the purpose of their own empowerment.

The academic women in this study are not passive victims. As I listened and observed them, I was deeply moved by their courage, strength and determination to succeed in spite of all odds. On the basis of a clear understanding of their situations they adopted various strategies to cope with or change their situations. While some of the academic women overtly resisted the status quo, others did so in very covert ways. In their varied approaches, the women were optimistic that gender relations can and must be changed.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the background issues which give rise to the problem under study. It is argued that right from the inception of western formal education, Kenyan women have always been disadvantaged and that their educational prospects did not change dramatically with the change of political power. In post independent Kenya, women continue to be underrepresented in the educational system and particularly at the higher levels. Consequently, their participation in professional careers is marginal. It is also argued that there is a great need for studies with firm theoretical foundations which link the experiences of Kenyan women and in particular Kenyan academic women to the wider social system. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it provides an insider and outsider perspective on the experiences of the academic women. It also provides important information that can be used by both advocates of gender equality and policy makers.

This chapter is divided into five broad sections: background to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, methodological approach, and the organisation of the thesis.
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As gatekeepers academic women have the potential to play a critical role in shaping tomorrow’s woman today. It is therefore important to understand their herstory and ideological commitment to improving the status of women in the academy. (Lie and O’Leary, 1990, p.17)

As long as education is tied with employment and good life we cannot say it is not important. If one does not have formal education she or he is excluded from the society’s mainstream. However, if empowerment means making decisions, choices and charting our own lives then education as a tool for empowerment becomes questionable. Education and power do not correspond. For us academic women it is not easy. We continue to be judged not on our professional success but on our marital status, how well our families are, on whether our marriages are stable or simply whether we are perceived as good moral women. (Edna - Interviewee)

Struggle is an ever present phenomenon. One such struggle is that of equality between women and men. In Kenya the advocates of gender equality insist that provision of equal educational opportunities would lead to greater participation and integration of women into the society’s mainstream. However, studies by Schiefelbein and Farrell (1984), UNESCO (1985), Robertson (1985), Carty (1988), Rathgeber (1991), Kelly and Slaughter (1991) and Stromquist (1990; 1991), among others, warn that although the number of females accessing higher education is increasing, both in developed and developing countries, enrolments should not be confused with equality. They contend that as equality of access is achieved, surpassed or approximated, women become segregated into distinct areas of study. This sex differentiation of the curriculum constitutes a major mechanism in reproducing a sexual division of labour, particularly at the professional level. Further, these studies illustrate that very few women enrol in postgraduate programmes. This in effect means that women’s chances of getting a teaching or a research post at the university are very limited. Moreover, even in countries where women’s participation is at par with men, full participation of women in all aspects of their societies is far from being realized. One may wonder why this is so. In most cases, as Robertson (1985) clearly indicated, possession of a western type of formal education creates a new dilemma for African women.
Formal western education was initially introduced to the male gender with an express aim of serving the imperialist agenda of manpower development. When it was later introduced to women, it was an education for adaptability, whereby the African woman was encouraged to remain the custodian of African culture while at the same time internalizing western Victorian patriarchal ideas of domesticity. In Kenya, therefore, women's lives are shaped and continue to be shaped both by old forms of indigenous culture and by westernization - forms which live side by side, at times in clear lines of confrontation and at times with blurred distinctions. This study will get at the texture of that experience by capturing the mixture of fear and desire and the many continuing tensions caused by the old sense of self shaped by the interlocking hierarchies of subordination.

Women who teach and conduct research in Kenyan universities seem to experience remarkably sharp contradictions and dilemmas as they try to disentangle themselves from a dependent capitalistic patriarchy which includes the enmeshment, of in a rather distorted fashion, of indigenous forms of patriarchy with western Victorian capitalistic patriarchy. They experience tensions and conflicts as they try to adjust, adapt and actively shape their own social realities in three important spheres: the family, formal education and the university.

By virtue of their position and higher education they are in a privileged position compared with the majority of their sex, yet they are still disadvantaged when compared with men in the same institutions. The general society and the university community, in particular, view these women ambivalently. They are expected to be "good" wives and mothers, meaning that they maintain subordinate positions in society. They are expected to take care of almost all family responsibilities and at the same time be equally as productive as their male colleagues. In the university circles their presence is neither resented nor welcomed. They are perceived as intruders and incompetent and sometimes ridiculed as unfeminine. Almost invariably women academics are
in a minority and they tend to be concentrated at the lower end of the salary scale. They are not evenly distributed within higher education institutions and are less likely to be a lecturer or a researcher in science or technology than in arts (McMahon, 1985). Evidence from the world over shows that women are underrepresented in university teaching (Moore, 1987; Smith, 1987; The Chilly Collective, 1995). Moreover, the higher the promotional level, the lower the percentage of women (Acker, 1992).

Various theories have been advanced for the exclusion of women from senior positions in society in general and in the education system in particular. These theories range from notions of women's perceived inferior intellectual ability, to the presence of disabling role conflict and discrimination, to the functionalists' idea that the sexual division of labour is rooted in the needs of society itself. In recent years, arguments have focused on the operation of capitalism and patriarchy (Lie and O'Leary, 1990; Acker, 1992).

However, in Kenya it has been and continues to be argued with pride that there is no discrimination against women, since the Kenyan constitution deals directly with and approves equal educational opportunities for women (Riria, 1984). It is also argued that women are employed in important positions in the armed forces, in the police force, in prisons and in government as well as in the private sector (Government of Kenya, 1989, p.64). Following this line of argument, one is forced to ask how many women are in these important positions. What decisions do they make? What power do they have? Out of the general population of women, how many have had access to the formal educational system and how many have succeeded? A closer examination of the Kenyan system of education reveals that there is a glaring contradiction between theory and practice.

In 1989, the Kenyan population stood at 21.4 million with a growth rate of 4 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 1993). Fifty two per cent of this population are women and girls. Yet 70
per cent of the women are illiterate while only 35 per cent of the men are illiterate. This gender gap in educational provision has popularly been attributed to the later entry of women into formal education during the colonial era. Nevertheless, thirty years after independence educational access for women has not increased significantly, particularly at the tertiary level. For example, university admissions records for the 1992-3 academic year show that even after the undergraduate cut off point was lowered in 1991 from 69 to 68 points,¹ of the 10,189 undergraduate students admitted for that academic year only 2,771 (27 per cent) were women. This means that lowering the qualifying marks alone without genuine efforts to rectify the factors which limit girls' achievement in schools cannot translate into equal educational and employment opportunities.

During the research period there were many debates concerning the lowering of university entrance marks for women, with male academics arguing that this practice amounts to reverse discrimination and lowering of academic standards. Some of the academic women perceived this affirmative action as a back door policy and in fact detrimental to their social standing. They felt that this affirmative action undermined their intellectual capability. Women academics might be looked down upon as incompetent persons whose presence at the university can be explained as part of affirmative action.

Earlier studies on women's education in Kenya, for example, Kinyanjui (1975), Maleche (1976) and Eshiwani (1985), all seem to agree that the number of female students drastically thins out as one ascends the educational ladder, that girls perform more poorly than boys in examinations, that girls have low educational aspirations, that girls are underrepresented in science subjects and as university students. Available statistics show that even fewer women get access at

¹ To get admitted to the university, the candidate must have an average score of C+ which is equivalent to an average of 69 points. Candidates are expected to pass in ten subjects. In 1992 it was decided by the University Admissions Board Committee that any female candidate who scored 68 points average - i.e. cut-off point for grade C - should be admitted to the university as a form of affirmative action.
the graduate level. For example, at Kenyatta University, during the 1989/90 academic year, out of the 227 people admitted to graduate programmes, only 54 were women. These figures are important because it is from this insignificant pool of graduates that academic women will be drawn. These figures serve to illustrate that the number of academic women may not increase if so few continue to be admitted to the graduate programmes. Interestingly, the universities’ employment records did not indicate gender, which could be interpreted to mean that gender is not seen as an important variable in admissions or employment policies.

Kaburu (1975), analyzing the proportion of women holding positions of leadership in Kenyan society, found that women were seriously underrepresented. He points out that out of the 99,800 people in high and middle level categories only 16 per cent were women. What is even more revealing is the fact that 69 per cent of these women were nurses, midwives, teachers, shorthand typists and teletypists. Riria (1985) found that women were almost absent at the executive and policy making levels. She points out that out of the 172 elected members of parliament in 1984 only two were women. Further revelations from the Republic of Kenya (1993) and Midamba House (1991) illustrate that of all the employees in the formal sector only 18 per cent are women and only a negligible percentage of these women were professionals, administrators or technicians. These figures suggest that between 1975 and 1993 there was only a small increase in the number of women entering formal employment. Leadership in universities is also mostly confined to men. By the time this research was being conducted all the vice chancellors of the five national universities were men and of the twelve deputy vice chancellors, only one was a female.

Women do not fare better in the political sphere either. Even with the first multi-party general elections and the promises made by the various party manifestos, women’s representation did not improve substantially. The promises remained on paper just like other earlier ratified
conventions against discrimination against women and on pay equity forward looking strategies.

For example, the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU) manifesto (1992, p.4) states:

Women must be given a higher proportion of the nominated seats in parliament and local authorities. KANU will deliberately encourage women to stand for election to party positions.

Surprisingly, out of the twelve nominated members of the current parliament only one is a woman. Women were not encouraged to stand for elections (Daily Nation, February 3, 1993). Out of the 200 members of parliament only 7 are women. Out of the twenty-five cabinet members only one is a woman and she is assigned to the Ministry of Culture and Social Services2 (Personal communication with W. Nyaga, October, 1995; Munji, 1995; Munji & Mutua, 1995).

The point made clear by these studies is that access to education, professional work opportunities, and leadership positions are limited for women. It is also clear that simply increasing the number of women in the educational system as well as in the labour force cannot lead to gender equality. The thesis advanced in this study is that although education and formal employment remain crucial elements in the struggle for women's emancipation, the extent to which they can improve women's status depends on the conditions under which education and employment are acquired and utilized.

Previous studies of women's education and labour force participation are remarkably atheoretical. They do not go beyond the descriptive level and link gender differentiation to the

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2 On May 4, 1995 Dr.(Mrs.) Nyiva Mwendwa, 55, raced into Kenya's history books for becoming the first woman cabinet minister. She described her historic appointment as a surprise and God given (Munji & Mutua, 1995, p.1). In January 1992 she was appointed as assistant minister in the same ministry. Ministry of Culture and Social Services is in charge of women's groups, the women's bureau, community development, youth, adult education and other cultural areas like performing arts. Her earlier appointment as an assistant minister in this ministry had angered a number of prominent Kenyan women. Mwakisha (1992, p.12) wrote: "This latest appointment joins other examples of how little regard the government has for the women of this country. After 30 years of independence, the government view is that women can only deal with fellow women through women's groups, their children and other cultural and social issues."
wider patriarchal dependent Kenyan society nor try to weave the long list of causes of women’s unequal access to education and employment into a coherent explanatory framework. These studies fail to establish how those who make it in the educational system participate in the labour market or in the other social aspects of the Kenyan society. These studies also do not tap the views of those persons concerned. Another missing link is that these studies do not mention women academics.

This study, therefore, will be an attempt to bridge this gap. It investigates in an in-depth manner the experiences of academic women in three crucial sites: formal education, the family and employment at the university. Specifically, I inquire about their daily lived experiences - the problems they encounter, dilemmas, hopes and aspirations as well as the strategies they adopt for survival in an overwhelmingly male dominated society.

Although from available literature it is commonly accepted that with greater educational attainment women in developing countries like Kenya can pursue careers and formal employment and thus gain more economic and social status in their societies (Smock, 1981; Kelly 1989; Nammuddu, 1992, Moghadam, 1992), my personal experiences and observations in the educational system as an academic woman do not really fit with these expectations. It appeared to me that possession of a higher education and entrance into an academic career did not unlock the social barriers or stereotypical societal attitudes towards women. The voices of elite women and in particular academic women are rarely heard even in articulating issues affecting them. Women with higher education seemed constrained, alienated from one another as well as from the less educated Kenyan women. They did not seem to organize or collectivize their voices on behalf of themselves nor of women from underprivileged rural areas or from the urban
poor. They also seem to be absent from executive, policy and administration levels. I began to wonder about this seeming silence, apathy and exclusion. What is the problem, I wondered. Does it mean that the academic women shy away from responsibilities or making their views known? Did their formal education prepare or fail to prepare them for leadership? In effect what concerned me is the fact that although quite a number of women were teaching in the Kenyan universities, there was no female constituency or visible gender solidarity in the university. I wondered what the academic women perceived their role in the university and in the general society to be. I became increasingly doubtful about whether formal education empowered women to question, analyze, challenge and organize for collective action. I also began to wonder whether the increase of women in higher education and senior positions could translate into real power. What does it mean to be an academic woman in Kenyan society?

My questioning of how higher education and entry into academic careers might increase women's sense of autonomy and social status became more heightened in 1987 when I was a junior faculty member in one of the Kenyan universities. I presented my doctoral proposal to the chairman of my department and it was rejected on the basis that the other three women in my department were pursuing their doctorates in the area of gender relations. The chairman of the department argued that he could not understand what problems women faced. He further

1 On December 20, 1986, a prominent criminal lawyer, S.M. Otieno, died suddenly and seemingly intestate. His widow, Wambui Otieno, after six months of protracted struggle lost the rights to bury her husband. In 1987 Professor Wangari Maathai launched a campaign to collect a million signatures from Kenyan women so as to pressure the government to consolidate and amend the law relating to death and burial so as to give a widow the automatic rights to bury her husband. Many of the elite women disassociated themselves from Wambui and Maathai. Moreover, in 1989, Maathai opposed the government's proposal to construct a 69 storey building (Kenya Times Trust Tower) in Uhuru Park (the only Green space and a historical movement to the Kenyan public). Unaccustomed to challenge from women, Arap Soi, one of the cabinet ministers, dismissed Professor Maathai as a "frustrated sentimental divorcee" (Maina, 1992, p.2). On Jamuhuri Day, President Moi expressed the surprise that women had kept quiet whilst one of their own went astray. Promptly, some elite women led by the chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake organized rallies to condemn Professor Maathai for her activist stance. For more useful discussions on how elite women have not supported each other as well as on the burying Otieno saga see Stamp (1991) and Odhiambo and Cohen (1992).
explained that enough studies have been conducted on women’s issues and Kenya needs more studies addressing socio-economic problems as well as science and technology. I was forced to write another proposal better suited to the departmental requirements. It was approved and supervisors assigned. My personal knowledge was invalidated. I began to progressively question how knowledge is constructed, validated and legitimized by those in power.

When I got a chance to study at OISE, I decided to revisit my earlier interest in relations of gender. Bearing in mind that there is no knowledge from a disinterested perspective I decided to study academic women in an attempt to answer some of the questions which had troubled me over a period of time. I have chosen to study academic women because of my conviction that as educators they have a strong impact on female students. As role models and opinion leaders, how they teach, what they teach, how they conduct their daily lives, and what impressions they create have a tremendous impact on how women’s lives and politics are played out in the university and in the general society. Their aspirations, hopes, desires and frustrations can easily be translated into their teaching strategies and this in effect will have an impact on tomorrow’s women. It is my belief that any social change leading to gender equality must begin with changing societal attitudes and perceptions, a task that must begin in our schools and universities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which formal education has enabled academic women to question their situations, to challenge and organize collectively for a better life for themselves and other women, as well as to take charge of decisions concerning their careers and families. A particular concern is the extent to which as opinion leaders they impact on decision making machinery at the university and in the educational system in general.
I formulated a number of questions which guided my research. These questions allowed for flexibility and did not unduly limit topics for discussion with research subjects. Respondents expressed a lot of personal views and raised many questions in the conversational style interviews.

The following were the research questions:

1. Who are the academic women? What is their background, their earlier educational experience, their career experience?
2. How do their educational success and career accomplishment benefit other academic women as well as grassroots women? What linkages and alliances exist?
3. What barriers, if any, prevent academic women from achieving their social and personal goals?
4. What is the nature of women's participation at the university?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study's significance lies in the fact that it uncovers, reveals and informs from the Kenyan academic women's personal experiences and perspectives how the education system and academic career impact on their daily lives. The women identify several problems, tensions, dilemmas and contradictions that they encounter daily. This study is almost unique in considering highly educated women in the Third World. Most of the studies on Third World women and in particular African women, for example Kinsman (1976), Caplan (1978), Obbo (1980), Eshiwani (1985), Robertson (1985), Berger and Iris (1986), Kinyanjui (1988), Parpart & Staudt (1989), Staudt and Parpart (1990), Stamp (1986, 1991), Stitcher and Parpart (1988) Hansen (1992), Musisi (1992), Nzomo (1993), Gordon (1995), address themselves to the issues of women in development and in almost all these studies the focus is on rural and urban poor women. Some of these studies also deal with colonial education, culture, literacy and access and attainment in formal education.
Few studies focus on higher education and in fact none of the studies focuses on lived experiences of a specific group of women in higher education. Highly educated women have been ignored by researchers because of the great faith developers, planners, educationists and international consultants have in education. Education is posited as an unqualified good and the more of it the better. Education is perceived as a panacea to all social ills in the Third World; therefore, it is assumed that once women are highly educated and incorporated into the employment sector their problems are solved. This study is significant because it shows that schooling has more to do with large scale projects of moral regulation, social integration and control than with individual or collective liberation. Thus this study makes a substantive contribution to knowledge as well as counteracting western stereotypes about Africa as solely a region of deprivation and illiteracy. It also contributes to knowledge about the diversity of Kenyan women’s experiences.

Unlike most of the previous studies of women’s education in Kenya, such as Maleche (1976), Eshiwani (1985), and Riria (1985), which are purely descriptive and give long lists of causes of women’s underrepresentation, this study makes a theoretical contribution by showing that the problems Kenyan women and in particular Kenyan academic women experience are not accidental but are a consequence of ways in which vested interests are being served by existing conditions. Unlike studies which blame women for their own predicament, in this study obstacles are located in the social system and the institutional environment and not simply in women’s choices (Stromquist, 1991).

Unlike most studies by Africanist feminists and earlier feminist anthropologists who homogenized and universalized Third World women’s experience of gender, this study makes an important contribution in showing that women experience gender differently even in one Third World country. (For other useful discussions against universal subordination, see Etienne & Leacock, 1980; Leacock, 1981; Sacks, 1982; Amadume, 1987; Albers, 1991.) This study argues
that sisterhood is not even local in the Kenyan society. Women experience gender differently on
the basis of culture, class, ethnicity, levels of education, marital status, religious affiliations, a
country's location in terms of socio-economic and political development and its relationship with
the developed world (Amadiune, 1987; Mohanty, 1991) and thus we must go beyond simplistic
ideas about women's nature. The data in this thesis indicate that academic women occupy
multiple locations. On the basis of their education and careers, they occupy an elite position but
due to their gender, they are subordinated to men just like the rest of the Kenyan women.
Although these women are subordinated, they still have the economic and social power to control
not only underprivileged women (housemaids, cleaners, secretaries etc.), but also men. Ironically,
these underprivileged men can assault the academic women on account of their gender. Women
are not a monolithic group and hierarchies exist among women. Contradictions therefore, exist
between the oppressed groups.

Perhaps, the greatest strength of this study is the fact that it represents both an insider and
outsider perspective. As an academic woman, born and raised and educated in Kenya, I shared a
similar social background with my respondents. As an outsider - as a researcher from Canada - I
was at a vantage point to critique my own culture including relations of gender which I had once
taken as given. As an African and in particular a Kenyan woman teaching in one of the Kenyan
universities, the issues affecting academic women are of particular concern to me. I take,
therefore, as paradigmatic one of the tenets of feminists' research and politics that my own
experience of location and knowledge of the world are important and inseparable from the
research process (Stanley and Wise, 1981). In this in-depth analysis of their lives, academic
women themselves reassess the implications of acquiring a higher education and of pursuing
academic careers in an atmosphere where higher education is highly prized and at the same time
gender relations dictate that women should be subordinate to men particularly those in their
personal lives. They also reassess the impact of harsh socio-economic realities on their lives.

A qualitative approach informed by feminist theory is a strength of this study. The significance of a qualitative method is that it takes place in a naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) rather than in an artificial situation. This design allowed me to interact face to face with my research respondents and progressively focus on issues as they emerged. This flexibility to interact with my research subjects helped to focus on the issues which the academic women felt were important to them. An emergent design allows the research questions to unfold as the researcher interacts with the research subjects. The research subjects in this study are treated as knowledgeable social actors consciously intervening in their social realities. This view is opposed to the quantitative research design where research subjects are often treated as unknowing passive objects. The voices of academic women are presented in this thesis as far as possible. In this way new knowledge is created by the women themselves by telling their personal stories in their own words. In creating this new knowledge the women showed that they were quite aware that their social suffering has been socially constructed and therefore is mutable when other supporting social mechanisms are in place.

Finally, this thesis journey has significantly contributed to my intellectual development particularly in the area of gender relations. Before September 1990 when I joined the OISE Department of Sociology in Education I did not have articulate knowledge in feminist studies. I hope this study will contribute to the now current debates on gender relations in Kenyan society, provide a data base for policy makers, planners and university administrators, as well as provoke more research. More research on experiences of women is required in order to equip ourselves in the protracted struggle for gender equality.
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study focuses on the experiences of academic women in Kenya. At the time this research was conducted there were four national universities and one university college, namely, Nairobi University, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Egerton University and Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology (JKUCAT). Four academic women drawn from all four national universities and the only constituent college were selected and interviewed as well as observed in both formal and informal settings.

This study does not include academic women on study leave, sabbatical, maternity leave or leave of absence. The women interviewed were those doing the actual teaching during the research period January 1993 to June 1993. This selection was based on the fact that I wanted to observe these women as they conducted their official duties at the university.

Over the same period in which the interviews were held, I conducted participant observations at the university, at the women’s homes and in social and official functions they attended. I used these two methods because I wanted to capture the emotions, feelings, values and needs that shaped my research subjects’ world views. I wanted to understand the meanings they attached to what they said, did or felt. The participant observations were particularly important, because what people say is not always what they do (Burgess, 1984). The interviews were semi-structured but took the form of a conversational style. I tape recorded all the interviews but at times the women requested me to turn off the tape recorder when they felt something was too personal. I also wrote down field notes and at times kept mental notes which were written down as soon as time permitted.

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4 At the time of conducting the field research, there were four full fledged national universities and one university college - Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology (JKUCAT). In 1994, JKUCAT became a full fledged university. To date, there are five national universities.
I also collected and studied documents, such as statistical information, newspapers, magazines, university calendars for various years, statutes, memos and anything that I believed would strengthen this study.

Interviews were transcribed and coded with analytical categories emerging from the data (Tesch, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). More detail on the research process can be found in chapter three.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into eleven chapters. Chapter one provides background information to the study, a statement of the problem, a discussion of the significance of the study, a description of the methodological approach, and an outline of the organization of the thesis.

Chapter two deals with literature related to women's education, empowerment and employment in the Third World. Literature on academic women both in the developing and developed world is also reviewed. It is argued in this chapter that there are gaps in the literature and in particular there is a dearth of qualitative information concerning Third World academic women. This study intends to contribute to filling this gap. From the issues raised in the reviewed literature a theoretical framework is also conceived and presented.

Chapter three explains how the thesis journey has been travelled. Specifically, the research subjects are described, and methods used in collecting and analyzing of the data are presented. The chapter also addresses the social location of the researcher both as an insider and outsider to the research process.

Chapter four explores the earlier educational experiences of the research respondents. It is argued here that the main purpose of educating women was to make them better mothers, wives and workers. The curriculum was gendered, girls' high schools were ill equipped and in almost
all cases the teachers as well as parents and friends influenced subject choices these women opted for. It was an education for subordination but as active social actors the women exploited various avenues to cut a niche for themselves in a mainstream society. This chapter is useful because it gives us an earlier portrait of the respondents and how their initial educational experiences, career choices and self perceptions have changed or not changed over time. On the basis of their earlier life experiences it becomes clear that the purpose of formal education was not specifically tailored for women’s empowerment.

Chapter Five explores the factors within the university which enable or disable the development of academic women’s career development. It is argued that women’s academic careers develop at a slower pace in comparison with that of their male colleagues because promotions are not only based on the stated promotion criteria but are also influenced by other extraneous factors. The women are excluded from academic networks, excluded from thesis supervision, experience a chilly climate at the university, are unsupported and are discriminated against on the basis of their marital status. However, not all women felt disadvantaged. A minority explained that the university is fair, democratic and meritocratic. In their view the university does not discriminate because the most qualified persons get hired and promoted. They also argued that gender is not a factor in their careers.

In chapter six the impact of domestic labour on a woman’s career development is discussed. It is argued that academic women accumulate career disadvantage because of the sexual division of labour in the domestic sphere and a culture which dictates that women should not achieve a higher status than their spouses. Women are either forced to defer or completely abandon the pursuit of higher degrees in an effort to fulfil societal expected norms such as marriage, marital peace, and childbearing activities. Due to harsh economic realities, particularly those due to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS), most of the women are forced to engage
in side businesses which chew away the little time they could have used for research and publications.

Chapter seven examines the nature of linkages and alliances that academic women make among themselves in an attempt to empower themselves as a group. It is argued in this chapter that although academic women expressed a strong desire to work together, they experience formidable social, psychological, and structural barriers which make their alliances and linkages almost impossible. Jealousy, competition, ethnicity, physical and social organization of the university and preference for male bonding are identified as some of the obstacles to academic women’s working together.

In chapter eight the barriers preventing academic women from reaching out to the grassroots for political action are presented. It is argued that there are many more things that divide academic women from grassroots women and few factors to unit them. Huge social, educational and economic differences and a strong culture of fear divide the women.

Chapter nine analyzes higher education for women as a double edged sword. Whereas higher education and entrance into an academic career may lead to increased social and economic autonomy, this autonomy produces contradictions and dilemmas in an overwhelmingly male dominated society. In the chapter it is also argued that western formal education and the development of capitalistic institutions continue to exist side by side with indigenous culture and modes of production and this more often than not causes a dilemma for educated women. They are enculturated in a western culture through formal education which is capitalistic and individualistic in nature, work in institutions which encourage individualism and competition, are paid a salary which at times is not enough to replenish the worker and her family, and are also expected to fit the stereotypical image of an African woman.
Chapter ten explains the coping strategies that academic women utilize in an attempt to make the institutions work for them. I argue that as knowledgeable social actors they are cognizant of their subordinate positions in the society. They understand very well the gender politics involved and exploit various cracks within the system to advance their status.

Chapter eleven summarizes the findings of the study, presents my own reflections on the whole process, and outlines emerging research and policy implications.
CHAPTER TWO

GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND WORK IN THE THIRD WORLD

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature dealing with the nature of women’s participation in the educational system as well as in the labour force. Specific attention is given to the Kenyan educational system. Also analyzed is literature on academic women. Literature on academic women in developed countries is not completely alien to the experiences of Kenyan academic women because universities in the formerly colonized countries were and continue to be modelled after western universities. In any case, formal education in Kenya in its present form has a long colonial connection. The aims, culture and ethos of the university more often than not tend to reflect colonial and neo-colonial biases. However, I do not in any way try to homogenize the experiences of the Kenyan women with those of women academics in other regions and in particular from developed countries. Insight from these studies, in my view, are important to show the diversity and the similarities of experiences between women academics from the developing and developed nations. Presented also in this chapter is a theoretical framework to be used in the empirical study reported in this thesis.

Literature reviewed in this chapter clearly shows that, although developing countries have great faith in formal education as a tool for development and indeed spend large proportions of their annual government expenditure on education (for example, Kenya spends about 33 per cent), women’s participation remains marginal. All over the Third World, despite their diverse cultural, religious, political and regional differences, similar patterns of gender disparity are identified.
Studies on access and attainment identify several barriers to women's education. In particular, parents' socio-economic status, their level of education, area of residence, availability and access to schools, type of schools available to girls and teacher factors are seen to have significant impact on the education of a girl. Women do not usually spend the same number of years in school as men and even when they do they are channelled into different kinds of curricula. This gender differentiated curriculum in turn prepares both males and females for different occupations in society, with women at a disadvantage.

The literature reviewed also shows that some tensions do exist between education and employment. Possession of an education is no guarantee that women will get the same jobs as men because the labour market is segregated by sex. State policies in countries like Saudi Arabia enforce sex discrimination and division, while in countries like Kenya, where state policies emphasize equality of opportunity, strong systematic socialization in the school, work place and the society ensures women's subordination irrespective of their education or educational status.

This chapter shows that certain gaps exist in the literature dealing with women's participation in education and work. For example, it is found that almost all studies on women's education deal with access and attainment, but no study deals with the daily lived experiences of women in the educational system or at work. Also, the studies reviewed identify a long list of barriers to women's participation in education and the labour force without attempting to link these barriers into a coherent explanatory framework. My contention in this chapter is that gender inequality in the educational system and in the labour force cannot be fully explained without our understanding of the mechanisms used by the greater social system in naturalizing this inequality. It is this gap in literature that this present study wishes to fill.

This chapter is organized into five sections. Sections one and two examine literature on gender inequality in education and work throughout the Third World. Section three is a specific
study of Kenyan women’s participation in the educational system. Section four addresses issues affecting academic women in both the developed and developing world, while section five is an explication of the theoretical framework. The chapter finishes with a conclusion.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN THE THIRD WORLD

The Female Education Paradox: Access and Barriers

Improving and widening access to formal education has been a major goal in most Third World countries in the past two decades. As a result, the number of females enrolling at all educational levels has increased but gross gender disparities continue to exist and persist, particularly in West Africa, South Asia and Middle East regions in which the proportion of women with no education is between 14 and 20 percentage points greater than that of men (Stromquist, 1990, p. 138). Studies of women’s educational participation and attainment such as those by Smock (1981), Kelly (1984), Robertson (1985), Stromquist (1990), Kelly and Slaughter (1991), and Rathgeber (1991), King and Hill (1993) show that there are several family, socio-economic and school factors militating against equal education for equal results for both males and females.

The Family and the Home

Several factors within the family such as the level of education of the parents, their cultural beliefs, ethnicity, social economic status, and area of residency have been identified as some of the decisive factors affecting whether a girl will be enrolled in school and for how long she will remain in school. Deblé (1980), Chlebowska (1990) and King and Hill (1993) show that female enrolment levels are low and dropout rates high, particularly among females from low socio-economic backgrounds. They show that even when schools are free, poor parents cannot afford to pay the direct costs in terms of school books, uniforms, and transportation nor forego
opportunity costs because female children provide much needed household labour.

Chlebowska (1990) argues that sending a girl to school is rarely perceived as essential, especially when there are household chores she could be performing which, in the eyes of the parents and especially of the mother, are more important than education. She states:

To help her mother who is overwhelmed with work in a household that is often too numerous, the girl stays at home and prepares or helps to prepare meals and takes care of little brothers and sisters while her mother is out in the fields. She goes after water, pounds millet, and fetches dry wood to cook the meals. Little girls may also have to help their mothers in agricultural production or in craft activities. (Chlebowska, 1990, p.74)

Crehan (1984), in her study of Zambian women, notes that even when girls from the lower classes enrol in school, their performances are marginal:

The more girls are integrated into housework the poorer they perform at school, not only because they do not have the time to study, but because this is the only time they can rest. (Crehan, 1984, p.57)

Studies by Weis (1981), Assie (1983), Stromquist (1990), Kelly and Slaughter (1991) and Rathgeber (1991) show that girls from socially and economically advantaged homes were much more likely to enter and remain in secondary and tertiary education level than girls from poorer homes. Assie (1983) shows that in Cote d'Ivoire, a girl with a university educated father was more than thirty-five times as likely to enter an academic secondary school than was the daughter of a man with no education. King and Hill (1993) point out that wealthy Saudi families sent their daughters to private public schools in Egypt and Lebanon in the 1960s. Most of these girls were enrolled in male dominated fields, while those from Egyptian working families were enrolled in the so-called "feminine" subjects and vocational education:

Those from a working-class background are also more likely to enrol in vocational education, nursing, and teacher training institutes than in the general stream at the secondary level or in profession education at the tertiary level ... These non-academic secondary schools provide easy access to paid jobs. By comparison, professional higher education, while prestigious takes longer and is costly. Female students in engineering, medicine and other professional programs tend to come from wealthier families. For instance, sixty-five per cent of the female engineers
under the age of 35 come from urban bourgeoisie and aristocracy - the top 11 per cent of the Egyptian population - compared with the 41 of their male cohort. (King & Hill, 1993, p.69)

These findings are very revealing. Although presented as value free it is not difficult to detect that although women are discriminated against on the basis of their gender, social differences do exist among them and, therefore, any analysis of women’s participation in education or the labour force must entail a gender-class analysis. From these findings, we can also argue that since the majority of female students who get access to higher education are from economically advantaged backgrounds, then those who become academic women are more likely to have class alliances with the men in their class. These findings show that we should be careful in making generalities. We should critically examine which girls are disadvantaged. This would act as a pointer that alliances between women might also be difficult to achieve because of these social differences (see chapters seven and eight).

Finally, these studies challenge the myth that schools are egalitarian through the use of meritocracy. These studies suggest that schools are implicated in class and gender divisions (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Wolpe, 1978).

Tied to family and home background is the area of residency. Studies by Smock (1981), Chlebowska (1991), and Abraha et al. (1991) show that in most developing countries schools are more readily available and physically accessible in urban areas than in rural areas and that urban girls persist in school at higher rates, both in absolute terms and relative to boys. In contrast, they show that in rural areas fewer girls attend school and still dropout rates are higher. In rural areas, transport facilities are limited. Parents hesitate to send their daughters to a school which is far from home. Citing the case study of Egypt, Chlebowska showed that school attendance was 94 per cent for boys and 72 per cent for girls when school was 1 kilometre away, but fell to 90 and 64 per cent respectively when the distance from school was 2 kilometres.
**Cultural Beliefs**

Societal attitudes towards what is commonly believed to be the woman’s role and status in most Third World countries is another repeatedly cited constraint to women’s participation in education. Almost all studies show that girls are expected to be married and boys are supposed to be providers or "breadwinners". This belief encourages parents, particularly if they are poor, not to invest in girls’ education. Girls are expected to play their reproductive and domestic role which does not necessarily require education. When allowed into the educational system, they are given courses in subjects which complement their domestic roles and are thus denied vocational skills, becoming, therefore, disadvantaged in the job market (Hatem, 1983; Rihani, 1983).

Lockheed and Verspoor (1989) add that some traditional cultures insist on control of women’s sexuality and, as such, some girls are withdrawn from school to get married at puberty, while others are thrown out of school in cases of pregnancy. These studies fail to tell us why the control of women’s sexuality is necessary or whose interests are served by this control. However, they do add to the evidence that schooling, through its processes and practices, reproduces gender inequality.

**The Role of the School**

The role of the school in reproduction of gender inequality both in the educational system and the labour force is well documented by Smock (1981), Kelly (1984) and Rathgeber (1991). Patterns of access to schooling as well as administrative and curricular practices play an important role in socialization of the students into "appropriate" gender roles.

Rathgeber (1991) and Kelly and Slaughter (1991) warn that although the number of women accessing higher education is increasing, enrolment should not be confused with equality. They contend that entry into higher education has occurred in the context of segregation by sex.
They argue that as equality of access is achieved or surpassed, women become segregated into distinct areas of study, and I agree. This segregation is tied with what is considered culturally appropriate for males and females. On the basis of this gender ideology, even in countries like Cuba, Chile, and Lesotho, where more females than males are enrolled in higher education, the females do not study the same subjects as the males. They are overrepresented in fields like education, nursing and home economics. These fields of study do not translate into opportunities equal to those afforded men in the workforce. Kelly and Slaughter (1991) show that the education system exacerbates gender inequality even in a country like Lesotho which has the highest proportion of females in higher education in the whole world:

In Lesotho which has the highest proportion of women in higher education in the world - women are 63 per cent of all students - women are 53 per cent of humanities students, 72 per cent of education students, 39 per cent of law students, 50 per cent of social and behavioral sciences and only 16 per cent of those studying natural sciences ... The access women have achieved to higher education has been to fields of study which articulate poorly with highly paying professional, technical and managerial employment. ... Opening tertiary education to women has for the most part meant providing women with education but with fewer skills to negotiate in a highly competitive labour force. As a result female graduates become marginalized in the workforce. (Kelly & Slaughter, 1991, p.6)

This means that gender inequality cannot be solved by mere entry of women into education. The system is value loaded and must be unloaded if gender parity is to be achieved.

This systematic gender discrimination exists and persists despite the fact that most Third World countries which obtained independence after World War II instituted policies of equal access for men and women in the post secondary sector. However, studies show that formal policies are often set off by informal but highly effective socialization processes which in fact bar women from venturing into subject areas associated with male dominance (Rathgeber, 1991). The implications here are that fields of study and channelling practices constitute a major mechanism for reproducing a sexual division of labour at the professional level. As such, the ideology of domesticity and motherhood is constructed and reconstituted through the hidden curriculum.
This effect of the hidden curriculum - or the hidden way in which learning is shaped and organized - is corroborated by Amadiume (1987). In her study, she found that those women who dared to enter traditionally male subjects were ridiculed as unfeminine, ugly, unmarriageable, and in effect, were labelled as social deviants. This conditioning is further exacerbated by stereotypes in school textbooks. Studies by Harber (1989) and Obura (1992) show that textbooks used in Third World countries continue to overwhelmingly portray sexist ideologies. Women are portrayed as mothers, sweepers, submissive, and dependent, while the men are active, play games or work in offices. These textbooks, therefore, perpetuate predominant sex-role stereotypes and potentially limit girls' educational and occupational aspirations.

Other studies show that lack of role models to emulate could affect the performance and career aspirations of female students. The teaching profession at the elementary level is dominated by male teachers. Davies (1990) argues that although the teaching profession is portrayed as a feminine career in the developed countries, it is, in fact, a masculine occupation in many Third World countries. Moreover, even where women are in the majority in the teaching force, decision making is in the hands of men. To illustrate this gender imbalance in the teaching force she cites the cases of Fiji with a total percentage of women teachers at 51 per cent and women holding only 28 per cent of leadership posts, and of Brunei with a total of 60 per cent and women holding only 2 per cent of leadership posts. She also decries the Zimbabwean case where women teachers are in a minority status - only 32 per cent of secondary and 40 per cent of primary teachers - and hardly represented at all in leadership positions. Davies further shows that students are presented with a patriarchal world view which in itself is a limitation.

Chlebowska (1990), supporting Davies (1990), argues:

In mixed schools, the school masters do not adopt the same attitude to girls and boys. Girls are relegated to the back of the classroom and often ignored by the teacher, who rarely puts a question to them. Girls are in a minority in the class; confronted with boys who enjoy the favour of a school master with sometimes
pronounced misogynist tendencies, they have great difficulty in asserting their presence. (Chlebowska, 1990, p.73)

What is even more interesting, however, is the fact that some women teachers too discriminate against female students (Eshiwani, 1985). The findings of these studies have implications for teacher education. To confront gender inequality in the schools one must begin with gender sensitive teacher training programmes as well as increasing the number of female teachers who can act as role models. However, it should be noted that unless there is a conscious move to dismantle systems which perpetuate and organize gender inequality, increasing the number of female teachers may not solve the problem. There is a need to have a gender sensitive curriculum which addresses issues of gender inequality in the school system. Education can only become a practice of freedom in Freire’s terms (1990) if it addresses consequential questions confronting the daily lives of students. It is my contention that education should aim at liberating, not enslaving, the minds and capabilities of the learners. Creativity and potentialities cannot be developed and unleashed while students are caged in sex-typed school processes and practices.

Quality of the School

The type and quality of school females attend is seen by some writers to have a significant relationship with educational attainment. Studies by Weis (1981) and Eshiwani (1982) showed that in Ghana and Kenya respectively, girls were overrepresented in secondary level institutions of low quality - institutions that had relatively poor success in preparing their students for the ordinary and advanced level examinations. Eshiwani showed that girls in Kenya were overrepresented in Harambee schools (schools created and maintained through community help). Few of these schools offered sciences; they lacked basic infrastructure as well as qualified teachers and the morale in these schools is usually low and the performance very poor. Davies (1990), however, argues that although these schools have low quality education, most of Third World
countries, and in the African region in particular, would prefer the weak academic version of schooling rather than vocational schooling. Vocational education is generally devalued in most African countries because of its colonial legacy. Vocational education was designed for the underclass who were to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Academic education was expected to open doors to prestigious white collar jobs (Wamahiu, 1992). However, Davies does not seem to notice the irony of this choice. Lack of vocational skills and possession of "weak" academics training both lead to the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the labour force.

**Co-Education or Single-Sex Systems**

Literature on the extent to which co-education or single-sex systems benefits or disadvantages girls is conflicting. Some studies such as Smock (1981) and Chlebowska (1990) show that girls perform poorly in mixed schools while others such as Eshiwani (1985) show that in single-sex schools performance is much higher. However, studies also show that the discussion of co-education is inextricably entwined with that of religion. Single-sex systems in the Third World are favoured by countries with either a Christian or Islamic bent. The western type of formal education was generally introduced by missionaries who often believed in segregating the sexes as a form of moral regulation. Secondly the missionaries and the colonialists advocated different curricula for the sexes and therefore sex segregation was very important.

In general, the impact of co-education is difficult to assess. There may be a great deal of hidden sex segregation; sometimes schools that are technically co-educational separate boys and girls into different classes most of the time. Sex segregation, of course, facilitates differentiation of faculties and curriculum by sex.

Suffice to say that there are many factors that militate against equal education for women and girls. However, it is important to note that there are many gaps and omissions in the literature
reviewed. One major weakness in these studies is that they are remarkably atheoretical. They present long lists of independent variables such as the family background or role of the school teacher as obstacles to women's education but fail to weave them into a coherent explanatory framework. While it is noted that no single feminist theory whether liberal, radical or socialist can fully account for Third World women's subordination, I believe that these studies would have been improved by a greater application of feminist theory and analysis. Ideally lists of variables would be replaced by a coherent theory explaining how gender is constructed, reconstructed and reconstituted by the social, political, and economic forces prevailing in the Third World and the place of education.

EDUCATION AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE LABOUR FORCE

One woman in three today is illiterate, and almost all these women live in the so-called Third World countries (Chlebowska, 1990, p.18). This means that one third of the world's female population lack literacy skills necessary for participation in the modern sector of employment. Secondly, women's opportunities for economic participation, like men's, are tied to the nature of the economic system under which they live. This means that whether or not women get higher chances of access to education, the extent to which their countries' economies are integrated into the global capitalistic system determines the nature of their participation in the labour force. Due to the dependent economies of most of the Third World countries, women's lack of literacy skills, and the persistence of cultural traditions, the majority of the women are engaged in the rural agricultural sector, petty trading, or subsistence economy which are rarely accounted for in a country's GNP. Due to this devaluation of female labour the majority of women are seen as not "working", meaning they are not engaged in the waged modern economy.
Presented in this section are studies dealing with the nature of formally educated women’s participation in the modern sector of employment. Studies by Smock (1981), Eshiwani (1985), Robertson (1985), and Davies (1990) all found among other things that:

1. Women are underrepresented and excluded from many of the careers and jobs that are considered to be appropriate for females in industrialized societies.

2. Occupational placement and mobility increasingly depend on the completion of specific levels of formal education and, therefore, education plays an important role in allocation of jobs and many economies favour the more educated job seekers.

3. The earlier access of males to secondary and university level of education due to historical factors conferred an initial advantage in securing high status and well paying positions because they entered the labour force at a time when the imbalance in labour supply and demand for educated manpower favoured the job seeker.

4. The exponential expansion of the education system in the Third World countries over the last 30 years has far outstripped the wage employment creation potential of the weak dependent economies and this has given rise to a surplus labour market in which the number of job seekers far exceeds the demand. In turn, this has enabled the employers to raise educational qualifications required for even the menial jobs.

There is a lot of tension between these findings and the great faith which developmentalists, planners, educators and even international consultants have in education. Education has been perceived as a panacea for solving the social ills in the Third World countries. Currently the World Bank and other developmental agencies have on their priority agenda the education of Third World women. As noted in the final report of the Inter-Agency Commission on the World Conference on Education for all (WCEFA) article No.3 (3):
The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated. (Inter-Agency Commission, WCEFA, 1990, p.45)

My argument, however, is that although education of women is a basic prerequisite for both social and economic development, their education can be counterproductive if affirmative action and restructuring of Third World countries are not addressed.

Evidence from literature shows that gender inequality in the labour force cannot be solved by only increasing participation levels of girls in the education system, because educational growth usually has the effect of increasing rather than decreasing social and economic inequalities.

Increasing amounts of education only lead to the escalation of credentials and this works to the disadvantage of girls:

Thus, the school certificates and degrees that women receive can no longer command the kinds of jobs men regularly obtained with similar credentials ten, five or even two years ago. (Smock, 1981, p.230)

Credential escalation works to the relative benefit of males since it reduces the pool of potential females eligible for employment. In a surplus labour market, employers are more selective not only in terms of credentials and level of education, but also in terms of gender and subjects studied.

This selection becomes more sexist particularly when we consider the subjects women study in school. As noted earlier, there is a wealth of literature showing that women are overrepresented in arts and humanities and underrepresented in professional and technical fields (Stromquist, 1990; Kelly, 1984; Rathgeber, 1991; Kelly and Slaughter, 1991). Fields of study, therefore, constitute a major mechanism to reproduce a sexual division of labour at the professional levels, as clearly stated by Kelly and Slaughter:

The access women have achieved to higher education has been access to fields of study which articulate poorly with high paying professional, technical and managerial employment. Graduates in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences had
the greatest difficulty in finding and maintaining full time employment in job markets that have increasingly emphasized technical scientific and managerial expertise. Opening the tertiary sector to women has for the most part meant providing women with education but few skills to negotiate in a highly competitive labour force. As a result, female graduates in many countries become marginalized in the work force ... Higher education, it seems provides women with qualification, but that qualification does not translate into opportunities equal to those afforded men in the workforce. (1991, p.6)

Stromquist (1991), writing on this gender inequality in education and the sex-segregated labour force, laments that social emancipation will continue to be elusive even though women are entering the university in greater numbers than ever before. She points out that as women continue to be marginalized even within the university in fields of nursing and teaching, men continue to dominate science, technology, and agriculture, fields that shape contemporary life and will increasingly affect it in the future. Society maintains the sexual division of labour by channelling men into male dominated fields. Once positions are so defined, society enforces these definitions through social control (Jacobs, 1989, cited in Stromquist, 1991, p.117).

However, Carty (1988) and Davies (1990), though agreeing with the foregoing studies, caution about generalizations. Davies argues that for most developing countries, occupations which are seen as "feminine" in the developed countries are still masculine in developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia where women are still grossly underrepresented in the educational system. Carty (1988) specifically argues that the patriarchal relation of dependent capitalism supports the sexual division of labour in the Caribbean region and these relations are the main factors responsible for the male domination in highest paid jobs and for men being at the management level in the so called "women's jobs".

Carty further shows that the labour force is segregated by sex, and even if women entered male jobs, gender equality in the labour force would be difficult to achieve because when women enter male professions, the professions take on a hierarchical structure. In her words:
Once women begin to move into the male dominated professions, the professions take on a hierarchical structure whereby men occupy the supposedly more prestigious sectors. For example, where men in medicine dominated specialties like paediatrics and gynaecology, these are now considered "women's specialties" as men move more into fields such as orthopaedics and neurosurgery. (Carty, 1988, p.118)

There are also social, psychological and structural barriers to women's entrance into the 'male' professions. Rathgeber (1991), in her study of Kenyan female physicians, found that the structure of the medical training was not designed to meet the special needs of women, particularly at the postgraduate level when they are likely to be married and at the child bearing stage. She also found that women physicians encountered a lot of sexism, and that their hard work was not recognized and rewarded by their peer group. Male students attributed the high performance of females to 'special favours' from the male professors. She cites one female physician recalling:

Women seem to do better on exams and men will not accept that fact ... they say, oh, you people because you are women you are going to pass every time ... but the women are much more responsible than men. (Rathgeber, 1991, p.59)

This kind of mentality will definitely discourage women from entering these "strategic" male domains particularly in countries where a woman's reputation as a "good woman" is strongly upheld.

However, gender inequality in the labour force in some of the Third World countries like the Caribbean and Latin America has no foundation in the educational performance of males and females, although education is a major criterion used to allocate all the higher paying jobs. Studies by Schiefelbein and Farrell (1982) demonstrate that throughout the education process, females perform well or even better than males yet they are not represented in any way which matches their educational attainment. These studies, therefore, indicate that other factors do work against women's participation in the labour force on an equal footing with men.

Studies also show that women are underpaid in the labour force. Schiefelbein and Farrell (1982), for example, show that although Chilean women have a greater probability than men in
most societies in acquiring relatively prestigious jobs, they earn less than men with the same level of education, and that it is more difficult for women than men to acquire the same type of job, especially in tight economic circumstances. To overcome this hurdle, some Chilean women spend extra years in school to get equivalent jobs. They also found that area of residence and marital status affected the nature of participation in the labour force. In their study they show that although most of the girls had reported the desire to work upon marriage, the idea is quashed.

In view of the foregoing studies, it would be interesting to explore specifically the status of Kenyan women in the education system. It is hoped that this exercise will serve to provide more background information necessary to the understanding of the lived experiences of the Kenyan academic women of my study. It is this case study I now turn to.

THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE

Colonial Economy and the Status of Women

In African indigenous societies, before the intrusion and invasion of Western European imperialists with their religion, culture, politics and capitalistic economy, there existed closely-knit societies based on kinship. Kenyan people had their own system of government, religion, education and culture which were all an integral part of life. Although strong male domination in the ideological structure existed, this was mitigated by sexual dualism. There were flexibility and balance in the sexual division of labour. Women had areas of social life in which they predominated. They had their own political, economic and cultural institutions whose very existence was unknown to observers (Likimani, 1985, p.15). Women enjoyed a status of respect and dignity and exercised a certain amount of social control in their capacity as mothers, co-wives, daughters, agemates, aunts as well as members of the extended lineage (Ogudipe, 1984; Stamp, 1986; Kamau, 1994; Gordon 1995).
Indigenous societies recognized the importance of the multiple social and economic roles played by women as food producers, reproducers, distributors, guardians of the hearth, fire, water, and land as well as healers, creators and disseminators of indigenous knowledge (Wamahiu, 1984; Kamau, 1994). Moreover, production was for use value and the household was an important unit of production. Women were and continue to be the major breadwinners in Africa south of the Sahara if we take the provision of food as the chief function of the breadwinner. As subsistence farmers they had usufruct (use or access) rights to the land which was communally owned. Women controlled and distributed what they produced and as such had more power, more resources and more control over their own lives than they now do (Okeyo, 1980; Newman, 1984; Likimani, 1985; Davison, 1989). It is significant to reiterate that literature on the status of women in pre-colonial era deconstructs the view that women everywhere and every time have been subordinated and that African women were at the very bottom of the social Darwinian scale.5

In terms of education, there existed both formal and informal indigenous forms of education. Education defined in its natural and broadest sense encompasses a conscious attempt to help people understand their social reality and equips them with social, economic and political skills to enable them to transcend the limitations of their social environment. Indigenous education was accessible to all members of the community. It was a lifelong education which was related to the practical needs of the community (Kenyatta, 1968). The early childhood education of both sexes was in the hands of the mother and other women relatives until the children reached puberty. At this age, education was gendered both in content and by sex of the teachers. Education of girls was handled by mothers and other women in the community and boys were

5 For more useful and in-depth discussions against universal subordination of women see feminist anthropologists' critiques of colonialism such as Leacock, 1980; Etienne and Leacock, 1980; Okeyo, 1980; Sacks, 1982, Draper, 1975 and the excellent film "Na! The !kung woman" by Patricia Draper 1984; Wamahiu, 1984, Amadiume, 1987; Albers, 1993; and feminist critiques of post colonialism such as Stamp 1986; Hansen, 1992 and Gordon, 1995.
taught by their fathers and other men in the community. Interestingly, grandmothers who had acquired the position of elders (after passing childbearing age and seeing almost all their children married) were consulted by both men and women particularly on matters of sex, love and marriage.

However, with the advent of the imperialists, African social, religious, political and economic institutions which gave women a certain amount of power were disintegrated and branded as "heathen and uncivilized practices" (Oliver, 1963; Oliver, 1982; Anderson, 1970; Amadiwne, 1987). Indigenous institutions were replaced with new institutions to suit the new social, political and economic order - "capitalism" in the name of "civilization" and "modernization". Modernization, however, for underdeveloped countries, has meant the deterioration of the economic position of men and women, especially that of women (Boserup, 1970). Economically, Kenyan women became marginalized. Money economy and cash crops were introduced to men. Huge tracts of land were expropriated by Europeans for plantations. A hut tax\(^6\) was imposed and coupled with land alienation most men were forced to migrate into plantations and urban areas in search of paid labour in order to pay the imposed taxes. As a result the family was no longer a production unit where the women and men worked together for the family consumption. The women were left behind in marginalized "reserve" areas as defacto heads of the households. They had to struggle to provide for themselves and their children including the male migrant worker especially in case of illness.

\(^6\) The hut tax was one of the numerous taxes imposed by the colonialists on the Kenyan men. The taxes were to be paid in cash. Under the guise of civilizing Kenyan people and liberating the African woman the men were taxed according to the number of wives they had in the hope that this would help curb polygyny. Each wife owned her own domicile "hut" together with her children. The more wives an individual man had the more huts on which he had to pay a tax. It is this indigenous practice which was being taxed for the benefit of colonial political economy. With the advent of Christianity and monogamous marriage, the individual wife became a private property of an individual man as Mrs. A.X.Y. In Kenyan indigenous cultures women maintained their maiden names even after marriage. For example, my grandmother who died at age 95 in 1982 maintained her maiden name as Njoki wa Kinaiti - (Njoki daughter of Kinaiti).
Bujra (1983), Marshall (1988) and Gordon (1995) all seem to agree that there was no question of a family wage and in some cases wages were below the physical and social maintenance and reproduction needs of the worker. Gordon writes:

It is largely women's unpaid subsistence activities that subsidize undeveloped capitalism. Men can be paid low wages and prices for cash crops far below a family wage because as husbands they can "by custom" count on their wives to grow food for them and their children to do housework and childcare and provide cheap or free labour on husbands' cash crops. (Gordon 1995, p.888)

This colonial arrangement resulted in an underdeveloped capitalism whereby capitalist enterprises operated side by side with pre-capitalistic forms of production based on the household. Various studies and reports, such as Kinyanjui (1975), Mutua (1975), Sweat (1976), Hafkin and Bay (1976), Rogers (1980), and Grown and Gita (1987), all point out that colonialists favoured men as producers and as government officials while women were relegated to subsistence farming. Ironically, when the colonial government introduced new methods of farming, technology and credit, all these were introduced to men with the hope that the knowledge would trickle down to the actual agricultural producers - women - and this trend continues to date. By 1950, Kenyan women were socially and economically marginalized because land which used to give them some sense of power was finally demarcated and title deeds issued in the names of men. Formerly, Kenyan women's access to land was guaranteed through patrilineal lineage and kinship ties and women's interests were protected by a group of women of the lineage and as such checks and balances were ensured; under the new scheme of things their access to land became heavily dependent on a woman's affiliation with an individual man. These women bore and continue to bear significantly Kenya's burden of dependent underdeveloped capitalism. Not only do these women share with men exploitation and dependency and inequalities that result from poverty, they also suffer from cultural and political biases that define what women are best "suited" to do and this restricts their true participation in social, political and economic life (Gayfer, 1983, p.1).
From the foregoing analysis, I conclude that colonialism did not only exacerbate the already existing gender inequalities in pre-colonial Kenya, but had a devastating effect on the majority of the Kenyan people, and in particular women. Colonialism set in motion the underdevelopment and deterioration of Kenyan women's status. The present Kenyan male elite is not eager to change the status quo, but is only involved in symbolic politics not aimed at improving the lives of women in any significant way. Due to social, economic and political biases Kenyan women like other women in formerly colonized Third World countries were denied access to the western type of formal education. When it was finally given to them, it was to serve the colonial political economy and patriarchy.

**Colonial Education and Women's Marginalization**

The contemporary western type of formal education right from its inception, first by the missionaries from 1844 and later in conjunction with the British colonialist by the turn of the century, was not meant to benefit the African people, least of all women. Education given to African people was premised on the misconceived notion that Africa was featureless, "a tabula rasa" without social organization, artifacts of civilization, a blank page on which to begin writing history (Marshall, 1988, p.4). A sustained exercise was carried out to construct Africans as childlike, little distinct from a savage natural order that the African continent presented to European eyes. Integral to this was a moral discourse working to create an almost unbridgeable chasm between savagery and civilization. This sustained exercise was a necessary fiction for the systematic assault on African resources that was about to take place and this could not have been possible without a systematic education aimed at subordinating and subjugating the colonized peoples (Camaroff and Camaroff, 1988). To achieve this goal the missionaries zealously offered evangelical education in order to Christianize as well as "civilize" the African people while the
colonialist agenda was to socialize African peoples into becoming subordinate and obedient workers.

Western formal education, therefore, had an instrumental function to produce an army of junior clerks, messengers, cooks, milkmen, tax collectors and other functionaries for the colonial administration as well as to effect Christianity (Miriri, 1979; Smock, 1981; Newman, 1984; Hansen, 1992; Hunt, 1992). These new roles were initially given to men since women were not considered part of the educational plan. Riria (1984), Likimani (1985), Amadiueme (1987), Midamba (1990), and Musisi (1992) corroborating the above studies show that colonialism was characterized by a strong male bias both in government educational programmes and in mission policies. Imbued by patriarchal capitalistic Victorian ideology prevalent in Europe during the 19th century, women were given an education for domestication while men were equipped with skills oriented towards the public world. Amadiueme specifically argues that a Christian church with a male God, His son served by a male bishop and archbishops, was introduced together with warranty chiefs and schools headed and dominated by men. The missionaries transported and implanted the Victorian ideology of what a woman should be on the Kenyan woman. This ideology supported by the Christian biblical theology glorified the subordinate role of women which led to the marginalization of Kenyan women. What is important is that is that these ideas were legislated into Kenyan common law and male power was subsequently translated into state power. Control of women became an important aspect of the exploitation of the Kenyan people and this could not have been achieved without denying women access to formal education. It is from this gendered ideology that the expression "a woman's place is in the kitchen" was derived and continues to be a popular ideology in Kenya.

What is important about these studies is the fact that Kenyan women were constructed and reconstructed to fit the essentialized and overgeneralized images the colonialist and missionaries
had of the 19th century Victorian woman - "housewives" even when they knew in reality the majority of the women were actively involved in the labour force. In my view, this social construction of the Kenyan woman was a necessary step to effect the subordination of the women. Rogers (1980) rightly argues that the colonial masters did not have any impetus to change this bourgeois value system. What is ironic, however, is that African women continue to be defined as housewives despite the fact that they produce 80 per cent of the food.

Van Allen (1976) seems to agree with the foregoing studies. She points out that African women were also categorized as mothers and housewives and as such, were given a different kind of education or none at all. She concluded that boys and girls were treated differently as a result of Victorian capitalistic patriarchal ideology:

At least part of the answer lies in the value of the colonialist, value that led the British to assume that girls and boys should be treated as people supposedly did in civilized Victorian England ... strong male domination was imposed on the Igbo people by new economic structures and directly by recruitment of men into the native administration supported by sexist ideology in mission schools. (Van Allen, 1976, p.80)

As "housewives" or subsistence farmers in the rural areas women were not seen as needing or deserving any formal education. However, as colonialism advanced, a crop of educated or "civilized" African men emerged and they needed equally "civilized" women (Jeannes, 1987). On the basis of this need a number of African women (usually daughters of chiefs and other colonial functionaries) were allowed into the formal educational system. However, there were extraordinary differences between the education offered to girls and boys. A deliberate pattern of sex segregated schools and curricula was instituted. Girls' education was aimed at producing moral Christian wives and mothers, as lucidly explained by Kelly and Elliot (1982):

To train Christian wives and mothers. To implant a Christian morality, and an awareness of proper family relationship and a favourable disposition towards children. (Kelly and Elliot, 1982, p.132)
Therefore, the education offered to women consisted of biblical studies, cookery, housekeeping, sewing clothes, child care and other domestic skills necessary to enable these women to play prescribed ‘proper’ roles for women. In total it was an education tailored for domestication. Conversely, boys were given artisan education in courses like woodwork, metal work, agriculture, masonry to enable them to play expected subordinate roles in the colonial economy (Yates, 1982).

Staudt (1984) seems to corroborate the above views in her writing about one of the colonial policies on women’s education:

They need to know enough to be able to follow printed instructions in books on domestic science ... instructions about laundry ... to use paper patterns and to understand simple books on children ... In addition English enables them to make contact on the simple level of domestic interest with English women when they meet. (Staudt, 1984, p.78)

This policy was aimed at cultural resocialization. However, it also reflected notions of the bourgeoisie and only a few privileged women in the ascendent classes could join this ideology and practice. In my view colonial educational policies and practice culminated in the creation of social differences between the Kenyan women. Those who accessed western formal education were constructed as literates "asomi", "mambere" or civilized while those who failed to access the system were constructed as "illiterates" and therefore "non asomi", "washenzi" or uncivilized.

7 *Washenzi* is a Kiswahili term which is used to refer to people without a culture or a set of principles to guide their everyday life. In indigenous Kenyan society each ethnic group had a set of values, principles etc. which governed their day to day life. Any person who deviated from the expected cultural norms was stigmatized as *mushenzi* or uncultured or normless. In this context, the term was appropriated and corrupted by missionaries and colonialist [and continues to be used today] to refer to people who refused to embrace colonial and missionary religion, education and western culture, which were and continue to be perceived as the hallmark of modernization or civilization. Schools and western culture were signalled as a remedy for Africans’ deficiency. In an attempt to establish the colonial hegemony a divisive ideological frame was necessary and thus the creation of those like "us" the *asomi* or "wastaarabu" (civilized) versus "them" "the non-asomi", "washenzi" or heathens, pagans and uncivilized. Individuals who continued to hold on their indigenous cultures were therefore constructed as the "other" the "non-asomi" or "washenzi". Although today persons who have not embraced western formal education or western religions and cultures may not be openly referred to as *washenzi*, most of them continue to be overwhelmingly dispossessed. There is always a misguided view which blames the poor for their predicament - that they are poor because they are illiterate. The gap between the educated elite and the vast majority of Kenyan people is a widening one. Women as a group are overtly represented in this dispossessed class. This gap has led not only to
This social gap between the privileged few and the majority of the Kenyan women persists to date and I argue that this has implications for women’s alliances and solidarity as data presented in chapter eight illustrate.

Smock (1981), Kelly and Elliot (1982) writing about this gender inequality show that the schools became very powerful agencies of socializing Africans into western capitalistic patriarchy, especially about family life and education.

From the foregoing studies it becomes very clear that colonial education had far reaching implications for the Third World women and Kenyan women in particular:

(1) Gender roles became fixed and women were socially constructed as men’s helpmates.
(2) Colonial education exacerbated indigenous gender inequalities.
(3) Colonial education created and accentuated inequalities among genders and classes.
(4) Colonial education succeeded in reinforcing gender as a legitimate basis for differential treatment and this resulted in a sharply sex differentiated curriculum and unequal access to different levels of education.
(5) Colonial education created a justification for denying to women technological education, free access to land, and economic participation. A woman became "dependent" and indeed experienced dislocation in the sense that she was trained for domesticity and treated as a "housewife", yet was expected to provide for herself and her children through participation in the subsistence economy or waged labour.
Women's Participation in Education in Post-Colonial Kenya

Available literature shows that the independent Kenya government inherited colonial policies and traditions in which women were not encouraged to participate equally with men in the educational system. For example, by 1963 when Kenya acquired independence, women were grossly underrepresented particularly at the tertiary level. Out of the total 289 Kenyan undergraduate students enrolled at the East African Universities and Colleges, only 18 were females. By 1967, although the figures for both men and women were on the increase, the proportion of females was still far below that of males - the males were 739 and females were 126 (Ministry of Education, 1967, p.76). The economy was incorporated into the international capitalistic system which led to the breakdown of labour and this had a negative impact on the education of women and girls. In the modern economy more men than women continued to be sought to provide the much needed personpower to replace the outgoing colonial administrators. Moreover, in Kenya, like all other African states, state power is, in effect, male power (Staudt, 1985). Education is controlled by the state. It is centralized with a common gendered curriculum and of course the men in power are not particularly interested in sharing power, least of all with women. As early as 1975, this situation has been lamented thus: "An independent Africa is no guarantee that women will enjoy equal freedoms with men" (Obbo, 1980, p.97). As in all other capitalistic societies based on repression, oppression and suppression of women and their interests, where inequality is seen as natural, women's education continued to lag behind that of men at all levels.

Studies by Mutua (1975), Kinyanjui (1975), Riria (1985) and Nzomo (1993) clearly indicate that while Kenya became "independent", education per se, which is a very important tool for national development, remained embedded in the Victorian capitalistic patriarchy. Education continued to perpetuate the colonial situation. By 1969 the first population census in independent
Kenya showed that girls were slowly integrated into the school system. Out of the 1,557,762 females of school going age (5-14 years only), 510,470 (33 per cent) were enrolled in schools compared to 762,827 boys (53 per cent) out of a population of 1,631,306 (Kagia, 1984).

In terms of access, studies such as Eshiwani (1985) and Robertson (1985) show that enrolments are rising and are almost at par in the primary level but female enrolment drops as one ascends each educational level, as illustrated in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT BY YEAR, FORM AND SEX**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>61,943</td>
<td>44,553</td>
<td>106,496</td>
<td>59,160</td>
<td>45,573</td>
<td>104,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>54,385</td>
<td>35,588</td>
<td>89,973</td>
<td>63,409</td>
<td>46,482</td>
<td>109,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>38,656</td>
<td>22,122</td>
<td>60,778</td>
<td>45,670</td>
<td>46,482</td>
<td>74,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>34,927</td>
<td>17,722</td>
<td>52,649</td>
<td>38,769</td>
<td>21,251</td>
<td>60,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>3,803</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>5,240</td>
<td>5,027</td>
<td>2,012</td>
<td>7,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>5,174</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>1,461</td>
<td>5,531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


What these statistics, however, do not tell us is in what specific subject areas the women are enrolled in or the type of schools they are attending or what the experiences of the girls are within the educational system. As noted earlier, studies by Eshiwani (1985) show that the majority of the girls are found in poorly funded self help *harambee* secondary schools with poor teachers, poor infrastructure and a narrow curriculum. Most of these students, according to Eshiwani, rarely perform well at the end of secondary education and more often than not are ejected from the educational system.

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*Harambee* secondary schools are schools built and funded by local communities. The government sometimes provides a head teacher. The other teachers are employed and paid by the community. More often than not these are untrained.
Tied to the issue of dropout is the nature of the curriculum and societal attitudes to women's education. Studies by Mutua (1975), Kinyanjui (1975, 1988), Riria (1985), Eshiwani (1985), Harber (1989), World Bank (1990), King and Hill (1993) and Obura (1992) all show that education is unequally provided on gender lines. They show that most of the places available to girls are in arts subjects like history, geography, religious studies, etc. Boys had proportionately greater access to schools offering sciences and mathematics. For example, Mutua points out that as of 1975, there were sixty-nine science secondary schools. Thirty-five of these were boys only, fourteen were mixed and only twenty were for girls. This imbalance means that the chances of girls studying sciences or science related subjects are limited. As Eshiwani puts it:

The situation is made worse by the fact that there are no strong science programmes in most girls' secondary schools; and in most unaided schools where enrolment of girls is quite high, no science programmes are offered. (Eshiwani, 1985, p.97)

What this pattern means is that women will be under-represented in prestigious careers which require scientific education.

Studies by Eshiwani (1985), Chlebowska (1990) and King & Hill (1993) ironically show that not only do teachers hold stereotyped attitudes towards female students, but that even women teachers believed that boys ought to do better than girls. Rathgeber (1991) reported that even when formal policies do not explicitly discriminate against women, these policies were often offset by an informal but highly effective socialization process:

In Kenya, classroom practice, peer pressure, and job market discrimination all work to systematically discourage women from entering subject areas which were associated with male dominance. (Rathgeber, 1991, p.7)

She further found that: (1) girls were systematically discouraged from attempting to excel in subject areas which were male dominated; (2) girls were encouraged to give equal weight to their marital and career prospects when attempting to plan their future; and (3) the status of male doctors is taken at face value while women's professions are not. Women
doctors have to struggle for simple recognition even from female patients.

Harber (1989) and Obura (1992), corroborating Rathgeber's study, have data showing that Kenyan textbooks do not reflect the changing images of Kenyan women even after thirty years of political independence. The women continue to be presented performing domestic tasks such as cooking, caring for children or sewing clothes, etc., while men are going to work in offices, reading books, playing ball, etc. This negative ideology is not only internalized by the female students and thus affects their academic performance and career choices but also affects their disposition towards social, political and economic life. Moreover, the ideology of domesticity and motherhood is constructed and reconstituted through the hidden curriculum. Female students, therefore, do not see their education as of any importance and indeed aspire first and foremost to fulfill their reproductive roles. Moreover, they opt for careers which complement their domestic roles. Lindsay (1980) seems to agree with the foregoing argument in her writing:

Female students were influenced in their choice of courses of study by what they perceived as the flexibility allowed by certain careers and that they were willing to go into the workforce at lower level professional positions in order to allow them to combine reproductive and productive roles. (Lindsay, 1980, p.25)

This means that women have been socialized to accept constraints imposed by their future reproductive roles and not to pursue areas of career interest which would conflict with this role. In my study (Kamau, 1987) on "occupational aspirations and actual job placement of form four graduates," I found that 90 per cent of the females aspired to clerical, secretarial, nursing and telephone operating jobs. It is my argument that these were rational choices, for this range is what these girls have seen society making available to other women. The values of society dictate what careers women should take and women who deviate may face strong opposition and ridicule and have to bear the pain of isolation. Eshiwani (1985) had earlier commented on the stereotyped societal expectation:
Unlike engineering, medicine is regarded by the Kenyan society in general and by the Kenyan women in particular to have a feminine touch. Few eyebrows will be raised when a woman is introduced as a medical doctor but a woman engineer is regarded by most people not to be feminine. (Eshiwani, 1985, p.98)

This situation means that the patriarchal ideology has ensured the fixation of femininity and masculinity. These findings show that the colonial gender ideology is still in place. Data on university enrolment confirm that even if women manage to break through all societal and structural barriers and get into the university their situation does not improve. Table 2 shows us representation of students between 1985/86 and 1989/90 in the five national state universities.

### TABLE 2: ENROLMENT IN THE FIVE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES BY YEAR, AND SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>UON</th>
<th>MOI</th>
<th>KU</th>
<th>EGERTON</th>
<th>JKUCAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/86</td>
<td>4,045</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/87</td>
<td>4,304</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987/88</td>
<td>6,710</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>2,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988/89</td>
<td>7,672</td>
<td>2,385</td>
<td>1,628</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>3,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989/90</td>
<td>8,497</td>
<td>2,497</td>
<td>2,341</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>3,882</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the author from university enrolment records.

Note: UON = University of Nairobi  KU = Kenyatta University Egerton = Egerton University  MOI = Moi University JKUCAT = Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology

As evident from table 2, very few Kenyans out of the total population of twenty-six million get access to university education. One striking observation in this table is that at

---

9 There are no available statistics showing the number of those who go abroad.
Kenyatta University the enrolment figures for both sexes seems to be at parity. The main reason is that up to 1984 when the Kenyan educational system was changed to 8-4-4 (like the U.S.A. model), this university was the main teacher training institution. All undergraduates used to be awarded the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree. It is significant, therefore, that even in areas traditionally defined as female careers in the western world, males predominate. In fact, as noted earlier, Davies (1990) has correctly argued that what is seen as a feminine career in the western society may be masculine in developing countries, where even primary school education and teaching are the province of men. This is true of the Kenyan educational system.

Still interesting from table 2 is the fact that at Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology (JKUCAT), the only university of science and technology, out of its total enrolment of 112 only 12 were women. One is intrigued by this gross underrepresentation, particularly in the field of agricultural training, since the majority of Kenyan women are farmers. As early as 1975, Mutua had revealed the same pattern of discrimination against women in science and technology. In that year Bukura Institute of Agriculture had 270 males and only 30 females. The pattern does not improve and based upon my personal knowledge, by 1990, none of the six technical secondary schools were admitting girls. Other training institutions in the country also seem to systematically discriminate against women. According to Republic of Kenya (1985, p.204) in the ten operating Harambee Institutions of Science and Technology in 1980, out of the total enrolment of 1,312, 1,002 were males and only 310 were females. These women were in sex typed courses like secretarial and business studies while men were in masonry, carpentry, motor vehicle mechanics and other male domains. These statistics are in harmony with Ester Boserup's argument that in developing countries it is men who operate equipment (Boserup, 1970, p.53). It appears that, despite Kenya's political independence, the national male elite continued to pursue though in a covert manner colonial educational aims for educating women. Indeed education is a
hegemonic project. Men get the training while the actual work is done by women following the top down development approach. It is expected that when men, as the heads of families (as they were socially constructed by the colonialis and the missionaries) get the knowledge, then this knowledge will trickle down. Fortunately, over the recent years international developers and consultants are recognizing the economic and human cost of the educational and development policies they had vigorously pursued. As Judith Van Allen (1976, p.76) has noted: "African women have paid dearly for carrying the white man's burden," and I add also for carrying the African male elite burden in the post colonial Kenyan. In the 1990s women continue to be channelled into a narrow range of courses thought appropriate for them as vividly illustrated in table 3.
### TABLE 3: STUDENT ENROLMENT IN NATIONAL PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, BY YEAR, SEX AND SPECIALIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course (Undergraduate)</th>
<th>1989/90</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture**</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>1,567</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>2,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Management</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Science Technology</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Technology</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Economics</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Economics</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Cultural Studies</td>
<td>4,215</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>5,610</td>
<td>6,263</td>
<td>2,103</td>
<td>8,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Art</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed. (Art)</td>
<td>3,209</td>
<td>3,063</td>
<td>6,272</td>
<td>7,040</td>
<td>4,995</td>
<td>12,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed. (Science)</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1,314</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>1,792</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.Sc. (Home Economics)</td>
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<td>255</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>276</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.Sc. (Technology)</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.Sc.(Home Science Tech.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
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Continued...
TABLE 3 (Continuation)

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<tr>
<th>Course (Undergraduate)</th>
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<th>1990/91*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc. (Arts-External Degree)</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Science</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1,822</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical and Communication Technology</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering**</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Surgery</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>7,264</td>
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</table>
TABLE 3 (Continuation)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course (Postgraduate)</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91*</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture**</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry and Wildlife Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect, Design and Development</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>247</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering***</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>230</td>
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<td>Journalism</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Population Studies</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>1,775</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>1,782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Provisional

** Includes courses on Food Science and Technology, Range Management and allied Agricultural studies

*** Includes civil, mechanical, electrical, agricultural and building construction.
As argued earlier, women are the chief food producers, but as indicated in table 3, women continue to be grossly underrepresented in fields like agricultural engineering, farm management, horticulture, and general agriculture. Unsurprisingly, women are either absent or almost absent in the fields of electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical and communication technology just to name a few. It is also important to note from this table that the number of women thins out sharply at the graduate level. This observation is important because it is from this very small population that academic women are expected to emerge. Another important observation is that women's access to universities does not mean equality of opportunity. Moreover, the type of educational programmes individuals pursue determine the nature and availability of jobs. Wamahi (1992) clearly shows that the number of women entering Kenyan universities is increasing but only in fields like Bachelor of Arts which are already devalued in the job market. Even in the field of education, credentials have escalated. Higher and higher certificates are required to teach even in a primary school.

Although the studies presented and analyzed in this section seem to agree that women are grossly underrepresented in the educational system and in fact identify a number of constraints to women's participation, the root cause of these constraints has not been systematically studied. Studies like Kinyanjui (1975), Mutua (1975), (1985), Eshiwani (1985) all seem to identify and describe socio-cultural and economic factors which are basic constraints to women's participation in education. The mostly commonly cited constraints to women's education range from socio-cultural factors such as the belief that girls will get pregnant and drop out of school, that educated girls are unmarriageable, or that girls' education is not necessary since they will marry and their husbands will provide for them. Cultural biases and attitudes also dictate and define what girls are suited to do and more often than not girls are called early to participate in domestic labour such as food preparation and care of siblings. Girls are also denied education because some ethnic
communities still believe that educating girls will lead to discontent and immorality. Early marriages also work against girls' education.

Economic and structural arguments include: schools are too far to walk to, teachers and career masters exhibit biased attitudes towards girls, there are few educational openings for women in higher education and in particular science, as well as the cost benefit analysis arguments which maintain that poverty dictates that parents educate boys for expected economic gains. Girls are also blamed for lacking in motivation and as such their denial of access to certain forms and levels of education are justified.

If we examine these factors critically we are forced to ask, for example, why do girls and not boys drop out of the educational system? Why would girls not be willing to continue beyond certain levels of education? Why should education of women and girls lead to discontent, immorality or make them unmarriageable? Why are the women blamed for their predicaments? What is the problem? In view of these questions, it becomes clear that there is a need to connect or locate women's experiences in the educational system to the wider social, political, economic system. Schools are not value free and do not exist in isolation, as studies by Maleche (1976) and Eshiwani (1985) would want to make us believe.

Of all the studies I have analyzed it is clear that there has been no conscious effort to connect gender inequality in post colonial Kenya to the historical experience nor to the location of Kenya in the international division of labour. Also, there has been no study conducted from the women's own experiences in the educational system. These studies end up with a series of independent variables which cannot fully explain gender inequality. There is a great need to make systematic connections between these variables and come up with a coherent explanation.

We need to address issues like whose interests does the sexual division of labour serve? Why should girls fail to go to school because they are too far to walk while boys can walk? In
my view, these factors are manifestations of deep seated social controls. It is a mechanism used by society to control its women and as Stromquist (1985) correctly argues, the ideology at work has three mutually supportive components: (1) sexual division of labour, (2) capitalistic exploitation and (3) the control of women's sexuality. The main goal is to ensure women's subordination.

Nevertheless, literature does show that a few women are allowed into higher education but no study has been conducted to show under what conditions these women are allowed in or what their experiences are in higher education. There is a dearth of information particularly as documented by Kenyan women about the experiences of Kenyan women. Most of the studies on Kenyan women and the educational system are either conducted by Kenyan male academics such as Kinyanjui (1975, 1988), Maleche (1976), Eshiwani (1979, 1985) and Hughes and Mwiria (1989) or by White feminists interested in Africa (or Africanists) such as Robertson (1985). Moreover, most of the studies by Africanists are not specifically on education per se nor are they in-depth specific country studies. None of these studies is based on the actual lived experiences of women in the educational system and in particular in higher education. It is this gap in the literature that I would like to bridge in this present study on the experiences of academic women.

WOMEN ACADEMICS

In reviewing literature on academic women a number of themes emerge. These concern issues of representation, fields of specialization, salary structure, gender based discrimination, networking and mentoring, and productivity.

Edited volumes on academic women such as Rossi and Calderwood (1973), Simeone (1987) and Chamberlain (1988) on the United States, Lie and O’Leary (1990) on North America, Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, as well as individual studies like ones by Fapohunda
(1983) on Nigeria, Sutherland (1985) on Europe, Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) on the United States, Smith (1987), Dagg and Thompson (1988), Caplan (1993) and the Chilly Collective (1995) all on Canada and Carty (1988) on the Caribbean, Stromquist (1990, 1991) on Peru, and Acker (1980, 1992, 1993) on Britain all seem to agree on the point that women academics are not only in the minority, but they are also disproportionately found in the lower ranks and in less secure posts. In particular, women academics are less than 20 per cent of the total academic staff in the regions studied. In the American universities, women academics are grossly underrepresented in the nineteen leading research universities with women making up only 17 per cent of the faculty and only 4.6 per cent of these women at the rank of full professor. Women tend to be concentrated in the less prestigious universities and colleges and often in part time positions (Farley, 1990; Moore & Sagaria, 1991, p.187). These studies also show that although women's access to higher education is on the increase and in fact women make up about 52 per cent of undergraduate enrolments in both United States and Canada, when it comes to doctoral studies and academic positions the number of women thins out. Moreover, women tend to be channelled into the less prestigious and lucrative positions in arts and humanities and their ascension continues to be excessively slow and tedious as encapsulated by Moore (1987, p.29): "Women are clustered in the lower ranks and in the lower paid academic disciplines and in the lesser status institutions."

Smith (1987) showed that:

women are most heavily concentrated in the positions of lecturer and instructor which are not part of the promotional system leading to professional rank (the so-called "ladder" positions) and are usually held on only one year contract. There is an appreciable drop even to the next level of junior positions, the assistant professors - the first step on the promotional ladder. Women form a very small proportion of full professors ... This means that they are restricted to teaching, that their work is under continuous review, and that reappointment is on conditional conformity. (Smith, 1987, p.249-251)

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10 For more details on this situation see Moore and Sagaria, 1991, p.191.
Dagg and Thompson (1988) and the Chilly Collective (1995) corroborating Smith's position show that women do not only get poor reviews from their male colleagues, but also by the male students and many women particularly in the University of Western Ontario have been denied tenure.

Acker (1980, 1992) describes most women university teachers as having only token positions and fairly powerless status in the skewed male dominated colleague groups. Women have little input if any into the decision making about higher educational policy, student admissions, promotion and firing criteria. Stromquist (1990) further argues that women have not participated in decision making dealing with expansion and content of schooling. Women's progress has been primarily a side effect of the existence of more schools and the schools' claim to be meritocratic. In spite of this progress, across the world the women in higher educational institutions continue to be concentrated in the fields of education and nursing. Conversely, men dominate science, technology and agriculture, fields that shape contemporary life and will increasingly affect it in the future (Stromquist, 1990). As argued earlier, fields of study constitute a major mechanism in reproducing a sexual division of labour at the professional level.

Earlier discussion in this chapter pointed to the important role of the school in reproducing gender inequality both in the educational system and the labour force. The problematic segregation of women into distinct areas of study was noted. For academic women, this translates into gender division in the academic career. In Kenya, for example, 100 per cent of all the academics in the Home Economics department are women. Acker (1992) shows that in Britain women are only 13.4 per cent of academics in mainstream academic careers but 31.1 per cent of those in the insecure contract research sector. In her earlier work, such as the book Is Higher Education Fair to Women (Acker and Warren Piper, 1984), Acker has consistently showed that both horizontal and vertical segregation exists in British universities.
Studies on networking and mentoring, for example, Simeone (1978) and O'Leary (1990), writing about American women academics, report that research productivity depends highly on collaboration. They report that male scientists are better connected to networks than female scientists are. In scientific work one of the most important factors contributing to accomplishment is the interaction and exchange of ideas among colleagues. Individuals who are excluded from these formal and informal networks (invisible colleges) usually perform less well and are less productive. Advantages of networking have been reported for men. They report that informal conversations with colleagues are important primary sources of ideas and inspirations. O'Leary and Mitchell (1990) show that as far back as the 17th century, networks of academics (invisible colleges) existed. The members of the network functioned as gatekeepers controlling finances, reputation and the fate of new scientific ideas. What is important to note about academic networks is that until very recently women did not work together and as such had fewer publications in relationship to their male colleagues. Fewer publications, coupled with negative attitudes towards educated women, have resulted in few women promoted to positions of power and as such intellectual, social and economic power in academe has continued to be concentrated in the hands of men. Through the concentration of intellectual power, male hegemony both in academe and in the wider society has been ensured. These studies show that women are rarely sought by their male counterparts, that women are few and lack role models, particularly in science, and also that academic women rarely network among themselves for the purposes of accelerating their productivity. Male academics more often than not mentor and sponsor their own kind and thus their productivity is higher and their promotions are faster than those of their female colleagues.

In terms of promotions, Graham (1973), Fox (1989), Lie and O'Leary (1990), Moore and Sagaria (1991), and The Chilly Collective (1995) show that successful entry and progress in academic careers as well as in other professions are frequently dependent not only on hard work,
determination and availability of time and financial support but more on the collaboration and contributions of a mentor or sponsor. Moreover, as Lie and O'Leary (1990) note, these relationships are difficult to establish among the same sex but more so between sexes:

Relationships with mentors are an ideal way to gain the sponsorship of senior colleagues, but when the relationship is cross-sex there is the risk that it will be perceived as sexually motivated. Same sex mentoring relationships can also be problematic because they are often viewed as burdensome by senior women, who when they are reluctant to meet the demands of their protégés for emotional as well as professional support risk being labelled ‘Queen Bees’. (Lie & O'Leary 1990, p.25)

From the literature reviewed it is evident that the academic culture favours men and that men accumulate career advantage while women accumulate career disadvantage. Fox (1989) for example states:

In this milieu, men share traditions, styles, and understandings about rules of competing, bartering, and succeeding. They accept one another, they support one another, and promote one another. As outsiders to this male milieu and its informal network of information and resources, women are shut off from job prospects, research information and professional opportunities and services. (Fox, 1989, p.229)

Academic women do not only accumulate career disadvantage due to lack of mentors, role models and exclusion from male networks, but also due to specific demands on a woman’s life, particularly maternity and child care. Academic women who have young children have to juggle domestic tasks and career demands (Chamberlain, 1988). Male academics more often than not accumulate career advantage, and as such get promoted faster, occupy top academic ranks and make important decisions. These male academics may evaluate their women colleagues’ work negatively and as such women’s promotions are harder to achieve. Moore encapsulates academic women’s entrapment:

Women who enter academic careers may lack some or all of these advantages, then as their careers progress they may fall farther behind their more advantaged colleagues. Reviews of their work may not receive the same serious consideration or solicitous response. Their work may suffer and therefore the evaluation of their work will be low. They may be shunted into less desirable work situations or
institutions, and they may never achieve the same level of productivity or recognition that their ability and aspiration would have predicted for them. They become part of the academic profession but not really in it. (Moore, 1987, p.29)

Even when women are hired as faculty, they experience a chilly climate. Studies on Canadian universities such as Dagg and Thompson (1988); Caplan (1992) and the Chilly Collective (1995) show that in some of the Canadian universities, women faculty are unsupported, experience exclusionary and derogatory language, as well as sexual harassment, and those who speak against these issues openly are punished. In response to this chilly climate, a number of women have either kept quiet while others have departed to more friendly and greener pastures in other universities or to other kinds of work outside the university.

However, although studies reviewed here seem to show that academic women around the world accumulate career disadvantages and as such their academic careers lag behind those of their male colleagues, a few studies do not support this view at least as far as the women themselves see it. Nina Toren (1991) reported that academic women in her study maintained they have never experienced discrimination in the course of their careers. The majority reported that they were not isolated from male academic networks, that they felt supported and encouraged in their research work and that male colleagues mentored them. In their view, there are no restrictions to women’s work and women participate in all kinds of work and committees. The majority rejected the idea that gender plays any role in their academic careers. They located the blame in themselves and to objective conditions of their lives. It is important to reiterate that these women, however, did admit that women have to work extra hard and longer to establish their suitability and competence as academic scientists. Nevertheless, it is arguable that the women in Toren’s study are women who have achieved (as full university professors) and that they concentrate on outcome rather than process. The university seems to have worked for them and as such they may have no complaint against the system.
Glazer and Slater (1987), Long and Khan (1993), Chamberlain (1988) and the Chilly Collective (1995) show that academic women have resisted their low status in academe by adopting specific strategies not only for survival but also to uplift their status. Some women courageously challenged their denied promotions, while others have resigned their positions. Academic women have also formed professional associations, caucuses, and social and professional networks. Some have decided to remain single, others to marry and have fewer children or none at all in an attempt to concentrate on their academic careers. The women also "superperform" (Glazer & Slater, 1987) in order to gain academic recognition and to avoid blame.

Problems affecting academic women in the Third World region have not generated research interest. In spite of my extensive literature search, I found less than a handful of studies on academic women. In Latin America, for example, there are works by Stromquist (1989, 1991) for Peru; for the Middle East, I found Toren (1990) for Israel and Acar (1990) for Jordan. Acar (1990) has also done research in India, Carty (1988) in the Caribbean, but for Africa, I found research materials by only Fapohunda (1982) and Biraimah (1987) for Nigeria. I did not find a single study on Kenyan academic women other than a newspaper article in June 1995 where five academic women were interviewed.

These studies like those concerning the rest of the western world show that although the number of women accessing higher education is on the increase, few women get access to academic posts. At the university, women suffer from discrimination, cultural constraint, role conflict and are in a minority status and almost absent in the faculties of science.

The disjuncture between the data reported from the western world and the Third World and Africa in particular is that there has been no history of unequal pay of academics in the same rank. Salaries are fixed and not negotiable. The teaching loads are relatively the same and none of the studies reported a chilly climate. However, although the salaries are fixed by rank, men end
up being paid more than their female cohorts because they get promoted more often than their female colleagues. Other differences are found in studies like Toren (1990) which reports that full academic professors deny the experience of gender in their career lives.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Feminist theory has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the condition of women in the western societies. In particular, feminist theory in the social sciences has a special interest in what has become known as the public private dichotomy: the relationship between the realm of the family and household on one hand and the sphere of public or civic affairs on the other (Charlton et al., 1989). Feminists have carefully explained how this private-public dichotomy has led to the subordination of women and the continued marginalization as well as resistances/struggles of women as they try to break, to change, and to redefine this duality.

Western feminist theory, however, does not adequately capture the condition of women in the ‘Third World countries’ because some of its strands assume "that only through the development of western industrial capitalism and the resultant entry of women into waged labour that the potential for liberation of women will increase" (Carby, 1982, p.222). This assumption of women’s liberation through their entrance into the waged labour has been found to be incorrect, even in the western societies. Entrance of Third World women into the waged labour force has meant further oppression and exploitation.\(^\text{11}\) Much western feminist theory fails to acknowledge the effects of racism, colonialism and the continued neo-colonialism on the Third World women. Western feminists while studying Third World women incorrectly continue to assume that "women as a category of analysis has a homogeneous character" (Amadiume, 1987; Spelman, 1988; Sen and Gita, 1990; Mohanty, 1991, Pierson, 1993). In search of a global sisterhood, all the other

\(^{11}\) For a more detailed discussion on this point see Mies (1986); Mies and Thomsen (1988).
variables were ignored, women were perceived as a unitary category and gender privileged as the only variable, as succinctly put by Pierson:

"Sisterhood is powerful" was the rallying cry ... the movement still placed emphasis on the common bonds uniting women - "the bonds of sisterhood". ... And at once "gender" was taken up as a conceptual tool to distinguish the socially constructed from the biologically determined, gender was often employed as the primary, if not the only variable. Gender was thus often treated as operating separately and independently from other variables such as race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, race and class ... The difference that mattered was difference between men and women. (Pierson, 1993, p.188)

The African woman in particular continues to be presented as the exotic other to be studied and discovered. Experiences of African women continue to be lumped together despite the social, economic, religious, political, cultural and geographical disparities in the expansive African continent. It is not surprising to come across a study of a specific social group in a specific country presented as a true representation of the whole African continent (Amadiume, 1988).  

Critiquing the refusal by some feminists to accept that there is no such a thing as "women as women" and the claim that we can or we should take up women’s issues in isolation from issues of race or class, Pierson (1993) quoting Spelman (1988, p.190) writes:

In feminist theory it is a refusal to take differences among women seriously that lies at the heart of feminism's implicit politics of domination.

Third World feminists such as Hartman (1981) argue that women’s status and roles are influenced by race, class, culture, age religion, ideological institutions, geographical location, ethnicity, ability, sexual preference, and the specific country’s level of economic development as well as its location in the international division of labour. Given the diversity of women’s experiences in various classes and ethnic groups in the African region and specifically in Kenya, feminist research faces an enormous challenge. The plurality of analytical approaches in feminist scholarship has its

12 In her excellent critique Amadiume shows how studies such as Cutrufelli (1983) failed to acknowledge not only differences from one geographical and cultural region to another, but also homogenized and generalized the experiences of African women in her introduction of African women to the Italian feminists.
own advantages, but it does not remove the major obstacle in the study of African women: the
dearth of theories and methodologies that are historically oriented, geographically specific and
grounded in their experiences.

In view of the scarcity of appropriate feminist theories, I have, therefore, added to ideas
from feminist frameworks. Specifically, I draw on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony,
Davies's (1987) concept of feminine gender scripts and Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy
in order to capture the daily lived experiences of the Kenyan academic women. Although
Stromquist (1991, p.76) notes that Gramsci fails to acknowledge the existence of patriarchy, she
also acknowledges the usefulness of his work, for he has repeatedly noted the role of ideology in
manufacturing consent among the dominated groups. The concept of hegemony, as Gramsci
defines it, characterizes:

The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the
general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this
consent is "historically" caused by the prestige and (consequent confidence) which
the dominant group enjoys because of its position in the world of production.
(Gramsci, 1971, p.12)

According to Gramsci, a strong state creates a culture and uses this culture to ensure that
people consent to the ruling. On the other hand if people do not willingly consent, the state relies
on other more visible forcible mechanisms. The hegemonic culture is propagated as the only true
representation of society, while in reality it is the culture of the dominant group. This thesis
adopts this concept to analyze how patriarchal ideology is propagated as the only true
representation of the Kenyan society.

Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which
men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Pierson (1993, p.187) corroborating this definition
writes that patriarchy refers to a system that established not just the rule of fathers but the
dominance and privilege of men, whether fathers, husbands, lovers, brothers, co-workers or
classmates and I add even sons. A patriarchal ideology therefore, emphasizes the naturalism of
gender inequality. Institutions and ideology (the culture and ideas of the dominant group) are
organized in such a way that gender inequality is reproduced. Patriarchal hegemonic culture is
transmitted through socialization and curriculum. Formal education is intended to be a process of
enculturation where the dominated are made to willingly adopt the culture of the dominant group.
Nevertheless, hegemony is never complete. In real life, individuals are not passive objects
disinterested in their social reality. As knowledgeable, conscious social actors people intervene in
their herstory/history (Freire, 1973). They intervene through various ways such as subversion,
resistance, rejection or conscious silence or compromise (Goffman, 1959).

To capture the feelings, thoughts, desires, struggles, resistances, hopes and aspirations of
the women academics, I also utilized the concepts of dramaturgy following Goffman (1959) and
feminine gender "scripts" following Davies (1987). Goffman (1968) argues that we take into
account the perspectives of people with whom we are interacting. We project an image of
ourselves which represents the way we think they see us. Definitions of the situation mostly
determine the nature and level of the interpersonal interaction. On the same line of thought
Davies (1987) develops the notion of feminine gender scripts.

The notion of 'scripts' according to Davies is a useful device for explaining women's
experiences and their strategies in a situation. Unlike the social theory which suggests individuals
are passively socialized into roles, when using the notion of scripts the self is constituted in an
ongoing fashion. The individuals are perceived as actively reacting and mapping out strategies in
different situations, as indicated by Davies:

The concept of scripts differs from socialization in that it implies the individual's
ability to write and re-write his or her lines; to perform differently in different
programmes, in public and private, to experiment in different parts within the same
play; to ad lib; to edit; to forget. (Davies 1987, p.98)
The women in this study indicate that they are quite aware of their situation and their lives have been marked by herstories of prudence, resistance, strategizing and survival. As such, they are trying to go in every direction to move beyond their limitations. However, basic constraints do have significant impacts on the ‘scripts’ they formulate.

CONCLUSION

Discussions in this chapter have shown that women and girls throughout the Third World region do not have equal chances of access and attainment in the educational system or in the labour force. Women’s education in most parts of the Third World continues to lag behind that of the men’s, particularly at the tertiary level. The curriculum is gendered and as such males predominate in scientific and technological education while women are largely found in arts, humanities and social sciences. Fields of study constitute a major mechanism to reproduce a sexual division of labour. The type and level of education acquired more often than not determines an individual’s entrance and participation in the various sectors of the labour force.

Although the number of women accessing higher education is increasing, that education has taken place within a gendered context. My argument is that gender inequality in the labour force will not be solved by increasing the number of women in higher education without a conscious attempt to reform the whole set of societal institutions as well as the educational processes. In any case, the increase of women in higher education is happening at a time when the labour market is already flooded. Women graduates, particularly those with general degrees, find it difficult to get employed. As more and more individuals get qualified the employers tend to escalate the credentials required and to discriminate even more in favour of males. It is also concluded in this chapter that the socio-economic background of the women and girls influences the level and type of programme women follow. Women from rich economic backgrounds with
well educated parents enrol in scientific programmes and go further in their education.

For the ex-colonized countries such as Kenya, it is concluded that colonialism had a devastating effect on the Kenyan peoples and on women in particular. It led to the breakdown of the more egalitarian African institutions, culture and values and replaced them with western ones which were rigidly segregated not only by class but also by gender. Victorian capitalist attitudes towards women were transplanted and planted on the Kenyan women, particularly through the educational system. It is also concluded in this chapter that although African countries and in particular Kenya got political independence, education, which is an important tool for national development, continues to foster negative attitudes towards women. Women continue to be educated to become better wives, mothers, and helpmates but not to play independent roles as individuals. The education given does not encourage critical inquiry but is intended to mould hard working persons to fit into the production process. As such education for Kenyan women is functional but not liberatory.

It is also concluded that gaps do exist in the literature in that there have been few attempts to connect women’s experiences in education and the labour force with the wider social, economic and political system. Specifically, the role of dependent capitalistic patriarchy has not been well studied.

From studies on academic women it is concluded that women academics from both the developed and the developing world experience problems in areas of networking, mentoring and promotions. They suffer from patriarchal negative social attitudes. Moreover, women are in the minority in the academic circles and are mostly represented in junior positions. Women academics are also excluded not only from prestigious positions but also prestigious institutions. The experiences of women academics in the Third World have barely been studied. Given the context developed in this chapter, a study of the location and experiences of Kenyan women academics moves the literature into new territory.
CHAPTER THREE
APPROACHING RESEARCH IN KENYAN UNIVERSITIES

INTRODUCTION

Presented in this chapter are the methodological assumptions underlying the analysis as well as the research methods utilized in gathering and analyzing data reported in this study. The chapter is divided into four broad sections. In the first section, a justification for the utilization of a qualitative and feminist paradigm is offered. It is argued that in order to capture the diversity of the Kenyan academic women’s experiences it is imperative to integrate aspects of a feminist approach into a qualitative research strategy.

In the second section, I discuss the techniques I used in order to gain access to the field. I explain how both primary and secondary access were sought and achieved but with some difficulties. The third section deals with the techniques used to collect data. These techniques were mainly in-depth interviews and participant observations. In section four, I describe how the data were analyzed. I show how the data were coded progressively with analytical categories emerging from the data (Tesch, 1990; Bodgan and Biklen, 1992).

QUALITATIVE - FEMINIST APPROACH

There is a dearth of methodologies and theories that are historically oriented, geographically specific and grounded in the experiences of African women. Given the diversity of women’s experiences in the various classes and ethnic groups in the Kenyan society and the fact that existing
feminist literature on African women privileges rural over urban (Zeleza, 1993, p.108), I had to use a combination of research methods in order to capture the experiences of academic women. Academic women are a part of the tiny privileged class which is rarely researched. In this study, I utilized the strengths of qualitative and feminist research methods in order to allow the research participants to identify, describe, question and analyze the problems and dilemmas they experienced in their daily lives both as women and as academics not only in the university but also in the wider Kenyan society. This approach also provided for my critical voice to be heard.

I decided to use a qualitative approach because unlike quantitative research, which seeks to manipulate data and provide objective analysis, qualitative research uses description and interpretation to capture the "essence" of the people's lives and how they make meaning of their life experiences (Rockhill, 1982, p.14). Often it takes the form of narratives or stories told by participants to the researcher. Extracts from such narratives may be used to illustrate particular points and develop themes.

Qualitative research has become increasingly accepted within sociological and educational scholarship in recent years, and many books are now available to give guidance to researchers (e.g. Burgess, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Woods, 1986; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Relatively little attention is paid to cross-cultural questions in these texts, and the problems and possibilities of doing qualitative research in Third World settings are not fully explored. Apart from educational aspects of studies in the anthropological tradition, which usually seek to document and describe whole cultures, educational research in the Third World tends to follow positivist, quantitative models (Vulliamy et al., 1990, p.16). Some small shifts towards qualitative method have been detected in research on educational innovations or classroom dynamics (Vulliamy et al., 1990, pp.17-18). However numerous areas - including the study of experiences of academic women in the Third World - remain almost
entirely untapped by qualitative research strategies.

Feminist research is often, although not inevitably, conducted within a qualitative paradigm. It seeks to privilege the experiences of women. Webb (1992, p.423) argues that feminist research is research on women and for women. Quoting Klein (1983), she writes:

I define research for women as research that tries to take women's needs, interests, and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women's lives in one way or another.

Smith (1987, 1988) argues that for social scientists to fully understand women's social position, they need to start with the experiences of women. Research must begin from the situation of those who have few means of exerting power and women are one of these groups. Further she argues that women's everyday lives tell the stories of their oppression. According to her, it is from the basic aspects of women's lives that one can begin to trace the impacts of the larger society. Smith points out that beginning from the experiences of women does not imply a myopic view of social reality, but serves as a port of social entry, the locus where subjects are inserted into a larger social and economic process. In other words, a feminist perspective does not imply a narrow focus on women's lives but allows the researcher to begin a systematic inquiry into where women are located socially, economically and politically.

In placing women's experiences within a broad social context, feminist scholarship confronts not only the relations of gender, but those of class, race, ethnicity and other social categorisations which define women's existence. As Morgan (1981, p.91) notes, "gender is not something unchanging that is brought into every encounter, but it is often shaped and patterned in different interactional contexts." Thus, gender relations must also be seen holistically and in context, and as socially and culturally complex (Shields and Dervin, 1993, p.66).

Another strength of feminist research is that it is not only research done for women which takes their needs, interests and experiences into account, it also treats the research participants as
knowing subjects whose knowledge must be respected. It claims explicitly that there is no
knowledge created from a disinterested perspective. This perspective, therefore, allows both the
researcher and research participants to become actively involved as both informants and
investigators in a democratic process. As an academic woman born and raised in the Kenyan
society, the issues I was investigating were of particular concern to me and I believed for the
academic women, too. I agree with Reinharz (1983, p.176) that:

... the research problem must be of sincere concern to the researcher ... and of
sincere concern to the subjects so that they will collaborate in uncovering the
phenomenon.

In this present study, I wanted to understand the experiences of academic women. I
wanted to understand the Kenyan university from the perspectives of those academics who had less
power in relation to their male colleagues. In particular, I wanted to understand what meanings
the academic women attached to their day-to-day experiences and struggles, how they socially
construct their world, interpret it and respond to it. I wanted to hear from them what it means to
be a highly educated woman. I wanted to listen to those things they considered important. I also
wanted to hear and understand those things they said as well as what they did not do or say. I
wanted to understand the meaning they attached to their perceived silences.

I, therefore, needed to enter into the women's world in order to understand it from their
own perspectives. I needed to reconstruct their stories on their behalf. This was only possible if I
became close to the data. I could not be a detached social scientist. I had to enter their world as
a participant observer. I had to interview them in an in-depth manner in natural situations so that
they could talk about things they are most concerned about, as well as express their feelings and
emotions. My approach was broadly ethnographic. An ethnographic approach allows the
researcher to generate description of the culture(s) using the language of the members of that
culture of which the researcher may be a member as well (Spradley, 1979, p.25). It involves
learning through listening and looking - observing behaviour in natural settings. The investigator participates and mingles with the participants in the latter's world. Through sharing and interaction the researcher gets to understand as fully as possible the subjects' points of view, their relation to life and their vision of the world (Geertz, 1976). The limited time span for data collection (seven months) meant that this study could not be ethnographic in the classical anthropological sense. I could only participate in the lives of the women on a temporary basis. However, I also had my years as a Kenyan woman academic to draw on, so that I could relate quickly and easily to the everyday events in the women's lives. I shared with other ethnographic researchers the desire to generate a description of group culture and the emphasis on comprehending the perspectives of the participants. In a later section of this chapter, I describe how I became a temporary participant in their lives. I also detail the other techniques used to gather data. First, however, I discuss in detail the problematic process of gaining access to my research subjects.

NEGOTIATING ACCESS

Gaining access into the Kenyan universities for the purpose of conducting qualitative research proved to be more complex than I had anticipated. As an academic woman in one of the Kenyan universities I had hoped that my position would help me meet academic women willing to participate in my study through a web of networking or by snowball sampling:

This approach involves using a small group of informants who are asked to put the researcher in touch with their friends who are subsequently interviewed, then asking them about their friends and interviewing them until a chain of informants has been selected. (Burgess 1984, p.55)

I wanted to use this informal networking in accessing my sample in an attempt to economize time. I wanted to avoid the bureaucratic procedure in gaining access, because I knew it would involve a lengthy, time consuming and constraining process. I was anxious to get the
interviews begun quickly since I had only seven months to visit the five national universities. I knew conducting in-depth interviews and participant observations would require large amounts of time.

However, I soon discovered that no amount of reading or preparation can prepare one for the surprises of the field. My networking plan was problematic. I found that the women I knew had a limited knowledge of women teaching in other faculties. It became apparent, for example, that academic women in one university which was predominantly offering degrees in education only had acquaintances or friends in other universities who were in faculties of education. This was a limitation because I wanted to interview women from all faculties. I had, therefore, to look for other ways of meeting academic women. I also needed quantitative information in order to ascertain where the women were represented in terms of qualifications, designations and disciplines. I also needed access to enrolment records in order to understand the overall nature of women’s representation in the university. Enrolment records would give some insights about the size of the pool from which academic women were drawn.

To gain access to such records, I had to seek what I term primary access from the university’s top administrative officials. I had also to negotiate a second level of access with the individual academic woman for the purposes of in-depth interviewing and participant observations. This level of access I term secondary access. Primary access did not lead to secondary success or vice versa.

**Primary Access**

Literature on participant observation cites many examples of how researchers are denied access or offered only limited access (Bryman 1989, p.161; Buchanan et al., 1988, p.56; Crompton and Jones, 1988). In my case I faced nearly insurmountable difficulties in gaining primary access.
Part of the reason for the difficulty with which primary access was gained can be attributed to the culture of fear and suspicion in the universities. Here is an illustrative anecdote. I approached one of the senior administrative officers in the human resources department in one university. I explained to him that I was an academic woman at Kenyatta University and that I was currently on study leave pursuing a doctoral degree at a Canadian university. I explained to him the nature of my study and that I needed statistical information on both employment and student enrolments. He declined my request with the explanation that employment records are sensitive documents and can only be released with a written authorization from the Vice-Chancellor. I booked an appointment with the Vice-Chancellor through his secretary, an appointment which never came about. After several attempts to see the Vice-Chancellor and getting responses that he was either out of town or was busy at an important meeting I decided to use informal connections. Knowing my culture and the entrenchment of the patron-client system, I decided to approach a senior male professor who had taught me in one of my masters courses and requested his assistance. I explained to him my predicament. Without hesitation he took me personally to the academic registrar. He introduced me as a hardworking ex-student of his and now a colleague. He further explained that I was on study leave pursuing a doctorate in a Canadian university and that I needed statistical information on both employment and student enrolments for the purpose of my doctoral research. He also explained that a senior administrative officer had denied me access to the data. The academic registrar, a very refined professor, expressed dissatisfaction that was I denied access to statistical information. He promised to make arrangement for release of this information by the following morning.

When I showed up in his office the following morning, the registrar demanded an explanation of the nature of the research I intended to conduct. I explained to him in detail the purpose and nature of my proposed research. He appraised me and commented: "That is very
interesting research." However, he took it upon himself to give me a lecture on how the
information he was about to get released to me should be used. First, he told me that there is no
discrimination against women in the Kenyan university. He maintained that the university is
democratic and is very committed to equity issues because those who merit it get promoted.
Those who work hard get promoted. Second, he gave me what has been referred to by Sandra
Acker (personal communication, July 1995) as "poison pen portraits" of some of the women in his
university. These women, in his view, wave banners of women's liberation but do not publish and
are therefore not promotable. He then proceeded to narrate the dark sides of their personal lives.
Nevertheless, he had a favourite group of women and he had very positive things to say about
each one of them. He extolled them as women, as mothers and as brilliant academicians. I had to
maintain a very critical intellectual distance from his portrayals of these women. I was very
careful not to be influenced by the biases of this registrar.

Third, he cautioned me not to use the data that I was about to collect as a way of washing
dirty linen in North America. As I listened quietly to this registrar’s warnings I began to feel
conflicted. I was caught in a double bind. I felt devalued, and disrespected, doubted not only as a
woman but also as an intellectual, a researcher, and as an academic. I could not raise an argument
with him because I needed the data. I felt as though I was compromising myself. I had to deal
with my inner turmoil and had to put on a face of respectability since I was in a powerless
position. However, he played a crucial role, because without his assistance it would have been
almost impossible to get the statistical information from that university.

I found that my outsider/insider status during the research was both advantageous and
disadvantageous while negotiating access from the top. As an insider, a doctoral student on study
leave, this senior professor as well as the registrar must have felt obliged to assist me. As an
outsider, coming from Canada, I suspected that this administrative officer felt I had the potential to
tarnish the good name of the Kenyan university abroad. I also suspected that he felt I was of no immediate consequence to him and for that reason he proceeded to lecture me on issues of equality in the university and to paint negative portrayals of academic women, disregarding that I was a woman and an academic at one of the Kenyan universities.

While negotiating further primary access from the top administrators I consciously decided to overemphasize my student status which I felt was perceived as non-threatening. As a "student" I could get more support from the academic gatekeepers (who were usually male) because they would view me as their junior, a student in need of support. I realized that when I emphasized my status as an academic, I was met with a lot of resistance and the terms for granting me access were made more stringent. I also emphasized the point that I was a student in a foreign university because, as Bulmer (1988, p.154) has observed, "foreignness" can be an advantage while negotiating access. The fact that I did not have much time in the country led some of the academic gatekeepers to personally expedite the process. This was the case with this academic registrar. Through his single telephone call to the human resources department I was allowed access to all enrolment records, employment records and other non-confidential documents which have tremendously enriched this study.

However, access to top administrative records was only but a half battle won. To my surprise the universities did not keep updated records of their employees. Secondly, the statistics are not differentiated by sex. Thirdly, most of the employees were simply identified by their surnames and initials. All the surnames according to the Kenyan naming system are male. It was, therefore, difficult from these records to tell who was male or female. Fourthly, it was not always possible to identify the designation\footnote{By designation I mean rank, i.e. full professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, assistant lecturer, tutorial fellows and the lowest ranks of graduate assistants and demonstrators. As presented in table 1 and appendices 3,4 and 5 and discussed in chapter five, moving from one rank to another is a demanding} of the academic staff. Given these limitations I decided to
seek access at both the departmental and faculty level in order to clarify the statistical information.

At the departmental level I met further hurdles. Most of the departmental and deans of faculties’ secretaries were women. They refused to give me departmental lists of the academic staff. They informed me that I must get permission either from the deans of faculties or chairs of the departments. Getting access to departmental chairs or deans of faculties required booking appointments. After concerted efforts, diplomatic negotiations and lengthy waiting I was finally able to get departmental staff lists which were more up to date and reflected the designation of all the academic staff. One important omission at all levels was sex differentiation. Once granted permission from the chairs of the departments or the dean of the faculties, the departmental secretaries became more relaxed, friendly, supportive and almost all of them helped to identify the sex of the employees. In some of the departments, male chairs of the department were very supportive. Some male heads of departments personally compiled departmental lists by hand, identifying the sex, qualification and designation of each member of staff. Some expressed a keen interest in my research, provided more information on departmental politics and others warned me that I should be careful to note that even men are trapped by cultural expectations. One male chair of a department insisted that while he understands that he should help in the domestic sphere, any time he attempted to help, his wife who was a senior civil servant, protested and interpreted his actions as a sign of an imminent fight. Another one blamed his peers, friends and his mother for ostracising him for trying to do women’s work. I had several discussions with the male academic gatekeepers pertaining to gender issues and the whole running of the university. Some of these gatekeepers became my allies; in fact, I acquired two trusted and dear friends who mail me current information and articles either from newspapers or university discussions pertaining to gender issues.

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task. According to university career structure, there are very few positions for full university professors, with majority concentration of the academic staff at the lectureship position.
I spent phenomenal amounts of time during this phase negotiating primary access. This task was very crucial for my research. It is from this statistical information that I was able to identify the population of the academic staff, their designations as well as their representation across the departments. Nevertheless, primary access does not translate into secondary access, and I had still to negotiate access with the individual respondents in this study, as discussed in the following section.

**Secondary Access**

Accessing academic women willing to participate in this study was a complex process. Part of the complexity was tied in with the decisions I made as to whom to include in the study. Although I was not aiming at having a representative sample, I selected my sample purposively. I decided to include women from all academic ranks and women from all the teaching faculties, namely, faculties of arts, faculties of science and faculties of education. I also felt it was important that these academic women must also represent voices of married, divorced/separated as well as single women academics and that mothers would be included. Another important consideration was that I wanted to include academic women from all ethnic groups and religious faiths represented in the Kenyan university academic staff. I wanted to hear, for example, how academic women connected marital status with their careers. I wanted to listen to what meanings the academic women attached to their higher education, their careers, their families or ethnicity. In particular I wanted to understand in what specific ways these social factors enhanced or disabled their academic careers. I wanted to get a complete picture of what it means to be an academic woman in a society where not only do very few women get access to university education but the society is also patriarchal and patrilineal. I wanted to understand what connections academic women were making between their lived life experiences and the wider
social system. To do this I decided to include women from all the five national universities. I wanted to understand whether universities shared the same ethos or culture and whether women fared the same or differently in the five universities.

These five national universities were not only hundreds of kilometres apart but each university was gigantic, with campuses scattered in all directions. Like many of the Third World public institutions, communication to and within the university was limited by lack of telecommunications systems. Also, public transportation to and within the campuses was unreliable. This meant that either I had to write to the women academics or I had to physically visit the universities in an attempt to interest them in my study. I chose to go physically to the universities because I knew letters take long to reach the intended destinations and that they may take long before being acted upon. I also knew that my culture privileged orality over written letters. I knew my physical presence would have immediate and positive results.

My research began in Kenyatta University where I was a staff member and knew quite a number of the academic women. I also had a contact academic woman who had promised to connect me with other academic women since I had been out of the country for two and a half years and many changes had taken place. Once at Kenyatta University, I visited all the teaching departments where women were represented. Since my research coincided with the first multi-party election fever (just a few days after the election) the universities were almost deserted. The university and in fact the whole country was gripped with a certain level of uncertainty, fear and apprehension about the political changes. For the first two weeks of January 1993, I met very few women academics. People stayed away from the university. It was during this period that I decided to conduct a pilot study with four academic women. I wanted to try out my interview guide schedule. I also wanted to get a feel for what issues the women may think are important as well as the suitability of interviewing in an unstructured, conversational style.
This pilot study proved to be an invaluable experience. The four women pointed out some of the questions which they felt were unclear and even suggested how the question should be worded. They asked me to clarify, or to rephrase some items. They too added questions which they felt were important to them. In particular, they emphasized the domestic domain as an area where their lives are most conflicted. In their view the university experience represented only a partial reality of their lives. As a result, I decided to include the domestic sphere as an important aspect of this study. It was during this pilot study that I met Edna, who became a key informant in this study. Before I could interview her, she requested a copy of the proposal and the interview guide. She offered to discuss the clarity of my interview guide at a time convenient to me. The academic women in my study were not passive listeners. They identified gaps in the interview guide and even suggested questions that I should have included. Some were experienced researchers and helped in sharpening my interview guide. The characteristics exhibited by the academic women in this study seemed to corroborate Kirby’s and McKenna’s point:

The research participant is not a passive participant, simply there to talk about her or his experience. The participant may know of better or clearer questions to ask, of gaps in the interview plan and even of potential participants. If the interaction between researcher and the participant allows for an optimal degree of sharing, both may reach new personal and political insights in relation to the research focus. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.68)

I did not trivialize the perspective of my informants. I took their questions seriously and I was guided by my feminist commitment that I was doing this research with the women and for the women. I wanted to be a representative of their voice and their perspectives (Poland, 1995).

During the pilot study I realized that researching "up" was going to be a difficult process. For instance, the academic women who have been used to researching "down" (i.e. studying groups perceived to be disadvantaged) expressed surprise and dismay that I wanted to research them. At first they were uncomfortable with the prospect of being interviewed. Some joked about my proposal and declared: "It’s a funny feeling when you have spent all your life interviewing others and now to be interviewed."
Significantly, almost all the academic women interviewed in this study requested a copy of the interview guide. A minority asked for both the interview guide and the proposal well before the interview took place. I felt that some of these academic women, who were seasoned researchers, did not want to commit themselves to a study they did not have control of. Although Oakley (1981), Kirby and McKenna (1989), Webb (1994) and other feminist researchers express concern about power in an interview relationship and in fact advocate democratising the research process and indeed sharing power between the researcher and the research subjects, I did not perceive myself in a powerful position in relation to my research subjects. I presented myself as one of them and willing to learn from their experiences. Some respected me as an equal, and as a colleague. Although I was in privileged position as a researcher and by the fact that I asked questions and pressed for further explanations, this was done in a friendly conversational style where we laughed and joked as equals. The women academics also asked me questions, challenged my position and some critiqued not only my interview guide but also my proposal. Some were my seniors professionally and by age. From my cultural background, age is respected and any academic woman who was older than me occupied not only a position of power and authority but also that of wisdom after having learnt from many years in the school of life.

**IDENTIFYING THE SAMPLE**

The four academic women who participated in the pilot study became my contact persons. I requested that each one of them give me an introduction letter or some form of reference to women they knew in other universities. I felt this introduction would be useful so that when I arrived at each of the universities at least I would have a contact person. Ten names of academic women were suggested. I wrote letters of self introduction to these women, stating clearly that I was an academic woman in one of the Kenyan universities and conducting a study on academic
women for my doctoral thesis. I also emphasized that I was attending university in a Canadian university and I had only seven months in the field. I felt this information was important to create a sense of urgency and to garner support as a student. I knew the nuances of the Kenyan culture and in particular that people made sense of their own lives by helping others.

Meanwhile, I established contacts with more women in the university where I used to teach. I had numerous discussions with them. As a result of these discussions, I updated myself on the various social political changes that had taken place in the Kenyan universities. Some political spaces had opened and women were no longer looking over their shoulders to detect who was eavesdropping on their conversations. Through this process, I was able to identify potential interviewees. I also hoped that the women interviewed would introduce me to other women. Through this process of networking I developed a list of potential interviewees. However, as noted earlier, I made certain decisions which were to guide my sample selection: (1) to include women from all academic ranks; (2) to include women from all four national universities; (3) to include women from all faculties, mainly science, arts and education; (4) to include women from all ethnic and religious backgrounds represented in the university; (5) to ensure that married, single, and divorced/separated academics were represented.

To net academic women who fitted my descriptions dictated that I use a variety of sources to identify the women. At times I used the snowball or networking approach, at other times I used departmental records and the help of secretaries who seemed to know who among the academic women had children and how many and who did not, as well as who belonged to which religious faith. To verify such information I at times held pre-interviews with possible interviewees to determine whether or not to include them in my study. I held two such pre-interviews with women I had been informed were Muslims because they had Islamic names. It turned out that each of them had one parent who was Muslim and that they personally not only
affiliated themselves with Christianity but had attended missionary schools. Since I did not come across any other academic women who professed to be pure Muslims, I decided to include these two women in my study. Surprisingly, despite the fact that they had one parent who was Muslim, their experiences were not in any way obviously different from the others who professed to be Christians or secular.

In view of the enormous amount of data that I gathered in the pilot study, with only four women, I decided to limit my study to twenty-four academic women. Four of these women were those involved in the pilot study. In the actual study, these women build on their earlier transcripts, clarifying issues and questions which were not very clear at the initial stage. I had also conducted a dry run for this project (Kamau, 1992) with six African women who were pursuing their higher degrees in various universities in Ontario. Findings from that dry run have also enriched this study. Due to the need to maintain anonymity I decided not to present any extended personal profiles of individual women. I also use pseudonyms not only of the women but also of the places where the women lived or were interviewed.

The respondents' ages ranged between 28-52 years old. Table 4 gives information on other characteristics of my research participants.
### DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

The data presented and analyzed in this study were collected through a combination of strategies. These are documentary sources, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

#### Documentary Sources

I studied both primary and secondary sources such as university statistics, university documents dealing with policies of hiring, promotion, firing procedures, as well as career benefits. I also studied magazines, university calendars, reports, memos, university newsletters, internal
telephone directories, and office allocation guidelines in an attempt to understand how and where women were located in the university. I used the information from the documentary sources to triangulate women's responses. In my view, these documentary sources helped not only to enhance credibility but also to enrich the findings presented in this study.

The Interview Process

In-depth interviews conducted in semi-structured friendly conversations were used to collect the core data presented in this study. The in-depth interview approach was selected because it allows the researcher to enter the world of the people he or she plans to study:

The researcher enters the world he or she plans to study, gets to know, to be known, and trusted by them, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed. This material is supplemented by other data such as school memos and records, newspaper articles and records. (Bogdan and Biklen 1992, p.2)

This approach also allows the researcher to probe deeply, to uncover new cues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate and inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience (Burgess, 1984).

When I met a potential interviewee for the first time, I introduced myself as an academic woman in one of the Kenyan universities pursuing a doctoral degree at a Canadian university. I also explained that I was interested in interviewing academic women in an attempt to capture the experiences of academic women in our universities. If the academic woman agreed to participate in my study, I negotiated a time and a place where she would prefer the interview to be conducted. I also made it explicit that I would like to "shadow”¹⁴ the woman at three different locations, mainly at the university, at her home and at a social occasion. I wanted the women to

¹⁴ The term "shadow" is used in this chapter to mean observe. Some social scientists, for example, Sandra Acker, have used it instead of "observe" because it is more friendly and does not carry the clinical connotations the term "observe" carries.
select a time and a place which would be most comfortable and convenient for them. I felt that it was important to include them in the decision making process. Ten of the women elected to be interviewed in their homes, eight in their offices, four in exclusive clubs where they held family memberships and two preferred to come to my house. Significantly, all the women I identified and approached for purposes of interviewing expressed interest in my research and appraised it as an important and a brave move. To my surprise, although the women justified their choice of the interview venue for both proximity and serenity, none of these venues turned out to be free from interruptions. Most of the interrupted interviews were those held in the women’s offices at the university.

Students as well as lecturers dropped by and we had momentarily to stop the interview so that the academic woman could attend to the concerns of her colleagues or students. As an insider, I understood that it would be considered very rude if the interviewee failed to attend to these contingencies. In view of the prevailing social cultural expectation, at times I felt obligated to excuse myself for some minutes in order to give my respondents a chance to deal with some official contingencies. Due to these interruptions, we had to reschedule two interviews, one to a Sunday afternoon and another to an evening, to limit these interruptions.

At the academic women’s homes there were also a few interruptions from either a crying child, a telephone or unexpected visitors. At times, I did suggest that we reschedule the interview when I found the woman caught in a double bind: either to please me and disappoint her unexpected visitors, which would be considered anti-social, or to suggest that we postpone the interview which as a member of culture is not only anti-social but unprofessional. A few of the women could not afford to sit down for two hours at home discussing my study. They decided also to use this time for shelling peas, beans, peeling carrots or potatoes. Sometimes, we stopped the interview to prepare lunch for the children arriving from school. These interruptions were
important aspects of the women’s lives. Also, in the African sense, work and leisure are interspersed and as such most of these interruptions were considered to be quite normal. The least disturbed interview sessions were the ones held in my residence and in the exclusive clubs.

In spite of these interruptions, and the women’s busy schedules, it is remarkable that some of these women gave me so much of their valuable time. Although I had intended the interview to last somewhere between one and a half to two hours, I ended up spending more than ten hours with women like Angela, Edna, Sophia and Akinyi. They emphasized that the study I was conducting was not only important to them as academic women but also to all Kenyan women. They also felt that they had important information contributions to make to my study. Some of the women had lengthy personal stories which they had locked in for years. Once they unlocked the stream of consciousness, I felt obligated to listen. I wanted to be with them not only as a data gatherer but also as an empathetic friend. I wanted to understand their lived experiences and when they decided to display the whole picture of their lives I had but to offer a listening ear and understanding heart. The length of the interviews, therefore, varied from woman to woman. There were three women who were so busy that even devoting two hours for this interview seemed too much to request.

The Interview Structure

The interviews were semi-structured, flexible and took the form of a friendly conversational style. I began each interview by greeting each academic woman appropriately. I said good morning or good afternoon Miss, Mrs., Doctor or Professor X. Depending on where the interview was conducted, I asked general questions like "how are you?" "how is your family?" or simply "what is it like working here" if the interview was conducted in an university setting. Bearing in mind the centrality of the family and, in particular children in the Kenyan families, I
inquired about the welfare of their children and if they had none, asked a different question. If the children were attending school we discussed a bit about the school system. In turn, I shared with the women information about my school life, about my academic career in one of the universities, and about my pursuit of a doctoral degree in a Canadian university. I also shared with them information about my son who was ten years old then. I hoped to relax the atmosphere as well as establish rapport and a sense of trust.

I found these opening conversations very important. They helped to establish rapport and put the interview into a focus. Surprisingly even women who were well known to me seemed uptight at the beginning of the interview session. Once I felt that the ice was broken, I proceeded to restate the purpose of my study. I also promised the respondents that their interviews would be held in confidentiality and that pseudonyms would be used while transcribing and using the information in the thesis. I also informed the women that they were free to withdraw from the interview at anytime and that they were not obliged to answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering. None of the women withdrew from the interview once they committed themselves nor expressed any level of discomfort with any of the questions I asked them.

However, when I gave the women the consent form (see appendix 1) to sign, this almost broke the trust I had cultivated. Edna, in particular, argued that you only give forms to strangers to sign. Akinyi also explained that, even when you loan money to your friends, you do not ask them to sign papers that they will repay the debt. When I explained that the consent form was to protect them, they were not impressed. To them, what mattered was the fact that I trusted them and they should trust me. I tried with four women without success and then I put the matter of the consent forms to rest. I suspected that signing forms evoked a sense of suspicion particularly in a society characterized by a culture of fear and lack of academic freedom. I suspected that they felt the consent form might jeopardize their careers if any secrets leaked out. At this point, I
asked each academic woman whether I could tape the interviews. I had a mini tape recorder which was unobtrusive. All the women agreed to be tape recorded.

An interview guide, which was progressively improved as the interviews went on, was used (see appendix 2). The questions were not asked in any fixed order but I took great care to ensure that all the women were interviewed on the same issues. Denzin (1970, p.106) corroborates this strategy by stating that all the respondents should be asked basically the same questions.

The discussion flowed naturally and at times I did not have to ask the subsequent questions because the women covered them in their extensive and intensive narrations. Sometimes, I only barged in at the appropriate moment when I felt something needed further clarification. I asked questions like, what do you mean by that? Why is it so, or can you please elaborate on this or that issue? I also tried to redirect the discussions, but in a very careful manner so that I did not become obtrusive. This redirection of questions was only done when I felt that an individual woman had digressed too far from the research issues.

The discussions at times were so animated that we did not notice the passage of time. Sometimes some of the women expressed surprise that they had never thought about how gendered their lives and careers were. I specifically remember Agrippina admitting: "I have never thought about these issues that way." Angela lauded my study as "really an eye opener." I particularly remember with pride a conference held during the research period where Aketch presented a paper entitled "Education as a liberator?" During the interview session two months before the conference, she told me that I had inspired her to write a paper. She later invited me to comment on her paper. After her presentation, she publicly expressed thanks that I had influenced her thoughts while writing that paper. I was happy that my research was having a positive practical impact on the lives of some of these women. I was also invited to be a discussant in one of the
sessions in the same conference. I felt that I had not only established rapport and trust through interviews but friendships and intellectual contacts that extended beyond the research project. I felt that through these semi-structured interviews I was able not only to enter into these women's social world but also to capture the perspectives my interviewees had developed and held about their world. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.2-3) give a similar example of a woman studying female teachers through the use of in-depth interviewing:

The researcher is bent on understanding, in considerable detail, how people such as teachers, principals, students think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold. This goal often leads the researcher to spend considerable time with the subjects in their own environs, asking open-ended questions such as "what is a typical day like for you? or "what do you like best about your work? ... and recording their responses. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp.2-3)

The flexibility of the interview structure was conducive to the academic women's adding questions or asking for clarification of questions. Some of the women asked questions and proceeded to provide the answers. For example, Sophia reflected: "I think the question you should be asking is, why does the society educate women?" Does the society educate women so that they can attain gender equality or is it an education for two salaries which only privileges the man's position? Then Sophia continued to answer her own question in a detailed account. It is perspectives like this one, initiated by the women themselves, which have helped to enrich this study.

As the interview proceeded, time and again some of the women asked me to turn off the tape recorder once they felt they had something sensitive or private to share. Some asked me even to put my pen down so that they could speak off the record. I also respected their privacy and when I pressed them to explain something and they said it was private I quickly apologized and moved on. However, the interview structure was not always relaxed. There were times when the academic women broke down in tears when our discussion reminded them of some horrendous incidences in their lives. There were also times we shared laughter and jokes about the ironies,
contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas characterizing our own lives as academic women.

Another interesting aspect of the interviews is that more often than not the academic women intermittently asked to listen to parts of the taped interviews. Some women suggested that I delete parts of the interview where they felt their points of view were not well articulated. We recorded the section of the interview again but with clarification and precision. Sometimes, the women simply wanted to listen to whether their voices were clear. As seasoned researchers, some told me that they did not want me to suffer while trying to decode their interviews. Each evening I listened carefully to the taped interviews and analytically read my field notes. I had intended to transcribe the interviews in detail as the field work progressed, but this proved an impossible task. I instead made summary notes of every interview I listened to. When time permitted, I transcribed each day's interview verbatim. If I identified any gaps or inconsistencies I tried to reschedule an interview with the relevant woman for verifications. Four such revisits were made to the field.

During the interview, I had a small notebook where I recorded any use of body language, gestures, facial expressions or change of mood as an indication of ease or anxiety. I also recorded my own feelings during the interview. Soon after the interviews I recorded my reflection notes on the interviews, evaluating critically what worked and what did not work. I also kept in-depth notes on the venue, the physical organization of the place, any interruptions and what exactly happened when and how. These notes helped not only to prepare for the next interview but also became invaluable when transcribing and analyzing and presenting the data many months after the fieldwork. These interview notes helped to reconstruct and bring each individual woman alive. As I write this chapter, and indeed the whole thesis, these interview notes helped me hear the voices, visualize the figure of each and every woman I interviewed, smell the places these interviews were conducted and rekindle my feelings of joy, hope, pain and frustration while conducting these interviews. Through these intense visual and emotional revisits, I feel strongly connected to the lives of these women who unreservedly shared their inner struggles with me.
**Participant Observation**

Participant observation is the practice of living among the people one studies, coming to know them, their language and their ways through intensive and nearly continuous interaction with them in their daily lives. It involves communication and interaction for active learning rather than passive reception of knowledge. Information is processed by the fieldworker during interaction (Berreman, 1968, p.340).

The concept of participation observation involves long-term intensive involvement in the culture of the study with the aim of generating cultural profiles. It reduces the problem of reactivity - that is, people changing their behaviour when they know they are being studied. The researcher adopts the role of participant as observer and participates in the lives of the research subjects, developing relationships with informants and recording data as well. As the researcher mingle with the people she or he is studying for a period of time, she or he becomes less and less of a curiosity and people take less interest in her or his comings and goings (Burgess, 1984). Participant observation gives the researcher an intuitive understanding of what is going on in a culture and allows the participant observer to speak with confidence about the meaning of data. It also helps one to understand the meaning of the observations (Sena, 1991).

The disadvantage with this role is that it is difficult to combine data collection with taking sides in a conflict. During my participant observation sessions, I tried not to take sides in a conflict or an argument. I maintained a critical listening ear and a critical observant eye. However, there are questions of the extent of the participation and ethical dilemmas when one is confronted with a situation which might require action and refusal to act may seem like compromising oneself. I observed each academic woman in three different settings: namely, at the university, at their homes and social gatherings. Through participant observation I uncovered new information and new meanings as well as noting some inconsistencies between what was said at
the interviews and what I actually observed some of the women doing in a different social setup. During these observation sessions, I was able to formulate and ask questions based on what I observed the woman doing or saying.

In this study, however, I shadowed the women as they conducted their daily lives for two or three days as opposed to the lengthy immersion in a culture expected of outsiders. Even though I was pressed for time, it was not necessary for me to stay in one location for months. As a Kenyan, I did not have the problem experienced by outsider researchers who have to spend months or years learning the language, culture, politics or even geographical location of the research site. As a Kenyan academic woman, I knew the nuances of our culture and establishing rapport with the women was not very difficult. They saw me as one of them interested in documenting problems affecting us with hope for change. Moreover, there were no problems of cultural shock or adjustment or making acquaintances as is common with western social scientists when they conduct studies in a distant land other than their own.

I, therefore, shadowed each academic woman for two or three days (others invited me to accompany them many other occasions which I gladly accepted) in order to capture what their daily lives are like both at the university and outside the university. In my role as participant observer, I made sure I did not interfere in their normal routines. I avoided taking sides in discussions. However, there are limits as to how far one can refuse to speak unless asked questions or to give a comment. There were times I felt conflicted and felt my silence meant I was consenting to what was going on. A case in point was when I accompanied Angela to a social event and the chief guest insinuated that wife assault is an expression of love and many women in the room clapped in agreement. I also gained an intuitive understanding of what was going on at the women’s homes, at the university or in social gatherings. From these observations and from my own lived experiences as an African woman, I feel that I can speak with confidence
about the meaning of the data I gathered. I feel that the credibility of the data is increased by what I learnt from interviewing and from watching people. I concur with Kirby and McKenna that:

Being a participant observer provides an opportunity to develop greater meaning for the experience being researched ... Through participation the researcher appropriates new information and new meaning. Even though perfect understanding is impossible, a measure of assurance and understanding can be gained from "standing in the shoes of another" and/or immersion in the setting of another. The sense of belonging, however temporary, gives the researcher some claim to status as an insider ... with a brief measure of insider’s knowledge. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.78)

After completion of an interview I re-expressed my interest to "shadow" each interviewee for a day or two. I explained that I would like to observe them in their daily formal and informal settings in order to get a clear picture of, for example, what a typical day for an academic woman is like. By the end of the interview session, we had developed a rapport. They had understood my commitment to their lives and they also expressed a commitment to mine. Some repeatedly said "this study is very important" and felt that it had the potential for social change. Some constantly reminded me that I should not forget to document just how over-extended their days were.

I did not fear that by telling the academic women that I was going to shadow them, that they may put up a show or behave as expected in what has been referred to as the Hawthorne effect (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.78). I felt that my presence was unobtrusive. I was already an insider by the fact that I was a Kenyan woman, born and raised in the culture, and an academic woman at a Kenyan university. I was not only a colleague, but a friend who did not have any power over them. Advocating that research subjects be fully aware they are being observed, Reinharz (1983, p.177) contends:

Researching from the margins we think it essential that people be fully informed about the research being done. Since we have altered the relationship between researcher and the participants, there are no subjects and subject deception is not possible.
Furthermore, Klein (1983, p.95) argues that when an honest relationship has been maintained between the research subjects there is no need for "fake responses".

However, human interaction is very complex and I feel that no amount of theorizing and strategizing can give a complete social reality. As social science researchers we can claim to know only a partial reality of the people we interview and observe. Even with all my preparing, strategizing and being an insider, I encountered academic women like Amina who had a red eye and at first made me believe she fell in the bath tub. She admitted that it was as a result of domestic violence only after her young son revealed the secret. As I reflected on this incident again and again, I arrived at the conclusion that social scientists cannot uncover everything about people's lives. There are limits as to what social science can achieve.

I observed all but one of the twenty-four women interviewed in this study. Wanja fell sick a few days after the interviews and did not get well by the time the research process was completed. I shadowed each academic woman for at least two days. I accompanied them in their daily routines. At times I walked with them along the university corridors, observing how they interacted with one another. I joined them for tea at the university cafeteria or at the secretary's office. I sat in their lecture halls observing and jotting down briskly the nature of interactions between the academic women and the students. I noted the use of both verbal and non-verbal language. I asked for permission to participate in faculty board meetings as well as departmental staff meetings. In the university where I taught, I did not need to seek formal permission since I was a member of staff on study leave who was interested in the university affairs.

In these meetings, I carefully observed the seating patterns. Usually, men sat together and women sat together. When a woman sat beside a man, they were mostly from the same ethnic group. In my small black notebook I noted down in minute detail what I observed, what was said, who said what and how. I paid particular attention to when and how academic women spoke, the
type of issues they raised and the tone of voice they used. I paid attention to body language, gestures and symbols, as indications of discomfort, anxiety, ease or respect. These observation notes were quickly jotted down in English or Kikuyu.

I tried as much as possible to space my participant observations in such a way that I would have ample time to reconstruct what was said, done, and observed as accurately as possible. I also wanted to have enough time to reflect on what I had observed in order to prepare myself psychologically for the next participant observation or interview session. I conducted one interview or participant observation per day.

I also decided to spend some time in university senior common rooms or in cafeterias in order to observe how men and women interacted and the frequency of women academics visiting these social places. I was particularly keen to observe what women and men consumed. I was moved to note that men ordered more expensive and nutritionally richer meals than women. When I inquired why this consistent pattern, Sophia alluded to budgetary constraints while Angela perceived it as a matter of individual tastes. Since I had made my research interests explicit, I did not feel as an intruder or obtrusive in any way. If I failed to understand something that I observed, I sought an explanation or meaning from the people around. For example, one evening when I realized there were only two other women in a senior common room packed with males talking animatedly, I sought explanation from a male friend and colleague who was seated beside me. To my utter surprise and dismay, he spontaneously responded: "Decent career women are not expected to frequent social places." I was rather shocked by his response but it was indicative that social cultural constraints, in this case a stereotypical construction of a good woman, constrained women's social interaction.

I also shadowed the women at social functions like weddings, churches, markets and parties. In some of these places I felt that it would be viewed as obtrusive if I sat down making
observation notes. Instead, I kept mental notes which I tried to reconstruct either verbatim or as close as possible to what I observed or heard soon after the event. There were times when I quickly made an exit to jot down some notes if I felt the incident was important and I wanted to record it as vividly as possible.

Observations in the academic women’s homes sometimes turned into gruelling tasks. In one case, water taps ran dry and we had to draw water in buckets for several trips from a construction site which was some kilometres away. Thus I shared in their daily tribulations as a result of social and economic underdevelopment. Together we shared long walks to the bus stops, shared long hours of waiting for buses and long hours of hassling at Wakulima [farmer’s] markets. I also spent a whole day at an open air kiosk where Amina sold second-hand clothes. While participating in this social world we spoke at length about issues ranging from politics, families, religion, marriages, divorce, to wife assault. We shared jokes and laughter. We laughed at life’s twists of irony. For example, with Angela, a single mother like me, we laughed until our ribs ached and tears filled our eyes when Angela told me that she sometimes tells men that she has only form six education in order to attract them.

I also observed and heard some academic women contradict the images they had created about themselves during the interviews. It was not uncommon for academic women who during the interviews and in the absence of their spouses described themselves as warriors and as no-nonsense academics who could not be "sat on" to behave in very conservative ways in the presence of their spouses. Conversely, I observed women who exhibited very conservative behaviour in the university setting behaving in very radical ways while in private social spaces.

These participant-as-observer notes together with the reflection notes were interspersed or appended to the interview transcript of each individual woman. These pieces of data became not only powerful reminders of the details a tape recorder could not capture but helped to bring each
woman alive. Emotions, facial expressions, frowns and the whole gamut of verbal communication were captured. These pieces of data also helped to strengthen certain perspectives as well as reveal some inconsistencies and contradictions in the women's lives. Most of what I observed and heard is so engrained in my mind that it will be remembered vividly many years after the doctoral process.

INSIDER/OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVE

Many times, I felt that my insider/outsider status was one of advantage. As an insider and as an academic woman I shared the same culture, language, class and gender oppression with the respondents. Moreover, as an academic woman I shared the same reference points. We shared the same problems of promotion, publication and discrimination on account of being women. Rapport was, therefore, naturally achieved. As women we shared a lot of information and laughed and joked about our common destiny.

More often than not, during both interviews and participant observation sessions, the academic women addressed me as one of them. They captured my attention by the constant use of inclusive language. For example, in our discussions, to support a point of view the women also called for my support an insider by saying things like: "As you know with our men ...", "you also know as I do that ..." "As you know with our culture men do not or men are not expected ..." and so forth. They expected me, as one of them, to understand their cultural knowledge. Because I was one of them, some felt confident enough to share some very inner secrets to a point where I felt uncomfortable. Some few women divulged so much of their personal lives that I suffered guilty knowledge. More often than not, after taking me into their confidence and opening their guarded secrets the women summarized by warning me through proverbs like: cia mucii ti como [literarily translated to mean matters of the home are not for public consumption], or kagutwi ka
*mucii gatihakagwo ageni* [you do not smear the home oil on strangers or you do not divulge secrets to strangers]. Invoking these proverbs meant that the women did not see me as a stranger and that is why they divulged a lot of personal information. In return they expected me to reciprocate by not using the information in any way that could hurt them.

Although I was an insider in all the ways mentioned, I was at the same time an outsider in that I was pursuing a degree outside the country and was only gathering data for a short period and then returning overseas for my studies. Moreover I was a visitor in four national universities where I was not an employee. At Kenyatta university where I was an employee but on study leave, the two and half years of my absence created a sense of an outsider. Many changes had taken place and the fact that I was not an active employee and that I had travelled from Canada created some kind "foreignness". As an outsider, I also felt that I was advantaged. I was told things which the women said that they would not divulge to their spouses, let alone their colleagues. Some told me about owning secret bank accounts or property in the name of a friend, relative or a child for a rainy day. We exchanged knowing looks, when particular men or spouses approached. In the middle of a sentence the whole direction of a conversation would be automatically changed to accommodate the newcomer.

I also felt that the fact that I was in transit to Canada gave the women some latitude in their exposure and discussions. They felt less threatened since I was not actively engaged in my academic career at my home university and was thus detached from university politics. I suspected that they felt I could not harm their reputation or social or public image since I had only a few months to collect my data and then would depart from the country for at least a couple of years.

My "foreignness", I also felt, was very useful in the sense that it provided me with the conceptual tool to step out of my culture and to critique it empathetically and as an outsider. My
insider/outsider status, I believe, strengthened my understanding, analysis, and interpretation of the academic women’s daily lived lives.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in a qualitative study is an ongoing process. It begins right from the time a researcher enters the field and ends when the findings are reported and analyzed in some form of report. In my study, I worked through several levels of data analysis. Firstly, as the research progressed, I made daily efforts to transcribe each interview in detail, and when this was not possible I carefully listened to the interview with the purpose of identifying certain ideas, events, themes that each individual woman stressed repeatedly. I noted identifiers or code labels as they emerged from the data. I also read through my observation notes and reflection notes not only to identify emerging themes but also to identify gaps and inconsistencies that needed further clarification, as well as to map out a strategy for the next interview or observation session. This process of pre-analyzing the data was followed for each of the interviews conducted.

Secondly, when all the interviews and observations were completed, I transcribed data from interviews verbatim. This was an enormous task which was not only time consuming but also yielded twenty-four transcripts each containing on average sixty-five pages. The interviews were conducted in English which is the official language of instruction in Kenyan schools with the exception of the lower classes or grades at the primary level. While the academic women’s responses were in English there were times they expressed their ideas in their mother tongues or in Kiswahili. They explained that when certain ideas are translated into English, their authenticity and intensity are no longer the same. Numerous proverbs and wise sayings were expressed in the indigenous languages to capture the essence of what these academic women intended to convey. They also explained the meanings of these proverbs and sayings in English. Since I am only
conversant in Kikuyu (my first language) and Kiswahili (my second language) I only used proverbs and sayings in these two languages in the present thesis. I thought that it would be obtrusive if I kept on asking each and every interviewee to either spell or write down for me these proverbs or sayings not in Kikuyu or Kiswahili. At times I experienced a deep sense of illiteracy in these other languages spoken in Kenya but the women made an effort to translate the literal meanings into English. Efforts were made, however, to make translations render the meanings intended to be conveyed by the interviewees.

When I had all the pieces of data from interviews, observations, reflection notes, memos and so forth ready, I appended observation and reflection notes to the interview with which it belonged. For example, I put together Angela’s transcript with all the memos and notes I made while working with Angela. I wanted to contextualize the interview and see the totality of each woman’s life. This was done with all the transcripts.

Thirdly, I then read carefully through all the transcripts identifying certain ideas, words, patterns of behaviour, subjects’ ways of thinking, and strategies as they emerged. On the left margin of my transcripts I identified each theme with a code label. Coding refers to the identification of an idea, event, theme or common property that identifies the contents in a piece of data (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p.139). I then read and re-read through my data searching for regularities and patterns as well as topics my data covered. I wrote the words and phrases on the left hand margin of the transcript for the second time. These words and phrases served not only as coding categories but also as important means of sorting the descriptive data I had collected (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.167). Once the categories were saturated and I could not detect any other meaning I moved on to the fourth step.

The fourth major task was to move all the portions of data that seemed to go together into one file according to the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, I
moved into one file all information that seemed to fit together into a theme like economics, then another file on promotions, etc. After I put the data in categories, I read and re-read again, moving bits that seemed to fit in another category, looking for the common properties as well as identification of those things which did not quite fit in.

The data presented in this study were coded with analytical categories emerging from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Tesch, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The themes and sub-themes that emerged during this inductive analysis as well as research questions helped me in deciding the sequence into which to present the data. The following chapters in this thesis are thematically organized and are linked to certain major research questions.
There is no such a thing as a neutral educational process. Either education functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1973, p.15)

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the earlier educational experiences of the academic women interviewed in this study. I wanted to understand what their earlier educational experiences were like and what impact these experiences could have had on their present social and academic lives. It is my belief that the past illuminates the present and unless we know what our lives were like yesterday, we may not be in a position to determine where we are today nor how and where we want to be tomorrow. In my view the past and the present experiences do help us to chart our goals for the future. Therefore, I considered the earlier educational lives of the women in my study as very crucial to my understanding of their current responses, interactions, hopes and aspirations.

To get pertinent data, I queried the women about the schools they attended, subjects they studied, what they liked most in school, what they disliked most, what enabled them to succeed this far as well as their relationship with their teachers. In discussing these questions the women also raised many important issues concerning the nature of not only their own education but of the whole educational structure. One question which the women raised persistently and which seemed
to be of great interest to them was whether it was possible to educate formally in western terms, without alienating the learners and in particular women.

Based on my analysis of their responses, it is argued in this chapter that the western type of formal education was used and continues to be used as an ideological tool to ensure that the majority of the Kenyan peoples and in particular women ungrudgingly accept gender stereotyped roles and occupations. To ensure the continued performance of these roles and occupations, women are denied access to certain forms of knowledge. Their own experiences are misinterpreted and misrepresented to themselves and others. Moreover, only very few women are allowed to climb to the top of the educational ladder. Even when women are allowed into the educational system the aim is to equip them with certain skills, attitudes and dispositions to make them better workers in the reproduction and production process. Critical thinking is discouraged or stifled through the provision of irrelevant curriculum and the use of repressive sexist learning methods. The students are made to memorize facts and reproduce them in examinations even though they are of no interest to the learners. This banking concept of education has been criticized over and over again (Freire, 1970, 1973; Njoroge & Benaars, 1986). In Kenya sex stereotyping and the use of male centred approaches has only begun to be discussed. (For more useful discussion on this problem, see Harber, 1989; Obura, 1991).

The voices of the women presented in this chapter show that far from linking schooling with daily realities, the schools were reserved for alienating and disempowering discourses. Schooling is rooted in colonial experiences, and the roles that women were assigned by colonialists and missionaries have not been addressed in the education system.

To ensure continued colonial domination of African peoples, the colonial regime defined the African mind in such a way that the subservient roles assigned to Africans appeared justifiable. In the same manner, what African women are capable of knowing has been defined for them first
by the colonialists and currently by the African men. Schooling processes draw on a male centred curriculum, sexist teaching methods, dogmatic Christian faith, and a pervasive gender ideology, all of which serve to silence women.

Women were and are still expected to accept uncritically certain forms of knowledge, rules and dogmas even when this information is against their own interests. The schools try to convince women that their daily lived experiences are not true or important and that women are inferior and as a group have never made any contribution to the development of Kenyan society. As such they have been forced to learn, emulate and identify with patriarchal forms of knowledge and power. Giroux (1988) has clearly exposed this deceptive role of the school:

Knowledge can no longer be seen as objective, but has to be understood as part of the power relations that not only produce it but also those that benefit from it. Every form of knowledge can be located within a specific power relations: as time passes certain forms of knowledge are transformed by ruling groups into "regimes of truth". (Giroux, 1988, p.xviii)

Remembering their student lives and the role schooling played in their lives, the women seemed to concur on the point that their schooling was aimed at reproducing certain attitudes, values, and dispositions necessary for their continued marginalization as a group. The women, however, as conscious actors and thinking, creative persons, have in various ways resisted their own oppression in the education system. Over the last few years, schools have produced a lot of unintended results. This chapter is organized under five broad headings: educated into conformity; not trained for leadership resistance; the unintended results; gendered curriculum; motivation to succeed.

EDUCATED INTO CONFORMITY

Each in her own way the academic women in this study argued that their earlier educational experiences as students either at the primary, secondary, or at the university level left a
lasting imprint on their own lives. Their present careers, hopes, aspirations, successes and failures are all intertwined with the teachers who taught them, the knowledge they were given access to or denied, the types of schools they attended, the gender ideology inculcated into their consciousness through these experiences and the responses they made to these experiences, as well as being embedded in the social, cultural, economic and political climate of the time. All these interacting factors shaped the lives of the academic women.

Recollecting their school experiences, they were very critical of the misleading role that the school played, particularly in their social and personal lives. The schools were concerned mainly with the dissemination of book knowledge, which was very theoretical and did not have any practical relevance to their daily lives, but had to be memorized, if they were to be certified as educated. The main concern of the western schools was to produce the ideal woman who was subservient, obedient, ever pleasing, hard working, morally upright in accordance with Christian ethics and in effect a self-effacing individual. Some of the women held ambivalent views in regards to their own education. Although formal education enabled them to get gainful employment, they also maintained that the same education eroded their sense of pride and esteem as African women. It was a common feeling among the women that western formal education did indeed disable them in the sense that they were turned into consumers of knowledge rather than creators of knowledge.

One of the most moving depictions of how the western type of formal education, and other colonial institutions, enslaved the African peoples and turned them into robots was told by Angrippina, a senior lecturer. Angrippina, a reserved woman who was educated in the early 1960s and has taught in the university for the last fifteen years, said:

You may not understand what growing up under colonialism meant. When we went to school all teachers were white catholic nuns. They used to discipline us harshly. They defined what we were capable of learning. Child care, mother craft, were taught to us. It was ridiculous. You could not dare ask any questions.
They knew everything and we did not. Teachers used to tell us that African ways were stupid, that we did not have history, language, or a culture, or any knowledge. We did not have the courage to speak up. Their authority and powers were absolute. We knew it was all lies, but we also wanted to get an education, we wanted jobs, we wanted to better our lives, we wanted to be like them. It was such a contradictory state. It was a trade off.

When I went to the university, it was slightly different. There you were considered important, but there were conditions. You could not challenge authority. For us women it was a double or triple burden. We had to respect and obey first the white man, the white women and their children, and then our African men. It was never easy. We learnt a lot of academic stuff. When I think about it now, it is like a big dream which haunts you. You cannot completely outgrow your past experiences. Sometimes I want to ask questions to my seniors but I am not sure how they would react and I keep putting it off. Decision making, action and authority were in the hands of the colonizers, now under our African men. It is difficult for us women to be on the receiving end all the time. When we attend staff meetings you don’t know the pain, when you have a burning issue, you want to say it, but your mind says no. It has taken me all these fifteen years as an academic staff to surmount courage to speak out. Today I challenge issues but the problem is, I feel guilty and uncertain about my questions, afterwards. It is as if I am in self doubt. It is a very difficult state but I believe it goes back to our colonial school days.

The silencing, alienating, oppressing and exploitative nature of colonial education has been studied and exposed by both African and western scholars. Mirii (1979), Smock (1981), Newman (1984), Riria (1984), Likimani (1985), Ngugi (1986), Marshall (1988), Amadiume (1987), Camaroff and Camaroff (1988), Staudt (1989), Sifuna, 1990, Midamba (1990) and Musisi (1992), all agree with Angrippina’s moving narration that colonialism was characterized by strong male bias in government educational programs and policies, and that the main aim of colonial education was to facilitate the expansion of the colonial economy. Colonialism thrived on the suppression of the African mind. Once the mind was suppressed, the African peoples seemed like they were consenting to their own oppression. Likewise women’s subordination and seeming consent was and continues to be inculcated through the schooling processes.

One would have expected the role of the western type of formal education to change radically with the attainment of political independence. It seems a paradox that formal education
in independent Kenya continues to alienate, oppress and silence its own peoples and in particular women. Rhoda, a young lecturer who was trained in the post-colonial period and who defines herself as a warrior and a no-nonsense academic, explains that formal education ruins the trust, respect, courage, confidences and bonding that women could develop among themselves. The messages transmitted in the school are that women are not serious, spend all their time gossiping and hence need moral regulation. Indignantly she remembers:

First in class they [teachers] would insist that we sit boy girl, boy girl and I did not know why and I asked. I was told when you sit boy girl you do not talk as much as if two girls sat together. Two girls I was told spend all their time gossiping and boys get naughty. Then we would be told that girls were to be seen, not heard, and as I told you I was a noisy person. I would be told that I was not behaving like a girl and that a girl carries herself quietly.

However well intended these messages could have been, the underlying implications are instructive. If girls/women want to succeed, they must avoid each other’s company or else they will gossip the whole day. This attitude, in my view, seems to have been internalized and carried on into the professional lives of some of the women I interviewed. Maria seemed to devalue other women:

When you talk about women, there is nothing I can say is really special. They are just other staff members. In fact I tend to be freer with male colleagues than female colleagues. I don’t know whether other women academics feel the same way, but with other women I really never get a basis for establishing academic discussion ... I have more men friends. I am socially and intellectually at home with men. I find that I have very little to discuss with other women. One thing I have noticed about women, they like discussing trivial things like boy friends, clothing, family, children, husband or about somebody else ... But with men you don’t. These things don’t come, they discuss other things which in my view are more constructive. Very rarely do you find men discussing clothing or other trial matters. They are serious.

From the foregoing excerpt, despite the fact that Maria is the sole woman in her department and her immediate colleagues are male, we cannot fail to detect her contempt and devaluation of other female colleagues. She seems to have internalized the school master’s message that girls gossip, and even now as a senior academic she seems to believe that issues that
affect women personally are trivial. In no uncertain terms, she tells us that men rarely discuss trivialities. This kind of outlook has implications for academic women’s alliances and linkages as discussed in chapter seven.

However, when I urged her to tell me why she thought that such well-educated women dwelt on trivialities, she shifted the blame to the socializing and indoctrinating role of the school and society at large. In her words:

I really don’t know, but women have been treated as inferior all their lives. In school we were told we should behave well, or we will never get a husband. In church the same message. It seems that women were created to get somebody to marry them and then their lives would be fulfilled. Women have internalized these expectations with such dedication that it dominates all their life. I think maybe that is one of the reasons why women are so preoccupied with their families, appearances, and clothing.

The women repeatedly reiterated that the schools were only interested in training ‘good’ women and girls, a practice which in their view was a colonial legacy and a distortion of African indigenous cultures. In African indigenous societies, women were not expected to be docile, dumb and passive creatures. They were active workers, as well as creators and disseminators of knowledge. They were in charge of the education of their children and provided food for their families. But with the advent of the western type of formal education, women became the passive listeners and recipients of knowledge aimed at making them subservient workers at the expense of their social and personal needs. Their indigenous knowledge accumulated over centuries was devalued. Under the western type of formal education, a new type of impractical, irrelevant knowledge was taught in the name of "civilization". Access to certain forms of knowledge was withheld and thus the women were miseducated. Decrying this miseducation, Santalo, who describes herself as ambitious, uncompromising, and forthright, narrates her own school experiences:

Our education was and still is not about life and living. You find that the kind of education that we get is a kind of factory, where you are processed so that you can join the production line ... produce, help in the reproduction and ignore the important aspect of our lives. After a number of years in school you are certified
as "civilized" on basis of how obedient you are. Civilization meant accepting subordinate status, and not asking questions ... Take for instance you complete a university degree, masters and a Ph.D and you have never had an idea of legal education which I believe helps to inform what our rights are legally. I think if this kind of education is given we will be having less problems, because most of the problems which face women today is because many things are hidden.

The schools were not only seen to be deficient in what they taught, and how they taught, but also in what they failed to teach. This omission is seen by many women in this study as a deliberate attempt to subordinate and silence, just like the colonist silenced the colonized African people. Angela aptly puts it:

African peoples have been cheated that they have no history, culture, education or religion. That their history has nothing to contribute to humanity. Likewise, women in the education system have been taught that we have no knowledge, and have no contributions to make and that our ultimate goal is to be somebody else than whom we are. They say knowledge is power. For us it is what kind of knowledge we have, some kind of knowledge definitely makes us powerless.

Access to certain forms of knowledge, creation and validation of knowledge and transfer of knowledge were identified as the means through which women are silenced and subordinated, and male domination created and perpetuated. The women in a striking manner kept making allusions to the colonial discourse as a way of illustrating their case. Colonialists defined the African mind in such a manner that the colonized African peoples would be excluded from certain functions in the society. The African peoples were seen as highly developed in emotions and perceptions but when it came to intellectual development and abstract thinking, they were not thought capable of this and, therefore, the best kind of education was to keep them close to material processes. This was a power game which supported the continued domination of the African peoples. The African peoples were denied the power to define themselves. Any attempt to define themselves was construed as deviation and was met with brutal force. By extension, we can see the same mechanism of defining women and what they are capable of knowing and doing as a way of ensuring their continued subordination. The biggest problem, however, is that women have to deal with double colonization, first as they were defined by the British colonialists and
presently by the African male. The colonization of knowledge in the same pattern, first by colonial educators and presently by the African male as dictated now by neo-colonial masters, has led to a gendered curriculum and a sexual division of labour in the education system. Males are in charge of the creation and transfer of this male-centred knowledge at all levels in the educational system and this helps perpetuate the myth of male supremacy and women's inferiority, as Wambui’s comments illustrate:

... As I told you earlier I went to boarding primary school. There we were taught about the mother country Britain. ... at the university all the lecturers who taught the courses I registered for were all male. In any case, there were very few women lecturers those days and most of them were foreigners ... Male lecturers decided what was to be taught and who were clever and who were weak students ... Just like the African peoples were thought weak minded by colonialists, our male lecturers seemed to believe that as women we had a feeble brain ... It’s funny that when I was admitted in the university I was admitted to study Geography, Religious Studies, and Literature in English. The Geography lecturer advised me that Geography was difficult and I should transfer to Home Economics ... Many other women in my year ended either in Religious Studies or Home Economics.

Gaskell (1987), although writing about a different social, economic and cultural background, echoes the Kenyan women’s case as far as curriculum biases are concerned. She writes:

There can be no doubt that existing curricula are biased, both in what they include and in what they omit; nor that for any working class students they have little interest or appeal ... It is clear that schools have been intended to serve as instruments of the dominant ideology, playing their part in reproducing the social order and maintaining cultural hegemony (Gaskell & McLaren, 1989, p.41).

Atieno, who defined herself as a hardworking, loving and motherly academic, insisted that important issues like sex education, interpersonal relationships, and individual rights were omitted from the curriculum which in turn disadvantaged the female students:

What I am saying is that through the education system we have been denied very valuable information. People need to be sensitized about their rights ... that if someone slaps me that is violence against me. In our schools violence against persons and in particular women should be addressed ... In our education system we should be educated about our rights, our obligations, duties and responsibilities. We should not only be taught what we have to do, and what should be done to us
when we fail, we should be enlightened also about what should not be done to us. What are my rights as a person and in particular as a woman.

Although the women complained bitterly that their school was meant to subordinate them by the fact that they were expected to obey, respect, and emulate the norms of the colonizers, and now those of the African male, it was rather interesting to note that the women often seemed willing and ready to compromise with those whom they accused of betraying and keeping them down. Here is an extract from my fieldnotes:

I enter the senior common room and I notice one of the women I had interviewed. Our eyes meet and she beckons me to her table. She is seated with three other women. She introduces me as a friend to the others. I sit down with them and they continue with their discussion as if I am one of them. Various issues are discussed. I gather that all the three women seated at this table are academics. One of them is unhappy with the kind of treatment she had received that morning from the chairman of her department. It has been decided that she should teach a class on Mondays for a senior male professor who had travelled abroad. The arguments are that women should not be pushed to do to any donkey job for male professors seeking after their ambition. As the discussion continues, one woman argues that maybe it is okay for this woman to teach the course. "It is a sign that the chairman recognizes your abilities" she offered. At this point two men appear, happily chatting among themselves, they come over to our table, greet us and ask whether they are welcome to sit with us. Without waiting for a response the men sit down and I am surprised and amazed because the discussion changes immediately. The complaining women now are quiet. The men initiate discussions and the name of the professor who was travelling abroad came up. I expect flare ups. I am surprised. The women praise the professor, how hardworking he is, considerate and even Amina who was complaining shifts positions. She says she is happy to be of assistance to him. I am now baffled. The other woman announce that she is working hard on her publications and hoped to get support from one of the male lecturers at the table. I gather that the two men are associate professors at the university. I am amazed by the level of compromise and shifting of positions and moods caused by the intrusion by these two men. (Fieldnotes, February 16, 1993)

However, further discussions with the academic women revealed that although these women seemed as though they were compromising, their actions should not be simplistically understood. As members of the powerless group they could not afford to antagonize male colleagues, particularly the senior professors. The women wanted promotions and publications and they had to be strategic. By appearing to be agreeable with their male colleagues they hoped to
reap some benefits. It also became clear that women complain to each other as a form of support but rarely made their complaints known to the senior male colleagues for fear of consequences.

**NOT TRAINED FOR LEADERSHIP**

Recollecting their academic experiences, the women rated themselves as above average. Almost all the women interviewed submitted that they were high achievers in their schooling years and were almost always ranked in positions of number one to five in a class of about thirty-five students. Those who attended girls-only primary, secondary and high schools were either class prefects or dormitory captains, yet they claimed they were not trained for leadership. Real life, they argued, is composed of both men and women. Therefore, being a prefect or head girl in an all girls’ high school cannot translate into genuine leadership skills. In any case, even in girls’ high schools, where the school head was always a female, the discipline master was always male. All the women who attended single-sex schools right from primary to high school were critical of their one-sided experiences and particularly of the underlying message that this sole male discipline master conveyed to them. They claimed that their schools taught them to respect, recognize and revere male authority and to disdain, disrespect and devalue the control and authority of their own kind through the school administrative and social arrangement. Consequently they did not believe women could be in charge and by implication they could not take or aspire towards leadership roles. They left high school convinced that only men could lead.

Sophia narrates:

> When I reflect about my education today, first of all I would like to say it was one sided. If I went to a mixed school, maybe it would have been different competing with the boys. In a girls’ school you are only exposed to what was expected of girls but that is not total life ... I was a prefect for all the six years I was at Ngandu high school, which was one of the best schools in the republic at that time ... all staff members were female, except for the only male who taught biology, the only science subject at our time. What I dislike most when I think about it now is the way this male teacher was revered. He was the discipline master. The girls
started fearing him. If we were making noise and we were told he is coming we kept quiet. If a female teacher was on duty and we were uncontrollable, it was him, whom the naughty girls were to be taken to. He looked like a father even to the female teachers. Reflecting on it today, he looked like the polygamous husband with many daughters ... When he was on duty the school would be very quiet. The more I think about it now the more convinced I become that the male teacher was the hidden headmaster with the express aim to ensure social control.

According to the women, from primary school on (except for a few single sex schools), the whole administrative structure was male. The headmasters, the school bursars, principals of colleges, their deputies, finance officers, etc, were all male. These were the role models in leadership to which women were exposed.

Lamenting the denial of leadership skills through the nature and scope of the education made available to them, the women asserted that right from primary school days, they were taught to follow instructions, not to be critical of issues, and to understand that the hallmark of a good woman meant total obedience even when the rules did not look right. The schools were organized like military barracks with strict discipline and codes of conduct. When recollecting their experiences, particularly in primary and secondary schools, the women repeatedly told me of how difficult it was to develop critical thought or self-identity without getting into trouble with the school authorities. This is illustrated by Rhoda’s narration:

School had a long list of rules which we were expected to sign upon our admission into form one. Ours was a strict Catholic boarding school for girls only. You were supposed to accept all the rules including that you will be of good moral conduct, that you would attend the mass ... we were required to walk in certain style, wear certain hair cuts, wear decent dress, so if you walked around in a dress which did not seem okay you are reprimanded to behave like a good girl.

And Angela corroborates:

A decent dress was below the knees, does not expose the neck ... The way you spoke was also important. You will always be reminded that is not how girls talk. Girls are supposed to be soft, appealing, non-assertive and not argumentative ... In fact I did not mind neatness, I would like to dress neatly. What I did not like was the fact that sometimes the schools made us feel inadequate especially in our looks. I also hated the impression that girls were not supposed to be vocal, you
are not expected to be critical of things, that is expected of ladies and if you question you were labelled a ringleader. It is as if you are inciting people and all you wanted was to understand.

From the foregoing narratives, it is clear that the school experiences were not liberating at all. The schools instilled a sense of self-doubt, anger, frustration and self-negation. The curriculum encouraged stereotypes of femininity and masculinity which were in conflict with African practical realities. This led to dissonance. The women were socially constructed as feeble fragile beings yet, they were expected to perform gruelling tasks, like fetching water, firewood and tilling the land for long hours, etc.

This finding supports Dreeben’s (1989) argument that schools provide more than instruction. They provided norms, or principles of conduct which are learned through varied experiences in school that influence students’ lives.

The women repeatedly told me that they experienced a moral dilemma, particularly when faced with situations where they were required to speak out on issues. If they were critical and asserted their moral authority, they felt guilty if their remarks appeared to offend some colleagues. On the other hand, if they compromised and made popular decisions, they felt guilty that they had not done the right thing. The women often connected this policing of the self to their earlier educational experiences where they were drilled to serve, nurture, please and submit to authority.

If women were only expected to obey rules and do their school work, there is no way their leadership potential could have been enhanced. It is, therefore, not amazing to find academic women who are experts in their subject areas but uninterested in the political and social life in the university.

Not only did schools deny them leadership qualities, but the teachers’ sexism aggravated their fears. In recollecting incidences of sexism directed to them as female students, the women were indignant. They felt that the jokes, though intended to be funny, denigrated their
achievements, humiliated them and created a very chilling learning climate, particularly in the universities. Women were not always sure what type of demeaning joke a male professor would use. These sexist jokes did manage to put women down and sometimes made them feel ashamed of being women. Some male lecturers were categoric in their assertions that to succeed one had to be male or take on male characteristics, while others questioned the credibility of female students.

Sophia, remembering her student life at the university, explains:

... I hated that class. It was as if all female students in the class did not have a right to be there. In almost every geography lecture this professor finds an opportunity to remind the males to work hard. He would look up from his notes, look round the lecture theatre, then in a funny joking tone and gestures and pacing around, would say 'young brothers in this room, you must work harder, very hard indeed, than your sisters here ... These sisters after some time will get married most of them to rich illiterate tycoons and will be driving good cars and looking down on you'. Then there would be prolonged laughter and whistling from every corner of the lecture theatre. Then he assumes a very serious mood, and continues to teach as if he has said nothing offensive.

It was as if women's ultimate goal was marriage; but what is extremely demeaning in this kind of a joke is to assume that, despite their education, women would end up marrying illiterate rich men. It was as if women were dumb, and could not decide what was right or wrong for themselves. They were relegated to the level of sexual objects useful only in the reproduction process and in service of a man.

What is encouraging, however, is the fact that female students were actively resisting and renegotiating the stereotypes assigned to them despite various attempts to silence them. Santalo defiantly asserts her position:

You do not have to be sat on to be a good woman in society. It is when I hear they are looking for somebody who is submissive, it is that which makes me want to fight against being submissive. I wanted to be heard not seen, then I would wonder, what is the difference between me and a picture, I did not want to be a picture, I wanted to be alive, a human being, a live woman.

From the foregoing analysis it becomes quite clear that some of the women interviewed consciously resisted gender indoctrination even though in very covert ways. Being in powerless
situations first as students and secondly as women, they could not openly challenge the established authority. Established authority, be it in government or in schools, is rarely challenged in most developing countries. Those who dare to challenge it are labelled disgruntled elements, dissenters or detractors and are often ruthlessly punished.

The women were not only silenced by these put downs, they also devalued and questioned their performances, moral credibility and even physical attributes. If a woman scored high marks, the males would condescendingly attribute it to her having a sexual relationship with a male professor, while others would water down women’s success by suggesting that only desperate, ugly women make it to the university and, therefore, their high performance is only an act of compensation. Edna, a charming senior lecturer, who considers herself beautiful, articulate and outgoing, has this to say:

However, when I joined the university that was when I began experiencing the differences between male and female students. At the university it was co-education. This is when I started suffering. One evening this man who was taking a geography course with me came to my room. He was interested in me so he said. As we were discussing, and I still remember, he said he does not understand why women who go to the university should be proud. According to him all the beautiful girls get selected for marriage by the end of high school. In form six the few remaining beautiful ones also get married, then remaining "Maathuro" [leftovers] get to the university. Can you imagine, this man was my prospective boyfriend. In fact he had come to take me out to a movie. He was already in the process of courting me. I looked at him, and I told him you know certainly that you are in the room of one of the leftovers and with these words will you leave this room and I will never want to see you again. If you want to know how men view women’s education, then get it from this man.

It requires a woman of Edna’s courage to deal with this institutionalized sexism and to forge ahead and achieve academic excellence. The never-ending problem, however, is that women must keep fighting and proving that they are worthy of some respect. It is notable that whereas academic success for a man leads to social esteem, for a woman more often than not it leads to

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15 Maathuro is a Kikuyu word. When literally translated into English it means leftovers. Maathuro connotes that which is not desirable, for example in sorting out grains, those which are rotten, attacked by weevils, etc. It could mean chaff.
disapproval and social questioning. The experiences of the women were further complicated by the fact that the curriculum was gendered. It is to this issue we now turn.

**GENDERED CURRICULUM**

Since the Kenyan system of education was imported from Britain without major modifications, it is apparent, therefore, that the curriculum offered was sex typed (Rogers, 1980; Robertson, 1985; Amadiume, 1987; Harber, 1989; Obura, 1991; Mwiria, 1993; Wanjama, 1993). The curriculum failed to recognize the practical roles played by women, even in important areas dominated by African women, like agriculture (Boserup, 1970; Eshiwani, 1985; Wamahiu, 1985). Women lost out with the introduction of the western type of education which devalued not only their work but also their knowledge and skills. A new curriculum was designed to give women new skills necessary to play appropriate roles deemed fit for them by the colonial rulers. To ensure that the women were enculturated into the western gender ideology and morality at the time, two mechanism were employed: First, women attended girls-only high schools where appropriate gender codes and curriculum were offered, and second, even when girls attended mixed schools they were encouraged to opt for subjects that were not rough, tough, demanding or masculine.

Most of the academic women that I interviewed and those I met socially or otherwise were teaching in nonscientific fields. They offered reasons for them. Some mentioned that in the schools they attended the only science subject offered was biology. To get admitted into the university to pursue a scientific programme, biology alone was not enough. To qualify for a science programme at the university a candidate was required to pass well in subject combinations such as math, biology, chemistry (MBC) or chemistry, physics and math (CMP), etc. These subject combinations are tailored to lead to certain careers. (For more information on subject combinations at Ordinary Level of Education and Advanced Certificate of Education, see Ministry
of Education, 1985). This clustering of courses meant that very few girls met the requirement to pursue a scientific programme at the university. This in turn translated into having very few women teachers who could teach science in the Kenyan schools. From this pattern we have even a more negligible number teaching sciences at the university.

Another mechanism used to keep women in a narrow range of fields was the denial of qualified science teachers in girls’ schools. Even when science laboratories were available, qualified teachers, particularly in physics and chemistry, were lacking, and this meant that the girls could not pursue a scientific career. Girls were also said to perform poorly in sciences because of some inbuilt or internalized social psychological barriers, as succinctly expressed by Rhoda:

Our schools do not encourage girls into science education, and as such girls do not get role models to emulate. There are very few women teaching sciences either in high school or at the university and as such we grew up believing sciences are for men. Even when women teach science subjects, they are no better. They mystified it and we ended up performing very badly.

Anna elaborated on the many interacting factors leading to this popular belief:

First of all there was the general belief that chemistry was hard. I do not know where we got this belief from, maybe it was passed from generation to generation. Also the teachers played a significant role in the choice of subjects, because if you were not good in certain subjects (in form two) they would not allow you to take their subject in form three. If you are just average they would not accept you. They used to argue that they are preparing the science and history classes for ‘A’ levels and the general science class for the weak students was to lead them into junior positions or colleges. This was streaming. Teachers only accepted those students whom they thought would pass in their subjects. Therefore, although we were asked to choose, we did not have a free choice, because the teacher had to decide whether you are good quality for her/his class or not.

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The secondary level of education is divided into four years. The first year is referred to as form one, then second year as form two and so on. In the second year of secondary education the students are streamed on the basis of performance into either the Arts or Science programme. Just before sitting for the final examinations in form four students are presented with career forms where they are expected to choose careers they would like to pursue if they did not make it to higher education. The Kenyan system of education is elitist and the number of girls/women and boys/men thins out as one ascends the educational ladder. Competitive and selective examinations are used to differentiate the minority winners and the majority who are ejected from the educational system. Most of the women students are forced into certain subject combinations which later determine an individual’s career path and this is emphatically called career choice. However, there were few who were convinced that they chose their careers consciously.
From the above observations, it would, therefore, appear simplistic to argue that girls do not like science subjects. There are many interacting factors ranging from streaming, lack of female role models, unavailability of qualified teachers, or poor facilities in the schools girls attended, to discouragement from their teachers and the general society. The women teaching in nontraditional departments such as chemistry or physics told me that they had to surmount certain social barriers to succeed in their programs. One woman who was forced into opting for teaching in the traditional subjects told me how she was misadvised by her career mistress. She was told that law is for loose women. In her words:

Before joining to the university you fill career forms. I was one of the top students and I wanted to do law, but my career mistress told me that law is for prostitutes. Law is not for women, it is for loose girls. She was a Catholic nun and believed that after all a good girl is a good wife who is a nurse or a teacher. That was in 1972 and you could not question because you are told nursing or teaching was the best. In fact only three girls in my class who were considered loose girls were allowed to choose law.

It appears one could have the necessary qualifications to pursue certain programmes but the prevailing gender ideology was a limiting factor. To choose contrary to the accepted gender ideology would constitute a social deviation. The three women mentioned above who were allowed into law were already labelled loose women.

In Kenyan society as in much of the rest of the world, both men and women lawyers occupy a higher social and economic status than teachers and nurses. In fact they do set up lucrative businesses. It is ironic, therefore, that it is from this class of 'loose' girls that the so much talked and boasted about Kenyan female judges come from. (At present, Kenya boasts of three female judges.) It appears to me that for women to attain measurable gains either in the education system, or in the general society, they must be prepared to take risks, to lose, and to dare to challenge the societal gender stereotypes.

Recollecting their educational experiences, most of the academic women expressed dissatisfaction that the curriculum was and continues to be male centred. The women were
particularly critical of the fact that history books are silent about African women’s accomplishments. All the history they learnt in school was about white men and their expeditions. Today, although the curriculum has been Africanised, women’s contributions to the development of society have been ignored. Women who played important roles during the liberation struggle remain the unsung heroines. The women saw themselves as getting further alienated from their histories through the Africanisation of history by the male academicians.

Remembering her own experiences in a history class, Atieno, a senior lecturer, is convinced that the schools were and still are not about women and that there is need for an overhaul of the present curriculum if women’s contributions and experiences are to be represented:

Our history teacher in form three was an Asian woman. All she taught us was about the great wars, conquest, discoveries by Napoleon, Romans, Greeks and other European discoverers as if African peoples were the blind observers, and did not even see the great mountains in their vicinity until a white man came by. What is even more depressing when I think about it is the fact that history has been revised, Africanised, but African women are not part of that African history. I always find myself trapped in. There is a set of ideas, certain histories, the university expects students to know. There are standards, to maintain. To introduce a course about African women in history, I have to go through the male bureaucracy. I have tried once but got no support, you know how these people are. They said that is not history and I was appalled. I cannot just teach what I want, my students must meet the external examiners’ standards. I know my students want to get a better grade, a certificate. That is important for them. I still teach topics that glorify the white race and African men, and I try to bring in examples of women here and there.

Atieno’s indignation with the exclusive nature of the history taught in Kenyan schools agrees with Obura’s findings in 1991. In her analysis of standard six history textbooks in Kenya, Obura was appalled by the fact that learners were told to go and ask their fathers about the history of their clan as if their female relatives had no information or interest in their people’s history. She concludes that the history of Africa is depicted as the history of men. Women are invisible, absent, or in meagre supportive roles. Zeleza (1992) also arrived at the same finding, arguing that reinterpretation of African history gleaned from European sources has failed to look afresh at the European depiction of African women in history.
The textbooks, teachers and popular culture all seem to collude in the exclusion of women from certain educational experiences. Gaskell (1987) and Gaskell and MacLaren (1989) express the same dissatisfaction with the role of the schools in excluding women in Canadian society. They argue that occupations continue to be stereotyped in textbooks, and this stereotyping influences the career choices the young women make. They also argue that women’s choice of feminine courses may be a rational choice. Women continue to choose feminine courses because that is what is available to them, and such courses lead to careers they have seen other women perform.

The exclusion of certain forms of knowledge which were the cornerstone of the African indigenous education was also a recurrent theme. The women’s schooling, they argued, was not only narrow, but also omitted important aspects of life, like health and well-being, interpersonal relationships, sex education, indigenous technology, and indigenous medicine, which were central in the African indigenous education. With the advent of the western formal education, these indigenous forms of knowledge either got suppressed or ignored and as such a vacuum was created. The women maintained that how one presented herself socially, professionally and academically all determined whether one progressed from one socio-economic ladder to the next.

Edna’s comments support this point:

Our teachers never told us that academic excellence and real practical life are two different things. You pass all examinations from form one to the university but then fail in the test of life. Our biological functioning, pregnancy, birth, interpersonal relationships, negotiating skills, courage, survival skills, planning, were never seen as important. We believed that possession of a higher academic certificate was a guarantee to good life. I was surprised, when I finished university, and got a job as an administrative assistant. It was from this job, I realized that there was so much I did not know. I had to deal with people every day not papers. It was difficult I tell you, I had learnt so much from the outside world.

From the women’s voices, it is evident that the western type of formal education promoted a polarization of men and women. African indigenous education did not overemphasize
In agreement with the voices of the women in this study, Kinoti captures this gender polarization through formal education vividly:

When we entered *mambere* [boarding school], our *Bibi* [mistress-in-charge] used to teach us reading and writing, sewing, knitting, sweeping and many other useful things. She also used to teach us about God. ... We were ... intensely advised against walking with boys. We were told that boys are very bad because they tempt us to sleep with them and they make us immoral girls. This rather shocked us because we had always grown together with boys, held dances together, visited each other and even played together without having sexual union. But we thought that what *Bibi* said must be right. We therefore started keeping to ourselves, and if we met it was in the secret of the night or in the bush, and then we would not be in a group because we feared that *Bibi* might come to know. What formerly we used to do in the open, we started doing in secret. (Kinoti, 1985, p.21)

The one-sidedness of education was paid for greatly by those who learnt in single sex schools. Those girls who attended single sex primary and secondary schools, and only mixed with males at the university, faced a particularly difficult time trying to adjust to the changed social realities. Their isolation from male company coupled with the constant reminder by their teachers that boys would lead them to sin had caused gender polarization. This gender polarization, according to Angela, led many girls to withdraw from certain subjects which were male dominated at the university. She told me about an incident where her two female friends had to withdraw from a mathematics and physics class in the university because they were intimidated by the male students. The male students were too aggressive and also excluded these girls in their group discussions. The girls were not familiar with the male culture. Angela suggested that if her friends had studied in co-educational schools they would not have been intimidated by the men’s seeming hostility.

Although the school seemed to encourage academic success, it was a common feeling among the women that marriage was seen as their ultimate goal. Tensions did arise as they tried to reconcile their academic expectations and the need to become good wives. They faced daily contradictions, and at times, it was difficult to identify clearly what their expected goals were. Even though they worked very hard on their academic work, and passed their examinations very
well, the general feeling was that what ultimately counted was marriage.

However, from the women’s evidence, it appears that schools never totally accomplish their reproduction or hegemonic role. The students are never passive victims and schools are sites of struggle where cultures are manufactured and contested simultaneously. Psychologically or physically some students tend to resist. As reacting, thinking and analytical subjects some of the women in this study consciously rejected the "appropriate" gender roles ascribed for them in their earlier school days. How far they succeed in their struggles is another question.

**RESISTANCE: THE UNINTENDED RESULTS**

As indicated in the literature review and the voices of academic women in this study, the schools’ main concern in accepting African women right from the colonial days was to ensure enculturation. According to Gramsci (1971) a strong state creates a culture and uses this culture to ensure that the ruled willingly consent to the ruling group. The hegemonic culture is presented as the only true representation of the society. However, despite the concerted efforts and measures to ensure that women conformed to the accepted gender codes, and developed "appropriate" dispositions and roles in society, quite a number of women keep resisting this enculturation. Their resistance is manifested either through silence, disengagement or by actively fighting back, defining and redefining their roles within the educational system in an attempt to make the educational process meaningful to them. In line with Davies’ (1987) notion of gender scripts, the women are seen as actively and consciously engaged in creating their own life scripts, rewriting and editing them as the situation demands. Although on the surface, they may seem to have conformed to the gender ideology, my field experiences revealed that these women were consciously rejecting their prescribed roles, both psychologically and morally.

It was striking in my observations and discussions that the younger female academics were not typical. They were more confrontational in their approach particularly in regards to their own
rights and were ready to sacrifice whatever it takes to have their rights respected. These dissenting
tendencies have their roots in these women's earlier educational experiences. Angela, a young
academic both in age and professionally, remembering her earlier school life illustrates this
atypical response:

As a school girl, particularly in primary school, I remember I liked the company
of boys better. I played rough games and I was often called a tomboy, because I
was noisy, rough, played with boys and liked boys games ... as I told you I was
always loud and I always called myself a warrior ... I never obeyed rules which
did not make sense to me. There was this female teacher who insisted that we
must lower our skirts and boys their shorts when she wanted to cane us. I once
told her to remove her stockings and then I walked out of the class ... I had a
questioning mind and I hated being pinned down for nothing. I have never taken
no for an answer, right from home. If I am told no I ask why. It was only when
no made sense to me that I accepted it for an answer. And I always believed if
you wanted me to do something that was impossible you had to do it first and I
see how you can do it.

In an amazing way, Angela had developed her critical mind within a very constraining
school system. Although the school rules were in place and the message loud and clear that good
women carry themselves quietly and obediently, she had consciously flouted these rules and it
seems to me that her liking of boys' games was an effort to seek and affirm her own creative
potential. It was an effort to find and restore her personal dignity which would have been
negated and alienated if she adopted the prescribed "feminine" traits. Her acts of rebellion were
the hallmark of her ongoing struggle for personal liberation. This observation note serves to
illustrate my point:

I arrive earlier at the university conference room. Angela is not in. I glance
around the room to be sure. I wait for ten minutes. I start cursing. A woman
seated close to me notices I am unsettled. She asks me why I look uncomfortable,
and from there we pick up a conversation. There is a stir in the room, and I see
faces brighten up. A group consisting of three women and five men enters the
room. Angela among them. She is the keynote speaker at this gathering, but she
has not mentioned this to me. Maybe she wanted to give me a cool surprise. I
cannot remove my eyes from her. There is this magical spell as she explains that
Jesus loves and cares for women. She give the analogy of the Samaritan woman
at the well of Jacob, all emphasizing the centrality of women in the salvation
story. The room is quiet, all eyes fixed on her, then loud applause, and laughter
here and there. She invites her male colleagues at the university to join her in
condemning women’s exploitation, sexism, and all immoralities. Immoralities, she explains, is not only about sexual matters, it concerned all acts which dehumanized women and men. My spirit is captivated by her authority and level of dissension. I was rather apprehensive that the male colleagues might issue a scathing attack. I am elated. By the end of the meeting I find out that both women and men respect Angela. Some males complain among themselves that women should not go too far, but none heckles her, as I had witnessed in other meetings of this nature. (Fieldnotes, March 8, 1993)

Maria, who defined herself as forthright, hardworking, and a radical, and who during the time of the interview was having problems with the administration due to her uncompromising stance, recollects her school experiences:

I was a misfit. I don’t know why, but as I told you I used to whistle and wrestle and I will be told that is not girl like. Secondly, I used to have a very dirty uniform by the end of the day because I would play marbles and as such .... Letters would be sent home to my parents that your daughter is noisy, extremely naughty, untidy, unruly, etc., but it seems my father understood me and did not complain. I used to fight with boys, and side with them. In secondary school I was sent home twice, accused that I was a ring leader. One incidence, I remember they denied us our rights. We used to get two kilograms of sugar every two weeks, but all of a sudden our privilege as form six girls disappeared. We organized, that all of us forty girls should challenge the headmistress and the bursar. The girls gave me the mandate to air their grievances. That night I was suspended from school for two weeks. But as I told you I had great support of my father. He stood by me, he took me back to school and demanded an explanation. I was admitted back with agreement that I will be of good conduct. Three of us (she laughs and then keeps quiet and in a pensive mood continues) yes the other two are Wairimu and Akoth, we were nicknamed. We were given boys’ names by the male discipline master. He always behaved as if we were challenging his authority ... At the university, things were different. If you were outspoken, and seen as a ring leader, you were expelled. Many girls kept to themselves to avoid incrimination.

From Maria’s account, it is clear that rebellion characterized the lives of some of these women in their earlier school life. Their academic success is tied to the fact that they chose differently. They chose to be aggressive, adopted masculine traits, and were able to do this because they had the support of their fathers. It is notable that almost every woman interviewed in this study attributed her academic and career success to encouragement from a male relative such as a father, brother, cousin, or husband. Only two women mentioned both parents, father and mother, as a source of their academic and professional success. The more I reflect on this male
support despite its drawbacks, the more I perceive it as a healthy condition for women. What needs to be interrogated and redefined in my view are the terms "femininity" and "masculinity". The "rebellious" women have found that the only way they can appropriate educational success and use it towards their own empowerment is redefining womanhood. They have found that unless they are aggressive, hardworking, adventurous, risk takers, and forthright, they will forever remain submerged in the culture of silence.

Students' disengagement from the school process, either psychologically or physically, was another unintended outcome of the school's conditioning process. Akinyi's comments captures this view:

I attended high school in one of the best girls' schools in the capital city. I grew up in a rural setting. Two problems of adjustment came into play. First, the issue of language, and two, cultural and religious difference. Our English teacher was a white Catholic nun from Ireland. I rarely understood her accent. Two we were expected to go for the daily mass; confessions on Fridays and also speak and act like civilized girls. [Here she swings her head backwards and sideways and puts it as if she is pulling her long imaginary hair backwards and laughs out cynically.] With my friend, we sometimes skipped classes and hid in the library to read African writer's series which were familiar to us. Sometimes we would just gaze at the teacher as she asked other knowledgeable students questions. Sometimes, we would talk among ourselves, or pretend that we are listening. Sometimes we drew or painted. But some students could not stand the teachers' hostility and coldness. They left school for good.

Despite the considerations to exit there were some who were determined to succeed. It is this motivation to succeed we now turn.

MOTIVATION TO SUCCEED

Support by a Male Figure

Strikingly, 21 of the 24 women interviewed credited a male figure such as their own fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands or boyfriends as being the key persons who encouraged them to be firm and to work hard in order to succeed academically. This is interesting, bearing in mind that Kenya is a patriarchal and patrilineal society. Only two women identified both parents as a
source of their inspiration to succeed, while only one woman identified her women friends as a source of inspiration. Available literature on women and education in the Third World such as Smock (1981) and Chlebowska (1990) shows that girls are disadvantaged if parents are to choose between educating a boy or a girl. My data, on the contrary, show that fathers are just as interested in the educational success of their daughters as in that of their sons, and that their daughters to a large extent identify with the male figureheads. This particular finding may not be an exact contradiction of the earlier studies because my women are clearly the exceptions. Moreover, other studies such as Assie (1991) show that the choice of educating either a boy or a girl is not an automatic one but is determined by parents’ social and economic class. Almost all the women in this study had fathers who were beneficiaries of the missionary education [mission boys] or had some form of contact with the colonial christian church or colonial administrators. As such, these parents attached a great social and economic value to the education of their daughters. Although this identification with male figures seems to be necessary for the girls’ achievement in the educational process, this relationship could pose serious threats to female solidarity and bonding. A tendency to identify with the powerful or authority figures serves to divide the oppressed and as such organizing and strategizing for the liberation of the oppressed becomes difficult, as explicated in chapters seven and eight.

The father is the symbol of success; he has economic and social power over his family, and in most cases he has had access to the western type of formal education and formal wage employment. The mother, on the other hand, is home bound, under the father’s authority, lacks formal education, money, language to deliberate with school teachers, and is struggling, especially in the rural areas. The lack of attention to their mother’s contribution is instructive. Women’s work, unless accounted in monetary terms, is devalued. This devaluation of the social and food provision roles, which are basically played by our mothers, can cause serious divisions between the women educated in western type of formal education and thus employed in formal waged
labour and the rural illiterate women on whose backbone the economy of our nation operates.

Rural illiterate women produce about 80 per cent of Kenyan food (Wamahiu, 1984). This division between rural and elite women is discussed in detail in chapter eight. The only route of escape from rural drudgery is through formal education. The father has all this achievement, and success comes to be equated with maleness, behaving and acting like the father. Santalo’s comments illustrate this affinity to maleness:

My father is very aggressive and determined. I am like my father. He is my idol. He had always told me that he has taken me to school to be educated, to be able to use my head, to be able to protect myself and that is where I had to use my head in class. He taught me to fight back courageously. He taught me not to take things for granted. He taught me that if I asked for something and he said no, I should always ask why.

Although the schools encouraged gentility, passivity and submission, Santalo and other women in this study learnt differently from their fathers. Their fathers encouraged them to analyze, question and demand answers and to fight back when necessary. We could, therefore, argue that the gender role socialization through the school system could not be congruent because the important authority figures authorities [their fathers] encouraged something different. We could also argue that the dual expectation that these women be critical, questioning and active at home, and passive, polite, and gentle at school has resulted in the development of conflicting, divided and contradictory consciousness as the women try to play these two mutually exclusive roles.

Most of the women maintained that, were it not for their father’s official and personal intervention in the school system, they may not have succeeded. This intervention had very encouraging results, as noted by Angela:

For the first two years in high school I performed poorly. I remember by end of third term in form two I was graded in the last position in class - number 35. I will never forget that term. Our teachers did not seem to care, they encouraged girls from well-to-do homes particularly those of Asian origin. ... My father was furious. He visited the school and inquired why I performed so badly. He swore to kill me if I continued to let him down. He insisted that I must work hard and
improve my grades. I promised, developed a new interest in school, and since then, as you can see I am teaching here [university]. That tells you volumes about my academic struggles. ... If my father did not intervene, I could have been wasted through the cracks. It virtually happened to many girls I knew.

Educated into nurturing, caring and serving others, some of the women, each in her own way, explained that at a particular moment in their educational life, they wanted to give up plans for higher education, in order to take up a career either in nursing or teaching to help their brothers, sisters and parents. They did not see their education as important for themselves, but only useful in serving the economic interests of others. This attitude is deeply rooted in the African value of collective responsibility and concern for others. When I pressed the women to elaborate further, so that I could understand why they wanted to curtail their education, they all said that they thought that it was their responsibility to take care of the less fortunate members in their family, or they had an obligation to relieve their parents of the economic struggles. The male guardians, being more perceptive and knowledgeable about higher economic returns upon achieving a higher education, discouraged the women leaving school, as testified by Rhoda:

However, after my ‘O’ levels I did not want to go for ‘A’ levels and university. I wanted to make money and I loved nursing. All I wanted was to join nursing and help my family. But my brother encouraged me to go for A levels and insisted that I would be of more credit and assistance to the family if I completed higher education ... I still value my brother’s advice.

From Rhoda’s testimony, I believe, we now begin to see a financially vested interest held by those who supported the women. There was and still is a strong belief in the power of education to change the economic positions of both men and women. Characteristic of most African societies is the expectation that those who are financially able, and particularly those who benefit from western formal education, have an obligation to help their less fortunate siblings as well as relatives.17

17 For an excellent and in-depth portrayal of the communities’ great expectations from their educated ones see Dangaremba (1988).
During my fieldwork, I gathered that some ethnic communities attached a great economic value to their highly educated daughters in terms of lobola or bridewealth,¹⁸ and that men too were not willing to marry a woman who did not have a substantial education and waged employment. There were others who worked harder for other reasons, for example, the need to prove their detractors wrong. This is the subject of the next section.

Need to Discredit a Prejudice

The need to prove that women can achieve, or to discredit a prejudice, was a recurrent theme as to why the women struggled beyond all odds to succeed in the education system. This very need to disapprove an established prejudice does in fact make these women very atypical.

Edna, recollecting her struggles to achieve an education, told me how she passed very well in standard seven examination. But her father did not have money, just like other rural families which were poor. In order for her to attend secondary school, her father sold his goat despite protests from male colleagues and friends. They wondered why her father would sell a goat to educate a daughter who would either get married or drop out of school due to unwanted pregnancy. She swore that she would prove all those people wrong, and her father right. This is the basis of her impeccable academic record. In her own words:

... My father’s friend exclaimed, what! ... sell a goat to send a daughter to school, you shouldn’t. For a son yes ... get herself pregnant or just get married. I think my inspiration began there ... I wanted to prove this man’s attitude towards women was wrong ... I felt very proud of my father. I said to myself, for the sake of my

¹⁸ In African indigenous societies lobola or bridewealth was a token of appreciation from the man’s family to the woman’s family. It was intended to cement the relationship between the two clans. Marriage was not an individual affair but a community affair. However, under colonialism, lobola like all the other African practices and rituals was incorporated into the capitalist development in a distorted fashion. The more educated a woman is the more the bridewealth is expected. Bridewealth denotes to buy, but many women in this study pointed out that it was impossible to buy a person under African indigenous practices. It is notable that this practice is dying naturally. For more useful information on this practice see Colson (1958), Kenyatta (1968), Mugambi, (1980) and Likimani (1985).
father sex before marriage was out and I can prove my father right. My secondary school success stemmed from my father, and in fact my first salary ... I bought my father a radio ... and I still value what my father did for me.

Remarkably, the disadvantageous circumstances that women in this study encounter do not derail them. Instead they result in the women working even harder in order to circumvent their situations, as Regina’s comments illustrate:

... I remember when I was in primary school people used to laugh at me that I was wasting time by going to school ... typically like all the rural children we had a lot of work to do after school ... drawing water several times from the river, gathering firewood from the forest ... sometimes we did not have kerosene for our lamp ... It was difficult. Some of our relatives believed that because we were so poor that I could not pass in the examinations. Some urged me to drop out of school. I refused. I made sure I worked extra hard in school and any little free time at home I used it for my school work. The more they [her relatives] told me that I cannot succeed in school, the more I got inspired to work harder. I had this burning desire to prove them wrong. I knew I could make it ... I passed with six distinctions and was admitted to Alliance Girls High School [one of the best girls’ high schools in Kenya]. They [relatives] came to congratulate my parents .... At the university it was almost the same. Some male students and even some professors said things like "women are not serious and cannot perform in some courses" ... It was crazy. The more I heard these put downs the more I worked harder. I am a self made academic but I believe it is all because I was and still am a hard worker and I like challenges. I do not give up trying. ... Even here [university where this interview was conducted] it is the same. The more I realized some people are looking down on me or expect me to fail, the more I work harder.

**Great Desire to Escape Poverty**

For others, the driving force behind their academic success, and particularly those from less privileged backgrounds, was the need to get necessary credentials, to secure a white collar job, and to close the doors of poverty behind them. Even though the schools were very conservative, and the curriculum was irrelevant to their practical daily needs, education continued and continues to be pursued as a panacea to all social and economic ills. There was the very strong belief that education is the key to a better life both socially and economically. This faith sustained the women’s determination to succeed despite all odds.
It is notable that in my discussions with the women, marriage was not identified as a possible means to resolving their social and economic problems. This contradicts the popular gender ideology prevalent in Kenya and elsewhere, namely that a woman’s ultimate goal is marriage. Marriage has been glorified as a symbol of a woman’s self-actualization. This also shows that the schools to some measure have failed in their mission to make "good" women who would essentially aspire to be wives and mothers but not professionals. Women in this study ranked their professions first, and were firm in their assertion that rather than solving women’s problems, marriage compounded them. This is a remarkable feeling, precisely because it was expressed by both married and single women. This response reflects on women’s changed attitudes and priorities.

Possession of a higher education was attached to a good life and a better job. Akinyi, remembering her earlier educational experiences, emphasizes that she was sure the old order was no more and women had to fight for themselves:

Our family was poor, but I knew if I worked hard, I could help myself as well as my brothers and sisters from the jaws of poverty. As I was growing up, we saw families whose sons or daughters had a university degree transform their lives. ... I still remember the day I saw Otieno driving his own car in the village. I was even more determined to work harder, when I realized that he had put up a beautiful modern house for his parents. I worked extra harder. All the time I knew what would be better ... I can tell you confidently now that I am not rich, my husband is simple civil servant ... But our children certainly have better quality of life than I did ... I believe, education is very necessary for all people.

Great faith in the western type of formal education as a panacea for all economic ills was, therefore, an important reason why the fathers and teachers ensured that the women worked extra hard in their educational programs. However, if we see the value of women’s education only at the level of economics, then we can argue that it was a functional type of formal education and its liberatory potential might be low. In their reflections on their student days and experiences, all the academic women repeatedly pointed out that their teachers encouraged them to work hard. At the same time they discouraged them from questioning and encouraged obedience. They did
everything from punishment to counselling, and at times counted on parental support, in their attempt to discipline the women. To some extent the women agreed that this disciplining was good because it helped them succeed in their educational programs. They knew very well that it was only through education that they could escape poverty.

Nyawira, one of the three women academics who credited both of her parents for her academic success, encapsulates this view:

... Right from standard one we knew the difference between families who were educated and those not educated. Educated families lived in better houses [Here she laughs as if she does not believe in what she was saying and then continued]. Theirs were four cornered houses roofed with corrugated iron sheets. Those not educated ones lived in the traditional grass thatched round shaped houses ... other children laughed and sneered at you if you happen to live in poverty ... My dream was to get an education and change all that. They constantly reminded us that if we did not pass our examination we would be doomed to remain poor for ever ... I can tell you we took a lot of punishment from teachers. We were caned, verbally abused but we persevered. The need to escape poverty surpassed all else.

Compensation for Parental Lack of Formal Education

Compensation for parental lack of literacy skills was cited repeatedly by the women as one of the determining factors why their fathers encouraged and supported their education. Some of the women pointed out that one of the reasons their fathers supported them in their academic struggles to the point of economic sacrifice was the deep sense of pride and accomplishment their fathers derived from their daughter’s success. Wanja recollects:

The day I got my Ph.D my father called himself Dr. Mzee. I still remember the happiness, joy and sense of satisfaction my whole family derived from my success. My father, my aunt were very proud and I can very well remember them saying that mucii wi inoro thome ndutuhogia tuhiui.

This statement is a Kikuyu proverb which when translated literally means that a homestead that has a sharpening stone at the entrance will never have blunt knives. It implies that if a homestead has an educated person, then a wide range of possibilities are opened for all members of the family in terms of education, jobs, and a good life. The interdependent nature of African
peoples helped us over generations to survive despite adversities. However, with changed
economic realities, African virtues of interdependence, cooperativeness and collective
responsibilities are becoming extremely difficult to maintain. The women explained that they
experience anxiety, uncertainty, and guilt because despite their high education, their individual
salaries are not enough to meet the expectations of all those who supported them. It becomes
rather ambiguous, as to whether higher education has helped women escape from poverty, or has
increased their social problems. Many women had mixed feelings and pointed out that their
education has caused them a lot of economic strain. However, they conceded that their life chances
as highly educated women are much better than those of women who do not possess an education.

Despite the seeming contradictions high formal education causes in the lives of women,
the desire to go on is great. When her educational goals seem almost impossible to achieve, for
Sophia, her father’s advice is a constant encouragement. She posits:

... But my father is not literate in the western sense of the word. He did not go to
formal school but he is a very perceptive and knowledgeable individual. He had
that great value for formal education. He kept telling me that education has no
end. At times he would tell me of all the nice things he would have done with his
life if he had an opportunity as I did. That is something I still remember, and
when I am feeling down, I always remember, my father told me he did not have
the opportunity as I do, and that education has no end ... When I got admitted into
the Master’s programme and I was hesitant he asked me: "Sophia if you are
imprisoned for three years what would you do? If I were you I would take this
opportunity and accomplish my Master degree."

From the foregoing narratives, it is arguable that the western type of education is valued
and desired for its functional or economic benefits. It has not been conceived as an important tool
for changing attitudes and perceptions in order to bring about gender equality. It is my argument,
therefore, that unless formal education is changed to incorporate qualitative changes, enrolment of
women in schools and universities will not challenge this status quo. Gender inequalities will
remain in place.
CONCLUSION

It is concluded in this chapter that the academic women's earlier educational experiences are marked with contradictions. They felt that their education was irrelevant in the sense that they were taught about issues which had no practical bearing in their own lives. Important issues such as political education, interpersonal relationships and education about their social circumstances were excluded from the curriculum. Sex education in particular was not taught on moral grounds. Their education also led to gender polarity. This education was tailored to meet the colonial political economy and had an express aim of resocializing Kenyan women into stereotypical Victorian capitalistic gender ideology. At the same time the women knew possession of this irrelevant academic education would lead to employment in the formal economy and as such help them to escape from poverty. Caught in a double bind, they pursued western formal education for the perceived social and economic benefits. They also experienced tensions because their teachers encouraged them to succeed academically while at the same time training them for passivity [femininity] and subordination. These contradictions continue in one way or another to influence their present daily lives.

It is also the conclusion of this chapter that not only was the curriculum one-sided, gendered and sexist but that even the teachers who educated the respondents were undemocratic and insensitive to gender issues.

Another important conclusion is that almost all the respondents [21 out of 24] boasted of heterosexual approval. They were encouraged by male mentors in particular their fathers, to be aggressive, forthright and to fight back. As a result some of the women submitted that they are like their fathers - aggressive and hardworking. In my analysis of the situation, I suspected that this internalization of male attributes could have negative implications for women's solidarity.

For these women a gap existed between gender socialization at home and at school. As such schools were important as a terrain for gender struggle. Some of the women resisted gender
socialization by breaking rigid gender rules in their schools. It appears to me that the women are interested in seeing the Kenyan education overhauled in order to create a more democratic equitable and inclusive education.

Finally, it is concluded that although Kenya was liberated "politically" from colonial domination, the education system, which is a very important tool for social, economic political and social advancement, continues to be embedded in the western Victorian capitalistic patriarchy which was introduced in Kenya by the turn of the century. However, data in this chapter show that the respondents, each in her own way, are involved in a journey, struggling to create space for individual empowerment. This struggle is exemplified in the women's attempt to improve their academic careers despite all odds against them, as discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: DETERMINANTS AND BARRIERS

INTRODUCTION

Presented in this chapter are the experiences of academic women as they struggle to develop their academic careers. Specifically, I wanted to understand whether their possession of a high level of education and subsequent entry into academic careers translated into status and participation in the university equal to that of men. To get the pertinent data I inquired about the women’s research, publications, workload and involvement in university activities and about hiring and promotion procedures.

From my analysis of the responses two types of academic women emerged, which I call the embattled and the satisfied types. The embattled women maintained that sex discrimination was rampant in the Kenyan universities. They argued that women’s careers developed at a slower rate compared with those of their male counterparts. They maintained that they accumulated career disadvantage because promotions were dependent not only on the stated criteria but on many other extraneous variables. They complained that they suffered from excessive workloads, were excluded from nyama choma\textsuperscript{19} (roasted meat parties) and other important sources of information, and lacked academic mentors or sponsors. Their careers suffered because they were

\textsuperscript{19} This is a popular activity in Kenyan culture particularly among urbanized middle class men. After work or on week-ends they drive individually or in a car pool to social places where they share roast meat and drinks. Most of the times these men are not accompanied by women. Women and in particular spouses rarely accompany their husbands to these events. Most of the men testify that in these social places they gather ideas beneficial to the welfare of their families. Through these informal meetings men learn where to buy land and houses cheaply. Some women are known to encourage their husbands to frequent these places, particularly if they are otherwise at home with nothing to do.
excluded from thesis supervision. They also experienced sexual harassment from their male colleagues and supervisors. These factors were perceived by these women as barriers to their career development. The barriers are discussed in the first part of this chapter.

In the second part of the chapter, the experiences of the satisfied academic women are presented. These women maintained that the university is fair, meritocratic and democratic. In their view, success was of one's own making. They attributed their success to their abilities and their lack of success to lack of abilities. They located the blame in themselves. They also attributed success to an individual's personal choice. They denied that gender was an important factor in their career development.

EXPERIENCES OF EMBATTLED WOMEN ACADEMICS

The Politics of Promotion

Almost two-thirds of the academic women in this study perceived themselves as fighters interested in genuine transformations of gender relations within the university. These women believed that there exists covert or hidden discrimination against women in the four national universities despite the fact that the universities pride themselves on rules, regulations and promotion criteria designed to ensure fairness and equity. In their view, women academics continue to be marginal both numerically and in terms of prestige and status in the university. Although men and women were paid an equal salary at the entry point of their academic careers depending on their qualifications and experience, in the long run, men end up being paid much more than women and occupying senior and prestigious positions in the university hierarchy. The women are aware that men get promoted faster than women and are more likely to be appointed into positions of authority such as chairs of departments, deans of faculties, directors of bureaus,
heads of schools, principals of colleges, vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors. To illustrate their disadvantaged status and detail their exclusion, the women often pointed to the fact that all the vice-chancellors and their deputies at the four national universities were male. All the deans of faculties at Kenyatta and Nairobi University were male.

Women are underrepresented among the academics as well as the administrators. Of the 2,356 total academic staff in the four universities in 1993, only 450 (19.1 per cent) were women. This finding parallels the underrepresentation of women among academic staff in developed countries such as Canada and Britain (Acker, 1991). As in other countries, women are overwhelmingly found in junior positions as lecturers, assistant lecturers and tutorial fellows. For example, of the total academic women 86 per cent are concentrated in the lower ranks. The majority of these women are overrepresented in the Faculty of Arts and Education. Only three women were full university professors and they were in the traditional women’s fields of home economics, religious studies and education. Table 5 illustrates this unequal pattern of gender representation.
TABLE 5: ACADEMIC STAFF REPRESENTATION IN THE FIVE KENYAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES BY DESIGNATION AND SEX, JANUARY - MAY 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Lecturer</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Fellow</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Teaching</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,906*</td>
<td>450*</td>
<td>2,356*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: I computed these figures from departmental lists, counter-checked them against the lists of the deans of faculties, and the university calendar during the months of January to May 1993. Universities do not keep up-to-date lists of employees divided by gender.

* These numbers do not include academics at Laikipia campus and the Department of Agricultural Engineering at Jomo Kenyatta University College of Science and Technology, due to social and technical difficulties. Only the heads of department could release the staff list for reasons they termed as sensitive information. It was impossible to track the responsible heads. Their numbers are few and I believe the omission will not in any way affect the findings in this study.

It is important to point out that even the seeming overrepresentation of women in the lectureship position is a new phenomenon. In the mid-1980s Kenyans witnessed the sudden change of the whole education system from seven years of primary education, four years of secondary education, two years of advanced secondary education and three years of university education (7-4-2-3), a system inherited from the British colonial rule and in place since 1963 when Kenya became independent, to a North American system of eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four years of higher education (8-4-4). With this abrupt change,
three additional universities were set up but with no attendant qualified staff (for more discussion on this issue see the McKay Report, 1981). What followed was a high turnover among senior male academics, who went to head the newly established universities and their new departments and faculties.

This exponential expansion of university education was a blessing in disguise to the majority of women academics who for years had been blocked in the junior position of tutorial fellowship. Many women in possession of a master's degree, who had earlier tried to get themselves hired in the university but were rejected, were hired with these new developments. Promotion criteria were relaxed and movement from a tutorial fellowship to a lectureship only required two years of continuous university teaching plus presentation of academic papers in departmental seminars and proven ability to pursue doctoral work. Thus there was an influx of women academics into the universities in the mid-1980s. During the same period, blocked women were either promoted in their university or moved to the new ones in search of better promotional prospects.

However, during my fieldwork, the majority of the women who were part of the 1980s influx were utterly disillusioned. Initially they considered themselves "lucky" to have been hired. Now they perceive themselves as "ghetto" , "hemmed in", "hedged in" or "locked in" lectureship positions without much hope for promotion. Their entrance into the university teaching positions and accelerated promotion to lectureships has been a dead end. Departmental establishments

Departmental establishments: In each teaching department positions are established in a hierarchical and pyramidal manner. For example, in a department like Educational Foundations the establishment is two full professors, three associate professors, five senior lecturers, twenty-six lecturers, nine tutorial fellows and three graduate assistants. Unless a professor or any academic terminates his/her services, these positions rarely fall vacant irrespective of anyone's qualifications. This means an individual could be overqualified in a certain position but cannot be promoted because there is no opening.
coupled with a lack of research funds continued to ensure that these women remain locked in junior lectureship positions. For example, some women complained that their doctoral theses stagnated because they lacked funds to conduct field work. They were constantly advised to use their own money and it was said that the university would reimburse them when funds become available. The women lacked these extra funds.

One such disillusioned academic is Regina, who described herself as a hard worker, goal oriented and ambitious. She narrates:

.... I am one of the lucky lot ... beneficiaries of the expansion of the university system during the 1980s ... I consider myself lucky because one of the most difficult hurdles for a woman is to get one hired in the university. ... I got my Master’s degree in the 70s. I applied for a position for five consecutive years with no results. Once McKay report was out and universities out of the blue sprung up. Tutorial fellowships were advertised. I at once applied. It was a God-sent opportunity. I secured a position. Two years later, I completed my probation and applied for lectureship, permanent and pensionable status. I am glad one senior colleague had advised me on how to prepare. ... I presented papers in departmental seminars, had an excellent teaching record and of course defended my Ph.D. proposal. All went well. I was promoted to lectureship without fuss. That was in 1986. I have been in the same position for the last eight years. I feel like I am hemmed in this rank ... No money for research or basic necessities for teaching. ... According to the university establishment there are only eight positions in my department for senior lecturers. Currently none is vacant. ... Maybe I should consider a departmental transfer. ... that too is difficult. You see I am "kaput" I am done. I am locked in this lectureship position [laughing jokingly]. Maybe I will be promoted when one of them [senior lecturer] resigns or decides to die.

From Regina’s narration, it becomes quite clear that the academic promotion process is quite long and hard for both men and women. However, women’s promotions take much longer not only because they are newcomers into the academic world and therefore lack the necessary formal and informal negotiating skills, but also because they have to depend on the good will of senior male academics. Regina tells us that a male colleague coached her on the tips to success. These unwritten rules are not readily accessible to all academic women. Moreover, this
dependency on male academics might pose serious threats to women who may seek to establish their own autonomy and independent career paths. The women academics as a group lack the numeric power, lack female models to support them or to emulate, and, therefore, face very stiff competition for the rare openings with little or no support from the established male academic elite. Senior positions are overwhelmingly occupied by men, who rarely resign. Establishments are fixed and, therefore, very few openings occur.

The women believed that the way the university is organized, structured and operated works to the advantage of male academics. Promotion criteria were not simply based on merit. Promotions were not only gendered, but were also highly dependent on ethnicity, brotherization and professional and political patronage. Angela, a senior lecturer who described herself as a warrior determined to continue fighting for a worthy cause, explains:

The stated promotion criteria emphasize quality publications in reputable journals, excellent teaching for a continuous number of years and contribution to the university life. ... Other extraneous factors do come into play when promotions come for review. ... Factors such as loyalty to the university leadership, ability to influence levers of power is connected to who is a Luo, Kikuyu or Kamba, ...all these factors come into play when promotions are being considered. ... I can provide examples of many men and a couple of women who have been promoted not on merit but on the basis of factors beyond the stated promotion criteria.

These women maintained that it was simply incorrect to perceive the promotion criteria as independent and fair. They knew far too many persons who had been promoted because they were "good boys" as well as some women who were sponsored by senior male colleagues with

\footnote{Brotherization is a concept used in Kenya commonly to refer to some situations whereby to be hired, promoted or even admitted into training colleges, etc., one has to know another person in a position of influence. The term denotes a situation where one is expected to help members of his/her clan, relatives and friends before extending help to strangers. In my mother tongue - Kikuyu - this situation is referred to as "Kimenyano" or who knows who gets favours. This can best be understood as sponsored or ascribed mobility as opposed to contest mobility. For more information on contest versus sponsored mobility, see Banks 1976, Ballantine, 1983 and Waller, 1965.}
whom they were romantically involved. In their view, however, these extraneous variables beyond the stated promotion criteria tended to work mainly to the disadvantage of women academics and to the advantage of male academics. Male academics accumulate advantages in the sense that they are more likely to be well connected to the political system, more experienced in the university politics, more involved in academic networks and more often than not have wives who take care of their social, emotional and domestic needs. As such they have formal and informal support and the time to devote to their academic pursuits. Edna, one of the embattled senior lecturers, describes the promotion criteria as "a political document which is used to curtail women’s upward mobility within the university." She decried the many social cultural and structural barriers put in the way of academic women’s career development and spoke of her own difficulties:

... the fact that I am a senior lecturer is as a result of years of protracted struggle ... I have served in this university [where she teaches and interview was conducted] with dedication. I was among the first women hired as academics. That was in the mid-70s. ... The men do not believe a woman could be competent. After all they argue "what can a woman tell us." It’s an oligarchy. The same men have been running the university for years. The same men are virtually in all committees and when it came to publications they exchange information among themselves ... You feel terrible when young men join the staff and quickly get promoted. Senior male profs co-opt junior males to do background research, submit an article for a certain book or nominate their kind for awards and scholarships... they turn around saying women are not aggressive, hardworking or determined. Tell me, how can you achieve when you are excluded or barriers, obstacles are put on your way. It’s all too hard, but I just knew I did not have a lot of choice and I kept trying and only last year they were convinced and gave me my lectureship. They want to make it appear that women are only good at producing and nurturing babies and taking care of the home. ... They keep reminding you that you are a woman and a woman’s place is in the kitchen. ... I tell you don’t believe them. It is our Kenyan culture which privileges men. ... Women in this university and elsewhere work extremely hard, but they lack the recognition. Men in this university and particularly male professors cannot acknowledge that some women are better than them all.

The women in no uncertain terms argued that the cut-throat competition for the few positions in the academic hierarchy was biased against them because they encountered negative
socio-cultural attitudes from senior male colleagues who were determined to see them only as women irrespective of their academic output. The women mentioned that it was not unusual to encounter sexist academics who now and again questioned their credibility. At times women’s accomplishments were dismissed as an outcome of having a sexual relationship with a senior male colleague. Angela, for instance, complained that the head of her department kept undermining her academic worth. In her words:

I completed my Masters with shining grades. What appals me today is the head of my department. He continuously keeps asking me - "Oh! who supervised your master’s project" and when I tell him Abdul supervised me he retorts: "No wonder you got an A grade. He wanted to marry you. Is that right". ... He makes me feel very nervous ... He reminds me of male students when I was an undergraduate. They used to undermine our accomplishments by arguing that women were lucky by the fact that they could get "Markisi ya chupi" [underwear marks] meaning that women students could secure higher marks by offering sexual favours to male professors. ... This kind of attitude makes the strongest of us women to be extra cautious and this kind of limits what one can achieve.

And as if supporting Regina’s fears, Angela asserted that some male professors are even afraid to support women academics openly for fear of raising suspicions. Speaking of her own denied promotion she asserts:

.... For a woman in this university you have always to be on guard. ... I vividly remember when I approached Professor Njama and requested him to write a referee letter for me. ... First he told me that his letter may disadvantage me because it might be interpreted by the administration that he was trying to support me, first because we hailed from the same ethnic community and two, I was a woman. I still persuaded him to support me, but he refused. I did get another professor to referee me ... at the interview I remember I was asked two questions around my personal life which I thought were in bad taste. I never got the promotion, but I believe it was for personal reasons. ... When you are frank, aggressive and determined, they [university administrators] always think you must be having some taller godfathers.22 On several occasions I have been questioned about godfathers unknown to me...

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22 Taller godfathers are perceived or real figures thought to influence a woman to act decisively on her own and act boldly or aggressively. The concept is intended to discredit idea that a woman can act definitively without any support from male figures.
From stories such as Angela’s, we see that some male academics devalue their female colleagues’ hard work and intelligence and hint that women academics use their sexual favours to secure high grades and, therefore, are not quite qualified. This kind of attitude discourages many women from trying. In terms of promotions women’s qualifications were under far more scrutiny than those of their male colleagues. Rathgeber (1991, p.60) arrived at the same conclusion, arguing that female student physicians were expected to fail by the school authorities. When they did succeed, their success was explained by claims that their grading had been less severe, or that they had used sexual attraction as unfair advantage. This undervaluation of women’s achievements is carried into the professional lives of women academics.

**Lack of Time: Excessive Academic and Administrative Workloads**

Not only do the academic women encounter negative social attitudes which impact on their career development, they are overburdened by excessive academic and administrative routine work which leaves them with no time for publishing. Lack of publication in turn means their careers stagnate. Repeatedly, the women quoted the overused cliché that “you either publish or perish”.

The women again and again told me that although both men and women had a relatively equal workload, their own promotional prospects were limited by lack of time. Time was perceived as a critical resource which needed to be strictly "economized", "managed" and "wisely budgeted". This lack of time was tied to the structural, organizational and administrative limitations and conditions so peculiar to universities in some of the developing African countries. Most of the women complained of high enrolment rates in the university without the university making an effort to match both the physical and human resources to the high rates of enrolment.
As such the lecturers as well as the students spend phenomenal amounts of time in the library scrambling for the few textbooks. Specifically, the women felt overextended by the large class sizes, heavy teaching loads, administering of examinations and the grading of students' continuous assessment tests as well as the marking of final examinations. On average the women interviewed had about twenty hours of lectures per week. The preparation for these contact hours meant a huge amount of time spent in the library in an effort to make comprehensive notes because students lacked enough or appropriate textbooks. The students depended to a large extent on the lecture notes. Some of the women reported having to teach day and night to make up for lost time in times of academic unrest (strikes)\textsuperscript{22}. Some not only complained about lack of resources but also of the male hierarchical organization of the university which disadvantaged the women as a group and as junior academics. As junior academics they were expected to serve faithfully in most of the boring and repetitive clerical jobs in the departments. These tasks included computing of students' final grades in a given faculty, timetabling and goodwill committees. Since most of the female academics were either at the rank of lecturer or tutorial fellow, they were inadvertently involved in this boring, time consuming exercise while most of the male academics sat on important brainwork committees or pursued their research interests as aptly illustrated by Mwende's comments:

... In this university it is not automatic that a student proceed from first year to second year or to third year and so forth. There are conditions. A student must score an average mark to be allowed to proceed to the next year ... This means a lot of work particularly for these junior members of staff who automatically get into the examination committee ... After members of the teaching staff complete grading their papers it is the work of the examination committee to find an average

\textsuperscript{22} Strikes, or student disturbances as they are usually referred to, are a common phenomenon in Kenyan universities. Students are forcefully sent home for weeks and at times almost a year, after clashing with the university administration. Armed police personnel is usually deployed to expedite the process. Sometimes makeup courses are necessary upon their return.
grade for each student. This is a particularly tedious process of crunching numbers. I particularly dislike adding numbers with no calculators available ... Then sorting of the student papers either alphabetically or according to students' registration numbers ... This process can take weeks working on a daily basis. I remember one time we worked on Saturday and Sundays. What is annoying is that some senior male academics in spite of grading their papers, they deliberately refuse to arrange their script alphabetically or otherwise and expect us [members of examination committee] to sort the scripts for them. I clearly remember an incidence whereby a male professor handed his scripts all mixed up ... The chairman of the department excused this professor on basis of age and that he was stressed out and without shame or blinking asked the members of the committee to sort out these scripts. I was particularly furious but I was made to understand that this is a training ground and that all other senior professors have endured this exercise.

I had the privilege of working with the members of the examination committee in one of the core departments of the faculty of education in one of the universities. As a member of the university teaching community (on study leave) I was allowed to enter, mingle, sit and work and observe the examination committee at work for two days. The work involved sorting out hundreds of scripts in the required order, moving scripts from their safe stacks at room corners to tables where examination officers meticulously matched various scripts to be sure they belonged to one candidate, adding the marks on scratch papers and entering the average grade on a master student list which was prepared by the administration. After transferring marks from the students' scripts to the master list then the scripts were taken back to their safe corners. There were incidents of scripts missing or getting displaced which caused a lot of anxiety in the room. Entering of marks would be temporarily halted until the missing script was found. The search could take hours or even a day. I was particularly moved by these individuals' ability to make fun of their predicament. They joked and laughed about their junior positions and ridiculed senior male academics whom they accused of arrogance and misusing their senior status to shirk working in the examination room.
What was most revealing was the fact that this department comprised thirty-six members of the teaching staff and only five of these were women. All the five women academics were involved in the examination committee, which they all loathed and described as time consuming, boring, repetitive, and mind boggling. Computing of marks was manually done because the university lacked basic computer technology. Even simple calculators were rarely in use in the examination room when I carried out my observations. In the absence of efficient technology which would not only improve the efficiency of the university and save phenomenal amounts of time, the women, the majority of whom were junior academics, were called upon to provide this clerical labour. Although one of the five women was a senior lecturer, she was actively serving as an assistant examination officer, while the chief examination officer was a male professor who played no more than an overseer role.

Sophia, who had served on the examination committee for several years, was cognizant of the fact that to climb up the academic ladder, this was one of the rituals to be endured. However, when her name was put up on the timetable committee she decided to check how duties were allocated. To her dismay she found that women academics were overburdened with clerical work (done by hand) while male academics were involved in committees that required brainwork. When Sophia questioned this sexual division of labour, her head of department told her: "We thought that you are seeking gender equality." Gender equality for this departmental head meant overworking the women such that they would have no time for other academic pursuits. Despite these difficulties the women were prudent in their judgements. When I asked them why they do not quit these tedious committees, each in her own way mentioned that these responsibilities were important training grounds and useful for mention in a curriculum vitae. However, they maintained that male academics were represented on the most prestigious committees and that
publications carried more weight during promotion reviews than excellent teaching or involvement in several committees.

As a senior lecturer, Edna had served on several committees but was glad she no longer served on the examination committee. She expressed pity for those junior academics not so fortunate:

I would say that I have served on several committees in this university. ... I am so glad that I no longer spend countless hours in the examination room. It is too demanding and I hated mathematics. ... I sympathise with those serving in there [examination room] but it is part of the process. To move up the academic ranks these are some of the small prices one had to pay. ... all professors in this university would testify that they all worked in that room. ... Now that I am a senior I am involved in several other committees but not as physically demanding as examination committee.

In view of the excessive academic and administrative demands on the women's time, their situation is made more complicated by the fact that they are expected to play other critical domestic roles as wives and mothers. This domestic role will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. Suffice to say here that the academic women, each in her own way, explained that they experienced both intra- and inter-role conflict at the university and at home. They have become experts in juggling roles and balancing acts but by the end of the day they are left with little or no time for working on academic publications. They were clear in their view that no amount of excellent teaching or service to university would lead to promotion, particularly to senior lectureship, without publications.

**Processes of Exclusion**

Unlike the North American universities where information concerning conferences, publications, seminars, research grants etc. is readily available through scholarly journals,
membership in learned societies and associations, internet, and other academic publications as well
as though display of such information on university bulletin boards and even on some faculty
members’ office doors, this is not usually the case in the Kenyan university. Most of the women
academics complained that they experienced career disadvantage because they lacked or were
excluded from sources of information. Most of the women said that the universities they worked
in did not own a press or even a single scholarly journal. Even when a university owned a journal
the issues were short-lived due to lack of finances to maintain the subscriptions. Moreover, these
journals were run by a clique of males who supported each other and a few of their female
friends.

Due to lack of publishing houses or local journals both female and male academics are
forced to look beyond the national borders if they are to get published. The women believed that
this state of affairs favours male academics because most of them earned their graduate degrees or
most of their education in western universities and as such were better informed as to which
journals to send their papers to. More often than not most of the male academics were friends of
male editors of international journals who also coopted them as overseas members of the editorial
board. Male academics, therefore, are better connected locally, regionally and internationally, and
thus are more likely than women to get crucial academic information.

In view of the male academics’ connections with the western universities, they are more
likely to be paid up members of learned associations and societies in the Northern hemisphere.
Male academics, therefore, not only got access to publishing information but also controlled what
information is to be shared publicly or through informal networks. What is ironic, however, is
that even the few women academics who had earned their higher degrees in the western world did
not seem well connected to the western academics or to be members of learned associations and
societies in the western world. Nevertheless, I gathered stories of some few female academics who had succeeded in publishing not only because of the support of male academics but also because of their international affiliations. These women had earned their higher degrees in universities abroad and were active members of international bodies. They were reluctant to share information concerning publishing or conferences with other women academics. These women as Angela puts it "succeed by withholding information from other female colleagues whom they perceive as competitors."

Academic women in this study maintained that publishing is a political act rooted in informal networks. The few academic journals available in East and Central Africa are male journals. The editors, the reviewers and male professors form a clique and it is not unusual to get some professors publishing again and again in successive issues as succinctly put by Edna:

... whether we accept it or not publishing is a political act. I have had a couple of my articles turned down on the pretext that they are poorly written ... I can tell you Msingi Journal, or The Journal of East and Central Africa or even the International Journal of Comparative and International Education must give your article a favourable review, meet certain standards and articulate a certain point of view ... If they [reviewers or editors] know you, your article might get a favourable review. Some men in this university went to school with some editors of prestigious journals in Europe or North America and they get their articles published often. If you are unknown your article is over scrutinized ... Women lack connections. More often than not they are not members of learned societies or associations and as such do not receive information about call for papers or conferences. ... In most cases men [academics] in this university are decisive as to who get published and who does not. We know of a few women here who get requested occasionally to contribute a chapter or an article ... It is interesting, in fact funny that a mediocre male colleague got his articles published when mine was turned down ... I had a chance of discussing with one of the male professors who is also an editor of an East African Journal who conceded that they sympathise with male colleagues who are in need of publications.

The women compared publishing to secret societies where only certain individuals are allowed in. In their view only chosen individuals were sponsored into certain academic journals
while others were not. This point is aptly articulated by Maria, who was involved in two research projects during the time this research was conducted. When I asked her: "Are you involved in any research at the present time?" she reframed my question and then elaborated:

I think the critical question here is not whether I am involved in any research or not. I think the question you should be asking here is whether women get access to research funds, have access to information, access to current journals... who gets published and who doesn’t and why? Who attends conferences, seminars, workshops and who doesn’t and why. ... When you get answers to these questions you will realize that it’s all politics. ... To get into the publishing world you have to be supported, to be introduced, coached by some experienced academic guru. ... You need research funds and that too you need support. It is not automatic. ... You also need flexibility in time for field work. ... Things are changing. Donor agencies are demanding that before they dish research money to all these senior academics, they must involve a junior female as a co-researcher for capacity building. ... I am a beneficiary of these changes. That is how I am lucky I am involved in these two research projects.

When I pushed Maria further on these issues it became quite clear that a kind of patron-client system was in operation in the Kenyan universities. Maria and others like her were very firm in their belief that to get ahead, even the male academics depended on academic patronage. Ability to publish was attributed to access to information, availability of research funds, hard work and sufficient time. Support by male academics was an added advantage. Women are rarely senior academics or power brokers in the university. Women were in a minority status and were also young professionally. Socio-cultural expectations dictate that men and women be "segregated" and so women academics are excluded from informal academic networks. They are thus cut off from important sources of information very necessary for career advancement.

Moreover, most of the informal information is shared in social places that career women are not expected to frequent. The academic women argued that a strong sexist culture existed in the Kenyan society where women who frequented social places like bars, unaccompanied, or accompanied are perceived as women of loose morals. Men are free to frequent all social places
ranging from "Masandukuni" beer joints to the Sheraton Hotel, with no moral sanctions. A strong male bonding/fraternity existed in the universities so that it was a common practice, for example, for a young junior male academic to invite old and experienced male professors for drinks and nyama choma parties without any strain. Conversely, it would be difficult for a female academic, whatever her designation or marital status, to invite male colleagues to social places without risking the invitation being misunderstood as a sexual invitation. In any case, these parties are often held at times when women are expected to be at home. A married woman would need her husband's permission to be out late at night. Meanwhile, men participated in social interactions where academic ideas are exchanged and information about conferences, seminars, research funds and even tips on how to get into the right books, get published and get promoted are leaked. From these interactions academic networks and associations are formed.

Atieno, a senior lecturer, captured this exclusion of academic women vividly:

... The information does not get to the women academics because they are limited. Most of the times men meet for nyama choma after work hours. Women, particularly married women are not expected to frequent drinking places. Even when not prohibited there is the moral question. ... Some academic things get discussed there. ... I believe a man feels comfortable to release information to another man ... They [men] say: "women have crooked words" meaning that women seldom keep secrets. Popular wisdom, like that of the Agikuyu people, tell us "Mündū wa kuiya na mútumia akenaga akua" [translated to mean if you steal with a woman you will only be relieved when she dies]. ... Since women are absent from these sources of information, they do not get it. ... In these informal meetings the men discuss and plot together. ... When they come for staff meetings, they have already agreed on certain positions. They speak in one voice. ... This is how they build each other and maintain academic power. ... You know in our society whether we deny or accept if we still believe a woman's place is in the kitchen. ... therefore, if you are somebody's wife he will leave you home. ... If there is any information he is supposed to bring it to you.

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24 Masandukuni is a Kiswahili word meaning boxes. Kenyan society is socially stratified. There are vaticans (high rich areas) and hovels. In these very poor places people sit on boxes as they drink, hence the term masadukuni. Most of the senior men are known for frequenting these drinking joints which are less formal, but more lively and exciting socially than places in the richer areas.
From Atieno's narrative a picture emerges as to why women's academic careers stagnate. As women they are expected to belong to the private domain just like their mothers and sisters. A man as the breadwinner and head of the family is expected to play the public role, bringing home information as well as perfecting his career. Academic women, just like their illiterate sisters who work tirelessly in the corn fields, are constructed as male dependants, and, therefore, are not seen as needing or deserving academic promotions as much as the men. They too are expected to wait for information to trickle down to them.

The academic women were aware that it was a contradiction in terms to expect women with such amounts of education, exposure and experience to fit into the prescribed role of a "traditional housewife". This expectation in their view was an act of male domination and social control. Edna, who acquired her Ph.D from a prestigious university in England, critiqued the exclusion of academic women from social places as a sham. She managed alone for four years in England, but now she was not treated as a responsible adult. She lamented: "Who controlled my movement, my morality while in England? It is all too ironical."

This exclusion and social control of academic women is not peculiar to Kenya. Obbo (1980) witnessed the same pattern in her study of Ugandan women. She observed:

Professional women became further trapped in double standards that distinguished "good" and "bad" women. ... It was particularly difficult for married as well as unmarried women to go out to bars or restaurants and enjoy themselves alone or with friends, males or females without being suspected of being prostitutes. Some resorted to advertising their motherhood by packing their children into the Mercedes Benz, Peugeot or Citroën and driving around the town. (Obbo, 1980, p. 14)

Even the possession of a Ph.D does not unlock the doors for academic women. Sophia, an associate professor with a doctorate, narrated to me an incident where she had spent a whole day at a workshop with male colleagues in her department. At the end of the day she gave two junior
male colleagues and a senior male academic a ride in her car. They asked her to drop them at a
certain social joint (drinking place). They bade her and another female colleague good-bye.
When she inquired why the women were not invited to summarize the day socially since they had
spent the whole day working together, the response dismayed her: "He told me, these places are
not ideal for women of your calibre and we thought you may not be interested. ... In any case we
thought you may want to get home early."

The exclusion of women is apparent even within university spaces. During my fieldwork
observations, the absence of the females from the senior common rooms was remarkable. I
recollect vividly the loneliness and uneasiness I experienced in the senior common room of one of
the universities. Men walked in and out sometimes alone or in groups. Usually they engaged
each other in animated discussions and I thought about joining in. But being the only female I
refrained from doing so. I become self conscious about my presence there and hoped other
women might come in to neutralize my feelings of being in a minority. After some time, two
women entered the common room and sat at a table near mine. I was relieved. I became more
comfortable and I was able to listen to their discussion (which was carried on in low voices) as
well as hear what the men were arguing about in loud voices.

What was interesting about this observation is that even the discussions and the spaces we
occupied were gendered. Men sat or stood near the counter, arguing and teasing each other about
their work. The two women sat at a corner near where I was sitting and their discussion centred
on family matters. Rarely did I come across two academic women in the senior common rooms I
visited discussing academic work. The following fieldnotes may serve to highlight further
women's exclusion from academic networks:
I arrived a few minutes to 3 p.m. I sit in one of the corners so that I could not be too obtrusive and at the same time, I wanted to have a good vantage point. The place is clean. Comfortable seats are in place except for two long tables (which I later gathered were used for indoor games). The atmosphere is very relaxing, very good music. ... Men enter in twos, threes or simply in a group. Some stand others sit. They shake hands, laugh, hug and talk in loud voices. ... At the counter all types of drinks are displayed neatly. Tusker, Pilsner, whisky, coke, etc... I noticed most of the men are drinking beer and some coke or something else. ... Three women enter and I am happy that I am not the only woman in the room. They make themselves comfortable at a table near mine. ... I notice two of them being served soft drinks and one tea. ... I overhear mentions of children. ... school, homework ... I decide to pay more attention. I wonder whether I should join them ... at this time I become keenly aware of my presence in this place. I feel guilty that I am spying on people. ... I feel the odd person out. ... I wonder why men and women segregate even when in one room ... I notice new groups forming. Some groups speak in very low tones, others in high tones... then suddenly I hear a tap on my shoulder. It's my friend from the Sociology Department. He knew I was waiting for him. He apologizes for being late. We discuss about work, family, my presence there ... then I ask him why are there so few women here? He looked surprised. He looks around then answers, "Career women are not normally expected to be in public places. It is not considered to be right. ... They must exercise some discretion..." I become more and more convinced of how deep gender stereotyping is entrenched. Women must be home while boys socialize, network and deliberate on issues ... (Field Notes, March 16, 1993)

Even when women are included in academic networks, it is on male terms. Some of the women who had worked with men believed that the only reason why women were being asked to be coResearchers with senior male academics was due to changed funding policies. The international donor agencies, to promote capacity-building, were insisting on only funding research in which junior female academics were co-researchers. Although these women felt this was a positive move and would indeed give them a chance to develop their research skills, they also expressed feelings of anxiety and despair. To fit into the "boys club" they had to deal with sexist jokes, derogatory remarks that contained constant reminders that after all, they are women, and they even had to familiarize themselves with male games like football. Anna, one of these academics, told me of how she had to force herself to watch football or other men's programmes on television because every time the team met for research progress reviews, the first few minutes would be devoted to discussion of such interests. But whatever social and personal sacrifices and
adjustments the women made, they felt they were still not quite accepted. As Anna put it: "They invite you in but at the same time make it too difficult for you to stay in." Anna argued that physical inclusion in discussions or research projects does not guarantee actual participation. In her words: "Women are expected to accompany men as 'handbags' but not to challenge or contradict them. They are expected to listen and compliment." Other women gave several examples of incidents at workshops, seminars, or research project meetings where they could rarely be heard and the male academics ended up speaking to themselves.

Wanja, another such woman brought onto a research team, gave up trying to be part of these networks after experiencing psychological exclusion:

.... You have to be extraordinarily strong to maintain your hold in some of these committees. You have to deal with the perception that you are a woman and therefore different from your male colleagues ... most of the times you are the only woman in a big meeting. Then you attend some of the workshops there are two or three of us women. You speak your point of view. They [participants] are quiet, as if you have said nothing ... I remember for example a workshop we attended four years ago. I hoped to raise some research concerns... I did not think that research funds were fairly distributed ... I did not raise the issue. The climate was not right ... What I hated most was the way they [male] academics would whisper, beckon to each other as if in a form of conspiracy ... You are only expected attend the workshop to ascertain their point of view. They call each other aside to discuss as if you are a stranger ... these days even when they invite me I don’t attend. I have refused to be a cheerleader....

From Wanja’s account we realize that these women are not mere victims. They are active subjects. Realizing that her presence in these workshops was not beneficial and that her inclusion was only symbolic, she consciously withdrew. She refused to be "a cheerleader". Although this act was an important political statement, it impacts negatively on Wanja’s career development. In search of self dignity and identity she cuts herself off from a research network useful for development of skills, ideas, future publications and sponsorship into the position of an honourary male.
Wanja is in a double bind. Whichever exit she chooses she is bound to lose. Even if she chose not to withdraw there is not evidence to show that she might have progressed. Her presence on the committee, however token, would be used to justify claims of gender equality within the system. This would imply her participation in perpetuation and maintenance of her own oppression and that of other academic women. Alternatively, her resistance to oppression and her eventual withdrawal can be used to further the view that women cannot take a challenge or perform even when given an opportunity. In fact Wanja explained that around her university she is usually pointed out as a woman who cannot take academic challenges. Her withdrawal is perceived by male academics as a sign of weakness and personal failure, and her behaviour is said to be typical of all women.

This exclusion of academic women from academic networks and their subsequent career disadvantage are discussed by O’Leary and Mitchell (1990). Although they are writing about American academic women I find their findings support my own. They report that high research productivity depends greatly on collaboration. They argue that male scientists are better connected than female scientists. Women are rarely sought out by their male counterparts and thus their publication rates remain lower than that of men. Advantages of networking have been reported for men, who say that informal conversations with colleagues are their primary source of ideas and inspirations. O’Leary and Mitchell show that as far back as the 17th century, networks of academics ("invisible colleges") existed. The members of the network functioned as gatekeepers controlling finances, reputations, and the fate of new scientific ideas.

Toren (1991) has noted the same pattern of women's exclusion from academic networks in Israel and the powerful effects of social interactions, mutual perceptions, stereotypes, expectations and collaboration:

The nature and rate of interaction and research collaboration between faculty women and men in academic institutions are strongly influenced by mutual perceptions, stereotypes, expectations and evaluation of performance as well as by
propositional sex composition. In most scientific work most of the important factors contributing to accomplishment and success are the interaction and exchange of ideas among colleagues. Individuals who are excluded from these formal and informal networks (invisible colleges) usually perform less well and are less productive ... Those who comprise the numerical minority, and have inferior diffuse status encounter resistance on the part of the majority to accept them as equals. In the academic work setting, this means that women would be isolated to some extent from this informal networks, financial and psychological support, performance opportunities and power. (Toren, 1991, p.169)

It is important to note at this point that the few Kenyan women in positions of senior lecturers and professors (63 out of 454 women) (see table 5) were scattered across departments, campuses and colleges which were geographically miles apart. They lacked communication systems like telephones and thus senior women academics were not in a position to mentor each other or to mentor junior faculty women. Unlike female academics, the males were found in all departments and in all ranks including the administrative circles. With their large numbers, buttressed by an existence of a strong male culture, male academics supported each other and had greater probabilities of upward mobility than their women colleagues.

**Academic Mentoring/Sponsorship**

The women repeatedly linked their slow production rates and subsequent slowed promotion rates to the lack of an academic mentor or sponsor. A good relationship between a junior academic and a senior academic was referred to as a "catalyst" or "passport" to success in academia. The women believed that it was particularly difficult for them to establish and maintain a good working relationship over time with mentors/sponsors (senior academics) who are overwhelmingly male.

Mentorship is as old as society. According to Webster’s New International Dictionary, a mentor is a wise and faithful counsellor. A mentor is one who gives advice, states guidelines, warns of faults and instructs. Gitterman (1986), elaborating on this definition, sees mentorship as an intense relationship between someone who is knowledgeable in a specific discipline and a
novice in the field. A mentor helps the mentee sort out his/her thoughts in a non-judgemental way. A mentor advises and encourages the novice to get on during the initial stages of career development. A keen interest in professional growth augments a personal interest in the mentee’s career.

It is this kind of close, non-judgemental, personal relationship with a wise guru or academic godfather or godmother who instructs, guides, supports, etc. that some of the academic women in this study complained they lacked. The feeling was strong among these academic women that in comparison with their male colleagues, they were given less support, not taken seriously, ignored, trivialised and targeted for blame. The women explained that being someone’s “boy”, being in the right books, and being loyal to certain academic gatekeepers were some of the enablers of career development.

The women maintained that senior male academics preferred to sponsor their own kind. They told me of cases where their male colleagues were promoted faster than they were because they received favourable recommendations, information, and social support from senior male academics which were not readily available to the women academics. Sometimes women benefited indirectly. Angela, a senior academic, told me about a classic case of males sponsoring males. Her male colleague was being sought out for sponsorship and promotion, but since she was more qualified than the male colleague, the department had no choice other than to promote both of them. In her words:

... In an ideal situation, the stated criteria should be followed ... but I feel in this university the more lobbying, the more connected you are, the more close you are to these people [professors] the better your chances. ... I will provide you with an example here. In 1987, I memorably remember that I was due for promotions in my department together with another colleague who incidentally is my friend. ... We completed our Masters together in this department [where this interview was conducted.] ... through the grapevine this male colleague learnt that we were expected to have published or presented some academic papers in the departmental seminars. We were also supposed to have defended our Ph.D proposals. ... Neither the chairman nor the dean of the faculty had made this information
available to me. Nevertheless, this colleague of mine shared this precious information with me. ... We quickly decided to write and present papers to beat the deadline. ... His presentation was scheduled earlier than mine. During this presentation, I will never forget that day. The seminar room was packed to capacity. The chairman of our department, a full professor and a personal friend of my colleague had invited all the full professors and senior academics not only in our department but from the whole Faculty of Arts. ... they had all gathered to hear my colleague's presentation. ... Incidentally the chairman of our department supervised this colleague of mine's Master's thesis. ... You know how men build each other. ... But to my surprise when the day came for my presentation, the attendance was poor. The conspicuous absentees were my chairman and his fellow friends. ... I felt slighted, but the presentation went well. ... However, I got promoted along with my colleague. ... I later came to gather that the chairman was pushing for the promotion of his "boy", my colleague, and since I had outperformed him in my Master's grade they had no choice than to promote both of us. ... That is why I tell you that promotions in this university are not fair. It depends on who knows who.

From Angela's narration it becomes quite clear that junior male academics are singled out for mentorship. As Angela tells us, "the chairman of the department dragged all senior academics to witness and support this colleague of mine." This amounts to sponsored mobility. Conversely, women academics get a raw deal. During Angela's presentation, the chairman conveniently absented himself and attendance was poor. This amounts to sex discrimination. Angela was only promoted because they could not find a better way to explain or dismiss her qualifications. Her story suggests that for a woman to be promoted to the same rank with a man, her accomplishments must be clearly better than his.

This devaluation of women's accomplishments has its origins in the prevalent Kenyan gender ideology. A strong patriarchal cultural system exists that allows even open expression of hostility and contempt for women. It is not uncommon to hear or read statements from members of parliament or cabinet ministers devaluing women. For example in 1979 when members of parliament were debating the failed Marriage and Divorce Bill, Mr. Wabuge, one of the parliamentarians, and an ex-ambassador of Kenya to the United Nations, stated that a wife should be beaten as it was a pleasure to her, and a way of expressing love in Luhya [one of the ethnic
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communities] customs: "If you beat your wife probably after doing something wrong, it would only be by accident if you break her ribs," he told the house (Asiyo, 1989, p.45). To my surprise, during my discussion and interviews some Luyhia women seemed to subscribe to this idea. In 1991 Mulu Mutisya, a cabinet minister, told another minister: "You are like a wayward wife and your position can only be occupied by a woman" (Maina, 1992, p.14), while in the same year Nicholas Biwott, one of the powerful ministers, described members of an opposition party as behaving like women rejected by men who group together in search of clients (Maina, 1992, p.2). Arap Soi, another cabinet minister summarized: "Women must be forever led. It is quite absurd and perturbing the way modern women are clamouring for public office ... contrary to the important considerations of the natural law" (Maina, 1992, p.11). These archetypal chauvinists got the support and blessing of none other than the Head of State, who on 12 December 1991, during a Jamuhuri Day (Kenya's independence day) address, told the crowds that the flow of authority in an African society was clear. Women never surpassed men (Maina, 1992, p.1).

The lack of support for Kenyan women academics echoes findings in both European and North American studies. Reskin (1978), Fox (1989), O'Leary and Mitchell (1990), Moore and Sagaria (1991), The Chilly Climate Collective (1995) all show that: women are unsupported; that men support one another; that women are excluded from male academic networks; that women experience a chilly climate; that women lack mentors and sponsors and as a result they lack informal information and resources, and are shut off from job prospects, research information and professional opportunity and services. These studies identify the important role played by a mentor in the professional life of a mentee. Sponsors or career gatekeepers are seen as extremely valuable for one's upward achievement. Corcoran and Clark (1986) specifically stress that the academic gatekeeper plays an important role in introducing promising and favoured protégés to powerful circles of colleagues, promoting them, showing them the ropes, and providing opportunities to operate successfully among the powerful.
Thesis Supervision and Student Responses

Even when women have an impeccable academic record and are indeed promoted to senior academic ranks, their promotions do not bring the prestige, power, role or status commensurate with their positions. Their status continues to be determined by negative stereotypical images about women in general. They continue to accumulate career disadvantage through the numerous acts of academic exclusion. As an example, women are rarely chosen as university thesis supervisors.

The women maintained that supervision of either a Master's or Ph.D thesis was an added advantage for one's career development. The supervision process provided an ample opportunity to generate, share and try out new ideas and thus sharpen intellectual skills and establish academic clout and sometimes lifetime friendships. The women believed that thesis supervision helped one to gain courage, confidence, and broaden academic horizons and in this way acquire the necessary experience to proclaim academic authority. The number of candidates an individual successfully supervised was seen as an important factor in boosting one's academic social and personal esteem. It was also an important factor particularly if one was to put herself/himself forward for further promotions.

Maria showed her bitterness:

Selection or appointment is not a neutral act. In some departments the chairmen of departments allocate or choose supervisors for students. ... I am tempted to believe that the heads of departments assign thesis supervision to their friends ... those colleagues they believed were more qualified. ... In other departments the student choose their supervisors but their choice must be ratified, sanctioned by departmental head and postgraduate committees. ... The fact that I have been in this department for ten years and as the only specialist in [my field] and no one has approached me for supervision makes me believe [here she laughs] that these people [both male academic and students] do not believe that I am capable.

From Maria's narration we begin to see that even being a specialist in a certain field does not boost a woman's status. Maria is the only specialist in her department in a particular area and
for ten years she has not been asked to supervise even a Master's project. She was conscious of the fact that her knowledge was under question. She felt "these people do not believe that I am capable."

The women gave me several examples of men who had equivalent qualifications to their own but were involved in thesis supervision while the women were not. The women felt that they were discriminated against on the basis of their gender. At one university, for example, Sophia, a lecturer, personally introduced me to two of her male colleagues, who she later told me held Master's degrees as she did. She, however, was employed in the university two years before they were hired. Nevertheless, those two colleagues had supervised at least three student projects. She felt that she was overlooked. She expressed dissatisfaction with the secrecy and speed at which supervision was allocated. Although she considered these two male colleagues to be her friends, she only found out by sheer accident that they were supervising these projects. She felt slighted by the co-ordinator of the relevant programme, a person she had thought was her friend and supporter over the years.

From the women's evidence it was clear that both students (even females) and senior male academics preferred male supervisors to female supervisors. Sopiato, a senior lecturer, speaking from her own personal experience of exclusion, perceived the reasons why women were not preferred as thesis supervisors or committee members as follows:

... As the only woman and a senior lecturer in this department for now three years, it has become clear to me that even female students are not attracted to female professors. ... I have witnessed over the years both male and female students constantly consult my male colleagues. ... I have learnt that students are looking for powerful well connected and reputable professors who can later prop them in the job market. ... Women academics are not that well connected to the outside world. ... Secondly, there is this feeling, how can you be supervised by a woman? ... Our society is male dominated and women are not really seen as knowledgeable. ... few students and even fewer males would opt for a female supervisor. ... A couple of women students have requested me to sit on their committees but not a single male student has ever approached me.
Sopiato's marginalization is even more pronounced because even the women students were also looking for established, well connected academics whose reputation and social contacts would give them an easy passage into the job market. It is common knowledge that students supervised by certain academic heavyweights get hired as tutorial fellows in the university immediately after completion of their Master's thesis. Others have been sponsored for jobs outside the university on their basis of their being students of Professor X or Y. The majority of the women academics maintained that they were constrained because they were not well connected with the political system. They had no academic influence and their impact was rarely felt at the university or in the outside society. As women, they were perceived as subordinates whether they were professors or graduate assistants. Students' actions and choices of male supervisors, prudent as they may appear, impact negatively on women's academic careers. This kind of situation made many academic women I encountered express a sense of being outsiders.

The women suffered tensions, anxiety, vexation and serious self doubts as they tried to reconcile their contradictory and ambivalent existences. They were happy that they were university lecturers, earned a high salary, conducted successful seminars and lectures, but at the same time they were unhappy that their abilities were not recognised. Some felt that since they were excluded from thesis supervision, they were not clear whether they were despised, liked, valued or devalued as persons or as academics. They witnessed the same clique of males travel from conference to conference, workshop to workshop and supervise almost all the theses in the faculty.

The women's fears, anxieties and ambivalences were compounded by the fact women were not normally expected to be highly qualified. The women felt that they were perceived as an anomaly by the majority of the students and by some male academics. Some women narrated to me incidents where they believed they were unfairly booed, asked to go home or shouted at to
Waacha Urembo [stop behaving like a model] by students in the lecture theatres simply because of their gender. The women believed that in the minds of the students all academics and particularly doctors and professors are all males. A number of women told me of cases where they were perplexed by students' reactions. Some students went to their offices expecting to find male professors only to be embarrassed when they realize the lecturer they had come to see was a woman. Maria's experience illustrates this position:

... Before I established myself in one of the child development courses, I faced a lot of hostility. It was a second year course. As soon as I entered the lecture theatre, the room would be filled with boos and shouts of "go home, go home". I was not surprised because I did my undergraduate in this university [university where she was teaching and where this interview was conducted] and I remember we used to send home lecturers who did not deliver their lectures well. ... I was however surprised when on another day the students shouted Waacha Urembo [stop modelling/being feminine]. I realized there was a gender angle in this shouting. ... Some two first year students came to my office. They wanted to see Dr. Domingo. Incidentally Domingo is my husband's name and I believe these students expected to meet a male. ... I cannot forget the pangs of pain I experienced when these students asked me politely whether they could see Dr. Domingo. ... After it dawned to them I was Dr. Domingo, they could not hide their frustrations. One went as far as asking "Are you really Dr. Domingo"? ... I was hurt. ... One said "I am sure it's a mistake." They apologized and left. ... Three days later one of the students returned to my office, apologizing that they had been informed that the geography professor was a male. ... We sorted out the mess and I advised the students on the course prerequisites.

This anecdote tells us that women are not expected to be university professors. Students' attitudes can be best understood by considering the situation of the majority of Kenyan women. Most Kenyan women are illiterate and of the few who work in the formal sector, the majority are secretaries, nurses and primary school teachers (Republic of Kenya, 1993). These students may not have encountered many female teachers in their advanced levels, particularly if they were in a boys only school. They therefore could not possibly understand how a woman could be a university professor. This unequal gender ideology perpetuated in the Kenyan society leads these students to ask "Are you really Dr. Domingo?"
Rathgeber (1991) corroborates the findings in this study. In her study on women physicians in Kenya she found that female medical doctors were slighted by their patients who referred to them as "nurse" or "sister." This indicates that societal stereotypical attitudes determine how women in professions were perceived and treated.

**Sexual Harassment**

Maintaining a good relationship with one's academic or university supervisor was repeatedly cited as a crucial asset to an individual's career progress. Academic supervisors were perceived as potential career mentors. They play an important role particularly in the hiring and the promotion process for their students. Their reference letters were considered to be invaluable. However, a majority of the academic women complained that they did not enjoy a close working relationship with their male supervisors. The women told me stories of how their studies were slowed down or had to be stopped in order to sort out differences between themselves and their supervisors. Most of their differences were sparked by sexual advances, sexist jokes, passes and comments which made it difficult to manage the day-to-day working relationship. Some were forced to change supervisors, or to keep off the university premises for a time. Anna narrated to me how her supervisor, a man she completely trusted, all of a sudden developed a sexual interest in her. He went as far as suggesting marrying her while he was already a married man. Her being skilled and strong in character helped her ward off these unwanted sexual advances. She and her supervisor then had to renegotiate their working relationship all over again. They decided to recruit a male friend of her supervisor to act as a buffer, and under his direction, Anna completed her Master's thesis. However, the credit for supervision went to the man who harassed her because he was the assigned university professor. Anna told me that she did not officially complain because if she did, she would be ridiculed as a stupid woman who cannot take jokes and
who publicly tells everything. Speaking out or complaining about such acts would be seen as a sign of weakness. A woman is expected to carry herself "decently", meaning that she is not a "big mouth". In any case women are expected to accept and even be happy that somebody is attracted to them.

The majority of the women decried the advantage male professors take of them. They argued that it was not likely that a woman would complete a thesis process without some bruises. If supervisors make sexual advances and you turn them down, they could dismiss you as a weak candidate. Angela ruefully remembers her own experience:

... I liked my supervisor a lot. My colleague used to tell me that I was lucky to be supervised by him. He was concerned and used to prod me ahead ... But one day I took my work to his office. He beckoned me to sit on a sofa beside him. My senses told me something was very wrong. ... I could not believe my senses. I was utterly shocked by what was unfolding. ... He touched me and I told him that I was married. He told me that he is also married. ... I told him I was probably more married than him. I brandished my wedding ring hoping to convince him. ... In fact I had just gotten married, about six months ago and he was one of the invited guests. ... You are afraid to report these incidences. It only makes life difficult for you. You become a laughing stock. ... It is extremely difficult, painful and disorienting because it is from the same supervisor you may be expected to get a recommendation for further training or for promotion purposes.

Angela, who described herself as hardworking and a no-nonsense academic, shared with me that her promotion from tutorial fellowship to the position of a lecturer has been delayed for years. This delay was a result of psychological and sexual harassment from her thesis supervisor. She tried to be tactful and skilfully turn his abuses into light-hearted jokes, hoping that he might understand and stop misbehaving. She also did not want to jeopardize her academic career: "All I wanted was to complete my Masters and forget this man. I used to pretend that I did not understand his insinuations. I played dumb but that did not help."

The last straw was when this man one day went to her office. He did not go into her office even though she opened the door and ushered him in. He stood by the door. He did not make any effort to close the door behind him and after a brief conversation, he twisted everything
and told her "I know you do not like poor men like me. You only date rich men. I understand that you now drive a Subaru." Angela told me she felt as if she was completely undressed in a market place. She was sure her colleagues in adjacent offices or passing by must have overheard this nasty talk. She was so offended and hurt that she could not hold herself together. In tears she passed through the departmental secretary’s office and told her "I am quitting this programme. Professor Xuma has been harassing me and I cannot take it any more."

However, after thinking seriously about the problem, she went to her department the following morning determined not to quit. She officially reported the matter to the departmental head who advised her to forget the issue and quickly changed supervisors for Angela. This was tantamount to beginning her thesis project all over again. It took her four years to complete her Master’s degree instead of the usual two years. During the interview, it became quite clear that although Angela had decided to concentrate on the future, she was worried that her former supervisor, as one of the senior professors in her department, might negatively influence her promotion.

The respondents’ voices suggest that sexual harassment is a common phenomenon in the Kenyan universities. However, since gender is not a politicised issue in these universities, terms like "sexual harassment" or measures like sexual harassment policies are nonexistent. Unwanted sexual advances, according to the respondents, are seen as part of what happens in a working environment and not something to worry about. The women are not expected to complain and if they do they might jeopardize their own reputation and status.

But it is clear that the women do not like it and they employ certain strategies like playing dumb, turning the advances into jokes or being tactful in an attempt to ward off these advances. The women knew very well that if they had to report these incidents, it would only be to other senior males who might neither understand nor sympathize. They even feared that they might be
blamed. This chilly climate is very unsettling and destroys the congenial relationships expected in a university. The women are put on the defensive. Some women told me that they keep away from certain sexist male colleagues who have a reputation for harassing women. This avoidance approach, though the most logical thing to do, may work to the detriment of women’s career advancement. As we discussed earlier, academic women are excluded from male academic networks, but at times women manage to extract useful information from some of their colleagues. If women increase their social and physical distance, they may be completely cut off from the politics of the university and cut off from informal sources of information.

The dilemma here is that the majority of the women told me that they had to frequently consult with their male colleagues on certain academic matters. They also complained that some of these males harass them sexually and would prefer to consult with their own menfolk even if they are mediocre. The question which remains unanswered here is how can these women academics escape their predicament. They seem trapped in a double bind. To consult with their male colleague and in fact to maintain a working relationship may mean their getting access to some beneficial information. However, this consultation may be abused and turned into sexual harassment.

**EXPERIENCES OF SATISFIED WOMEN ACADEMICS**

**Merit and Fairness**

Contradicting the views of the embattled majority (65.5 per cent) of the academic women who maintained that gender bias existed in the Kenyan universities are the satisfied minority (25.5 per cent) who held very different views and perceptions. These women perceived the university as a fair, meritocratic and democratic institution. Despite the fact that Kenyan society is characterized by both patriarchal and patrilineal gender relations, and that the university is male
dominated at all levels, these women strongly expressed the view that gender was/is not a factor in either their hiring or promotions. In their view, the university had hiring and promotion criteria and only those who fulfilled the criteria got hired or promoted. They were strong in their beliefs that they were hired on the basis of academic merit but not on the basis of their gender. In their perceptions, progress was determined by hard work, proper time management, personal organization and individual priorities. These women, therefore, squarely attributed their success to their abilities and their failures to lack of ability. They did not see societal structures or the university as an institution as having any relevant bearing on their rate of progress.

Wanja, a lecturer, is one of those who see the university as a fair, democratic and meritocratic institution:

Here I would like to say I have gone through a few promotion interviews and so forth and I would like to say very positively that there was nothing that discriminated me as a woman. ... I have not heard of any woman discriminated on irrelevant grounds. ... You are hired here as an academic not as a woman. ... The promotion criteria does not discriminate between men and women. It is qualifications and indeed publications, determination and hardwork that matters. ... I would say the university is very sympathetic to women. ... My promotion or lack of promotion has got nothing to do with my being a woman. You have to meet the university criteria.

Women who see the university as fair attributed their success to their own abilities.

Akinyi, an accomplished associate professor, is such an example. In her view success is in an individual's own making. Through hardwork and dedication she earned the support of her male academic supervisor. This supervisor has continued to mentor and support her and they are great friends. She sees him as being like a father. Her career development has, therefore, been quick sailing. In her words:

... If you work hard there is no doubt doors will open. I am a hard worker. ... My doctorate was supervised by Professor Ali. A very refined man... he has been very instrumental in my being who I am today. He has encouraged me to publish, to apply for positions. ... He is like a father to me. ... My first published article appeared in one of his books. That gave me a head start. ... He has taught almost everybody in this university and they respect him. He has given me clean
recommendations ... But to succeed you must be tactful, skilful, and sensitive enough to develop feelers, to detect what is happening around you. ... But the bottom line is hard work.

Suffice to say that Akinyi is one of the few Kenyan academics to achieve the position of an associate professor. She clearly attributes her own academic success to her personal attributes and to the amiable relationship between herself and her former supervisor. She was convinced that hard work would translate into an accelerated career.

Wanja's and Akinyi's arguments are remarkable if we compare them with those of the embattled respondents discussed earlier. These embattled women believed that the university criteria favour men. The system was constructed by men with a very specific group of people in mind - usually men who were not expected to participate in domestic chores. The responses were replete with examples of how women are discriminated against or excluded in the academy. It becomes quite curious to note how women with the same type of education, working under the same environment, could differ so fundamentally in their perceptions and experiences. It is notable that the women who maintained that gender was not an important factor in their career development repeatedly asserted: "I was hired here as an academic and not as a woman." I pushed Wanja further to explain what she meant by such a statement. She told me that if women academics were to be hired in their capacity as women, then they would be perceived as second rate academics. Women are not seen as ambitious hard workers or determined. To prove the men wrong the women academics must work harder. Their determination and qualifications and not their gender would be useful in their promotion.

It therefore becomes clear that Wanja and others like her, unlike the embattled women, believe that promotion is a neutral act. To succeed one must be an academic but not a woman. The category "woman" is associated with lack of determination. Academic success is associated with maleness and as such these women were ready to compete and succeed on male terms.
Making Mistakes

Those whose promotion has been difficult to achieve located the blame in themselves. The majority of these women said that they did not work hard enough, were not aggressive enough, had their priorities all mixed up, spent too much time on their children. A few indicated that they have been disillusioned because academic work is not economically viable and have chosen to pursue other economic ventures instead of pursuing academic promotions. These women attributed their lack of academic progress to the objective conditions in their lives as women and to their own decisions. One such woman is Angrippina. After repeatedly putting herself forward for promotion from a lecturer to a senior lecturer for about six years without success, she located the blame in herself but in contradictory terms:

.... I would like to be at the top of the academic ladder. ... My dream is to be a professor. ... My dream is in my head [Here she laughs loudly]. ... I don't seem to be working hard enough. Maybe I am not ambitious. I spend too much time on my two boys. I have fallen behind in my publications. ... Generally my name has been shortlisted for interview, but I have not been successful so far. ... There are lots of family demands. You know how our men are. They expect service [she laughs as if it's a joke and continues] I chose and wanted the best of both worlds. I wanted marriage yes, I wanted a career yes. It's a trade off. I was entitled to one year sabbatical, but I couldn't leave because of my family. I cannot blame anybody for my lack of publications. ... I guess I have made enough sacrifices. ...

Although it appears that Angrippina's slow rate of academic promotion is a direct outcome of family conflict stemming from the sexual division of labour, she locates the blame in herself. She blames herself for not being ambitious, not working hard, for wanting marriage and a career simultaneously and for not sacrificing enough. Despite this self blame it is also important to note that she tells us that her dream is to achieve the position of a professor.

Making Choices

Nyawira perceives the situation differently. She was hired in the university in the late 1970s. She has risen to the position of a lecturer and she is very happy about it. In her view an
individual's personal choice and not gender factors determine whether one gets promoted or not. She does not understand all the fuss about academic promotions. She was happy just to be in that position for it allowed her the time to pursue farming interests which, in her view, were more rewarding than sitting in a library writing papers which would not be beneficial to the majority of the Kenyan people. She was critical that after all the hard work the salary of a professor is not enough to provide a comfortable family home. Farming has been rewarding for her. She derives satisfaction from watching her corn blossom:

... I love my career. I particularly like the freedom after lectures. I have been able to do some farm work which gives me the necessary extra-cash for my domestic use. ... You know in our universities, they don't pay well. Even with all the publications. ... professors are the poorest. ... cannot provide a decent family home. ... I decided that I was going to go make a difference. ... When I go to my Shamba [garden] and see my corn, beans blossoming ... I am more satisfied than if I publish all these papers which nobody reads. ... Promotion you can get it. You only need to put your heart and mind into it.

Nyawira, like many Kenyan women, had the burden of providing a meal on the table. She realised that her university career was not going to make this possible and therefore decided to do a side business. In her view, promotion is a matter of personal choice and she opted not to struggle for it.

There were others for whom the university has worked well. Their promotions have been very swift to the annoyance of many. These women felt that they were well supported by the male academic elite. Some of these women were closely connected to the political system. Some were repeatedly accused by the embattled group of engaging in corruption, of being too conservative or of providing sexual favours to influence their promotions. However, although there were these accusations, none of the women I interviewed admitted to being involved.
**Divisions and Denial**

Elsewhere, women have failed to make connections between the larger societal structures and their own lives or career conditions. Toren (1991) reports on a group of Israeli women professors who maintained that they are not victims of gender discrimination. They attributed their success to long hours of hard work. Conversely, they attributed their slow rate of promotion not to sex based stereotypes but to their own life conditions and personal choices. It is important to note that Toren’s participants were women who were successful academically (full university professors) and may have had no reason to complain about the system. However, in my study what is interesting is that there were women from all designations - from tutorial fellows to full professors - who denied that being a woman created any problems at all. In fact, some of the solo women in their departments argued that their gender has in fact worked for them. Some indicated that they had benefited from male colleagues who tried to patronize or gain favours from them. These women did not report incidents of exclusion or harassment.

It is important to note that these women who rejected gender as a factor in their career progress were very uncomfortable with the embattled type, who insisted that gender was an important angle in their career development. The satisfied women characterised the embattled women in negative terms like "lazy", "lacking in ability" "divorcees", "spinsters", "permanent dissenters", "rabble rousers", "a disgrace to the African woman", etc. They were clear in their views that those women who complained that the university did not work for them had only themselves to blame. The university was fair. In any case, they maintained that they would not like the idea of affirmative action. Some argued that this would be tantamount to reverse discrimination and would lead to disrespect for women’s abilities. For example, Angrippina argued:
I do not want my being here [university] or being promoted to be explained in terms of my being a woman. I am qualified and that is why I am here. This back door policy as was done with the undergraduate women intake in 1992 only hurts women students. All women students would be seen as failures who are being pushed through the system. I don’t want to be identified as such.

Some of these women explained that if women academics pushed for their recognition as women, then this would lead to their being marginalized. I was personally surprised by the attitudes exhibited by these women, bearing in mind that I was an employee of one of these universities and had my own experiences of gender oppression. Sometimes I felt that these women inhabited a different planet from mine. I tried to understand why their perceptions were so different. Some of their views led me to believe that these women were in a state of denial. They did not want to rock the boat. Akinyi’s comments illustrate this point vividly:

... These women are a real scandal. How do you expect to be promoted if you do not publish. ... What has gender got to do with it. ... You either publish or perish. ... Some want to make a name for themselves by yapping, crying that women are discriminated against. ... majority of them are single, divorced ... I truly support gender equality but hard work first ... One of the self proclaimed fighters for women’s right has forgotten her academic obligations ... I do not like the shame she puts into us [women]. She has been a lecturer for years but I doubt if she has a single publication. But instead of working hard, she has decided to talk. Any time she raises an issue in a faculty meeting the men ask her "and who are you? which women are you speaking for" and I tell you that embarrasses all of us [women] in that meeting.

In my capacity as the chairman of this department I sit in some of the review committees. Quality work is rewarded. But some of the women in this university appear for promotion interviews empty handed while men arrive armed with basket loads of publications. How can women turn around and say they are discriminated against?

These women seem to be caught up in a situation like the one addressed by Betty Friedan (1963). Accepting that they experienced gender problems might create difficulties for them professionally. Similarly Friedan’s middle-class women, supposedly liberated by technology, education and science, kept denying their submerged discontent and the emptiness of their lives. Friedan’s women saw their own dissatisfaction as a sign of their personal failure. Also Obbo
(1980) tells us that very often it is women themselves who resist change even when it is sweeping them along unwittingly. By women’s denial of their own oppression by locating problems at the personal level and failing to make connections between their lives as women and as academics they help to perpetuate the male hegemony.

A close examination of the accusations levelled against the embattled women by those in the satisfied group suggests that the satisfied women have assimilated male values. They use chauvinistic terms to blame other women. They have acquired the role of honourary males and as such they police and regulate themselves as well as other women academics. In Gramscian terms these women’s domination is so complete that the oppressed have consented to their own oppression. In fact they strive to uphold their oppression. Domination has become a lived culture and patriarchy can now sit back as women regulate, sanction and moralize each other.

Their accusations and state of denial seem like what Fanon (1963), Memmi (1969), Freire (1973) and Collins (1990) described as the ambivalent social experience of the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed love and hate the oppressor. Oppressors are models of success for the oppressed. These women in a state of denial are identifying and defending systems which in my view seemed to disadvantage them. Memmi (1969) argues that "the colonizer feeds on the fears, denials, silences of the oppressed and the ambiguous relationship between the two." Speaking of his French colonizers he says "I hated them and at the same time I felt passionately attracted to them." The history of colonialism show that the colonized peoples more often than not seek not only to identify with the colonizers, but to be like them. Thiongo (1981) and Freire (1993) tell us that it is only after recognizing ourselves with our identities that we can start asking who is like me. Patriarchy, like colonialism, thrives on the oppressed’s denial, silences and fears and false comfort.
This denial and the subsequent social relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is best illustrated by Nina, a senior lecturer, who describes herself as a successful academic who has experienced no problems in her career:

... I have never experienced any problems either in promotions or in any other matters in this university ... I was one of the first women to be hired into this department. I have always felt respected and supported particularly by other male colleagues. ... The male colleagues support you particularly if they came to understand that you are a serious scholar ... I have sat in several promotion committees and I can assure you that the university favours women ... publications are important ... and you are proving among your peers that you are competent. It is a political ritual and there are standards to be maintained ... you have to have evidence to show you are capable ... I know of cases where university seeks out why qualified people did not apply for a position.

... If two candidates male and female tallied in their ratings for a position or even if the female candidate showed that they had the potential the university creates another position ... That is why I tell you that the university favours women.

Nina’s comments are not surprising given the fact that she is one of the first generation of Kenyan women teaching in universities. In fact she considers herself lucky and successful. Very few women get access to higher education and in fact it was only in 1971 that the first woman (a Kenyan) in East and Central Africa acquired a Ph.D. (Wachege, 1992, p.128). Because of their high visibility and rarity coupled with many years of patriarchal education and socialisation it is likely that they do not see any problem with the system. It is also possible that because they have succeeded, they see their success as typical and simply cannot understand that there are others who may work hard but not make it. These women in my view universalize their experiences and as result they do not collectivize the experiences of other academic women. Their views, therefore, do not represent the experiences of the majority of the women academics. Nina reports that she gets academic support from male counterparts but only after they realize that she is a serious scholar. The suggestion here could be that those who do not get support are not serious. She sees herself in gender neutral terms, and in so doing perpetuates the status quo.
Stromquist (1991) had lamented the same problem in her study of Peruvian university students. These students were involved in struggles of social justice which defined inequality only in terms of wealth. Differences in power and status were not conceived in terms of gender. These students, however, in denying the importance of gender issues, ironically continue to impose patriarchal hegemony which by definition sees the world from a male perspective and accepts women's subordination as neutral. Female students in her study found it difficult to challenge the patriarchal ideology, and many of them in trying to win acceptance by their male peers fall into traditional mode (Stromquist 1991, p.161).

In my view refusal by these satisfied women academics to address issues of gender which squarely hinge on power and domination can be explained in several ways. First, as illustrated in chapter four, women academics, just like all other formally educated women, were educated for subordination. Second, the university, like the rest of the society, is characterized by a strong patriarchal culture. These women know that raising sensitive questions may ruin their career prospects. For example, they may have understood that you cannot complain against the university and then ask for tenure from the very same persons.

Third, the Kenyan post-independence path of development is capitalistic and gender inequalities are not addressed or seen as essentially wrong. Court (1993) argued that male dominance seems like an accepted characteristic of the Kenyan society and I agree. In view of their social and political circumstances, these women may be prudent in their decisions not to rock the boat. They may have seen others suffer for being unconventional.

Fourth, the satisfied women might have been lucky and not experienced gender discrimination on the scale reported by the embattled women. Given the few opportunities for communication among academic women, they may not have developed a sensitivity to issues affecting others but not themselves.
Fifth, it is possible that these women consciously reject gender as a factor in their career development as a coping strategy as discussed in chapter ten. They do not want to see themselves as victims of undesirable and uncontrollable circumstances. Their position could be based on the realization that as academic women they are privileged in comparison with other Kenyan women. However, even though these academic women’s actions and choices might be prudent, this kind of ideology poses serious threats to any attempts to organize women for any political action. In fact academic women were found to be very disunited. Networking among themselves and outside the university was difficult and will be discussed in detail in chapters seven and eight.

CONCLUSION

From the respondents’ responses and analyses, it becomes quite clear that the women held different perceptions in regard to their career development. A clear majority of just under two thirds, referred to here as the embattled type, believed that the university was unfair and undemocratic. They gave examples of exclusions, for example, exclusion from male academic networks, meat roasting parties or sources of important information. Through grapevine information, the men were first to learn where conferences and seminars are being conducted and where research funds could be secured. This information rarely reached women academics and their careers stagnated.

The women also concluded that men get promoted faster than females, end up earning more than females, and are more connected and well supported by the administrative body. Women’s abilities and accomplishments are devalued and for a woman to be promoted to the same rank as a male, she must outshine him. Women’s careers and promotions are under more scrutiny than those of their male counterparts.
The embattled women, therefore, believe that they suffer academic exclusions, trivialisation of their accomplishments and to a large extent are victims of psychological and sexual harassment. On account of their gender, therefore, they accumulate career disadvantages while their male counterparts, on account of their gender, continue to accumulate career advantages.

However, the one-third minority believed that the university worked for them. In what I interpret as a state of denial they maintained that their careers have been smooth sailing. They claimed that they have never been discriminated against because of gender. These women attributed success to their abilities and failure to their lack of abilities. They blamed themselves for having their priorities mixed up, for not working hard or for spending too much time on their children. Although it appears that these women have failed to make connections between their own lives and systems/structures in society, it is suggested in this chapter that the complexities and subtleties in their own lives might have forced them to reason that way. Nevertheless, their actions unwittingly support a situation whereby the system is exonerated, individuals are blamed and gender inequality in the university is perpetuated.
CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the impact of domestic responsibilities on academic women’s career development. In an attempt to understand clearly how the domestic domain affected women’s careers, I inquired about their publications, workload and any conflicts between career and domestic responsibilities. The women argued that their careers stagnated because they were expected to perform a multiplicity of domestic roles which are exhausting and time consuming. As women, they not only perform the expected domestic roles like childcare, husbandcare, and house management, but they are also expected to take on additional roles of caring for the sick and entertaining relatives and friends. The married women argued that even when they had domestic help this did not lessen their burdens, because their husbands expected personal services from them. All these tasks leave the academic women with little or no time to devote to career development.

The women identified several other barriers which stunted their careers, such as cultural expectations which dictate that a woman should marry at a certain age in order to begin bearing children. The women strongly argued that both marriage and singleness worked to the detriment of a woman’s career development. Upon marriage a woman’s work increases, but when she is single she is excluded from social and academic networks by both men and women, who suspect her of being irresponsible and a husband poacher. Strong cultural stereotypes also dictate that a woman should not be higher than a man either socially or intellectually.
Problems of social, economic and technological underdevelopment also take their toll on women's career development. These women lacked appropriate technology to lessen domestic labour and lacked conveniences such as reliable communications systems and telephones. They spend phenomenal amounts of time travelling from point A to point B. Due to declining earnings, they are also often forced to engage in a side business.

However, a handful of academic women in this study experienced gender differently in the sense that they were wealthy and hired two or three domestic servants, owned cars and had other time and energy-saving gadgets in their homes. These wealthy women had influence in the university circles and as such had the time and luxury to publish, and to travel. These women also enjoyed support from their male colleagues, and in some cases could draw on their wealth and status to act as patrons to these men.

**DOMESTIC-CAREER CONFLICT**

Almost all the academic women interviewed in this study argued that their academic careers progressed at a slower pace compared with those of their male colleagues because as women, they are expected to perform numerous domestic roles on top of their academic work. Repeatedly, the academic women complained that Kenyan men do not and are not expected to participate in the repetitive, exhausting and maddening domestic tasks. As women, their primary responsibilities were defined by the dominant cultural ideology, which first and foremost defines a woman as a wife, a mother and a male's helpmate. Consequently, their careers were perceived as secondary and were only considered important in so far as they complemented the husband's primary role of the "breadwinner". The women expressed dissatisfaction with this prevalent gender ideology which privileges the male as the head of the family, and sole breadwinner, irrespective of whether he earns bread or not. Whether or not a woman has a higher education or
higher status occupation than many men, she remains a subordinate to them and in particular, to her husband. In this kind of situation, the academic women, just like all other Kenyan women, are first and foremost expected to fulfil their supposedly biologically preordained reproductive roles, which also extended to nurturing children, taking care of the family home, preparing meals, doing laundry, going shopping, taking sick children to hospital, performing husbandcare, and entertaining family members, guests and relatives.

These responsibilities, the women asserted, were time consuming and exhausting and left them with little or no time to build their academic careers. Their stories demonstrate, that faced with this dual burden, academic women experience anxiety, contradictions and dilemmas as they try to reconcile the demands of domestic work with those of their careers.

The academic women maintained that they had learned the hard way to juggle their tasks and as such have become experts in time management and making schedules. However, despite their skilful management and budgeting of their time, the women bitterly complained that they accumulated career disadvantage because they lacked working time, peace of mind, and the leisure time necessary to renew their energies. Their very tight schedules were an endeavour to build their academic careers as well as carry their domestic responsibilities. They maintained that they spend endless hours in accomplishing their ceaseless but invisible work as wives and mothers. They explained that their male colleagues advanced their careers quickly because not only did they not have to do domestic work but they benefited from the domestic labour and support of the women in their lives. Comparing a man and a woman for the purposes of career promotion seemed to them to be tantamount to subjecting unequals to equal treatment. Women’s lived experiences were fundamentally different from those of their male colleagues. The women believed that the promotion criteria favoured men because they did not take into consideration the fact that women academics had domestic responsibilities. Some women academics married to
male academics questioned how it was possible for them to be equal competitors with their husbands who expected service from them. Some gave examples of how they make several trips to the house in between lectures just to ensure that the young child is okay, or to keep an eye on a sick mother-in-law or to attend to something else which needs immediate attention. Their academic husbands do not have to interrupt their work once they embark on it. Nyambura, a lecturer whose husband is a full university professor, mentioned that her husband left their family house early in the morning for his office where he sits "cracking on his papers up to midnight." In the same day, she is expected to pick up children from school, ensure the family house is neat and serve a hot meal to her husband when he returns home.

The multiplicity of domestic roles has far reaching effects on the careers of academic women. Domestic roles include nursing sick family members, entertaining, shopping, cooking, mothering, and being a wife. In contrast, men only played the role of a husband and father, roles which demand that they be served. Regina, a wife and a mother of three children, protests:

Promotions in this university are very hard for both men and women. But it is even more difficult for women and particularly if they are married. I have been in this university for the last twelve years and I can tell you confidentially that men climb up the promotional ladder very quickly.... Here I will provide an example and I want you to compare. I was hired on the same day with a man named Hassan just years after completion of our Master's degree.... We applied for senior lectureship together. On the interview day I was shocked. He had a heap of publications in his bag... I too had a few, but that is beside the point. The issue here is that the Interviewing Board is comparing two persons whose experiences are quite different. Women academics are not equal competitors with male academics... When they [university administration] tell you they are fair, don’t believe them... I have three children and a husband to take care of. Like all other Kenyan men, my husband, a senior lecturer in this same university, expects service. You know for me it is different. They don’t have to bother when kids get sick, or when a maid runs away. It is all a woman’s job. It is for this reason I say the promotion criteria favour the men ... I did not get senior lectureship position until years later.

From both Regina’s and Nyambura’s narrations it is quite clear that as women they have about three full-time jobs: serving their husbands, caring for the children and pursuing an
academic career. Vividly their stories demonstrate that academic women’s professional lives, unlike those of their male colleagues, can be seriously disrupted by domestic tasks. Even husbands who are university professors expect service from their academic wives. Regina, in particular, concludes that women academics are not equal competitors with their male colleagues. The promotion criteria favour male academics. Regina and others sharing her views maintained that the university is biased against women’s interests. The promotion criteria do not allow for the fact that women have to perform other roles outside the university. Both men and women are treated as if they faced the same life experiences and the same social demands on their time.

Most of the married women indicated that their husbands made heavy demands on their time. Edna, for example, complained that she had to personally prepare her husband’s meals, wash and iron his delicate clothes and be ready when he brought an unexpected group of men friends for dinner. "I am expected to be ever ready even to accompany him for impromptu meetings where they [men] might be expected to be accompanied by their spouses. ... You see it’s hectic and you cannot refuse to accompany him on the basis that you are doing some academic work. It is not acceptable."

From these women’s voices it is quite clear that a husband is an added responsibility. Ironically, despite these women’s complaints they seemed to believe in the labour of love. It was clear that some believed that providing personal services to their husbands was a sign of love, and in particular, the offering of food was considered a defining principle in marriage. In fact, at weddings the bridegroom is congratulated for getting himself a cook. Sophia, remembering her wedding, mentioned that her husband was congratulated "Hongera kwa kupata Mpishi" (literally translated from Kiswahili to mean congratulations for getting a cook) and she was congratulated for getting "mlinzi" (Kiswahili - meaning a protector).
Even when some of the academic women had the services of housegirls, they had to carry the burden of cooking in order to prove that they had not abandoned one of their primary tasks in marriage. They believed all domestic tasks, however disruptive to their careers, were solely theirs. They did not go beyond the private murmurs and complaints that they were overburdened and that their husbands did not participate in the domestic labour. They lamented that their husbands did not engage in the repetitive, boring and mindless routines of dishwashing, shelling corn and peas, mopping floors, attending a crying child, doing laundry or changing nappies. They maintained that their husbands only fixed things around the house, mowed the lawn, or trimmed the fence but never directly participated in routine domestic activities. From their analyses of the situation it is arguable that neither higher education nor their entrance into the labour force has changed the traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. Consequently, although these women could no longer play their expected traditional housewife roles without strain, they were either afraid or unwilling to ask for help from their men. Perhaps it was too threatening to ask. Asking a man to cook is tantamount to "asking him to be a woman" as one academic asserted. Moreover, if a husband's significant others found out that he participated in domestic tasks he would be subjected to much ridicule. His wife too would be ostracised as one who "henpecks" and "emasculates" men. She would be branded by both men and women alike as "one who enjoys sitting on a man", as Angela ruefully puts it.

From the foregoing discussion, it seems to me that these academic women were critically aware of the unfairness of the situation but they did not want to flout the gender rules. They did not want to be seen as "sitting on a man", "emasculating" or "henpecking" their spouses. Aware of their own situation, they consciously decided to behave as if there was no problem and their decision might be prudent. Challenging gender relations, particularly within the household, might result in marital stress or worse still divorce, and women are the likely losers. Marital stress or
divorce could have far reaching effects not only on the women's personal and social lives but also on their careers. As discussed in a later section in this chapter, it is clear that some academic women have seen their academic careers stagnate or be ruined simply because they got divorced or never got married. Faced with this very difficult social reality, juggling tasks can be overwhelming and almost impossible if one has small children. In the absence of day care provision, these academics enlist the support of housegirls. However, as shown in the next section, housegirls may not lessen an academic woman's burden.

HOUSEMAID HELP AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS

For academic women to engage in careers, they have to rely on the help of housegirls. In Kenya there are no day care centres and children only attend nursery schools or kindergartens from age four to five. Furthermore, the need to maintain elite standards of cleanliness demands extra help. A clear majority of the women in this study (19) had housemaids while only five did not enlist their help. Two of these five women did not have children while the other three were single mothers and claimed that it was too expensive to maintain a housegirl.

However, the academic women who enlist the support of housegirls maintain that there are limits to what help the housegirl can offer. Furthermore, housegirls can become a source of more social and economic woes that leave the women anxious and emotionally drained. They were

\[25\] Examples of two women professors, Micere Mugo (now in exile) and Wangari Maathai, were repeatedly given to illustrate women whose careers were ruined when they got divorced.

\[26\] The academic women explained that unlike the rural and poor urban women certain social standards were expected of them. They are expected to live in spotlessly clean houses, and use extra polished furniture, glittering chinaware as well as extra white washed and ironed linen. Family clothes plus those of the little children must be well ironed as a mark differentiating them from socially underprivileged classes. The houses are expected to be mopped on a daily basis and to receive a thorough general cleaning every week-end. During my field observations, I noticed that any drop of water or tea was mopped up immediately. In fact the housegirls were on standby to wipe any spills. I gathered from the field that many domestic conflicts indeed emanated from a wife's failure to maintain the expected standards of class cleanliness which included not only keeping everything extra clean but also in an orderly manner.
clear in their views that housegirls are a "necessary evil" in their lives. Repeatedly the academic women told stories to me of how they had to manage crises like when they woke up only to find that their housemaid had disappeared. Sometimes they are forced to make flimsy excuses to chairs of their departments, cut short an arranged research project, or postpone their scheduled duties and meetings because the girls have decided to quit without any prior notice. This kind of situation inadvertently impacts negatively on the women’s professional lives, as graphically illustrated by Amina, married and a mother of four children:

... It is like waking up and stepping on a red iron rod... You don’t know whether she will tell you she wants to leave, or she is going to hospital or what. It feels like being blackmailed... I have difficulty at times putting my life together. You are either at the office and you are worried whether baby is okay, whether the housegirl has fed the baby, whether the right dosage was given or cold or very hot baths was given to the baby. You are always tense. Other times you wake up to find that the housegirl is nowhere to be found. ... If you cannot get help from neighbours, then it means you cannot attend official duties. ... It is heartbreaking ... I remember last year I had to cut short my research work... You cannot kill the children ... You know with our society, it is the woman who usually shoulders the family burden.

Angela, a senior lecturer and a mother of two who is married to a successful banker, makes similar points. When I asked her how often she published, her response was informative and instructive:

I do not publish as often as I would like to. You know as a married woman it is difficult to organize, to plan your time particularly for your husband... I can easily organize the children’s schedules... but I cannot tell when my husband might make demands on my time. ... I have hired housegirls one after the other ... they don’t like a place where there are small children ... It is very disruptive, painful and chaotic particularly when a housegirl decides to leave without prior notice. ... Many are the mornings I wake up only to find the housegirl had disappeared. This means that I put off all the plans for the day and take over all domestic responsibilities. ... You don’t expect a husband to get a day off because the maid has vanished. ... I have been forced on several occasions to terminate research projects, postpone writing my conference papers when a housegirl runs

27 Domestic responsibilities repeatedly mentioned included taking care of a young child, cleaning the house, washing the clothes and cooking. Most of the times housegirls are employed to do these jobs in the absence of the academic women.
away. ... our men have been raised to believe that it is a woman's responsibility to ensure that the kids are okay. ... My husband has on several occasions helped look for a housegirl but that does not solve the problem. ... While in the office I am always worried whether the kids are safe, whether the housegirl has run away and left them alone. ... Sometimes I drive several times to the house just to ensure all is okay.

From these narrations it becomes clear that although the housegirls are expected to relieve these women of their multiplicity of domestic responsibilities, it is not without a personal price. The women are under constant fear, worry and anxiety particularly if they have small children. They are always worried whether the children are properly fed, whether the right medication and baths are given. From this kind of situation, it is arguable that though the women might be in the offices physically, mentally they are home. They therefore suffer mental dissonance as a result and Amina clearly tells us "it feels crazy to have an infant and teaching duties."

Clearly, Amina and Angela believe all domestic responsibilities are exclusively theirs and as such when a housegirl disappears they have to take on her duties. The housegirl is only meant to help. Supervisory and managerial roles are still demanding. Some women complained that they spent a huge chunk of their time training and supervising housegirls, to ensure that they met the required standards for maintaining elite homes. Most of these girls are young, inexperienced, and come from different social economic backgrounds. Many of them leave soon after getting this housekeeping training. Even when some stayed and became experienced housekeepers, husbands did not always eat food prepared by housegirls. That means the academic woman must fulfil one of her primary responsibilities: "cooking for her husband, or another outside wife [will] prepare it," as Edna remarked.

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28 This term is usually used to refer to single woman involved in a romantic relationship with a married man. It is not unusual to find Kenyan men having secret relationships with women whom they treat as informal wives. Most of the married academic women expressed fear that if they failed to provide services to their elite husbands, the men would resort to keeping these informal wives. In my view, it appeared that the men used this fear to control and demand domestic services from their wives.
From all these analyses it becomes quite clear that the academic women are overburdened by having to combine domestic responsibilities and academic careers, even when they have housegirls to help them. There are limits to what housegirls can do.

It is also important to note at this point that not all academic women could afford domestic help and as such they had to make more social and personal sacrifices. From my field observations and discussions, it was evident that these academic women had no time to rest. When I interviewed women in their homes I found it amazing that as we spoke they were always doing something else too. Sometimes we had to postpone the interview to another day due to interruptions from an unexpected visitor, relative, or an emergency like a power failure. Other times the women responded to a crying child, a telephone, or we worked together in domestic activities like shelling peas or peeling carrots as we talked.

Bujra (1983) and Robertson (1984) argue that female wage earners in Africa do not have to carry the dual burden of domestic responsibility and wage labour because they can employ housemaids. In contrast, the present study shows that this expectation that professional women can count on support from housegirls does not lessen the professional women’s burden, but simply exonerates men from participating in these responsibilities. It is my observation and argument that for most of the academic women, their entrance into the waged labour force has continued to increase their work, and as such, their academic careers do not progress as fast as those of their male colleagues.

A critical concern, however, is the fact that instead of academic women squarely addressing the sexual division of labour, they have pushed their domestic responsibilities onto underprivileged women. In so doing they not only help in perpetuating patriarchy, but also justify the idea that domestic responsibilities are a woman’s purview. Moreover, the unequal relationship between the madam of the house and the housegirl works against female bonding and solidarity. This lack of solidarity is discussed in chapters seven and eight.
MARRIAGEABILITY AND ACADEMIC PRODUCTION

The dichotomized dominant gender ideology prevalent in the Kenyan culture which dictates that a woman's access to self-fulfilment, status and respectability comes only through marriage, whereas a man's access to the same comes through career success, was repeatedly cited as a barrier to academic women's career success. The academic women explained that the age at which Kenyan women are considered marriageable happened to be the same age when they might be entering into their academic careers. By the time a woman gets an undergraduate degree she is already twenty-three years old. If she were to pursue a Masters degree she would be much older and it is at this time that she is under great pressure from parents, peers and friends to conform to social norms, i.e. to get married and have children. To complicate her life further, it is at this time that she is likely to be recruited in the university, to a training position (staff development)\(^{29}\) as a demonstrator, graduate assistant or a tutorial fellow. During this initial period, a novice (recruit) is expected to embark seriously on Master's or Ph.D work and to convince her peers and seniors of her intellectual worth. Moreover, renewal of her contract annually depends on the nature of academic progress the novice makes. After a period of two academic years one is required at least to complete and defend a Ph.D proposal and present a number of seminar papers, on top of excellent teaching, for the contract to be renewed.

Some of the academic women again and again told me that they experienced social, emotional, psychological and intellectual conflicts as they tried to decide whether to get married first or to embark on their careers, or to plunge into the two conflicting and yet valued and

\(^{29}\) In Kenyan universities, there are graduate programmes where upon completion of an undergraduate degree with distinctions i.e first class honours, the individuals are admitted into masters programmes in order to train them for a university lecturing career and hence the use of the term staff development. At other times, persons with Masters degrees are absorbed in the lower ranks of an academic career as tutorial fellows with the explicit agreement that theirs is a training position. These individuals are expected to pursue doctoral programmes with immediate effect.
coveted options together. Their lives were even more conflicted by the critical awareness that a woman bestows honour and prestige upon her parents not only through high educational and career accomplishments but more so if she marries and marries well.\(^{30}\)

The marriage requirement was and still is crucial in their lives because it was/is perceived as an important rite of passage. Any person, man or woman, who fails to fulfil this condition is seen as a social misfit, an unfulfilled individual and in fact an incomplete member of the society. However, this marriage expectation affects a woman's career decision very differently from that of a man. A man is never too old, too ugly or too successful to get married. By the time a woman completes her undergraduate degree she is considered ripe for marriage. By age twenty-six she is getting too ripe for marriage. If she decides to choose her career advancement first and marriage later, she may be condemned to singleness. "She becomes too old, too successful, too ugly, too manly and aggressive" for the marriage market, as Rhoda, a Ph.D holder and single mother of one girl, puts it. Rhoda further maintained that she always wanted to tie that marriage knot but there are not many understanding men. Paradoxically both marriage and singleness negatively impact on academic women's careers, but in somewhat different ways. Singleness in particular could lead to social and personal conflicts, as aptly illustrated by Santalo’s narration:

... It is particularly too difficult to convince your friends, relatives and even parents that, the fact that you are not married has got nothing to do with your age. ... As you know our society encourages marriage and childbearing as central rites of passage. You are seen as irresponsible, incapable if you do not fulfil these rites of passage. ... The irony here is that the same society attaches high value to high education and careers for both men and women. This is a source of conflict. ... I can vividly remember the agony, the pains my mother had to bear. In her view, I was getting too old and she wanted me to either get married or have a baby, if I failed to get to myself a husband. ... I had to physically cut my self off from many of my married friends in order to complete my doctorate. ... There were times I used to get frightened that my mother might be right. ... that I might never get married. ... today they [her parents] are very glad that I made the decision to acquire my doctorate first.

\(^{30}\) Marrying well: A woman is expected to marry above herself (hypergamous). The man must not only be propertied, but also well educated, from the right family, clan, lineage etc.
It takes a woman of Santalo's courage to withstand peer pressure and nagging from parents. Clearly, her choice was not an easy one. There were times when she was frightened that she might never get married. She was critically aware of the centrality of marriage and childbearing in a woman's life according to the dictates of Kenyan society, but at the same time she knew that early marriage would jeopardize her career. However, to fail to fulfill this important marital condition could lead to one being perceived as an irresponsible social misfit, incomplete and incapable. This perception could have dampening career effects as confirmed by Aketch, who decided, like Santalo, not to get married prior to completion of the requirements for promotion to a lectureship position. She turned down many impatient prospective suitors, but upon her promotion to a lectureship position, found that her chances of her getting married were minimal. She explained that she was considered either too old or too qualified academically for the marriage market. In her words:

It is a tough choice for women who are career oriented. All the time I knew I wanted to become a university professor. ... I admired them a lot. ... luckily I completed my undergraduate with first class honours degree. Right away I was offered a university scholarship to pursue my Masters degree as part staff development project. It was neat. ... Many prospectives proposed and I turned them down. ... I wanted to get a lectureship position before I could think of marriage. ... Here I am today a senior lecturer with too many men around but too scared to propose marriage. I would like to get married, I would like to get a family like everybody else... Some [men] have even suggested I am too old for marriage. ...Others think I am beyond child bearing age.

Examining Aketch’s narration of her life experiences it becomes clear that it is not easy for a woman to disregard societal traditional expectation and not be socially marginalized. Aketch tells us that she would like to get married, to settle down like everybody else but the stakes are high against her. Despite her academic accomplishments she still subscribes to the traditional belief that a woman must always get married. She seems trapped in a double bind. There is no way to move outside the society. Whichever choice she took she was bound to fail. If she chose early marriage, chances are that she would have forfeited her scholarship or that her career
progress would have been slowed down. Now she has a higher education and cannot secure a marriage partner. However, Aketch’s need to conform, "to get married like everybody else" is not without reason. At the university she faced exclusion, and lack of mentorship and support on account of her singleness. She told me how single women in university circles are perceived as "social failures", "uncontrollable", "irresponsible", "proud", "husband poachers", or simply unfulfilled individuals perpetually looking for a saviour (husband) to own them. In fact, single academic women despite their academic qualifications or career success are often greeted with pity "oui ucio niagire mwene" (literally translated to mean: oh how sad she failed to get an owner).

This failure to "get owned" has serious career implications, as Aketch further explains:

... Even when you work hard and everybody knows you are paid an equal or higher salary than many academic men, they [university community] don’t know how to deal with you. All the time they add a ‘but’ to my name. All the time "but she is not married" and this can be disastrous. ... Once the Dean of our Faculty approached me to work on a research project with him. I was enthused by the idea but this did not take long. Rumours started circulating that I was dating him. ... When you are single, to succeed you have to forego honour and dignity. ... I did not pay attention to the rumours. ... after three months of travelling to villages and collecting data I could no longer work with the Dean. His wife was already complaining. She simply could not understand how we could spend hours with her husband in the office, leave alone riding in the same car. The pressure was too much and I opted out of the research project. ... the problem here is that we are only few women in the faculty and none is senior enough to act as a mentor.

From Santalo’s and Aketch’s stories, it is quite clear that for a woman, singleness constitutes a barrier to academic progress. Fear of suspicion by the university community or jealousy from the male academic’s spouse leads to the exclusion of single women. Being single, they are perceived as sexually available. The single women in this study bitterly complained that even when they have worked extremely hard and felt they deserved research grants or promotions, senior male academics were afraid to recommend them highly or act in their favour for fear of being accused of having a romantic affair with them. Conversely, married women were perceived as "owned" and, therefore, decent, responsible, and sexually unavailable. Liberal male academics,
therefore, preferred to collaborate on research with married women because it was easier to defend themselves by asserting that "she is married", "she has an owner" and, therefore, is not sexually available.

Single women in this study gave several examples of incidents where they were discriminated against not only because of their gender but also because they were not married. They complained bitterly that single men did not face the same discrimination since there was no official policing to establish their marital status. Women were always differentiated and defined in a relationship to a man, as Mrs., Miss, ex-wife, etc., while all academic men are Misters. Single women expressed that they spent a lot of their invaluable time fighting and resisting stereotypes assigned them instead of advancing their careers.

Paradoxically, even the women who chose to fulfil the traditional societal expectation and married soon after completion of their first degrees expressed discontent. They complained that they lived under constant pressure from relatives and in particular mothers-in-law who wanted their daughters-in-law to give birth to more children. It is believed, at least by the older generation, that immortality is achieved through children. One would never cease to be as long as there is somebody named after them (Mbiti, 1978). This world view sharply conflicted with that of young women academics interested in advancing their careers. The academic women maintained that the pressure to get an extra child, to name your mother, your in-laws, and so forth, leaves the academic women psychologically tormented. Nyambura, talking of her own battles with her mother-in-law, exemplifies this:

Sometimes the pressure is too much. ... I do almost daily battles with my mother-in-law. She [mother-in-law] simply cannot understand how after several years of marriage I have only two children. ... Clearly I have agreed with my husband that two children are enough. That was all we could afford. ... When his mother cries that I control her son, that I should be divorced if I am incapable of getting a third child, at least a boy, my husband at times seems to listen to her. ... Incidentally I have two beautiful girls. This domestic turmoil affects my whole life. ... Sometimes my mother-in-law called me an academic witch. She asked me
whether I had become a man, that all I wanted was to sit and read, read and write. ... I get very angry many times when my mother-in-law visits. It's time consuming. ... Many times I postpone my academic work to entertain her, care for her, at least to appease her. I want to show her at least I am not as bad as she thinks.

From Nyambura's narration it becomes clear that even when academic women planned their families and career priorities they could not ignore pressure from significant others. They were under constant pressure to conform to the traditional stereotypical breeder role. This pressure at times can cause "domestic turmoil", and as Nyambura tells us, it is time consuming and psychologically exhausting. The women maintained that they were faced with a difficult situation as soon as they tried to break away from old norms and create new identities. They experienced contradictions and dilemmas as the first generation of highly educated women, and as participants in waged labour. Kenyan society is still grappling with social and economic transformations which are, in most cases, externally influenced. Kenyan society is in a state of anomie (Durkheim ([1857] 1952:258). Emile Durkheim used the term anomie, a French word which means "normlessness", to describe a situation of people whose social order is changing so rapidly that old communal values are eroded before new ones can develop to take their place. In a state of anomie, people are adrift, with no clear sense of meaningful rules or norms.

I find Durkheim's concept of anomie useful in understanding the clash between the academic women and their mothers-in-law in particular and the society at large in general. Kenyan traditional values and norms are being challenged by this group of academic women who wish to combine marriage and a formal career. But, even as the society changes materially, spiritually it seems resistant to change. Although these academic women were highly educated and indeed changed while part of the Kenyan society, spiritual values seem to drag on. This cultural lag to some extent can help us understand why the majority of the academic women, despite their intellectual and economic positions, kept operating in the traditional mode.
During my field observations and discussions with academic women, it was clear that these women, particularly the younger ones, presented a challenge to the society. They wanted to combine selectively old norms and new norms. The general society is not well prepared to deal with this new breed of women. It was not clear for either the academic women or their less educated relatives or for academic males how conflicting norms could harmoniously co-exist. Women entering into professions is something new, and the society needs to change in order to accommodate the inevitably changing gender roles.

However, until Kenyan society has developed new ways of dealing with these professional women, they will continue to be viewed ambivalently. Their career advancement will continue to be stunted as they try to reconcile the demands of their academic careers with those of the traditional society. They will continue to be pressured to get married at the considered appropriate age, to be isolated on account of their being single, and to be pressured to have more children even when this works against their economic and career progress. They will have to continue resisting and fighting the cultural lag.

Their academic careers will continue to be less successful than those of their male counterparts on account of their marital status. Single women are isolated but their careers might suffer even more if they were married. Marriage leads to restricted freedoms and restricts their training as well as publishing.

**RESTRICTED SOCIAL AND PERSONAL FREEDOMS**

The majority of the married academic women in this study argued that their career development, and in particular their promotions, suffered not only because of their specific domestic roles, but more so because they were not autonomous beings. As wives they are normally expected to be homebound. If they wanted to participate in a function that would take
them away from home, even if it were only overnight, they had to get the consent of their husbands. This consent was not easy to get because some women felt afraid to ask, while others thought it might be seen as a breach of the marital contract.

Once a woman is married she is expected to be home before nightfall to ensure her family house is in order. This expectation, which some of these women perceived as a means of social control, limited their chances of attending scholarly conferences, seminars, workshops and even their chances of pursuing further education. The academic women were critically aware that advancement in the academic world depended, to a large extent, on how well they mingled with other scholars and participated in events where new information was being disseminated, ideas shared and tested and networks established. They were also keenly aware that as married women they were expected to be stay at home. This kind of situation resulted in women experiencing tension, frustration and guilt. Some in no uncertain terms explained that marriage was a disabler to their career progress, not so much because they had domestic chores, as they could be delegated, but because of the condition that "decent married women do not usually spend nights out."

Critical of the double standards, the academic women lamented that their careers were more disadvantaged than those of their male colleagues, because if a chance for further training arose a wife could not make a unilateral decision to take it. Conversely, a husband would automatically take it and only inform his wife after the decision was made. Even if it involves the husband’s leaving the family for years, the wife is expected to celebrate that the breadwinner is making some progress for the benefit of the entire family. However, there are exceptional cases where elite men encourage and support their wives’ pursuit of higher education, more often than not, because of the perceived social and economic prestige. A pilot study by Kamau (1992) with African women in some Ontario Universities revealed that the pursuit of higher education in
Canada has resulted in great social and personal pain for some, particularly at the marriage level. Some of the women were in the process of divorce, others had divorced while pursuing their programmes while others complained that their marriages have become dysfunctional. Some had chosen to ignore the problem for the time being, while others made efforts to sponsor their spouses to Canada in the hope that their marriages could be saved, only to see them deteriorate even further.

Failure to undertake further education and to participate in academic conferences, workshops and seminars, in turn means that women lack some or all of the necessary intellectual capital to compete equally in a stiff, cut-throat academic competition. Several of the married academic women interviewed reported suffering serious academic setbacks particularly when they failed to accept academic scholarships offered to them pursue their masters or doctorate abroad. Some of the academic women admitted that their husbands personally denied them permission or said they knew of a woman who had been denied permission for further training or to participate in scholarly gatherings. Speaking of her own personal experience, Anna states:

A woman is not independent and particularly if married. I am leaving single mothers out because their problem is where to leave their children. But if you are married you have to ask for permission from your husband and one might be afraid to be seen as too ambitious to an extent of trying to overshadow her husband. ... the society does not encourage women to do a doctorate. You don't need it. ... I had two chances for further training but my husband argued that the children were important. Like all other Kenyan men he tells me that he is more interested in a wife not a degree. ... I have been in this lectureship position for years now. Working on my doctorate locally has proven to be an impossible task. ... You are always blamed by the university for not working hard, as lacking in ambition and this can be disheartening. ... You don't have to tell them about your marriage, it might be used against you. ... Sometimes I blame myself for wanting the best of the two worlds - marriage and a family. It is like wanting to eat your cake and still have it. ... It is a trade off. ... I feel trapped but for the sake of my children I persevere.

From Anna’s presentation and analysis of her predicament several things become clear. She is physically and socially limited by her status as a wife. It is also clear that it is difficult for
her to progress professionally because even when an opportunity presents itself for further training, her husband has veto power ("he is more interested in a wife than a degree") and that makes Anna’s physical mobility difficult. What is even more remarkable is the fact that Anna is seen by the university as lacking in motivation and career ambition despite her marital constraints. Anna’s case exemplifies a rather complex, ambiguous and contradictory existence in the lives of many of the academic women and indeed women professionals in Kenyan society. Although she clearly identifies and analyzes the factors that disable her career development, she at the same time locates the blame in herself for choosing a career and marriage. By so doing, she clearly fails to connect those patriarchal structures which oppress her, stretching from the family to the university, with her daily lived experiences. Failing to make these connections and to challenge these oppressive structures, she perpetuates patriarchy. She fails to understand that patriarchy thrives on ambiguities and silences.

Exaining her situation further, it becomes quite clear that Anna is in a dilemma. If, for example, she chooses for herself and accepts the scholarship for further studies abroad and thereby increases her chances for career improvement, she runs the risk of breaking up her marriage. At the same time failure to choose for herself jeopardizes her academic promotions as she clearly indicates: "I have been in this lectureship position for years now. Working on my doctorate locally has proven an impossible task." She has, rather grudgingly, decided to bear the accusation made against her by the university that she is lazy and unmotivated rather than risk becoming exposed, humiliated, and stigmatized were her marriage to fail. As a divorcee, she would always be ridiculed as a social failure, and stigmatized as an irresponsible woman who emasculated her husband. This marital failure is more often than not used against women seeking promotions within public institutions, as lucidly explained by Amina, a senior lecturer and mother of four children, who was busy trying to salvage her marriage:
There are tensions in my marriage because I sometimes decide to be deaf. If I wanted to attend a conference I attended, then I discussed later. ... there are complains that I am more married to my career than my husband. ... It is as if we are strangers. ... I am now trying my best because when you are divorced it hurts you. You are always addressed as an ex-wife. .... you are always blamed for the marriage failure. For the sake of my children and our social image I am working hard to save this marriage. ... always it is the woman at fault. ... In this university [where this interview was conducted], you get no support from both men and women in case your marriage fails. You become the laughing stock and that's it. ... They [other academics] question your capability. If you cannot hold your family together how can you maintain your career. ... such excuses and you never get promoted.

Under such circumstances, then, it is arguable that the women are prudent in choosing not to rock the marital boat. They have a lot at stake, including their personal honour, prestige and career prospects. From the women's evidence, a marriage failure was considered more painful and more stigmatizing than career failure. Marriage breakdown was interpreted as a personal failure. These women were willing to take all possible measures to prevent personal failure and hence were forced to give preference to their families over their career development whatever their career ambitions. (I use the word preference here reluctantly, unable to find a better word.) The women in this study clearly have high career ambitions but their lived social experiences do not allow them to further these ambitions. Even if we argued that these academic women had a "choice", for example to remain single or to get divorced if marriage conflicted with their career interests, the women's stories show that this "choice", too, leads to double failure. Singleness and being divorced are stigmatized conditions, and they, like marriage, affect a woman's career progress. Interestingly, the women charged that a double standard discriminated against them because single or divorced men were never penalized for marital failure. In any case the university [male and female academics] may treat a divorced man sympathetically - as a man who worked hard but was ruined by a woman. A man's marital failure is not considered a personal failure and in any case he can marry again and again without being stigmatized. It can be argued, therefore, by the women choosing to salvage their marriages, that in turning down scholarships
and conferences they are being prudent and are choosing the best for themselves. They are making the best "choice" out of a bad situation.

However, their choice should not be mistaken for uncritical conformity. Again and again the women told me "because of my children I have made this choice," or, "I am keeping quiet for the sake of my children." An interesting perspective about the gap between feeling and behaving is suggested by Warner, Wellman and Weitzman (1973). In their writing they argue that oppressed persons may play out their socially designated role with ostensible signs of acceptance, while actually rejecting the role, morally and psychologically. This gap between believing and doing was a characteristic of many of the women in this study. Some of the academic women indicated that they deferred their own higher education, postponed writing an academic paper, turned down academic scholarships and at times played dumb for fear of outshining the men in their lives. They did not like it but for the sake of domestic peace, for the sake of their children, they engaged in acts that were not in their own personal interests.

From the discussions with and observations of these academic women, I could sense an undercurrent of discontent and resistance, but these feelings were so painful, threatening or completely unsettling that these women often preferred not to publicly articulate them.

FEAR OF OUTSHINING A SPOUSE

Fear of eclipsing or overshadowing their spouses or other men in their lives was repeatedly mentioned as an important consideration in a woman's career advancement. Several academic women in this study told me of instances where they were forced to defer, slow down, or completely abandon their chances for further training and chances of attending scholarly conferences, seminars and workshops for the sake of domestic peace. The women explained that according to social and cultural expectations, the men in their lives were expected to be more
knowledgable, more educated, more wealthy, more outgoing, older, in higher positions - in short, to be more of something and everything in relation to the woman in their lives. Academic women, therefore would be expected to marry men who are many steps above them.

Unfortunately, however, these men are few and in any case most prefer to marry women who are several steps beneath them in terms of education, age, etc. Faced with this limitation some of the academic women married men who had an equal education, or less than their own. This situation in turn disadvantages academic women’s career advancement because they are forced to be content with their present positions in order to help their spouses save face.

However, deferring their own education or career accomplishments came at great personal pain. Many academic women shared with me career tribulations they had endured in an effort to not outshine their spouses. Atieno, who postponed her doctoral studies to save her marriage and only made a decision to embark seriously on her doctorate after being threatened with a termination notice by the chair of her department, had this to say of her own personal struggles:

... When we married both of us had Masters degrees. ... then I got a scholarship to pursue my Ph.D. ... I could not take the offer. It was simply threatening. ... My husband maintained that he had enough money to maintain his family. He is a head of a corporation. ... I deferred my Ph.D for five years but I was hired in the university with an explicit agreement that I was to pursue my doctorate. ... the chairman of my department sent this memo demanding that I explain in writing why my services should not be terminated since I had breached our contractual agreement. ... After a lot of talking over with my husband, he reluctantly agreed that I pursue my Ph.D. ... It was a painful period. ... He [her husband] constantly complained that I was more married to my books than him. ... Sometimes he would angrily lock me up in the study and I would be forced to spend my nights in there. ... I earned my doctorate after concerted struggles with my husband ... I have published a number of articles and I can say I am secure in my academic career. ... My doctorate has become a source of conflict in the house. Any minor disagreement is attributed to the fact that I have become hard headed since I got that Ph.D. He constantly accuses me of talking too much, being too forward, having a bloated ego, etc.

It takes a woman of Atieno’s courage to break with the "traditional" socio-cultural expectation that the man must always and in every situation be the boss. She ultimately realized
that she had to choose to be her own person. She needed that Ph.D in order to keep her position at the university. Atieno is caught up in a double bind. If she chose not to pursue her Ph.D, it was likely that she might loose her job, but now that she has chosen the Ph.D, her life is riddled with marital tensions.

Like Atieno other women reported experiencing marital conflicts and being deserted when they accomplished their doctorates before their spouses or potential husband did the same. Their education, they maintained, is "a source of marital stress." They were accused of trying to emasculate their men and of going contrary to the natural law. Angela, who deferred her doctoral studies for the sake of maintaining domestic peace, bitterly regretted the fact that her deferment did not save her marriage. Even after ten years of self-sacrifice her marriage eventually broke down. By the time I interviewed her she was regretful of her ten years in academic limbo. She described herself as a double loser, but was determined to make up for the lost years.

Critically aware of the fact that a woman's academic and economic success could lead to a denial of affiliative needs or to social failure, some women consciously decided to be content with a masters degree. Some single women academics were even afraid to buy a car or to furnish their houses too well in case they scared off a prospective Mr. Right. Fearing to appear too successful and independent, some single female academics concealed their own accomplishments, as Amina succinctly puts it:

When I attend a social function I simply introduce myself as Amina. When pressed to disclose my career, I tell them I am a teacher. That way I get many guys interested in me. ... If the word gets around that I am a Ph.D holder and a lecturer at the university the social dimension changes. They [men] are no longer socially interested. ... They become more official and we end up discussing hard intellectual stuff. ... they want to be friends at arms’ length.

Wachege (1992, p.90-91), who is critical of the prevalent social-cultural traditions and patriarchal gender ideology which dictate that women are men's subordinates, tells us that Kenyan men are afraid of marrying women with a better education or career than theirs. He specifically
points out that Kenyan women experience both oppression and exploitation:

Intellectually and particularly concerning decision making women are usually taken to be simple simpletons. They are expected to adhere scrupulously to what men think, say and decide. It does not normally matter whether the woman is a professor and the husband a primary school dropout. She is not allowed to think. Discussion is a taboo. Hers is expected to be a yes role... It is arguably believed that the woman can only be at best on the same intellectual level with her husband no matter how low the husband’s education is, but never above him.

I find Wachege’s arguments very illuminating. As a man, a senior male academic in the University of Nairobi and a Catholic priest, his comments lead us into a deeper understanding of why academic women and in particular single academic women conceal, delay or defer their academic achievements. To fit in her preordained "yes role", as Wachege tells us, she must surely be less educated, less exposed and preferably less intelligent than her spouse or prospective one. This mentality indeed affects not only the academic women’s careers but also how the general society relates to a woman who is more articulate or vibrant than her husband.

The academic women spoke of experiencing contradictions, conflicts, tensions and dilemmas in the daily lives. They were highly educated but their society was bent on treating them like traditional women no matter what. Edna, a senior lecturer, a mother of three children and married to a successful professional, explained to me the problems she experienced with her in-laws. Despite her education she was expected to be mute. She was not expected to engage actively in discussions, particularly in the presence of her in-laws and her husband. She vividly remembered an incident when her mother-in-law furiously demanded to know "what happened to my son’s voice? How come we only hear yours?" It is, therefore, a perplexing task to be highly educated, highly exposed and yet expected to fit into the cultural ideology which mutes women. Attempts to silence achieving women have been well illustrated by Imbuga in his play Aminata.

As if all the forces are in conspiracy against academic women’s career advancement, these women have also had to deal with the vagaries of social and economic underdevelopment which directly affect their daily lives as women and as wage earners.
Lack of Appropriate Technologies

Another theme arising from the interviews was the lack of appropriate technological devices to lessen domestic labour. The academic women repeatedly complained that time was a critical resource which they lacked. They used words like "managing", "economizing" budgeting", "scheduling" to explain how difficult it was for them to get the time required for them to accomplish their daily domestic routines. In particular, they noted that they were forced to spend phenomenal chunks of their limited time on food processing, waiting for and commuting on unreliable and unpredictable public transportation, or going in search of cooking gas. They had also to find time for cleaning and mopping the floors as well as laundry which is done by hand in most of the homes. They spoke of endless domestic work made more complicated by the lack of or rationing of water and electricity.

These demands on their time contribute to their lack of publications and active involvement in university life, which in turn stunts career development. Blaming the effects of social and economic underdevelopment for her slow promotion rate, Anna, a mother of two girls and happily married to a successful civil servant, told me how she experienced mental anguish as she endlessly tried to balance her career demands and domestic responsibilities. She pointed out that she rarely got enough rest and as a result she felt physically exhausted and mentally drained. On weekends she tries to squeeze at least one hour or two for her private use. However, this one or two hours are not for resting. It is during this time she tries to finish a paper or organize a schedule for the next week. She is the organizer of the family house, and of shopping, cooking and washing for the week. She further explained her tight schedule on the week-end which included rising early in the morning to rush to "Wakulima" [farmer’s] market where the prices were a bit more reasonable, shopping for cooking gas, and preparing the family dinner. In
particular, she expressed concerns that due to a time squeeze it was only on weekends she was able to prepare what she considered a "healthy family meal" but this could translate into spending a lengthy amount of time. The food preparation is a tedious process. In her words:

... to prepare a good meal for your family means two things, namely time and money. ... Due to the economic squeeze I frequent Wakulima [farmers] market on Saturdays very early in the morning. By 7:00 a.m. I am busy hassling and pushing through the busy crowd. When my husband accepts to drive me it is easier because I do not have to rely on public transportation. ... but he just sits in the car as I wrestle and haggle with the traders. ... this can alone take several hours. When my husband fails to drive me it could take the whole morning to get back home. ... Preparation of the family dinner is a lengthy process. ... the peeling and chopping of carrots, garlic, onions. ... preparation of the dough for chapati, or shelling of peas and corn for Kienyenji. ... meat preparations etc. are all time consuming. ... sometimes I push my laundry to Sundays before I attend the church service. ... family ironing is done on Sunday afternoon whenever possible. ... the work is never ending.

At the time this interview was conducted Anna was undergoing a very difficult time because her housemaid had deserted them after a domestic dispute. Her two daughters were quite young, six and eight years, and as such could not provide any help. Her husband like other men in Kenya did not help in any of the domestic responsibilities other than fixing a broken tap or carrying out minor repairs round the house. Indeed, Acker (1994) has made the same observation in a different context that men’s help may be practical but rarely is it domestic. In any case having a husband may mean an added amount of work as I have shown in this study - because "our men expect service".

The academic women spoke of maddening interruptions of their tight schedules by either running out of cooking gas, experiencing electricity failure, or finding dried taps which meant that they had to stop even in the middle of their cooking to search for alternatives. Several academic women gave me examples of times when they had planned either to complete writing a paper, or to mark examination of scripts after their domestic responsibilities, and instead ended up in several gas stations in search of cooking gas or candles to replace failed electricity.
This state of economic and social underdevelopment seemed to overwhelm the academic
women as witnessed in one of my field observations.

I arrive at 9.00 o'clock as per agreement. I knock at the door but no response. A
glance at my diary and I am sure there is no mistake. Knock, knock but this time
harder. I am feeling nervous now. I hear movements and steps towards the door.
The door opens and we exchange smiles and handshakes. I explain to my host
Maria that I was nervous waiting by the door. She quickly explains that she was
cleaning the house. Now I notice a mop in her hand, the floor is wet and I feel
guilty for interrupting. She warmly welcomes me in and I am struck by the
elegance and splendour of the interior decorations. I sit down and Maria exits into
another room. A few minutes later she returns now well dressed and offers to
make a cup of tea. She asks me to join her in the kitchen... She explains that she
put the house together single handedly. She supervised the construction, went to
the quarry to buy stones, cement sand etc. ... oh oh oii she exclaims ... come and
see there is no water. Surprised at how her countenance changed I stand up. It's
all gloom. We cannot make tea. The taps are dry. ... Composing herself she
apologizes and explains that it is common in that estate for taps to run dry. She
has to fetch water from a neighbour's construction site. ... We fetch water for
about five trips using jerricans. ... we fill a large drum strategically situated outside
the kitchen back door. ... We make tea and sandwiches this time talking about
children, economic difficulties, and the difficulties of being a single mother while
trying to be perfect in all other tasks. We share our stories. ... I am also a single
parent and can relate to most of her anxieties. ... to wash clothes ... due to water
failure she decides to wash only the kids uniform. We hand wash the clothes
meticulously and hang them to dry in the hot sun ... Time to go to Wakulima
[farmers] market and she ask me whether I would be interested in joining her. I
had come to shadow her and happily I accompanied her. The walk to the bus stop
takes fifteen to twenty minutes. ... We wait for the bus for about half an hour. ... We
get to Wakulima market and we have hardly begun our shopping when it is
announced it is time to close the day's business. That was about one o'clock. ... She
decide to pick a few perishables at one of the roadside kiosk. ... We get home
and the boys are back. Did you take your snack? ... she asked the boys (Here I
notice that she does not inquire on when or how they got home - too busy or too
tired to ask I think). ... We embark on shelling peas, peeling carrots and potatoes
in preparation for dinner. ... We roam from topic to topic as we prepare the
ingredients for dinner. ... The boys are asked to light the charcoal jiko (burner). ... During the day I had learned that Maria had been out of cooking gas for three
weeks. She can not afford to hire a reliable and well educated housemaid and
therefore, has to do all the work by herself. ... By the time the food preparation is
finished it is well after 8.00 pm and I have to leave. Maria tells me she has to sit
with the boys for an hour to check their homework. ... then another half hour to
shower and put them to bed. ... I go home very exhausted but relieved that I
would not have to observe Maria the next day. (Fieldnotes, February 16, 1993)
From this field observation and several others plus the academic women’s explanations of their daily routines it becomes quite evident that academic women experienced the throes of the Third World underdevelopment dilemma differently from the men in their lives as well as from their male colleagues.

Although they lived in what may be described as middle-class homes, nevertheless their homes lacked energy and time saving devices. Some depended on wood fuel, sawdust and charcoal to warm water for baths or for cooking staple meals which take between three to five hours to cook. The use of electricity and cooking gas is just too expensive for such lengthy cooking. The academic women travelled several kilometres in search of affordable consumer goods, and spent lots of time in food preparation. In times of shortages of basic needs this might mean travelling to another town to shop and all these burdens fall squarely on the women as the keepers of the family home. These over-demanding responsibilities critically determined a woman’s use of time. How the academic women use their time determines how they progress in their academic careers. From the field observations and women’s narratives it is clear that academic women accumulate career disadvantage on of daily basis. They spend a lot of their time doing invisible work like walking from one gas station to another, fetching water in buckets, waiting for buses, shelling maize, beans or peas, or crushing nuts. Their male colleagues at the university experience problems of social and economic underdevelopment differently. As the ‘head of the family’ (whether he provides for the family or not) there is a tacit agreement that the man’s main task is to improve his career in order to bring a fat cheque home. He is not expected to cook or concern himself with the daily running of the home. Even if men may spend some of their time waiting for public transportation they are more often than not heading to their office and not to the farmers’ market. From the foregoing discussions, it is seems that women and men academics are unequal competitors in the academic race. The chances of success are more
favourable for the males. Men benefit from aspects of sponsored mobility by the fact that some women in their lives take care of their social, emotional and physical needs. The woman’s shouldering of domestic responsibilities frees the man to pursue academic excellence. At home the academic woman is expected to keep the family house in order so it is thus conducive for the "head of the family" to complete any official work brought home in the evenings.

Eliou (1991), in her study of academic women in Greece, arrived at almost the same conclusion. She suggested that the concept "use of time" should be approached more systematically as an important variable capable of explaining the inferior position of women. She argues: "It is a useful means of investigating the contributions made by women to the National Income [invisible work] and frequently exhausting conditions in which they live (Double working day, lack of free time etc.)" (Eliou, 1991, p. 160). For some of the Kenyan academic women there is no question of free time or leisure activities. They are just too overburdened, as Angela stated:

Even when I stay up late to complete that overdue paper up to 3 a.m., my husband may feel that I am ignoring him. He may complain that he married a trouser not a woman. ... Many men are known to seek companionship outside marriage when their spouses become too professional.

This competition for an academic woman’s use of time and how this negatively impacts on her career development is corroborated by Mbilinyi (1994). Specifically addressing issues of economic and social underdevelopment she writes:

Women continue to work under difficult conditions. ... childcare and home responsibilities. They lack appropriate technologies which could assist in food production and food processing. Their advancement in different fields has been constrained by multiple roles as mothers, workers and as the main persons responsible for the home activities. (Mbilinyi, 1994, p.156)

However, it is important to note that despite the academic women’s seemingly overburdened lives they are still resilient. They still managed to publish a paper or two. Almost all the women I interviewed told me that they were either in the process of writing or planning to
write a paper for publication purposes. However, the two exceptions clearly stated that they did not consider publication as their number one priority for the time being. They explained that they could better advance themselves, at least economically, by investing their time in farming or business. The majority argued that they were cognizant that publishing was important but did not publish as often as they wished because of lack of time. Most of the women were either involved in a joint research project or were writing their own papers. It was amazing that the likes of Maria, despite the water shortages and the several trips to the water reservoir, the lengthy tedious shopping and food preparation process, could still publish:

Currently I am involved in a research team attached to a Non Governmental Organization (NGO). We are researching on [topic]. ... I am also writing four papers from my Ph.D thesis for journal publications.

For women academics like Maria, it requires great effort, determination and sacrifice to survive in academe. Although their promotions lag behind that of their advantaged male colleagues, in their view they are doing "their best to keep their academic ship afloat. They cannot sink," as Edna boldly announced.

UNDERGROUND ECONOMY: SIDE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES

The academic women explained that their academic careers were further stymied by the fact that the burdens of social and economic underdevelopment directly affected the domestic sphere. In particular the academic women maintained that they were worst hit by the Structural Adjustment Programmes instituted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund from the early 1980s and escalating in the 1990s. Structural Adjustment Programmes, or SAPs as they are popularly known, were economic measures instituted in Third World countries in order to streamline their economies so that they can repay their international debts. SAPs insisted among other things on the devaluation of the local currencies and cuts in social spending in fields of

These cuts negatively affected the lives of women and children. For example, during my fieldwork for this particular study the Kenyan shilling was devalued five times against the American dollar. As a result of this currency devaluation the cost of living was sky-rocketing while salaries declined or stagnated. The cost of living was far beyond the salary of many ordinary academics. Women academics, just like their other sisters in Kenyan society, are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the children are fed and many other domestic needs are met. In very ingenious ways they resorted to the underground economy which undoubtedly affects the progress of their academic careers.

More than half of the academic women interviewed in this study were actively involved in a side business like selling old and new clothes, homemade juices, tailoring, hair dressing, running a food kiosk, or in gardening activities or dairy farming in an endeavour to make ends meet, as exemplified by Anna, a lecturer in the biological sciences and a mother of three:

... It is very difficult these days particularly with the fluctuations of the prices. You buy Kimbo [cooking oil] for seventy Shillings today and tomorrow it is two hundred shillings. ... The salary remains the same over the years. ... My son passed very well. To join high school we need to raise over twenty five thousand Kenya Shillings. It is difficult now to raise that amount of money. ... It is disheartening to know you are Mwalimu wa chuo kikuu [Kiswahili - meaning you are a teacher in the institution of the highest and yet you cannot afford to send your child to a decent secondary school]. ... We are lucky that I make some extra cash through my tailoring business. I have employed three "fundis" [tailors] right in my house. I do most of the purchasing of the fabrics, designing, measurements, cutting and advertising through word of the mouth. It is labour intensive, time consuming but it’s worth it.

From Anna’s narration it is quite clear that she spends a lot of time purchasing the garments, designing, measuring and cutting, and advertising her business, on top of her domestic tasks as discussed in the previous section. When I encouraged her further to tell me how often she publishes, her answer was succinct and instructional:
Publications are very important for career advancement. Right now I have no time to publish. My children must be fed, clothed and educated. Promotions here do not translate into meaningful economic returns. ... Right now I want to raise enough money to educate my children [laughingly] ... Maybe I will publish prolifically after their high school education.

As if supporting Anna, Nyawira, a senior lecturer, married with two children and actively involved in gardening activities, argued:

I published a lot when the boys were young. ... Their fees were affordable. Our family demands were few. Now the boys are in high school, we have a mortgage to pay all the bills. The interest rates and cost of living escalate on daily basis. ... We decided to buy a three acre piece of "shamba" [farm] where we grow all our food. Sometimes we market the extras. This way we have managed to maintain our sanity. ... It gives me a lot of satisfaction when I rush from the lecture hall to my shamba and I see my maize, beans, bananas.... blossom. It is very demanding work but it pays dividends. I really would like to devote more time to academic publications but that might mean a lot of economic woes. ... I can give you a list of full university professors whose families are in a financial ruin because they devoted all their lives to academic excellence.

From the foregoing narrations, it becomes quite clear that the academic women are faced with two important yet conflicting choices. They have either to devote their time to the academic quest and risk their families suffering economic ruin or invest their time in other economic activities which in their view are more rewarding financially and risk the stagnation of their academic careers. From the academic women's perspective, their conscious choice to invest in a side business is a prudent judgement. They had seen others before them rise to positions of full university professors and yet not be able to "afford to fuel their cars nor provide a decent living for their families". Yet they are expected to maintain middle class standards. It was this kind of predicament they were trying to escape through their subjective "acts" or "choices" to engage in the underground economy. However, their very acts or choices, however prudent, work against the general status of women in the university. Failure to publish translates into lack of academic promotions. When women fail to move up the academic ladder it also means that they are locked out of the powerful and prestigious positions in the university. For example, for an individual to
put her/his name forward for deanship, one must have risen to the position of a university professor, must have served as a chair of a department and all these are dependent on academic promotions. It is also important to note that the male academics exploit the beleaguered academic women to promote the theory that women academics are lazy, are afraid of success, are not aggressive enough and as such are not capable.

The academic women maintained that although some male academics were also engaged in the dual economy, their academic careers were not drastically affected like those of their female counterparts. When academic men are involved in side businesses like farming, their role is almost supervisory. However, these side businesses have taken their toll not only on the academic lives of these women but also on their social and psychological well being. As shown earlier in this chapter, on top of their frantic lives academic women are also expected to cook, care for their husbands (if married), clean, drop and pick up the children from school, and replace the housemaid or farm workers, particularly if they quit without notice. One such devastated woman academic is Rhoda.

Rhoda, who is a lecturer, a mother of three children and married to an academic male, was simply overwhelmed by the daily demands on her life. In her words:

... I live about forty six kilometres from this university [where she teaches and this interview was conducted]. ... I sometimes drive or use public transportation which is quite unreliable. It is quite expensive to drive everyday and the spare parts are just too expensive. ... I have fifteen hours a week of contact with the students. This means a lot of time is required to prepare if you have to keep on top of things. ... I have to wake up at 5 a.m. and when things escalate I wake up at 4 a.m. or 3 a.m. ... I prepare the "kum" [firewood] to warm the water for morning baths, prepare breakfast, ensure lunches and snacks are packed, check and sign the kids homework. ... My husband works in a different campus away from the kids’ school. I therefore drop and pick them from school. ... It is crazy in the mornings. ... the cows must be fed, milked and milk packaged ready for transportation. ...

The farm workers disagreed with my husband over a pay raise. They conspired and both left without notice. ... Imagine John [her husband] insisted I can harvest the thaaara [cattle feed] on Saturdays and that I feed and milk the cows daily. His argument was that his work was to do with laboratory experiments which cannot wait. ... After a month I told him it was impossible. I could not physically take it. I told my husband if we cannot get farm helpers then we have to sell the cows or
he takes full responsibility for them. [Here she got agitated and broke down in
tears. Tears rolled down furiously and I suffered too. I felt intrusive but I waited.
After a while she composed herself. We shared our experiences on growing and
living on a farm and of other women involved in such difficult situations. ... and
then she resumed her story in a rather pensive mood]. He hit me and this
escalated into a physical fight. ... The cows were never sold and I had to take two
weeks sick leave. ... It is a difficult world for a woman. ... Sometimes I wonder
whether it is wise for a woman to pursue a career.

Academic women experience the pangs of social and economic underdevelopment more
severely than their male counterparts. This differential experience is due to the fact that although
the women are highly educated and indeed placed in prestigious positions as academic lecturers
they are still subordinates to men. They are expected to excel in all the domestic responsibilities
which extend beyond the house to the farmwork. Their official engagements are perceived by the
general society as a supplement to their husband’s careers. Academic women like all the other
women in Kenyan society are expected to be helpmates to men. It is also clear that women bear
the brunt of the economic hardships. Since the salaries are not enough to maintain "middle class
status", a side employment is sought and this is automatically considered the woman’s
responsibility, as the case of Rhoda illustrates.

After critically examining Rhoda’s painful case, one can only wonder how under such
suppressive and oppressive social conditions she and others in similar situations could possibly get
time to publish and attend seminars, workshops and conferences, important nodes for the
generation and exchange of ideas. Under such unequal gender relations, where both genders have
entered into the market economy but domestic responsibilities and side employments continue to
be a woman’s responsibility, these academic women lack not only the time but also the
serenity/tranquillity and social space necessary for writing as advocated by Virginia Woolf (1978)
in her concept of "a room of one’s own." These women academics lack not only a room of one’s
own, but also the economic and social supports necessary for publication.
Not All are Wretched of the Earth

It is important to reiterate that the academic women in this study were not a homogenous group. Based on their differences in class affiliations they experienced gender, as well as the Third World underdevelopment dilemma, differently. Some of them are married to wealthy men or are daughters of prominent politicians or businessmen. These wealthy academic women could afford to hire two or three domestic servants and have enough money to own a home in the former exclusive white colonial areas such as Karen, Kileleshwa and Ridgeways where shortages of water and electricity are very rarely heard of. In case of shortages they are better equipped. They own large deep freezers and lots of expensive energy and time saving technologies. In many respects they did not face the tribulations of the likes of Rhoda or Anna. But these women were few. Only three of the interviewed women had this level of luxury. Two of these women were much older and beneficiaries of the first fruits of independent Kenya. They attained an education and they married well.

These well-to-do academics claimed that they were happily married and that their husbands were supportive of their academic careers. They were well published, widely travelled and reported enjoying wonderful relationships with their male colleagues. Their views were not surprising given the nature of the Kenyan patron-client relationship. Many male academics could benefit by fraternising with women married to notable males. Women too could be patrons. They could influence their husbands to grant favours to their preferred colleagues. This means that economic power can favourably change the gender angle.

When I probed them further, in order to understand why their wealthy husbands supported their academic careers, it became clear that these women were hypogamously married. Their husbands are heads of corporations, top government officers or from the successful business elite, although they did not acquire a substantial amount of education. To boost their male ego and
personal standing they may vigorously support their spouse’s education. They are economically sound and, therefore, not threatened by a woman’s higher education. It is not uncommon to hear such men brag that their wives are doctorate holders. It is a sign of personal achievement or a compensation for what they themselves failed to achieve. However, these wealthy women complained that their doctorates, just like those of the other women, took much longer to complete, and that their promotions took much longer than those of their male colleagues. They also maintained that they worked extra hard in comparison with their male colleagues. It is important to reiterate that the tradition of lumping women together with their fathers and husbands for the purpose of assigning them a class or status position has been questioned by feminist sociologists (Acker, 1973; Oakley, 1974). However, in my study this criticism may not hold. Of all the academic women I interviewed, I did not encounter one who had achieved an independent and respected academic and socio-economic status without reference to a man. In particular, the academic women saw their career development as closely intertwined with the support of their male colleagues.

Trapped in what appeared like an intractable dilemma, almost all the academic women reported that they have over the years witnessed their real earnings decline sharply. Their professions have been proletarianized and as a result few could meet the daily needs of their families. For these reasons they have been forced to engage in side businesses. An underground economy buttresses their wages, but it chews away the little time left after all the struggles we have discussed earlier.

CONCLUSION

From my analysis of the women’s narratives, it is my conclusion and argument that academic women’s careers suffer a great setback in comparison with that of their male colleagues
because they have to deal with a multiplicity of domestic roles which men do not have to face. Marriage, perceived as a woman’s primary role, negatively impacts on a woman’s career development. Childbearing responsibilities and being a wife were found to be constraining in terms of time, mobility and personal freedom.

Even with domestic help, the academic women are not substantially relieved. Some have to personally prepare meals for their husbands. Moreover, most of the housegirls are usually young, unskilled and cannot be trusted with complicated domestic tasks other than watching over the baby.

Importantly, the availability of housegirls not only legitimizes a sexual division of domestic labour and the subordination of women, it serves to maintain class divisions among women. Elite women push some of their domestic tasks on to other underprivileged women and thus men cannot be called to share in domestic labour.

Married women lack autonomy to travel to learned conferences, to seminars and workshops where important information necessary for career advancement is being released. In these ways their publications remain poor and few and their promotional chances remain bleak.

Conversely, being single or divorced also constitutes a barrier to career development. Single women are unsupported by both male and female colleagues who see them as irresponsible, sexually available, and as bad examples to the profession. In contrast, single men are never penalized on account of their marital status.

To summarize, the interconnection between domestic responsibilities and academic promotional prospects cannot be overemphasized. The professional lives of these academic women are deeply intertwined with their experiences outside the university. The women in this study have deep commitments to both their careers and families. However, factors beyond their control dictate that their careers be secondary. Despite these debilitating factors, the women
academics are accused by their male counterparts of being lazy and uninterested when they fail to meet the stated promotion criteria. In blaming academic women for their failure to compete equally with their male counterparts for academic promotions, those individuals fail to acknowledge the subjective and social, structural factors which limit women’s daily lives. From the voices of academic women in this study, it is quite clear that the majority of them have high career aspirations. Indeed their aspiration was to achieve the most cherished and coveted academic rank, that of "a full university professor" as Edna and others indicated. However, these academic women encounter a multiplicity of barriers at each and every turn because of their gender.

The argument advanced here is that, not only should we attack barriers at both the family and university level, but we should address the whole social structure. The problems experienced by Kenyan academic women are systemic. They are rooted in the culture, politics, education, and the social and economic arrangements of the society. Kenyan academic women, despite making it to elite status, are daily confronted with negative cultural stereotypes which are demeaning to their acquired academic status.

Strong cultural stereotypes also force academic women to defer, postpone or completely abandon their studies or career development in favour of their spouses and also for the sake of domestic peace. Culturally, a woman is not expected to outshine her spouse.

Social, economic and technological underdevelopment also impacts negatively on academic women’s careers. These women spend long hours in labour-intensive domestic tasks, dealing with the consequences of underdevelopment like poor communication systems, distances from markets and involvement in an underground economy to make ends meet. All these preoccupations take up a huge chunk of the academic women’s time and creative energy and negatively affect their careers.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ALLIANCES AND LINKAGES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Presented in this chapter are the formidable barriers preventing women from establishing linkages, alliances and solidarities within university circles. Specifically, I wanted to understand how academic women were using their higher education and career status for their empowerment as a group. I questioned the academic women on the nature of female solidarity within the university, their involvements in women’s social support groups and networks, the issues women lobby for within the university as well as their involvements in grassroots women’s organizations, the role they play and the kind of issues discussed in these networks. Links with grassroots women will be discussed in the chapter following this one.

My analysis shows that although the academic women expressed a strong desire to work together, they experience formidable social, psychological and structural barriers both within and outside the university which make their solidarity and alliances almost impossible to achieve. Specifically, the academic women identified competition, jealousy, rivalry, age, ethnicity, marital status, preference for male bonding, social class differences, and physical and social organization of the university as some of the main factors militating against their working together.
BARRIERS TO LINKAGES AND ALLIANCES

Competition, Jealousy and Rivalry

Despite the fact that a clear majority of the academic women in this study complain about their subordination and unequal treatment within and outside the university, they did not support one another. They compete, suspect, trample on each other, care only about their positions and successes, put each other down and operate as individuals to a degree that forging an academic network is almost impossible. From the women's evidence, it was clear that to get ahead within the university, one has to be competitive and this competition pits women, in particular, against each other. In order to get published and to secure research grants and indeed recognition from the academic gatekeepers, who are predominantly male, the women maintained that they had to endure cut-throat competition. Surprisingly, the academic women felt more threatened by their female colleagues, whom they perceive as actual competitors, than they were by male academics. They perceive other female academics as competitors for the meagre resources and for sponsorship into the "privileged male networks".

Caught up in this cut-throat competition they are atomized and act as individuals, Rhoda told me:

Women in this university do not network at a personal level. There are no linkages whatsoever. Every woman cares about her own position. How strong she is, how strong you are, if you are weak it is your problem ... people are basically interested in their careers. To publish, to write more papers, travel, to be promoted, how to achieve these things. There is nothing to pull women together.

Moreover, the women repeatedly told me of how successful female academics had blocked their way or failed to support them. They used words like "envy", jealousy", "rivalry", "distrust", "and competition" to express their feelings of being unsupported by other female colleagues.

Some of the academic women claimed that if they went for an interview and found the chair of the interview board was a woman, they would be sure that they would not be appointed. Edna
believed that a senior woman was responsible for denying her promotion:

..... Literally it happens. I went for an interview for senior lectureship at the National University and the only bad comment that was put was by a woman. She was the chairman of the department ..... I don't know whether we are insecure, fear any other woman succeeding. We want to feel different, admired as the only women who have succeeded ... It has been said that women are jealous, envious of each other ... they lack faith in their kind .... so when you come for an interview you are evaluated by another woman: she has dressed so smartly, she has answered all the questions so smartly, therefore she is joining this place as a competitor ...

She has come to take my position ... that is why I say women do not support each other.

Maria also complained that she failed to get promoted to a senior lectureship because a woman referee wrote her a poor reference letter, while Angela maintained that the dean of her faculty was "jealous of me and I hated it. She was worse than a man dean." When I asked Angela to tell me what she meant, she charged: "A male dean is not threatened ... afraid that you are academically talented and you are bent on poaching his position."

It seems that the academic women have internalized stereotypes about themselves and that they also use those stereotypes to evaluate each other. For example, Edna emphatically maintains that women are their own worst enemies. This response is quite paradoxical coming from a woman like Edna who had earlier described herself as a fighter and a no nonsense type of academic prepared to fight for women's advancement. Apprehensive of other women, she was certain that she would not "make it" if the chair of an interviewing board was a woman. There are fear, suspicion and fragmentation among the academic women. This kind of belief is destructive for a group which wishes to rid itself of oppression.

In fact, a majority of the academic women expressed a desire to work under a male chair rather than a female chair of the department. Surprisingly, they expressed the view that male professors are more supportive and sympathetic than women professors. These responses are rather contradictory, intriguing and inconsistent with what the majority of these women also believed: that their careers stagnate because male academics exclude them from academic networks
(see chapter five). When I asked the academic women to explain why they strongly preferred a male chair of the department, their responses were informative as well as instructive. They claimed that women who have made it [chairs of departments or principals of colleges] were promoted by male administrators and as a way of proving that they can do it, they become ritualists. Everything must be done precisely according to the book. Therefore, they overwork everybody else. Since a woman administrator has no authoritative voice over her male colleagues, she may crush her female colleagues in order to prove that she is not as weak as they are.

Judging from these responses, it is arguable that the woman chair of a department is trapped in a precarious situation. Since women's success in the academy is on male terms, then she is forced to act like a man, and in acting like a male administrator she is loathed by her female colleagues. Conversely, if she acted like a woman would be expected to act and promoted a culture of caring, empathy, and connectedness, then she would be bound to fail simply because the university is not organized according to a female culture. Trapped in this kind of double bind, the academic women continue to feel insecure, and this kind of insecurity makes them deal harshly with each other, as Edna put it: "Kamba kukatika kule kwembaba", a swahili proverb meaning that "a rope cuts where it is thinnest". As the underprivileged members of the university they fight each other to show the privileged group (male academics) that they are more capable, more deserving, and different from other women. As they compete for the token positions, they trample on each other and in so doing perpetuate male privilege.

What is also clear from these data is the fact that as women attempt to find a niche for themselves, they isolate themselves from each other while hurting others in the process. Networking among academic women remains a dream. Under these kinds of circumstances women do not celebrate each other's success. Some women use their success to the detriment of others. Instead of one woman's success becoming a rallying point for the others, success isolates
an individual woman from the majority. Again and again the academic women told me of cases where their women friends and colleagues deserted them or treated them with contempt after the colleagues had been promoted or appointed to a decision making position; their stories illustrated just how difficult it was to maintain an academic network or solidarity. In Amina’s words:

... I was delighted to learn that my friend Cecilia was promoted ... later I needed somebody in a key academic position to give me some reference. I telephoned her, but as you know with our telecommunications it’s difficult ... I wrote to her but I got no response ... I decided to travel to her university. It is about 300 kilometres from our university [where this interview was conducted and where she teaches] ... I was sure Cecilia would be elated to see me. To my utter amazement when I got to her office and informed her secretary who I was, I got the reply that I had to book an appointment. ... I was shocked, for Cecilia and I have been helping each other all the way. ... She did not even suggest I meet her in the evening taking into consideration I had travelled from far. ... I put up in a hotel for two nights ... I was later shocked to learn from one of my friends that Cecilia had informed her that she treated me that way so that I could learn that "she was the boss".

From Amina’s narration and many others it is quite clear that although the women believed that they were subordinated and treated unequally, they lacked a sense of female bonding and solidarity as a means of empowering themselves as a group. Also it appears that their western type of formal education has led them to a position where they are deprived of a female culture characterized by caring, bonding, interdependence and friendship. This finding contrasts with earlier studies which show that the less educated women and in particular those without any formal western education are more supportive, caring and friendly with others in line with African indigenous culture which provided avenues for female solidarity and bonding (Stamp, 1986; Amadiume, 1987; Kamau, 1994; Gordon, 1995). Some of these academic women were so much concerned with their own positions that they did not care about breaking an established female bond in search of recognition. The Kenyan university is characterized by the lack of a female culture which is so necessary for women’s empowerment and survival within academe. As Amina clearly tells us, when her friend Cecilia was promoted, a hierarchy developed between them. It
appears that instead of academic women’s formal success leading to women’s increased power, it leads to further separation, alienation and fragmentation among the women. From the women’s stories, it is arguable that formal education promotes structural violence whereby women have to compete against each other in order to get positions in the university. It is also arguable that these successful women have imbibed many years of patriarchal education and are now working in male institutions, and as such are forced to act in ways that make them appear more patriarchal than the patriarchs themselves. Possibly, some of these women may be not even conscious that they are behaving like men and genuinely believe they are doing what is expected of their positions.

In order to get a clear picture of the outlook of the academic women in this study, it is important to reiterate that women have a relatively short history in the Kenyan universities. The first doctorate to be earned by a woman in East and Central Africa was in 1971 by Professor Wangari Maathai, the coordinator of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. In 1978 she acquired the position of a university professor in veterinary anatomy (Wachege, 1992, p.128). She did not last long in the academy to mentor other women. Secondly, higher education as well as entrance into formal employment and careers for women is something relatively new in the Kenyan society. As such the women academics are few and very new in academe and are still finding new ways of establishing their own self and career identities.

**Age and Ethnicity**

Age and ethnicity were also repeatedly cited as factors which worked against academic women’s solidarity. Most of the junior female academics, who were also more often than not young in age, complained bitterly about the conservative attitude exhibited by older female academics. They humorously accused them of extending their colonial education of the early and late 60s to the 1990s. They spoke of what they termed a generation gap which led to conflicting
world views. The younger and junior female academics complained that instead of the senior female academics showing them the ropes and informal rules leading to academic success, they more often than not were on the side of young male academics. Angela, in particular, gave several examples of junior male academics who she believed were the favoured protégés of an accomplished female academic. She wondered: "How can you establish solidarity with a woman who does not support you?" During my field observations and interviews, it was clear that the younger academics were more relaxed, less conservative and sometimes very radical in their views. As shown in chapter five, it was clear that most of the young academics were typified as "combatant", "militant" and "rabble-rousers" and indeed as "threats" to the academic peace of the career-oriented, older academic women.

It is interesting, however, to note that in Kenyan and indeed most African societies, young persons are expected to give due respect to the old. The young are also expected to learn from their elders, who are believed to be wise because of their lived experiences. Some of the academic women in this study felt conflicted by the fact that, although they respected the older female academics, there were many things they clashed on. Whereas the young female academics wanted to be able to dress, to associate, and to express themselves freely, they daily confronted established female academics regulating, sanctioning and policing their moral code. Santalo, who described herself as a hardworking, ambitious and uncompromising academic, speaks about this differentiation between the younger (junior) and senior (older) women academics:

Generally women professors would like to attract young women ... but the problem with many accomplished women is that they are dictators ... I don’t know whether they get threatened by young women joining the department. It is like they want it and they don’t want it ... I have been summoned and lectured to by one of the women professors here [university where she teaches and where this interview was conducted] ... up to today I don’t know what to make of her words of wisdom. She told me that she cared for me and would like to see me succeed, and that was why she wanted to talk to me ... advised me that in order to create a niche for myself I must dress appropriately, and tone down my arguments in the staff meetings. ... I felt angry. ... that is why I ask you "what kind of solidarity can you have with this professor?"
Examining closely the differences between Santalo and her would-be mentor, it becomes quite clear that Santalo was resisting gender indoctrination. If she were to go by her "mentor's" advice, she would have to become conservative, agreeable, the hallmark of femininity, and she did not like it. One might have expected highly successful women to be critical of gender inequality; but to the contrary, some of them were both victims and perpetrators of the multiplicity of social rules which governed and restricted women’s behaviour.

This kind of situation is perplexing, particularly because accomplished academic women who did not have promotions to fight for seemed more conservative. In trying to understand their behaviour, it appears to me that as products of their own gender socialization and patriarchal education they have internalized their own inequality to such an extent that they do not realize it. These successful academics were unwittingly on the side of patriarchy and were in my view actively colluding with and supporting their own oppression. What this in effect means is that inequality will not be challenged. In fact, some of these women might be used to uphold patriarchy. As the narratives of Santalo and many others show, some of the accomplished female academics have acquired the position of honourary male and as such try to regulate, moralise and police the behaviour of other academic women.

This particular finding seems to support what has been reported in literature elsewhere. Amadueme (1987, p.185) specifically quoting Sylvia Rogers (1981) wrote that women who acquire the role of honourary male believe that for women to succeed in careers and to be equal with men they must assume male careers and norms. Citing Rogers (1981, p.67) she tells us that even in "civilized" Britain, women seeking admission into the House of Commons have to emulate male values and norms.

The academic women were not only divided by age and academic status, they were also tacitly divided across ethnic lines. Some of the women maintained that there existed an unspoken
alliance between men and women from the same ethnic communities and this worked against the interests of women as a group. Some women conceded to the fact that at times they gave full support to certain chairs of departments, deans of faculties, vice-chancellors, when they should not have, simply because they belonged to the same ethnic community. Ethnic loyalties have proven to be thicker than sisterhood in the Kenyan universities, as Angela succinctly explains:

.... When talking about women's solidarity in this university it's a bit tricky ... first you must realize that we first define ourselves as Luos, Kikuyus, Maasais, Kalenjins ... then we define ourselves as members of the university community. Thirdly there are men and women. ... I think solidarity is difficult to achieve among women because we have deeper ties with those who are like us [same ethnic group]. They say thakame ni nditu kuri Mai [translated from Kikuyu to mean blood is thicker than water].... here I can provide an example ... We organized as junior women and men to fight for better housing allowances and commuting allowances... After a month of protracted struggle with the administration, some ethnic groups were called up there [administration office] and were bribed. ... Even some ethnic groups have made several trips to the state house to pledge their loyalty as an ethnic community in the university. ... How then can you expect women to work together ... Maybe we must fight ethnicity and then think about gender alliances.

Angela's narrative is a evidence that female bonding in the university circles is circumscribed by many barriers. Ethnicity seems to be a thorny one. Women seem to rally in support of men from their ethnic communities if serious decisions are to be made and this works against women's solidarity. Angela succinctly tells us that first they define themselves not as women but as members of a certain ethnic community. In fact, during my field interviews and observations, I gathered that some men and women academics were either supported or unsupported by the university on the basis of their ethnicity. As a result it was common to see men and women of a certain ethnic group bonding together and protecting their academic, personal and ethnic interests.

These ethnic divisions go back to the colonial history of Kenya whereby the colonial government deliberately fomented ethnic chauvinism in an attempt to contain Mau Mau contagion (Muriuki, 1991). Furthermore, when Kenya became independent in 1963, there was no conscious
effort to address ethnic differences. Kenya continued to be more of a geographical expression than a national reality. There are about forty-two ethnic communities, each with a distinct culture and language. These ethnic differences\(^{31}\) have continued to be played upon by the post-colonial leaders to maintain themselves in power and this ploy has penetrated the universities.

Under this kind of social and political arrangement, where a patron-client system operates even in the universities, it is logical that women have their affinities with their kinspeople. However, Rosa, one of the academics, indicated that women are the likely losers in this alliance, because when, for example, promotions or appointments arise, men share them among themselves irrespective of their ethnicity. We can note that women in Kenya played a key role in the Mau Mau struggle but when it came to sharing the national cake they were forgotten (Njau and Mulaki, 1984). Of course, there is nothing unique about coopting the energies of women to a struggle against imperialism and then allowing the situation to return to the status quo as soon as independence is achieved (Rowbotham, 1973). In the Kenyan universities, women's energies continue to be coopted to the support of ethnic solidarities, only to benefit the male academics.

**Marital Status**

Personal factors, like marital status, were also repeatedly cited as barriers to women's solidarity. Due to the strong cultural stereotype that all decent women should be married, some of the never-married and divorced women explained that it was difficult to work closely with married women. These single women protested that they were seen as "unclaimed", "ownerless" beings and as such their morality was always under question. Married women are not normally expected to associate closely with divorced women or never-married spinsters, as these are considered

\(^{31}\) Ethnic differences - in the 1990s ethnic differences have been revived on a large scale. Ethnic tension is rife whereby innocent Kenyans have been brutally murdered on the basis of their ethnicity.
"deviants", a source of "bad influence" or "Mang'aa" (meaning people who don't care). When some of these "deviant" academic women accessed senior positions such as chairs of departments or got promoted, more often than not they were accused of getting these positions because of offering sexual favours to the men in senior positions. For this reason, the married women, wary of their reputations, distanced themselves from these "deviant" women. As a result, there was an invisible social-psychological barrier which divided married and unmarried women. In my interviews, the male academics were accused of using divide-and-conquer tactics to ensure that women academics did not act together. Some of the single academic women claimed that male academics utilized sexual politics in a somewhat contradictory manner to divide women. On one hand, they respected and rewarded married women. On the other hand, they scorned single women, while at the same time propositioning them and assuring them that they are better academics than married women who are accused of spending all their time on their families.

According to Rhoda, some women [single or married] would be singled out and praised and told "It is women like you we want, not like those combatant, loose women." Aketch summarizes some of these points:

In this place [university where she taught and where this interview was conducted] you have to develop a thick skin or else you get mad ... If you are not married like me both men and incidentally some of the single women see you as a threat. ... Some [academic women] think that you are free and therefore use sexual favours to get ahead. ... I was married, I am a mother of two but my marriage did not work. ... I am the chairman of this department [her home department]. ... but I have heard several rumours that I got this position because I am a personal friend of the Vice-Chancellor [VC].... Others have suggested that the VC has divorced his wife because of me. ... I mean it doesn't bother me so much. ... they talk behind my back and at times it's very painful. For sure I know some married women and some single women avoid me (As you know in this place people are careful not to be associated or identified with those who act and live differently. They fear for their reputation ...) in case I teach them how to break homes as I have been accused of. I think it is very difficult for women to work together because of fear and ... I mean competition for men. Some don't invite you to their parties in case you steal their husbands. It's very hypocritical because they all pretend to be your friend but they stab you in the back.
It seems that for the Kenyan women academics to unite, work as a team, act as a lobby group or pressure group for any gender changes, they must win the battle against cultural stereotypes. Aketch clearly tells us despite the fact that she is in authority as chair of her department, she is more often than not isolated, avoided, or marginalized by other women academics who kept accusing her of being a homebreaker. She is seen as a bad example, a bad influence to be avoided, a threat to the moral fabric and harmony of the society. She is a loser - a woman who cannot find her own man. As a husband poacher, as one who can easily dispense sexual favours to the men in authority, she is ambivalently viewed: sometimes disliked, gossiped about, sidelined and sometimes secretly admired for her deviant status. Although this rivalry or infighting is never made public, Aketch tells us at times it can be very painful. As a divorced woman, she has made claims to freedom and this is very threatening to both men and women. At best some of her female colleagues feign superficial friendship with her.

During my fieldwork observations with the respondents, it was quite clear that marital status was an important organizing principle among the academic women. I gathered that married women walked together, lunched together and even worked on research projects together. Conversely, single women walked together, lunched together and at times mingled with both married and single men, particularly in the university cafeteria. This cross-gender mingling was not very common between married women and men.

Whereas women academics avoided each other or marginalized each other on the basis of their marital status as well as on their attributed sexual morality, single and married male academics bonded together. In fact, a man who is attracted to many women is perceived as a hero, not a villain, by his counterparts. It is important to reiterate that some of the academic women, using chauvinistic language, harshly chastised any woman colleague who might choose to exercise her sexual freedom and indeed control over her own body. This double standard is
debilitating particularly for women who are suspected of having more than one relationship.

Some academic women were cognizant of the divisiveness of the internalized cultural stereotype pegging morality with marriage, but few went beyond the level of complaining that it works against women's friendship. In one instance, for example, I remember vividly Atieno asking Anna, a friend and colleague: "My friend, since my divorce is about to go through, will you desert me? It will be sad but I understand." This is a clear indication that there is a tacit agreement that once your marriage fails, you cannot remain very close friends with a married woman, however close you were before. Social support cannot be expected and this is threatening in itself.

Although writers such as O'Leary (1989), Chamberlain (1991) and Caplan (1992) emphatically stress the importance of women working together, acting as pressure groups, lobbyists and role models, encouraging each other's scholarly research and mentoring each other, in order to improve their status in academe, data in this study run counter to this advice. In the present study, most of the women academics do not seem to find enough issues to bring them together. They compete, suspect, trample on, regulate, moralize, isolate, alienate and downplay each other.

It appears that the task of coping with the male world makes divisions between women more visible than what unites them. This kind of situation is the intractable/unresolvable dilemma western formal education and the expansion of dependent capitalistic patriarchy have presented to African women. In order for women to empower themselves, to challenge gender inequality effectively, they need to be educated and deployed in positions of power. The question I find intriguing is, how are highly educated African women to retain their own indigenous culture of female bonding characterized by empathy, cooperation, caring, wholeness of life, connectedness and understanding so common among the poor rural women, if the institutions they are entering
are male creations and encourage cut-throat competition, rivalry, aggression and structural violence? As the data clearly indicate, the university operates by male norms and values. For an individual to be promoted, somebody else must be a loser; to climb the educational ladder, one must step on somebody else. This cut-throat competition I see as structural violence embedded in the whole educational system and this works against women’s solidarity and linkages. A group which wants to get rid of their own oppression cannot afford to compete against each other; rather, they must cooperate and help each other and they must celebrate the success of one another. But the university is organized differently. For women to succeed in the university, they too must operate as individuals, be aggressive and stiff competitors like their male colleagues,

This kind of dilemma is discussed by Virginia Woolf (1938) in her novel *Three Guineas*. Here a man asks a woman how can women help men prevent war. The woman answers that women have to be educated, but that the education given in institutions of higher learning today is an education for war not peace:

> It is an education that breeds competition, jealousy, emotions which encourage disposition towards war. It is an education which fragments knowledge instead of continuing it. (Woolf, 1938, p.26)

Woolf further argued that women will learn to compete and get fragmented knowledge if they enter institutions of higher learning run by men. Although Woolf was speaking to a western reader almost half a century ago, I believe this situation is perfectly applicable to the Kenyan education system today, as reflected in the statements of academic women in this study. In my view, a new kind of education must be instituted if women are to empower themselves. We need an education that is gender sensitive, an education that teaches women to question their silences and their internalized cultural stereotypes in order to achieve liberation from patriarchy. That kind of education must be fundamentally different from the current one. The nature of the current formal western type of education and the formal institutions women work in fragments women’s
knowledge and solidarity. It is an education which socializes women to regard male academic networks as natural. It teaches women that women's attempts to act together are a sign of weakness and as such women prefer to bond with males to the detriment of women's empowerment.

**Preference for Male Bonding: Women and Men Should Work Together**

Interestingly, although these academics perceived each other as competitors, 18 of them strongly expressed the view that women should work together for change. They lamented the lack of a female constituency in Kenyan universities, but none of these women was willing to spearhead such an initiative. In fact, they seemed to hold diverse, ambiguous and conflicting views when I pushed them further to tell me why there are no linkages and alliances among them. On the one hand, they believed that women should organize and speak out collectively on issues affecting them. On the other, they expressed fears that such a move might jeopardize their academic status. They maintained that efforts by academic women to put forth their views collectively might be misconstrued by their male colleagues, particularly those holding the reins of academic power, as subversive, anti-men, confrontational or purely as a sign of women's weakness. As a result, the academic women feared that they might be further marginalized, isolated, identified and singled out for punishment.

Given that these fears were coupled with a great desire to keep their careers and to progress within the academic ranks, it was not surprising that some of these academic women held ambiguous and contradictory views. Some, perhaps after learning to be prudent, opted for male bonding rather than female bonding. Maria's comments encapsulate this rather contradictory option:
I believe as academic women we should speak out about issues affecting us. It is only the wearer of the shoe who knows where it hurts most. ... We should speak out in one voice ... When we operate as individuals the higher the risks. In any case as an individual, however powerful, you cannot bring about change. ... But women's constituency would be a problem because this is a university community, where all are lecturers not men and women ... We need to be tactful that when we begin addressing our issues that men will recognize that women are oppressed and join the struggle .... When any organization in the university is perceived as purely female, it would raise suspicions. Men would be curious to know what it is about. ... Motives would be questioned. ... Women might be seen as trouble makers ... an uprising against men ... women might be ignored, dismissed or ruthlessly crushed. For women to succeed they need to work together with malleable men, those who are interested in social justice issues.

From Maria's narration we begin to understand the barriers or threats to women working together. Maria is cognizant of the fact that if academic women acted collectively, they would be safer and have a greater chance of being heard. She clearly tells us that an individual cannot bring about social change and hence women need to unite. But at the same time, she shifts her position and tells us that if women organized, their motives would be questioned and women might be ruthlessly crushed. She concludes that since women are vulnerable, they need to work together with the men sensitive to social justice issues. In her view, academic women have to be 'careful', 'tactical' in their approach and should bear the burden of convincing their male colleagues that they are oppressed. She worries that academic women should not break what she perceived as a university community consisting of genderless employees as she put it: "... this is a university where all are lecturers but not men and women". Maria clearly holds two opposing views and inadvertently proposes an ambiguous adventure. At one point she tells us women should speak out together, whereas at another point she persuades us to see the university as not characterized by gender hierarchy because "all are lecturers but not men and women". She deliberately wants to downplay gender differences. Maybe acknowledging difference would be too threatening. She does not want to dismantle the Master's house (Lorde, 1986). She deliberately wishes to find some allies in it, and through persuasion and convincing she hopes gender equality might be
achieved. For her change is possible if one becomes actively involved in the Master's house, engaging in efforts to change it from within.

As if corroborating Maria’s arguments, Angela argued in similar self-defeating, circular and conservative terms:

... We [academic women] should be in a position to convince the menfolk to see women’s oppression. ... Convince them through reason that there will be no winners or losers. Convince them that once women are not oppressed all will gain ... Our struggle should be presented in a non-confrontational manner, because we can be ruthlessly resisted by those in power. We need to appeal to reason. ... This is an issue of power and we must be very strategic. ... convince the men that women’s oppression exists and [that women are] dominated by men and support can only come if we communicate with them. .... Women experience oppression, and I believe they are in a better position to articulate it, but I am still convinced we should be able to fight women’s oppression as a community. ... as a university community it can be done.

Angela’s analysis of the situation is quite paradoxical, given that she had earlier identified herself as a fighter, confrontational and ready to fight for gender equality in the university [see her arguments in chapter five]. When I questioned her about academic women’s linkages/alliances and solidarity within the university she seemed to have shifted away from her confrontational stance. In no uncertain terms she tells that as a university community, men and women together should be able to fight gender oppression.

In my view, Angela’s and Maria’s expositions, though sounding very attractive, are also problematic. They suggest that the academic women (powerless group) should connive with the male academics (powerful group) to bring about changes. They do not see the point of women working together to empower themselves. In their view, women’s alliances and solidarities would be perceived as a direct threat to male power and as such the women would be faced with insurmountable opposition. For women to make any gains, they recommend peaceful negotiations, convincing others and appealing to conscience. But if women do not have to work together as a group, then how are the women going to convince the men? Will each individual woman take it
upon herself to convince an individual man? What would be the strategy? It seems to me that for any substantive gender changes to happen in the university and in the society in general, the women must inevitably work together. Women must believe in their inner strengths, avoid self-defeating attitudes, and speak in one voice. I believe that even if women academics are very few in comparison with their male colleagues, if they united and spoke in unison, they could form a formidable voice that could not be easily ignored. However prudent Angela and others sharing her views are in their proposals, it does not seem likely that men would voluntarily share, let alone relinquish power. The most possible scenario is that men might accept to accommodate women but only on male terms.

Angela tells us it is the woman’s burden to convince the men that gender oppression exists and that it is unjust. In a nutshell Angela is advocating gender sensitization but in a somewhat conservative way. She is also clearly telling us that gender inequality is a non-issue in the Kenyan universities and hence there is a need to convince men that gender inequality truly exists. In fact, issues of gender inequality have not even begun to be debated in any systematic manner in the Kenyan universities in particular, and in the society in general. Nevertheless, Maria, Angela and others like them seem to be afraid of swimming against the current. However, as Audre Lorde (1986) stated:

The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to these women who define the masters house as their only source of support. (Lorde 1986, p.112)

Lorde’s argument is useful here because it is a pointer that some academic men may temporarily offer superficial support, while genuinely they are not ready to share academic power. For example, during my field interviews there were numerous Gender Sensitization Network Workshops being held and attended by both selected women and men academics. To my surprise, in one of the workshops several sessions were directed by men. I also learnt that these workshops
were funded by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and these males were contracted by these august bodies. It was even more ironical and surprising when one of the male senior lecturers, a key member in the Gender Sensitization Network (GSN), confronted me and wanted to know what my research was all about. After I respectfully described to him my research project, he retorted that Kenyan women have no problems. It is only those women corrupted by Western feminists who are trying to introduce problems to the "happy, contented" African women. I was shocked and surprised because I had thought that this man was sympathetic to women's issues and that was why he was a key member in GSN. It became very questionable how some academic women would expect to bring about fundamental gender changes in alliance with these seemingly progressive male academics. I was left believing that the main reason why these men were involved in GSN was the opportunity it provided to publish that extra academic paper and make economic gains, but not from any personal commitment to gender change.

Gender studies I thought might be incorporated into the university system as just another academic gymnastic.

However, it could be argued that by women not challenging directly the norms of society, and thus appearing to conform, they might be able to accomplish much more than they might if they are confrontational. As such their semblance of conformity may be strategic. However, gender change through the approach advocated by the likes of Angela can only be successful at the very personal level. It will also be slow and very sporadic. Such change cannot be transformative. Most of these women academics lack what Beatrice Webb (1926:177) once called "the consciousness of collective sin". They fail to see that the whole social system needs changing radically, not just reforming slightly.

As if to extend Angela's conservative views, other academic women strongly voiced the view that since they were in the minority and were young in age and young professionally, they needed to work together with the men for their voices to be heard. When I asked them why they
preferred male bonding their responses were instructive:

How many of us [women] manage to get into teaching in the university? Relatively few. This makes us have a thinner voice. ... Majority of these women you see here today were employed in the mid 80s with the expansion of the universities. ... I do not believe our voices can be heard because of our vulnerability. ... We can’t manage without the help of our male colleagues. ... some men are our best allies. You can’t believe some women are more traditionalistic minded than our men ... If women were organized and lobby for issues affecting them only, that means we alienate our male colleagues. We need their support and I can assure you there are many men who love and care for women in this university.

Critically evaluating the foregoing narratives it is clear that some of the academic women believed that they were vulnerable. They were few in number and were inexperienced. It could be argued that these women argued in such conservative terms because they wanted to protect their careers. It is clear that they knew that articulating a need for change in the status quo might be self-sacrificial and painful and could mean casualties. They were also cognizant of the fact that men dish out rewards, promotions and privileges, and therefore they do not want to antagonize them. In some ways the women considered themselves lucky to be part of the academic staff. Although their stance appears to be self-defeating, it is understandable particularly because there is no gender politicisation in the Kenyan universities. These academic women have been socialized and educated into acceptance of male hegemony. Moreover, it is likely that they have rarely encountered women who dished out rewards and privileges within the Kenyan university.

In view of their lived circumstances, it is further arguable that in preferring to work in solidarity with their male colleagues, they were inevitably choosing for themselves rather than the collective welfare. However, as prudent as their choices might be, they end up compromising with the status quo and gender inequality remains in place. It seems that the women are caught in a double bind because they perceive the act of seeking other women as self-defeating. But paradoxically, their aligning with their male colleagues has not proven to be beneficial for most of the women either.
Although the women gave me several examples of women who fraternized with men and failed, they themselves continued to advocate male bonding. Anna, speaking of her own experiences of failure in one of the male fraternities, narrated to me how in the lower grades men and women academics organized to lobby together for better housing and commuting allowances. To her utter shock and dismay the men were "bribed" and given their dues and the women were ignored. Then men disappeared into thin air and their solidarity was broken. In defiance, feeling betrayed and let down she led the lone group of women to the administration. The administrator concerned warned her to shut up and told her outright: "If you don't shut up you will never be promoted."

By the time I was conducting this interview Anna confided in me that since then she had been applying for promotion for two and a half years, and that even the head of her department (who is a man) has helped push her application. They have failed to receive even a letter of acknowledgement.

The fear of swimming against the current, which at times could be very expensive professionally as Anna's tale has indicated, may have forced these women to opt for alliances with their male colleagues. As Anna clearly tells us, the patriarchal university quickly utilizes divide and conquer tactics through coopting their own kind and threatening women who dare.

Suffice to say that some women academics preferred male bonding for what they perceived to be beneficial for their careers. Although more often than not women academics were disillusioned by the cooptation of their male colleagues, they still believed it was much safer and rewarding in the long run to work together with their male colleagues. In my view, these women were not ready to get more political and had not developed a sharpened consciousness of their gender oppression. In fact, they excused gender oppression by arguing that the men were sick and needed a social healing. And they believed that it was their responsibilities to "heal" and
"convert" them through appealing to their conscience.

About a third of the women academics categorically stated that they had more in common with the male academics and therefore could not see the purpose of establishing a women's network. This group of women seemed to devalue the abilities of their own kind. Most of these women were either accomplished academicians or the few teaching in the science faculties. They vigorously sought to identify with the male gender as a symbol of success. Explicitly some admitted that they are socially and intellectually at home with their male colleagues. Regina clearly speaks to this position in her response to my question of whether she was involved in any of the women's networks and social support groups in the university:

.... The people I am close to and socialize with are men... I have more men friends. I am socially and intellectually more at home with male academics than women in this university ... One thing I have noticed about women in this university they like discussing trivial things like their husbands, boyfriends, children, clothing ... But with men you don’t. They discuss other things which in my view are more constructive ... very rarely you will find male academics discussing trivialities. They are serious.

In Regina's view, men were serious while women were not. What is unsettling, however, is the fact that Regina and other similar academic women described themselves in such terms as "ambitious", "hardworking", "goal oriented" and "no-nonsense type". If women are not serious, then logically Regina and those like her do not fit in the category women. Men are serious and by extension Regina fits in the category of male academics. With this kind of attitude, networking among the academic women cannot be achieved.

Women like Regina, in my view, have internalized the cultural stereotype that women are not serious. By disassociating themselves from other academic women they are actively trying to prove that they are better and not like women who usually gossip. Their identification with their male colleagues can be explained in two possible ways. First, since the academic women are so few in the university (only 450 out of 2,356), they are not a perceived threat. As such they are
allowed to melt into the larger group in somewhat token positions. Secondly, because the university is male dominated as is the whole higher education system, then it is likely that these women have internalized male values through the many years of patriarchal education. Using male terms they define what constitutes seriousness and trivialities. The matters of everyday life which particularly impact negatively on women's lives - for example, children or their relationships - are trivialized. These women seem to have fallen into the male trap that separates everyday life from what is considered to be academic turf. By separating their everyday life from the academy they seem to suggest that home experiences do not affect women's career progress, and therefore, there is no rallying point for women. From my field observations and interviews, it became quite clear that the higher the academic women climbed the academic ladder, the more they disassociated themselves from their own gender. Successful women acted in very individualistic ways and more often than not sought identification with other successful male academics who might have been instrumental in their upward social mobility. In fact, there were lots of divisions among academic women based on political sponsorship. Some women maintained that women academics who supported the status quo earned themselves heterosexual approval and at times were singled out for sponsorship and even appointments into powerful positions in the university administration in an attempt to shut off those attempting to rock the boat. These women in token positions are also used as showcases to prove that the university is gender sensitive. The women questioned why some internationally acclaimed women academics were never appointed into any positions. Only a certain clique got appointed into virtually every committee both within the government and the university.

Mwende, an outspoken academic, was particularly critical of these women in leadership positions. Instead of these appointed women seizing their leadership opportunities to uplift other academic women, they instead bonded with the gender that put them into power. She maintained that attitudes towards women will only change if senior academic women stand firm and work
together with the junior women academics, secretaries and the messengers. In her words:

... once women who are able to break though the barriers that stop women from reaching the realms that so far have been male preserve they become like men. They stop identifying with the gender that they belong to and its aspiration, and relate to the class that gives them the comfortable perks that they now enjoy. They devote their energies to maintaining the positions that they have attained as individuals and give little or no thought to those of their gender who have yet to cross the valley of tears.

**Physical and Social Organisation of the University**

All the academic women in this study repeatedly complained that the nature of the university physical layout worked against women’s networking and solidarity. The women explained that even when they had important issues to discuss with their male colleagues, this is quite difficult because the universities lacked efficient internal communications systems. Few of the academic staff offices were equipped with a telephone. In any case even the one departmental telephone at the secretary’s desk was more often than not out of order. Few of the academic women owned personal cars and in fact only four of the women in this study owned one. Teaching departments in one university or campus can be miles apart. Lectures might be scattered in different corners of the university. The outcry was that academic women spend a phenomenal chunk of their strictly budgeted time criss-crossing the campus on foot, from one lecture theatre to the other and back to their offices. More often than not if a need arose for travelling to another university this included a lot of planning and time because it would mean hours of commuting in unreliable public transportation. Sometimes a journey of four hours could turn into ten hours or even into days, due to numerous mechanical failures. The women narrated several incidences when they were forced to cancel their *safaris* (journeys) or to spend a night in a motel when they were en route to a university in a different province and the public vehicle broke down when they were midway.
Those who owned a family car complained that their husbands dropped them in the mornings and picked them up in the evenings and thus they felt ghettoized during the day. Others complained that due to the proletarianization of the academic positions and concomitant skyrocketing prices of basic commodities, they could no longer afford to service or fuel their cars. Most of the elegant cars in the university housing estates, as Angela humorously put it, "were merely flashy displays of status symbols and some never left their parked stations till they fall apart."

In view of the above physical, social and economic conditions, the academic women explained that they rarely met or communicated with their other female colleagues and friends as much as they would have wished to. In most of the cases, they accidentally ran into each other and on the spot if they had time might go for tea together for a few minutes. Seeking out other colleagues would mean walking from your department to theirs and this could be miles apart, and chances are you might miss them. As such: "You end up wasting time which you do not have", as Amina explained.

Some of the academic women, particularly those singly isolated in the science faculties, said that they felt physically, socially and intellectually isolated from other women. They maintained that highly specialized and compartmentalized knowledge segregated women from each other. Sophia, for example, told me that all her working days she finds herself in the midst of male lecturers, demonstrators and laboratory technicians. Inevitably she establishes a close academic bond with her male colleagues and in a way gets alienated from other women. In her words:

I don’t know whether it is true of other academic women. ... but with other women I never get a basis for establishing academic discussions. I really don’t know whether I am different, but I find that I never get close enough to women to start discussing academics. You meet briefly and say hi and that’s it. But with men I find myself consulting them and them consulting me. But let me say this may not be because these are men or these are women, but in [my field], I am the only woman lecturer and on most of the academic things we consult each other ...
I have to consult daily others who happen to be men. ... The other women in the department are a graduate assistant, the cleaner and the messenger.\(^{32}\)

From the foregoing narrations, it becomes evident that academic women face several social, psychological and physical barriers to their networking and building solidarity with each other. It is interesting to note, however, that even though almost all the academic women stated that they would like to be more connected with other academic women and indeed complained of their social and physical isolation, some seemed to enjoy their rarity and high visibility. During my interviews and observations with the academic women, it was clear that academic women in the science faculties felt superior to women in the social sciences, whom they condescendingly referred to as penguins (meaning that social sciences are very easy). It appeared that women scientists, due to their daily interaction with an overwhelmingly male academic staff and male students, and of course, the fact that they are products of this male training, have been forced to assimilate male norms. This assimilation of male values and norms may explain why they referred to social scientists in such chauvinistic terms.

In Europe and the Middle East, a similar observation has been made by Sutherland (1985) and Toren (1991) who concluded that academic women enjoyed their solo positions, and were not critically aware of it as a token position. In my study, academic women in the sciences felt they had made it in the sciences because they were more intellectually capable than other women. This kind of outlook not only divides women academics but also promotes the academic patriarchal myth that science is good and only those endowed with tough brains can excel in it. This kind of

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\(^{32}\) A messenger is one of the lower ranks among the support staff in the university. A messenger usually runs errands for the chair of the department. Such errands include picking up and delivering departmental mail, delivering memos and messages to other departments. Usually messengers are male. They are expected to expedite these services by using their bicycles, a practice which is not common among women. The female messenger was exceptional in this particular department. Another exception to the rule is that almost all secretaries are females but in the Department of Fine Arts in Kenyatta University, the secretary was male. During one of my interview sessions, when I requested to see the secretary of the department one of the respondents replied: "he is a man". 
situation only helps to perpetuate the gendered division of knowledge instead of addressing social structural factors which enable one gender to succeed and one to fail in science. Women scientists then become male allies as they become integrated into science faculties on male terms.

In a very pessimistic prophecy, others feel that the way the university is organized and run constitutes a disabling environment for women working together. Rhoda clearly articulates this position:

Women in this university cannot and I do not see solidarity coming soon because of the way the university is run. ... There is no time the women or men meet as a full university body. ... Ask me who are the other women in other faculties, majority I have never spoken to. We are strangers to each other. ... It is only professors who meet as a full body in the senate and discuss their problems and walk out.

From these narrations, it is clear that the impersonal, individualistic, isolating and bureaucratic culture of male centred universities works against women’s solidarity. The university operates anonymously and individuals do not generally know each other even if they work in the same university. Women teachers’ culture of caring and nurturing as identified by Acker (1994) among the Hillview Primary School teachers stands in stark contrast with that experienced by the Kenyan academic women. As Rhoda succinctly tells us, she does not know women in other faculties: "We are strangers to each other." This is a rather peculiar situation bearing in mind that women academics are a minority in the Kenyan universities. For example, in Kenyatta University there are 181 academic women and 354 academic men. (For more information on academic women’s representation and distribution across the faculties and universities, see appendix 3, 4, 5 and 6). One would have expected that, although the women might not meet often, at least they are not strangers to each other. In my view, this means that the women have not found any good reason to look and find each other. They have become entangled just like male academics in the fast moving individualistic impersonal academic culture, so that even when they are more than one in a department they do not work together, as Amina lucidly explains:
It is only these women in my department I meet in a party, or around the corridors, otherwise you see me walk, I see you drive, you don’t even wave, I also don’t wave to you or if you are driving and I am driving, we hoot at each other, wave and that’s all. It is as if we don’t know each other. Even the men incidentally don’t seem together. But for men it is better because they meet in the senior common room, or other places, and as they drink and get to know each other.

Lack of time was again and again quoted as a constraint even by those who would sincerely have wished to connect with other women. These women explained that they were so overwhelmed by the academic demands and domestic demands that they lacked time even for their own personal relaxation. These women claimed that they felt guilty that they were not more political. Time constraints were even more complicated by the physical distances from one faculty\textsuperscript{33} to another. Even when they had an hour or two in between their lectures, it is difficult to use that time to connect with other women for it means walking from office to office. In Amina’s words:

I always feel that I should be more involved, more political but life is not like that. ... I am personally too busy, too overburdened with my career and home demands. ... I have no leisure time and I feel guilty that I have no time for anything else. ... the other hurdle is the distance. Even when I may be free for one or two hours. ... It is difficult to walk across, to the other end of the compound. There are no telephones here [her office where this interview was conducted]. ... public booths are far and mostly are out of order. ... Walking option is tedious, time consuming and does not guarantee results. ... Some people only show up in the university when they are teaching.

It is quite clear that the academic women faced several barriers which hindered the possibilities of their own networking. Poor communication systems made it particularly difficult for these time pressured academics to meet each other. In the absence of telephones, the alternative is either letter writing or walking from office to office which demands lots of time.

\textsuperscript{33} Faculty here means a conglomeration of several related teaching departments, for example, faculty of arts, science, etc.
CONCLUSION

From my analysis of the women’s voices, it is my conclusion that there exist no formal linkages and solidarities among the academic women. Sporadic incidents showing unity of purpose were reported across the universities whereby women acted together but no sooner than they do come together, they disband. The academic women see each other as competitors and as such rarely support each other. Each in her own way is involved in her personal struggles. There exists no woman’s constituency in the university. Prior to 1992 when the first multi-party elections were conducted and political spaces began to open up the issue of power, domination and in particular gender inequality were not part of the public discourse. Moreover, there has been no gender politicization in Kenyan universities. Many academic women’s lives were dominated by fear of losing their jobs, fear of jeopardizing their promotional chances, fear of being identified as anti-men and singled out for blame, as well as fear of punishment and isolation.

It is also my conclusion that higher education and academic careers have only been beneficial at the individual level. The academic women in this study have not used their education or career status to collectivize their voices to fight for their own empowerment as career women.

The majority of the academic women in this study preferred male bonding to female bonding. They believed that men and women should work together to bring about desired gender changes. The women were divided in their views. Some felt that the university is a community and the women should be careful not to be antagonistic as this would lead to gender polarization and the women would be the likely losers. They argued that they were in the minority, were also in junior positions and thus vulnerable.

These women also experience other social and physical barriers which work against their solidarity. Some were the sole women in their department, consulted with male colleagues daily, were separated from other women by miles, and as a result they stressed that they felt closer to
male colleagues than female colleagues. Some testified that they have nothing in common with their female colleagues.

What is interesting and rather ironic from the women's voices is the fact that these women did express a desire to work together. They were aware of the barriers to their supporting and working together. They were critical of themselves and others, but few were willing to take a lead towards breaking these barriers. A clear gap, therefore, exists between supporting feminist principles and living these principles. This gap at times is attributed to the culture of fear which is so pervasive in Kenyan society in general and in the university in particular. We learn more of the culture of fear in the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT
BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC WOMEN’S ALLIANCES AND LINKAGES WITH GRASSROOTS WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Explored in this chapter are the obstacles to academic women’s establishing alliances, linkages and solidarities with grassroots women, particularly for political action. Although all the academic women in this study expressed a wish to link up with the grassroots, and indeed, argued that it’s only when all women, both educated and not educated, rich and poor, work together that women’s liberation would be achieved, they also identified a host of barriers obstructing this unity. These barriers include lack of common ground, a culture of fear and the political separation of the intellectuals from the grassroots. Interestingly, very few of the academic women in this study were affiliated with any of the grassroots women’s organizations.

At times, the academic women held two opposed ideas, for example, some argued that they have no common grounds with the grassroots and at the same time argued that they have strong bonds with their friends, relatives and parents at the grassroots level. Moreover, their positions kept shifting. This is an indication that their lives are characterized by contradictions and ambiguities. However, in spite of all the contradictions and ambiguities, all the academic women argued that they have strong informal connections with grassroots women who are their mothers, sisters, aunts and friends. Interestingly, about two-thirds of the women in this study are involved in informal social groups which help to preserve class privilege.

To ease the flow of the discussion, the chapter is divided into three broad sections considering the lack of common grounds between groups of women, the culture of fear, and the existence of informal class-based networks which preserve class privilege.
NO COMMON GROUNDS

*Umoja Ni Nguvu: Unity is Strength*

It appears that the possession of high levels of western-type formal education and the concomitant tasks of coping with a competitive, individualistic male world not only bifurcated women academics (Acker, 1989, p.10), but has also created a widening gulf between them and the vast majority of Kenyan grassroots women. All the women in this study strongly expressed the view that *umoja ni nguvu* (a Kiswahili saying meaning that unity is strength). They maintained that all Kenyan women whatever their ethnic, social, cultural, economic, political or educational background should work together for change. They believed that as academic women they could play a crucial role in women’s advancement because they had the luxury and intellectual capital to ponder, reflect, conceptualize and conduct research. They had the skill to organize as well as the ability to articulate clearly the problems experienced by women as a group.

Each woman in her own way reverted to traditional wisdom, proverbs and sayings to emphasize the need for women to act together. They maintained that if they spoke in one voice, they had the numeric power to change the position of Kenyan women. Repeatedly, they used proverbs and sayings like: "umoja ni nguvu" (unity is strength), "kamuingi koyaga ndiri" (a Kikuyu proverb meaning many people together can lift a heavy wooden mortar or many hands make light work), "gutiri wiyenjaga igoti" (you cannot shave the very back of your head), and "kiara kimwe gitiuragaga ndaa" (one finger cannot kill a louse), to emphasize the need for interdependence, mutual support and solidarity. Clearly they were aware that lack of solidarity meant lack of power. Edna aptly articulates this position:

"... You may have three, five or ten university degrees but that alone is not enough. In our African society power emanates from the group. You are nothing ... unless other women back you up, you cannot get far. As they say *umoja ni nguvu.* This is true of all the grassroots leadership. The leaders have support from the group. ... They have a political clout. Their views cannot be ignored. ..."
alliances are very important. When we educated, urban women are against our own oppression and work in solidarity with women lower than us, then we will succeed.

And Aketch, as if supporting Edna, adds:

I believe *Ita ritari ndundu Ititahaga* [Kikuyu proverb meaning: the war that has no unity will make no prey]. I think solidarity is important. There is not much academic women can achieve alone. As the Aikuyu people say: *kiara kimwe gitiuragaga ndaa* (one finger cannot kill a louse). I believe we need to unite. First we are so few and we risk isolation. Even if we worked together as academic women, we are so few in comparison with the rest of the Kenyan women population. Together educated and illiterate we could have a thicker voice. Malleable men might also join us. Groups provide anonymity and scapegoating may be minimised. United we stand, divided we fall.

It is evident that the academic women are critically aware of the need to work together with grassroots women. They are cognizant of the fact that for them to effect any changes they have to rely both on their numeric power and on influencing important politicians. In their view, power emanates from the group and not from an individual, however many degrees he or she possesses. In any case, possessing higher degrees more often than not separates an individual woman from her kinsfolk, and in particular her kinswomen if they happen to be illiterate and poor.

The women also maintained that if they worked together as a group it would be safer, and scapegoating would be minimized.

However, despite this keen awareness of the possible benefits that could be reaped if academic and grassroots women worked together as a group, it is rather ironic that only a handful - in fact, only four of the women interviewed in this study - identified with any of the numerous formal women’s associations and organizations. There are over 1,600 women’s association organizations in Kenya registered with the official umbrella organization *Kanu*

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34 This concept was used by the academic women to refer to men who were empathic to the cause of women. In the women’s view, there were many of these men who were willing to support women’s causes once women convinced them of the need to form alliances. In fact, the academic women maintained that gender sensitive men (though they may not publicly admit they are) are better allies than gender insensitive women.
Maendeleo ya Wanawake. More ironic and rather revealing was the fact that only two of the women in this study knew of the existence of and belonged to the Association of University Women. After further questioning, it became clear that information was rarely shared or publicly disseminated. The Association of University Women is run by a group of elite women most of whom are not members of the academic body and are mainly concerned with charity. Edna, one of the two members, proudly told me that once in a while they sponsor a needy girl’s high school education.

More surprising still, almost all the academic women in this study maintained that they were not aware of any formal linkages, alliances or networks between academic women and the rest of the Kenyan women. However, they all maintained that they are personally linked to grassroots women because a majority of their parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends live in the rural areas. In fact, most of them argued that their homes are in rural areas and that they only owned houses in the towns because of their jobs. Many of them travelled to their rural homes fortnightly or once in a while. They owned property in their rural homes and had employees and as such maintained that they were not isolated from the grassroots.

35 Maendeleo ya Wanawake is the oldest formal national women’s organization. It was started in 1952 by a British woman, Ms. Nancy Shepard, as a charitable organization. Its major objective then was the development and improvement of the status and living conditions of women and girls in all of the communities in Kenya. However, in May, 1987 this organization was coopted by the national ruling party, KANU (which was the only political party by then). KANU promised to give “inspired guidance” as it was doing for other needy organizations.

36 The concept "home" is a contested one among many of the ethnic communities in Kenya. The usage of the term "home" is usually contrasted with the term "house". Home is usually used to refer to a dwelling place located at a person’s place of birth. Usually homes are in rural areas and consist of one’s own children, siblings, and relatives. Home in this thesis was used by the respondent to indicate the cultural roots or heritage usually connected with their specific ancestral land. Married women had "two homes" one referring to their own natal homes and the second one at their spouses’ place of birth. A house is a dwelling place which could be either in a town or rural area but usually away from kinspeople. Most Kenyans who work in towns therefore have a house in town and a home in the rural area.
Sopiato’s response to my questions was typical:

.... I do not know of any formal organization where academic women and grassroots work together. It is possible some women [academic] do but I don’t know of any ... let me say at a very personal level we all have deep linkages with the grassroots ... In my family of five I am the only person who resides in town. My parents, brothers, sisters ... all my relatives live at home in the rural areas at Londiani ... we only moved to this place because of our careers. We own a house in town, but our home is where we were born ... I visit home regularly, pay fees for my younger brothers and sisters. My parents depend on me economically ... even my aunts’ children I help ... but when you talk about solidarity, that one I don’t know .... the women’s groups that I have heard of both at home and in this town [where her university is located and where this interview was conducted] concern themselves with issues which to some extent are irrelevant to me.

When I pushed her further to explain to me why these women group’s were irrelevant to her, she replied: "These groups are mainly self-help groups or are just the brainchild of a certain local politician. I am not interested in that." Although Sopiato came from a very humble background and indeed her family depended on her for financial support, her education, her university position and her hypergamous marriage have elevated her over the vast majority of rural Kenyan women. Grassroots women’s groups mostly organize around economic issues and Sopiato was economically secure. Moreover, Sopiato’s reluctance to join women’s groups finds resonance in Kabira and Nzioki (1993, p.72-73), who argue that Kenyan women’s groups are too often used to further male interests. The main roles of these groups have often been reduced to providing entertainment, dancing, cooking, votes and praise for KANU, the ruling party.

In my view, Sopiato’s ability to provide for herself as well as her family members does not only set her apart from the grassroots women but also from the men of the lower classes. While all women experience patriarchy, Sopiato and other academic women bear burdens differently and unequally from poor women. The academic women’s voices suggest that this difference in wealth, education, and class privilege constitutes a barrier to working together for purposes of women’s emancipation. The academic women could not easily establish a common ground with grassroots women.
The Ever Widening Gap

A clear majority of 19 academic women in this study repeatedly spoke of barriers encountered as well as of perceived ones in any efforts to forge linkages, alliances and solidarity with grassroots women. Solidarity and alliances were as difficult to achieve between the academic women and the urban poor as well as with their rural and illiterate sisters. The women spoke of insurmountable perceptual, attitudinal, intellectual and socio-economic differences. This ever widening gulf between groups of Kenyan women has its roots in the colonial period when only a few women got access to the western type of formal education. These women also became Christians, and were incorporated into western capitalist patriarchy. The vast majority of the Kenyan population, and in particular women, remained in the rural areas, with no access to western formal education or formal employment. Some embraced Christianity in its extreme form, while others maintained their indigenous religions and culture and remained isolated in their rural homes. However, the expansion of capitalism, neo-colonialism, and now structural adjustment programmes have completely broken down African women’s indigenous institutions which provided for female solidarity, bonding and friendships. Western educated women were initially socially constructed as ‘maambere’ ["civilized"] or asomi [readers] while those who were denied or failed to get access to western education were construed as uncivilized and referred to as washenz’ non-asomi. This unequal access to western formal education and other social inequalities that sets apart the asomi and non-asomi has never been seriously addressed by the national government. This chasm between the western educated [mostly urbanized] and those uneducated in western terms [mostly rural and urban poor] continues to be perpetuated and exploited by the postcolonial rulers for their political gains. Only 35 per cent of the Kenyan female population is literate while 65 per cent of the male population is literate (1985 census).

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37 For more information on this see chapter 2, footnote 3.
This gap in access to western formal education has not only differentiated among Kenyan women, but to a great measure it has isolated the few who manage to get high levels of western education from the vast majority of Kenyan women. Some of the academic women complained that although their higher levels of formal education have resulted in prestigious careers, and as such have allowed them to achieve a certain measure of social, economic and personal autonomy which could influence how they are treated in marriage, they felt alienated from their rural illiterate and urban poor sisters. By virtue of their positions, they have established houses in towns and now have needs quite different from the vast majority of Kenyan women.

The women emphatically spoke of social psychological barriers and economic barriers, which made their working together with the grassroots cumbersome. It is to these barriers to which I turn.

**Socio-Economic Barriers**

Most of the academic women felt that they experienced status incongruity as they attempted to work together with grassroots women. Specifically, in explaining why they are not involved with grassroots women's groups, the academic women indicated that they experienced different social psychological problems from most grassroots women. In their view, grassroots women organized and formed numerous economic generating groups in an attempt to improve their social economic status. As a result, an academic woman might not be attracted to join these groups because her problems may not be economic in nature but related to her career development or family. In other words, grassroots women experienced gender differently from the academic women. Sopiato speaks to this point:

One of the reasons why some women in the rural and urban areas form or join women's groups is to address their social and economic problems. ... They may want to pool resources to buy a cow, pay fees for their children or buy corrugated iron sheets to roof a house, or to renew a petty trading licence etcetera. ... I do not
need any of these things. My problems may be more psychological than economic.

For someone like Sopiato, solidarity with grassroots women can at best be at a theoretical level. The priority of the majority of grassroots women is meeting basic needs. Sopiato, by virtue of her education and position at university, is at least assured of daily survival. Sopiato’s problems are how she can advance her career, or better her terms of service; thus she sees no common ground between herself and the other women.

Sopiato, like a few other academic women in this study, lives in relative comfort. A senior lecturer, she is married to the head of the government organization and lives in one of the coveted estates in town. She and her husband own three cars, their children attend one of the exclusive primary schools, and they are served by two domestic servants, a cook, and a gardener. The husband enjoys the services of a driver paid by the organization. Differentials in wealth between these few exceptionally privileged academic women and grassroots women were at times astounding. I remember keenly my feelings of guilt, frustration and powerlessness as I rode on a bus on a beautiful Sunday morning on my way to shadow Sopiato. Although this was not the first time that I travelled across this posh estate with high walls and iron gates with inscriptions like *Mbw a k ali* (Beware of dogs) or "this home is protected by A or B security guards," this time I was particularly vigilant, sensitive and alert to every detail. As I was about to alight from the bus at the stop Sopiato had described, I could not fail to notice the abject poverty that lay just beside this lush estate. I was perturbed by the elegance of this estate next to the site of mud house hovels so closely together that they looked like a big brown sheet of iron spread beneath the beautiful clear skies. I knew there were many women living in these hovels. I suffered guilty knowledge. After all, it was about solidarity and potential alliances between these groups of women, who seemed to inhabit two different but close together planets, that I was going to inquire about.
However, not all privileged academic women shared Sopiato's views. Akinyi, who lived in an equally luxurious environment, believed that academic and grassroots women should be able to work together. In her view, academic women should try to transcend their social psychological barriers and strive to meet grassroots women at their level but not the other way round. In a very interesting argument she recommended that in order to establish a working relationship with grassroots women, academic women must "commit class suicide" at least psychologically and meet the urban poor and illiterate rural women as equals. She, however, appreciates the difficulties of completely stepping out of one's own social class for political action. In her words:

I do not see any problem with my networking with the poor village women. They are my mothers, sisters and nieces ... In fact, these barriers are psychological. They are built in attitudes which we must do away with. If we go to the community as part of them and we truly believe we are one with them we can work across our differences. We must not act big, the knowers of everything or as if we want to be served... however, this may not be easy because your dressing, your hair style, your way of looking at things. ... but this could not be seen as a barrier. If you let yourself to be seen as an elite person willing to share. It may take time but they will accept you. The problem is perception. The way we perceive them and how they perceive us. We need to break the stereotypical perceptions if we are to work together.

Despite her positiveness and clever suggestions as to how academic women could reach the grassroots, not as those in authority but as members of the community willing to share, Akinyi still defines grassroots women as "the other". The gap between "them and us" is clear. However, Akinyi and others who shared the same view believed that they could narrow the gap between "them and us" by presenting themselves honestly and simply to the grassroots women.

Although Akinyi recommends ways which academic women can reach grassroots women at their own level, her approach seems to me like another charity project. Indeed she suggests: "Let yourself be seen as an elite person willing to share. It will take time but they will accept you." Akinyi's approach fails to deal with the thorny issues of wealth redistribution. Masking
wealth differentials, and forging a superficial unity without really addressing these things which divide women, might in the end lead to the elite women colonizing or exploiting the grassroots women. Moreover, it is evident that most of academic women advance in their careers because they have domestic servants (house girls) who take care of their children. A career woman gets only two months' maternity leave. Since there are no day care services, these academic women and indeed all other women working outside the home depend on the services of underprivileged women. It is questionable, therefore, what kind of solidarity the employers (academic women) and the employees (house girls) could forge in order to fight for socio-economic and gender equalities.

Some women admitted trying to forge alliances with underprivileged women but with no success. Edna, for example, confessed experiencing difficulties in trying to create an alliance with a local women's group at her home (place of birth). Although she tried to minimize her educational and class differences by dressing modestly, and by not allowing herself to appear like one interested in taking over the group's leadership, she reported experiencing a high degree of psychological loneliness. When she tried to offer suggestions, her education was thrown at her by some grassroots women leaders who interpreted her presence as a threat. Feeling a strong sense of rejection and intellectual isolation, she stopped trying. She felt that she was an outsider and did not belong to the sub-culture of the grassroots women. She also reported feeling totally disconnected from the issues the grassroots women were concerned about and from the way they operated.

This feeling of alienation and isolation from the grassroots is not surprising, bearing in mind that academic women are more often than not members of the tiny Kenyan elite. They have imbibed many years of western formal education and socialization which is patriarchal in nature and have been socialized in male work ethics in the institutions where they now teach. When these points are coupled with the fact that they live in and occupy a separate social economic
space from grassroots women, then it is understandable they are different. They belong to a higher social economic class where they are expected to behave like "ladies". In contrast, most of the grassroots women are poor, lacking any formal education and struggling to make ends meet, and as such cannot be expected to be "ladies". It is, therefore, arguable that if grassroots women were suspicious of academic women it was not without foundation. There is a glaring class difference between them.

**CULTURE OF FEAR**

*Fear of Being Targeted for Blame*

Among the many cited social psychological barriers to academic women establishing alliances/linkages and solidarities among themselves as well as with grassroots women, fear was the most recurrent theme. Some of the more embittered women described in chapter five explained that the university is not a free and autonomous body. It is directly under the control of the government and in fact the chief patron of all the national universities is the chancellor, who is none other than the head of state, who is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Kenyan academics are employees of the government and this relationship makes even the most critical academics keep quiet. The women complained of political patronage, lack of academic freedom, and indeed of a culture of fear prevalent in the Kenyan universities. They spoke of government-planted spies and listeners in and around the campuses and how this makes them suspicious of each other: "You simply don’t know who is working for them," Njambi claimed.

The women complained of political patronage whereby the chancellor, utilizing the powers invested in him by the university statutes, appoints only those who are "politically correct" to serve as vice-chancellors:
The vice-chancellor shall be appointed by the chancellor of the university after consultation with the council and shall hold office for a period of four years which may be renewed for a further period of two years. ... The vice-chancellor shall be chairman of the senate, and by virtue of his office be a member of every committee appointed, by the council and senate unless otherwise explicitly stated. (Moi University, 1989)

The vice-chancellors, who are members of all senate and council committees, in turn appoint their trusted friends to the headships of departments, schools and institutes. This kind of atmosphere does not promote alternative discourses and those who deviate are severely punished. Even after the first multi-party elections in December 1992, the hopes and aspirations of most academics continue to be frustrated, as corroborated by the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA):

... The Teaching Staff Union is still struggling to get registered, and so are student organizations ... And the climate at the university has not changed. There are still security officers spying on the campuses, still more or less visible forms of intimidation are being carried on. Censorship of school material is still in place ... Certain books are banned by law. (CAFA 1994, p.4)

The women voiced the view that the larger political system as well as the university administration survives and thrives through a purposeful strategy of divide and rule. Distrust and suspicion are deliberately encouraged not only among the academics themselves, but there is a conscious effort to separate the intellectuals from the grassroots. As a result, any attempts to reach grassroots women would be viewed with great suspicion by those in power. Speaking of a tremendous fear which seemed to engulf them, the women voiced the opinion that one has either to speak up and face the consequences or retreat to doing one’s job as well as possible and keep one’s mouth shut.

Expressing their fear of identification, the women maintained that if any social unrest occurred within the university or in the outside society, the members of the academic community would be the first ones to be singled out for blame. They gave me several examples of professors who either have been detained without trial, had their tenure terminated, were harassed by police
or who now are in self exile for trying to conscientize the grassroots. The academic women complained that more often than not, the academic community is portrayed as the enemy of the people and this creates a lot of fear and silence even among the bravest, as Mwende aptly explains:

... It is a difficult situation to have eyes and you are expected not to see. ... I personally believe in taking risks. ... I have tried to reach the grassroots women but all the time you feel your activities are under surveillance. They want to know what is it that you are telling women ... whether you are misleading them. ... even some women here think that I am a radical. ... they [government authorities] urge the grassroots people not to allow themselves to be mislead by disgruntled academics, who possess passports and can flee the country when they put everybody else in trouble. ... the university community is always portrayed as antagonistic to the general society.

While Maria affirms:

... There is a great deal of fear, suspicion and distrust of the intellectuals. There are spies in this university who report on our activities; there is no doubt about it. This makes the university very stressful ... lecturers get punished, their promotions withheld. ... You can imagine how difficult it would be if you went telling grassroots women to demand piped water, better schools for their children or fair treatment from their husbands. ... this would be perceived as subversion and even the women you are trying to reach may not even believe you. ... they [grassroots women] have been told several times that people coming from university are fond of creating chaos. Often they [grassroots women] are encouraged and warned to beware of women funded by western feminists to break down the African culture. ... always the warning is "it is you at the grassroots who will suffer. These trouble makers will leave the country and the propaganda continues".

From Mwende's and Maria's narrations, it is clear that there is a conscious attempt from those in power to create distrust, suspicion and antipathy between the academics and the grassroots. The grassroots people are persuaded by the government that it is in their own interests not to listen to the voice of difference - the academics. Grassroots women are in particular called upon to defend their African culture which is being corrupted by disgruntled, western-funded women. Inevitably, linkages and solidarities between the academic women and the grassroots women remain suppressed but not without one or two "politically correct" academic women sponsored into women's groups to give a facade of unity.
The women repeatedly told me that one of the reasons they do not openly speak out or make alliances with grassroots women for political action is the fear of losing their jobs. They felt that once they joined local women’s groups, by virtue of their academic positions they might be asked to provide leadership as a link to the social and political system. Being a leader would bring them into direct confrontation with the political system if they failed to act in favour of the political system and this would mean compromising themselves as well as ending up using grassroots women to uphold male interests. The other alternative would be that they would accept the leadership position while rejecting political cooptation. This refusal would lead to that particular women’s group being politically unsupported. Lack of government support could mean no funding or deregistering the group and indeed this would cause conflict between the academic women and the grassroots. After seeing other academic women suffer at the hands of both the government officials and the women they purported to support, many women academics have been forced to withdraw into their safe enclaves in university corners.

Speaking of her own personal fears and disengagement from women’s groups, Amina lucidly explains:

... one reason why I have not been involved in grassroots women’s association is the fact that I have seen other women suffer. ... women ask you to lead but if you suggest things be done differently that puts you in direct conflict.... I am opposed to the use of women’s groups to boost careers of certain men and women. ... I think in women’s groups we should go beyond income generating activities. I would like not only to push for posho mills or water projects but also for the women’s personal well being. ... Our men are too afraid of organized women and I might be the scapegoat. ... I know a number of women who have been silenced, lost their jobs because of being strongly opinionated. ... They disagreed with a provincial head and through underground networks their careers get ruined. ... I have decided to do my teaching, publish, rear my family and help my parents and relatives and I believe that is good enough.

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38 Posho refers to a staple Kenyan diet made from grains such as maize [corn], millet, sorghum, etc. Posho mills in this case refers to small scale women-owned mills, where other women take their posho to be ground at a very low cost.
This fear of identification and of being singled out for blame coupled with the great desire to keep their jobs and progress within the universities has made some of the academic women in the study isolate themselves from other women. Some have consciously decided to play it safe: to keep quiet and pursue their career goals. In my view their decisions are prudent but nevertheless their decisions work against women’s solidarity. Their decisions are based on the realization that academic women are in a no-win situation.

From the women’s evidence, it is clear that they were faced with three possible alternatives, all of which contain costs. First, they can choose for themselves and thus work towards the advancement of their careers and betterment of their individual families. In so doing they may isolate themselves from other women and this may appear to be selfish. This choice, though beneficial at the personal level, may be socially counter-productive. By choosing for themselves, they fail to use their high level of education and their positions to challenge patriarchy. Indeed, their seeming conformity helps to perpetuate gender inequality.

Second, they might actively join women’s groups, conscientize grassroots women and challenge patriarchy. This option would include fighting even the university which pays their own salaries. This alternative could be beneficial for the majority of Kenyan women but it involves risks and sacrifices. The academic women might be fired and as I have illustrated earlier, the common refrain among academic women in this study was "what can I do if I lose my job"? They were not prepared to lose. In fact, as discussed in chapter four, these women were educated into conformity. They were educated not to question but to stoop to conquer.

Third, the academic women could opt to join women’s groups, remain non-controversial, dance to the expected tune and in so doing may assist grassroots women to secure posho mills, sewing machines, or get incorporated into economic generating activities, but never challenge gender inequality. In most cases, women’s economic generating activities have been used for the
betterment of the position of the male, as the head of household. In this way, these academic women would be helping grassroots women generate resources to uphold patriarchy but not to dismantle it. A number of elite Kenyan women have politically gained through their ability to mobilise grassroots women in favour of patriarchy and to the detriment of women’s status as a group.

The role African elite women have played in the leadership of women’s organizations has been sharply critiqued by Bujra (1986), Amadiume (1987), Staudt (1987), Pressley (1992), Nzomo (1992) and Kabira and Nzioki (1993). Pressley and Staudt in particular indicate that elite women tend to head women organizations because of material and personal resources such as education and contacts that are useful in linking women to the political mainstream. Unfortunately, African elite women have not measured up to the writers’ expectations. Amadiume (1987) critiqued them sharply for failing to provide information, education and leadership:

.... The responsibility of educated elite women and organizations to their rural sisters was identified as providing information, education and leadership. In my opinion, any organization truly committed to the achievement of economic and social justice for women must be guided by socialist ideology ... It cannot be an organization working for or always in harmony with whatever government is in power. As we know, like male politicians, on the platform of umbrella organizations, many women have used the services and support of the majority of women, especially at the grassroots, to enhance their own political careers. They have either ripped off existing women’s organizations, or have organized women to serve their own self-interest, rather than that of the women they claim to represent. The result is that women’s organizations which previously directed themselves began to wait for directives. (Amadiume, 1987, p.197)

Despite these criticisms and observations, the stories of academic women in this study clearly show that these women have a good understanding and interpretation of their own lived experiences. In an attempt to deal with the circumstances, they at times adopt strategies which are essentially detrimental to the women as a group, but beneficial to themselves as individuals. Their actions to a large extent are limited by an intimidating political and university environment. Their lives are marked by fear of victimization; it is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of their
lives that they would draw their strength to live and the reason for their acting.

At times, they do not only fail to ally with the grassroots women, but they are forced by the deeply internalized culture of fear to disassociate themselves even from their closest women colleagues. Mwende, who described herself as a fighter, a daring senior lecturer, narrated to me her own personal experiences of isolation, rejection, and exclusion by even her best women friends and colleagues when she spoke out in the name of women. Her marriage failed and she was politically targeted. She stood alone and to her utter amazement women went to the side of men who were tormenting her. Her closest friends, afraid of being associated with her, only telephoned and when they became more scared they stopped even calling her. In her words:

... Then I stepped forward, sometimes alone. Quite often, in the name of women I tried to protect the rights of women. That is why sometimes people say I am working on human rights, on women rights. ... even in my divorce case, I was not only defending myself. But I was defending the rights of women because I was being treated wrongly as a woman, I was actually setting a precedent over how women should be treated. ... I was trying to say women should not be treated like this ... To my amazement women did not come to my side. If anything they went to the side of the man who was tormenting me, and it amazed me. ... Even my closest women friends were afraid to be seen with me. They only telephoned and then they stopped even calling. ... You realize when you speak out publicly people avoid you. You are under surveillance and they don’t want to risk their careers and their families.

The academic women were not only muzzled by the fear of loosing their jobs, of being isolated, or being targeted for blame. They spoke of another kind of fear, fear of antagonizing and destabilizing the grassroots.

**Fear of Antagonizing and Destabilizing the Grassroots**

Fear of destabilizing grassroots women’s lives without offering tangible alternative solutions was repeatedly cited as a block to academic women’s working together with the grassroots. The academic women were strong in their views that the grassroots women were knowledgeable about their own situations. They were cognizant of the fact that the grassroots
women and in particular the rural peasants and the urban poor were publicly voiceless because they did not own any property. They noted that a woman does not own a home and only gets a home upon marriage. However, if a woman was gainfully employed as they (academic women) were, she could rent a room or house and live by herself and therefore make certain decisions in life. The academic women felt that since the majority of Kenyan women owned no property and there exists no social welfare system, then academic women who are relatively secure might be perceived as traitors by the grassroots women. The constant refrain was "what would happen if I speak to the grassroots women, conscientize them and their marriages break down without offering alternatives?" The academic women explained that they would be perceived as traitors because if their own marriages broke down they could afford to live alone with their children. The academic women feared that they might be seen as selfish: "As one ready to ruin their [grassroots women’s] lives," Angela explained. As explained earlier, the fact that the academic women belonged to a different economic class and had different aspirations, desires and needs made it very difficult to connect with grassroots women despite their common experience of gender submission. Sopiato, who was convinced that once peasant rural women were assured of their survival and that of their children they would fiercely fight gender oppression, spoke of her own fears:

What I am afraid of doing personally is antagonizing the women with the men they depend on ... I go to a meeting, conscientize the women and they go home feeling powerless after listening to these ideas. ... I think I would rather speak to the men, convince them of their mistakes and if possible lay down rules. ... poverty is used as a whip, a trap to keep women in a subordinate position.

The academic women, clearly aware of their privileged economic positions, feared that their solidarity with grassroots women could constitute both a threat and a desire. Grassroots women may develop a desire to break the bonds of their subordination, to demand to be freer, and to have more rights as persons. But this desire could threaten their relationships with their husbands, their fathers or brothers who owned the means of production, for example land. When
they assert their freedom, or become uncontrollable, they may be denied access to the land, and this means that they may have no food for their children, let alone a place to sleep.

Their fears were not without foundation. Some academic women shared with me several incidents whereby they tried to help their own sisters or mothers only to be dismissed with the charge that they want to ruin the lives of their sisters and mothers. Amina, for example, narrated to me a horrendous incident where her elder sister was seriously beaten by her husband because he found family planning pills in her handbag. Accusing her of infidelity he broke her limbs and she had to be hospitalized for a month. Amina took her battered sister to her own house after hospitalization. She convinced her not to return to her matrimonial home. After several weeks, her sister’s husband brought their six children to Amina’s house and left without a word. Amina’s salary was not enough, and her house was not big enough for her family and her sister’s. Although she had sworn to do her best to see her sister live better, after a couple of months her sister and her children left without any notice. She went back to her husband and accused Amina of misleading her. When I further questioned Amina, I learned that she had advised her poor, semi-literate sister to attend a family planning clinic after the birth of her sixth child. Little did she know that her husband was opposed to artificial family planning methods. He believed that family planning methods promoted promiscuity.

This kind of situation makes the relationship between the academic women and their rural illiterate sisters a very tenuous one. Academic women realized that knowledge alone cannot save their poor sisters. Other mechanisms need to be in place. Raising the grassroots women’s critical consciousness without offering tangible alternatives for a woman and her children is destructive. Amina explained that her sister preferred to go back to her husband, who violently assaulted her, rather than be a dependent on her (Amina). Maybe she thought it was more honourable to suffer in her "own" house.
Trapped in an unresolvable dilemma, academic women like Amina give in to fear. They see no better way of connecting and resolving the problems experienced by their less privileged sisters. Amina tried to save her own sister only to be turned into a foe. Overwhelmed, Amina and others then adopt "a mind your own business attitude" and conclude that grassroots women understand better their own problems. Leaving the grassroots women to resolve their own problems widens the gulf between academic women and grassroots women. In my view, as women become more divided, they cannot pose a challenge to patriarchy. Patriarchy thrives on our divisions, fears and silences. Giving up trying to reach out to even her own mother, Sophia summed up the situation thus:

When I go home to the village, my mother and her friends tell me how they grow and pick coffee and how their husbands receive the pay cheque ... how men buy a kilogram of meat and roast and eat half of it at the butchery and take home only a half. ... the women at the grassroots are aware that they are exploited but they see no alternatives. ... I believe the grassroots women would not believe me ... they would argue ... "because you are capable on your own ... you have made it ... you want to deceive us to ruin our marriages" ... they would even spit on you ... I would like to speak to people who understand ... Rural women know their problems better than I do.

In my view, these narrations and analysis by the academic women clearly show that women's struggle for emancipation in Africa is replete with contradictions, ambivalence and silence. Women do try to resist as, for example, Amina helped her sister get family planning pills and housed her temporarily, but their resistance and protest are easily suppressed by the structural, political and ideological powers of the male supremacy. While women suffer similar patriarchal impediments, they do not all have the same interests. They are divided by contradictory class interests and this makes alliances between them difficult. Bujra (1986) writes:

To discuss the implications of capitalistic class formation is consciously to reject the simplistic notion ... of "African women" as a homogenous category. The condition of women in Africa has of course always been culturally diverse: [W]omen cannot be thought as a single category, even though there are important and occasionally unifying struggles in which they may engage. At the same time women cannot be analyzed "as men": gender is almost invariably a relevant social
category. The point is that gender differences find differential expression at different class levels - gender is qualified by the position women occupy in the newly emergent classes. (Bujra, 1986, p.118)

**INFORMAL CLASS BASED NETWORKS: IN PURSUIT OF PRESERVING CLASS PRIVILEGE**

**Social Support Cum Prayer Groups**

Networks are basically a "configuration of cross-cutting interpersonal bonds in some unspecified way casually connected with the act of individual persons and the social institution of their society" (Barnes 1972, p.3). Networks used this way are partial rather than societal networks. They are personal, ego centred networks, containing links that join ego to friends, kinsfolk and workmates. All individuals in society are at the centre of such networks. Epstein (1969) identified two parts of personal networks, mainly "the effective and the extended part". Effective networks are the ones in which the members interact frequently, and links connect all members. The extended network is by contrast a relatively open network and the members do not necessarily know each other.

The effective network was utilized by some of the academics in this study. Two-thirds of the women in this study explained that in the absence of social networking in the universities, they were involved in informal networks of friends. These friends are usually women who live in the same estate, attend the same church, have children attending the same schools, and sometimes attend the same prestigious health clubs. Significantly all the women in these networks were married. These women met as a group once a month or every three months, and in each other's houses, on a rotational basis. Occasionally they organized group parties and often invited each other for tea or for family dinner. These women friends were rarely academic women, but were relatively well educated, of the same status in wealth and privilege. Some, however, had accessed a high social status through hypergamous marriages (marrying above themselves - to wealthy men)
or through family background. Some managed their own businesses and were not necessarily from the same ethnic group as their friends.

These informal solidarities were referred to as "prayer groups", "merry-go-round" or simply "group of friends". When I inquired further why these groups operated under such titles, it became clear that it was more agreeable and safer. Moreover, these groups were apolitical in nature. Edna, who belonged to two of these groups, maintained that Christianity was part of the Kenyan culture and "our men would not be threatened if they hear it is only a prayer group". Anna added, "you are even encouraged to attend prayer groups and in fact, the government spies and listeners do not bother with such women’s prayer meetings ... you do not need a licence at least to host a women’s luncheon". The purposes of these friendship groups were multi-dimensional. Some of the academic women explained that these groups were particularly important sources of social psychological support, for they provided avenues where they could socialize, talk about problems affecting themselves and their own families, discuss their children’s education and sometimes act as self-help groups in times of economic need. But more often than not the crucial reason for academic women’s involvement in these networks was the dire need for social support, as explicitly stated by Edna:

... I belong to one where you can call any of your friends at any time of the night and empty yourself if you are psychologically tormented. Sharing problems experienced is such help ... not even financially because finances may not be the basic issue affecting academic women ... But the social problems that are encountering us everyday are so many that they may even become a mental block ... so when you have somebody you can call upon at whatever time of the night and that person will listen ... that is what merry-go-rounds are meant for.

Explicitly in Edna’s narration is the fact that one of the crucial functions of merry-go-round groups is therapeutic. The women call each other at any time of the day or night and expect to get a listening ear and an empathetic heart. This “opening of the heart and emotional interdependence is only possible along a line of trusted friends who also share and understand your
problems", as Akinyi emphasized. It is also clear that "the women were not expected to tell on
each other" and as Wanja argued there was a mutual understanding that "Kagutwi ka mucii
gatihakagwo ageni" - an Agikuyu proverb literally translated to mean "matters of the home
should never be exposed to visitors". Clearly, what this means is that these women have
established strong bonds among themselves. Metaphorically they have established among
themselves "a home", at least a spiritual one. They expected confidentiality, mutual support, trust
and a high degree of tolerance and interdependence from each of the members. Any breach of
trust was viewed with great concern. Individuals who leaked out any information and were found
out were ostracized as traitors.

This level of confidentiality, trust and support was only possible within a group of friends
who experienced almost the same problems, belonged to the same social class, and had their
individual and family honour to protect, as Maria succinctly explained:

This line of friends from your own estate are also well educated like me. They
may not be from the same ethnic group like me, but we have common problems ...
at the family level ... They are mostly career women, business women concerned
with strengthening their families, its social standing and of course our own
reputation ... You don't want everybody to know all about your family ... some
people are malicious and can use the information to ruin you.

One point which clearly emerges from Maria's narration is the fact that these women were
very concerned with the preservation of privilege. As academic women, together with other
successful career and business women mostly married to well-to-do men, their reputation was to be
protected. In the Kenyan society marriage is a measure of personal success. It would be
damaging, for example, for families seemingly successful in education, careers and in economic
terms to be identified as dysfunctional families. Many successful women have had their reputation
eroded once it became public that they had marital problems. From the women's stories it is clear
that they had numerous problems at the family level which they needed help to deal with without
necessarily disrupting their families. Their solidarity to a great extent supported the ideals of the
traditional family. Their solidarity helped support but not supplant husbands’ positions within the family and as such preserved their perceived privilege. Preservation of their privilege depended on the women’s ability to conceal their family problems from the rest of the society, and in fact, through the exclusion of women from lower economic classes from their solidarity. In interviewing and observing these women, it was clear that they were very careful not to jeopardize their marriages as this would lead to loss of both class and career privileges. Evidently, solidarity among these women was more a response to their class position than to their position as women.

Gordon (1995, p.891) seems to corroborate this finding in her excellent analysis of gender, ethnicity and class in Kenya. She carefully explains that whereas in a familial mode of production, kinship loyalty requires that the wealthy and powerful provide for the less fortunate kin and ethnic members, as Kenyans get formerly educated and more entrenched into capitalism, class-based solidarities replace ethnic ties. In her words:

By contrast, capitalism encourages the development of solidarities based on class interests as opposed to kinship and ethnicity. In class system, style of life as well as position in property structures becomes a basis of class identity and solidarity.

Angela’s view encapsulate this class based solidarity:

We also realized we have a certain status in society and would like to portray that image. We felt that we needed to lead a certain kind of life that would match the societal expectation of us ... you are always under scrutiny .... We wanted to give a facelift to our homes. We contributed a certain amount of money every month. On rotational basis half of the money would go to one woman and the rest to the bank. We would inspect to confirm that the money was used for either furnishing, painting, etc.

Angela’s statement makes it clear that there is a great desire to maintain the perceived class values, standards or symbols of status. However, for some their salaries could not maintain the elite standards expected. By the virtue of their husbands’ positions, either as top civil servants
or managers of corporations, these women live in certain exclusive residential areas,
but it is always the woman who is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the interior design, furnishings, cutlery and so forth measure up to the expected class standards. In fact, many of these academic women maintained that a sexual division of family finances existed. The husband's money was more often than not spent on buying property such as houses, land, and cars, etc., while a wife's salary was mainly used for the family upkeep. Some of the women felt that this was particularly dangerous because Kenyans do not practise community ownership of property. In case of a marriage failure, the wife stood to lose everything.

However, not all the academic women in these networks had enough money to maintain the high class standards expected of them. As indicated in chapter six, real earnings have declined while the cost of living has sky-rocketed. As Angela shows, these women have resorted to self-help groups in order to maintain their elite class. They established a revolving fund whereby, at the end of every month, each member of the group contributed a certain fixed amount. Half of the money raised was given to an individual woman either to furnish or do anything necessary to keep her house up to the group's and in fact the estate's expected standard. The other half of the money was banked and loaned interest free to any member who might have a financial crisis. This means that these women had a pool of ready cash necessary to finance emergencies like school trips which are quite expensive, and a source of embarrassment if parents cannot afford them.

This spirit of cooperation is not new to Kenyan women. African women have been interdependent on each other for mutual support from time immemorial. In the indigenous societies, and in fact among members of the underprivileged class, women have used rotating

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39 Social economic class determines where individuals live. There are some very exclusive estates where the very rich live. Some of these residential areas are not even served by a public transport system because all those who live there are expected to own their own means of transportation.
funds known as *susu* in Ghana (Dei, 1994) and Matega and Ngwatio in Kenya (Stamp, 1986; Kamau, 1994). What is interesting is the fact that in times of economic difficulties, even the academic women who are part of the tiny Kenyan elite have resorted to indigenous resourcefulness and methods of creativity.

Although it is arguable that these women were forced by the harsh economic conditions and the need to preserve their class privilege to turn to indigenous women’s source of strength, mainly female bonding, solidarity and revolving funds, it is likely that some of these women might experience sharp class contradictions. When they begin to interrogate their class contradictions they might become useful elements in the pursuit of gender equality both inside and outside Kenyan universities. Kettel (1986) had specifically reported earlier that as women advanced economically, they lost their desire to form groups. On the contrary, data in this study show that these academic women would wish to ally with grassroots women, but they experience barriers on all fronts. They have therefore resorted to solidarity groups with women in their own class. However, it is important to reiterate that the academic women did not actively seek out other women academics even when they belonged to the same social economic class, for reasons given by Rhoda:

... In an ideal situation your women colleagues should be your closest allies. But as far as I know academic women see each other as competitors. ... It is a matter of social proximity ... social image and personal dignity. If everybody in the department and in fact the whole university knew you had this or that problem, it might backfire ... This is real for some women who are known to have marital problems, the university is not sympathetic ... I have heard in this university [where she teaches and where this interview was conducted] several men and surprisingly women comment "what do you expect of her? If she cannot manage her family how do you expect her to manage her career," so you see the connections ... It is dangerous to share your personal problems with your colleagues.

Seeking to preserve their social image, as successful, strong academics, these women ensure that their secrets do not leak to their colleagues. It is perceived to be professionally
threatening and dangerous for colleagues to have full knowledge of each other's private lives. As Rhoda tells us, the university is not sympathetic to personal tribulations and in particular women are not supported if they have marital problems. If anything, these problems are used to damage their career prospects.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

Some of the women joined these groups of friends to deal with their social isolation and loneliness. About eight of the academic women in this study told me that they were involved in prayer groups, which met once or twice a month. These meetings were organized on a rotational basis in the houses of the respective members. They usually served tea and snacks and as Amina humorously put it "we end up talking and most of the times we never pray".

The women indicated that they wanted to create a space where they could meet as women and discuss problems facing them in their various statuses as wives, mothers, daughters, aunts, cousins, workers, etc. In particular, the women complained that they experienced a deep sense of social isolation because their urban status has cut them off from their kinship linkages, and stranded them alone in high-walled, exclusive homes. Culturally, they are not expected to frequent social places even in the company of their husbands. "Decent" women, as I discussed in detail in chapter six, are expected to be home before dusk with their children. Married women in particular are expected to go straight home from their official engagements. These women used words and phrases like "walled in", "fenced in", "holed in", "exasperating", "crazy" to describe their feelings of social isolation and loneliness after a day's work and the burden of dealing with children and difficult housemaids.

Some of the women were indignant about the fact that their husbands picked them up from their places of work and their children from their schools and as soon as they arrived home,
the husband quickly made his exit to go and meet his peers and friends in social places. Even when they were relatively free, women could not easily accompany their husbands because their husbands, peers and friends would not understand this unbecoming behaviour. The men who took their wives to social places were accused of "exposing their wives too much and teaching them bad manners and of being sat on by their wives" as Edna clearly indicated. Interestingly, some of the popular television shows reinforced such controls. For example, a series I watched carefully during my research period was entitled "Mchezo wa plot ten" (literally translated to mean a play of plot ten). In this series the main theme was that men should not expose their wives to bars and restaurants or any social life as this would lead to marriage breakdown. Surprisingly, there were no protests from any women's group against this stereotyped patriarchal television drama.

Some women tried to break out of their social isolation and loneliness by forcing their way into their husband's company, only to meet with more psychological loneliness. The women repeatedly told me of stories where they insisted on accompanying their husbands only to end up, to their personal embarrassment, in some dingy drinking place packed with crowds of men. Aketch, for example, narrated to me an incident where a group of men friends used to drop by their house almost every other evening. Her husband, a senior civil servant, would accompany them only to return home in the small hours of the morning. One day she protested, and demanded to join them. Despite their attempts to persuade her not to join them as it would be uncomfortable for her, she prevailed and went with them. They ended up at a nightclub with lots of rowdy men. After a short while she was fed up but she could not go home alone. She was forced to sit there until to one in the morning. They finally got home at three in the morning, and she was not amused. She swore to keep her peace by not even trying to find out where her husband goes almost every evening.
The desire to overcome this specific kind of social isolation and loneliness led women to form or join women's informal "prayer groups". Rhoda explains:

I have been involved in an informal women's support network from 1987 to 1990. As a group of women friends, we realised that we had a problem of socialization. We realized that our men worked during the day and they pick up and drop us [women] from our place of work, they go out. ... They go out to discuss things which concern them ... We realized that we had our own things to talk about. ... We had problems in our families and we wanted to discuss them with our trusted group of friends. ... It's funny that we are married but we are more lonely than single women. ... being alone in the house with children demanding this and that and also dealing with unreasonable domestic workers. It feels like crazy. ... while our husbands are out there with their friends. ... We meet for prayers once every two weeks. ... We discuss how we can make the situation better. ... It is also a good way of socializing and of escaping from the maddening daily routine.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it is reported that all the academic women expressed a strong desire to establish alliances and linkages with grassroots women; however, few were moving in that direction. A gap existed between what the women claimed to believe in and what they were actually practising and vigorously pursuing.

Only a handful of the academic women were involved in any of the women's organizations. Barriers such as intellectual, social, and economic differences between the academic women and the grassroots were identified as militating against any possible alliances between the two. Attempts by the government to separate the intellectuals from the grassroots were also perceived as obstacles to academic women and grassroots women working together for political action.

The incorporation of Kenyan society into a western capitalistic system of development has led to many divisions among women. Right from the first colonial contact and the establishment of colonial institutions such as schools, some women became privileged while others were disadvantaged. For example, by allowing only a few women into the education system the gap
between the *asomi* [readers or educated] and non-*asomi* [not able to read and write, though initially it meant pagan or uncivilized] was set in motion and the gap is widening. Women are not only differentiated by levels of education but also by huge differences in wealth. It is argued in this chapter that women may share the same gender but in reality they seem to inhabit two different worlds. The responses of the women in this chapter seem to corroborate earlier writings by Fatton (1990, p.49):

> Women's access to political and economic resources has been severely constrained by pervasive and overwhelming patterns of male domination. Male domination should not, however, obscure the profound inequalities and class contradictions dividing women. If women are repressed and exploited, they certainly do not experience repression and inequality equally. The lives of women are decisively determined by their social class. The life chances of the peasant women are clearly enormously different from those of privileged women of the emerging urban bourgeoisie. Indeed, the latter has the power and wealth to force men of lower classes into obeisance. In this perspective, while all women suffer from patriarchy, rich and poor women bear its burdens unequally and differentially (p.49).

It is also shown that a strong culture of fear characterizes the lives of academic women, further limiting the establishment of linkages with grassroots women for political support.
CHAPTER NINE

EDUCATION AS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I analyze the advantages and disadvantages of higher education and academic careers for the Kenyan woman. Specifically, I wanted to understand whether academic women are empowered through western-type formal higher education to take control over their own personal lives, as well as achieving their career, social, economic and political goals and aspirations. To get pertinent data I asked the women questions like: "What does your higher education mean to you"? "Are there ways in which higher education and career have harmed you?" Or simply, "What are the advantages and disadvantages of higher education and careers?"

Surprisingly, the academic women in this study perceived their higher education as a double-edged sword. As they saw it, you are damned if you have it and damned if you do not have it. The women argued that so long as a western type of formal education is tied to employment and a good life, we cannot say it is not important. Persons who lack higher formal education are excluded from the society's mainstream.

The academic women identified gains from their higher education, such as intellectual power and economic power, which helped them strike a better "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti, 1988). Married women could use their salaries to buy social and domestic peace, or to help them

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40 The term "higher education" in this thesis is used at times as the most accurate translation of the expression that one has a lot of education. Few Kenyans have a first degree and when an individual and in particular a woman has a master's degree or a doctorate, people would normally say "amesoma sana" a Kiswahili expression literally translated to mean she or he has read a lot, hence the use of the term higher education.
to make important decisions such as whether to walk out of a troubled marriage. The single
women believed that their relative economic independence enabled them to acquire property, to
help their siblings, and to choose what kind of relationships to engage in and how they would like
to be treated in a relationship.

As highly educated women, the academics perceived themselves as better, more confident
mothers, wives and lovers. Their education helps them to detect social and health problems within
their families and provide early intervention. As educators, they provide important information
and support to their children’s education as well as to their friends and relatives.

However, whereas the possession of such an education leads to entry into a competitive
career and material gain and to greater assertiveness, aggressiveness, critical thought, ability to
make choices, and a demythologized understanding of life, these very gains have led to
contradictions and dilemmas in the lives of these women.

Most women were critically aware of the expectation that women be subordinate to men
in both socio-economic and political life. As women they are expected to display feminine
attributes such as submissiveness, modesty, obedience, nurturing, coyness, pleasantness, and an
unquestioning attitude and at the same time to work competently and aggressively in their
reproducer and producer roles. Nevertheless, that ability to contribute to the family well-being or
aggressively and competently to pursue their academic careers contradicts what is expected from
them as women. In particular, many married women argued that they suffered marital conflicts
when they demanded that their economic contribution within the home be recognized.

The women experienced conflict between their awareness of their own potential and their
awareness of social pressure to conform to the stereotyped script of femininity. This societal
script rejects much of these women’s potential and aspiration as unfeminine. As such, the
women reported living under great marriage, career, economic and image tensions, anxieties, conflicts, ambiguities, contradictions and dilemmas.

This chapter is organized into two sections. In section one, I present the advantages of higher education and academic careers, while in section two I present and critically analyze the problems emanating from the very advantages identified by the academic women.

ADVANTAGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Bargaining Power or Economic Independence?

Repeatedly, the academic women argue that one of the most important gains they have derived from their education and careers is the ability to earn a substantial regular income. The women maintain that a regular income which is directly under their control is not only important in the sense that they can provide the basic necessities for themselves and their families, but it also enables them to resist gender oppression and negotiate for better treatment, particularly within their natal and marital families. Further, the women stated that a regular income makes them "confident", "secure", "feel good about themselves", and indeed enables them to make such crucial decisions as whether to leave a conflicted marriage, whether to remarry, or whether to remain single. On the basis of their income they can decide where and how to live. The women were grateful that their economic ability gave them a certain amount of independence and personal power. Amina’s statement encapsulates this view:

.... So long as education is tied to employment and good life we cannot say it is not important ... I have a salary and that salary gives me a sense of independence and a sense of being ... I am self-reliant economically. If you do not have money you resort to begging your husband for the least of things and that is disempowering.

The women expressed satisfaction that they were not a liability but an asset both to their husband’s and their own natal families. In fact, they considered themselves better marriage
partners in the sense that they would marry not to depend on a man but for love and partnership. They would be equal economic contributors in the marriage union. They also perceived themselves as better wives and mothers. Provision of food was and continues to be one of the primary responsibilities of a mother in the present modernized society as it was in the African indigenous society. A woman was and continues to be respected for her ability to provide for her family, as Edna articulates:

... My education and my career has been a plus for my life. I am not a liability to my husband. I am an equal contributor in the marriage ... I try to provide good things for my children, sometimes I pay for their health needs, food, education, good clothes and entertainment. ... Short of my education, my salary we cannot have achieved what we have today. ... It is important we remember the glory of our mothers was that they fend for themselves and their children. That has not changed. A woman who cannot feed her children encounters pain, shame and repudiation.

From Edna's narration it becomes quite vivid that academic women like their rural sisters shoulder the traditional burden of feeding their own families. Women's economic ability, therefore, becomes an important tool for their bargaining for respect and fair treatment within the marriage union. Edna candidly tells us "without my salary we cannot have achieved what we have today" and that "the glory of our mothers is that they fend for themselves".

When I encouraged Edna to expand on her comments, it became quite clear that there is no egalitarian division of financial responsibilities within the home. The husbands had more latitude in how they spent their salaries. More often than not they used their salaries for purchasing fixed items such as land or a house, luxury items such as cars, and big items like refrigerators and entertainment sets. The women are expected to feed their families, help pay school fees, pay medical bills and sometimes contribute to the family investments. But since most of the property is registered in the name of the man, husbands can use this property to gain power in the marriage. If the marriage breaks down, even after years of social and economic contributions by the woman, she might be thrown out together with her children not only without
a piece of property but with no alimony or child support. Edna added that if a married woman insisted on having joint ownership of property she would be accused of not "trusting her husband, not serious with her marriage and as such 'plotting to desert'." In spite of this unequal spending pattern and ownership of property, the women were confident that their salaries strengthened their bargaining status in the marriage. Some even explained that they use their salaries to buy domestic peace. The feeling that they were worthwhile economic contributors in the marriage union helps to boost their sense of self-esteem, personal power and personal worth.

Whereas Amina, Edna and other married women use their economic base to strengthen their marital bonds, there are others who use it to subvert and resist marriage. Struggling to escape the trappings of conventional marriages where women are expected to acquiesce to the wishes and demands of their husbands, some divorced women expressed the view that their economic abilities enabled them to initiate and sue for divorce. Like some of the never-married women academics, they enter into informal, flexible liaisons, which give them greater autonomy. Some of the women preferred these informal relationships, which to some extent they viewed as "marriage", because they are easier to dissolve than the formal church, civil or customary marriage. In this informal relationship, their "husbands" cannot claim total control over their salaries or over their children or properties. The women had more control over their personal lives. Mwende, a divorced mother of two children who was dating an economist who was younger than her by the time this research was conducted, speaks to this position:

Education is very important. It is a key to a woman's life. ... An education leads to a better job and better pay ... After concerted accusations and fights with my former husband I remember my father and mother visited me. My mother asked: "my daughter Mwende with all that education why should you allow your life to go to ruin?" I think that provoked my urge to leave my marriage. I knew it was going to be socially painful but economically I was secure. ... I am raising my two children and I believe we are okay ... With an education you can decide how to conduct your life without minding the society.... It's better to have a friend [here she laughs loudly, then keeps quiet as if reflecting and then continues], a man friend and can even live together ... that way you control your money, your house
and your children ... If a problem arose in the relationship and I pray it should not happen it's less painful and less complicated legally. Some people will be on your side that you are not married since no bridewealth or formalities are involved.

From Mwende's narration we realize that a high level of education is an enabling factor in the women's lives. Despite the potential social stigma attached to divorce and living with a lover, it could be advantageous. Their education enables them to avoid commercialized capitalistic bridewealth payments in the name of tradition. Some women told me that they preferred to use their salaries to "buy" themselves from parents and relatives instead of their prospective husbands being asked to pay bridewealth for them. In particular, their higher education and salaries enables them to pursue relationships of their choice. The women argued that after divorce, they are in better control of their resources, and their children are out from under the domination of a man. A man friend or a live-in lover could not possibly make justified claims on a woman's resources. He has not paid bridewealth, which has historically served the dual function of (1) an ideological tool through which values of female subservience and respect are inculcated, and woman's behaviour consequently regulated, and (2) a practical means of binding women into marriage.

For these women, education served an economic and liberating purpose rather than an intellectual one. Nevertheless, there were other women who felt that their education was more fulfilling, encompassing and strengthening than anything else in life. The women who held this view were usually younger and never-married women. These women were more interested in the pursuit of ideas, their research, publications, and teaching, and they enjoyed the solitude, and tranquility and social freedom of being single. They maintained that they have been able to perform those roles which husbands are expected to play without difficulties. For example, when I asked Santalo, a Ph.D and single academic, what her education meant to her, she explained that for all practical purposes, her education has replaced the need for a husband. She metaphorically equated a husband with the provision of a house, land, car, food and other material things. I was
rather surprised by her insistence that "my education is my husband" and by the fact that she did not mention anything to do with affection in her narration. Using her salary she has been able to secure a bank loan and to put up a beautiful house for herself. She has also been able to educate her three siblings through high school, and has ensured that her mother lives well. In her analysis, she is better off married to her education than to a man. In her own words:

.... If I were not educated I do not know how my life would be like. ... You can count me lucky that I have a career. Many people accuse me that I am married to my career because I spend a lot of time in the university. Well, I think it was a wise decision [here she inflects her voice and humorously continued] "Ndoigire thome tondû nindagire Muthuri" [Kikuyu meaning - I decided to pursue an education because I failed to get a husband]. Yes my education is my devoted husband. ... I have been able to accomplish much since I graduated with my first degree in 1979. You see these [pointing to the plot upon which she has put up an elegant house and was rearing chickens and doing some kitchen gardening] are all results of my academic career. Without my academic career, without a good education I would not have dreamt of buying a plot like this. I got a mortgage from the National Finance Corporation (NFC) and the collateral was my job at the university ... What better husband than this ... I have been able to educate my two younger brothers and a sister through secondary and advanced level. They have their own jobs now. ... My mother also depends on me ... no man can allow his wife to help her people that way ... with an education a woman can attain autonomy, can own property, have a say in family matters but as you know in our society when you are not married there are some detractors who will always want to make you feel like a social failure. These days I beat them at their own game. When they [detractors] try to put me down, I ask them: "show me concisely what it is a marriage can offer me".

Critically examining Santalo’s comments within the gendered Kenyan ideology which dictates that the primary role of a woman is that of a wife and a mother, coupled with the fact that there are only a handful of women with higher degrees, then Santalo and others like her do not fit well within Kenyan society. She can economically provide for herself, her siblings, and her parents and, indeed, will be praised for these accomplishments, but power to provide economically does not override the fact that "she failed to attract a husband". Failure to get married means she has failed to fulfil one of the important societal scripts - marriage. Failing to tie the marital knot is interpreted by the general society to mean that the individual is uncontrollable, irresponsible, a
loser, normless, and as such, better fenced off from the respectable society. Santalo and others in her situation have to bear private pains of stigmatization as "husbandless", "unclaimed", "ownerless commodity", or "potential husband snatchers", as Mwende, a divorced academic, described her state of being unattached. Santalo and those like her could be regarded as suffering what Goffman (1963) termed "spoiled identity". They are deviants in the sense that they have violated societal norms (Lemert, 1981) by failing to get married in spite of their higher education. In any case, one of the primary purposes of educating a woman is to give her some temporary security before marriage and in marriage. Possession of some acceptable amount of education has become an important consideration when men are selecting marriage partners.

In my view it seems that in order to make good their spoiled identity, Santalo and others are forced to work excessively hard to buy plots, build houses, help their siblings, and aid their parents in an attempt to conceal, avoid or eliminate the furthering of their disadvantaged status. They want to prove to the society that after all they are winners, not losers. These single and divorced women, in my view, hope to force the society to accept them in their own right on the basis of their economic accomplishments. Santalo tells us that when she encounters stereotypical put-downs because she is single, she challenges her accusers to show her what it is that a husband could have given to her she has not given herself. In so doing she hopes not only to challenge but also to educate her accusers. Although it is arguable that a very high level of education can lead to disadvantaged status, particularly if the women fail to attract suitors, it is important to note that the women are in a position to use their economic base to make their education work for them. By claiming that "my education is my husband" these women are not only resisting marriage but are also making an important statement that marriage is socially constructed and, therefore, mutable:
"the knowledge we have of the ways society is socially constructed is the route to negation, of refusing to do what the society demands of us; so seeing society as a social construct means seeing it as a human construct. (Lovett, 1994, p.5)

This in turn means seeing it as capable of being altered through human agency. In my view, when these women perceive marriage as mutable, they are indeed renegotiating and redefining new roles for themselves.

The single women like Santalo, through their utilization of marital metaphors, become agents of social change. Through their actions, decisions, and proclamations that "education is my husband" they have not only been able to achieve fixed property which is usually possible for males; they have also effectively challenged and deconstructed the stereotypical cultural belief that women can only make it financially through marriage, that women are weak and dependent. Indeed some have managed to acquire a self identity and status independent of the males. Through their economic prowess these women are able to assert their rights in regards to sexuality, production and reproduction. They effectively challenge the man’s assumed dominant role as the provider and protector of the family.

However, this economic independence and ability to buy a house, a car or pay school fees for one’s children or help the natal family or be able to walk out of a stressful marriage should not be interpreted to mean that academic women’s problems are over. Purchasing power is only at the level of the individual woman’s accomplishments, and if she is not married, she has to reckon with society’s sanctions.

Some of the women maintained that economic independence for a woman should be seen as a necessary evil in the sense that it enables women to make certain decisions or purchase material things, but at the same time that ability leads to certain social and social problems. These women complained that as highly salaried women, they are stereotyped as "hard-headed", "uncontrollable", "aggressive" or are desexualized and reclassified as "men" or "self-serving
women", and as such they are isolated from the mainstream of society. Some married women argued that their economic ability has made their spouses abdicate from their financial domestic responsibilities with the excuse that their income [the husband's] is for future investments. Single women also complained of social isolation, loneliness and denial of affiliative needs on account of their being thought "too independent", "too secure", "too knowledgable" and "too over-exposed", "too wild" to make decent wives. These disadvantages accumulated by women on account of their being economically able will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

**Confidence Building**

Another recurrent theme is confidence building. All the women spoke of gaining some level of confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge, and the ability to discern, analyze, communicate, ask questions, make informed independent judgements and hold on to their ideas if they are convinced that they are right. In particular, the women were glad that their higher education has given them a position in the university which strengthens them more as they research, write, teach and meet the daily challenges of social and intellectual interactions with their colleagues and graduate students. The women consistently argued that their confidence level is boosted after they have "managed a difficult seminar", when they "see their students graduate and move on into prestigious jobs", when "a paper is accepted for publication", when they successfully "deliver their lectures" and when students do not shout to them "go home". All these experiences, the women maintained, helped to motivate them to work even harder and strengthened their feeling of "being in control".

The women felt privileged in the sense that through their high level of formal education they have gained mastery of the English language. Ability to communicate fluently in English, the language of the educated elite, is perceived as a key, an opener or enabler of success. In their
view, communication is one of the important tools of empowerment. Communication is power and if you cannot communicate you face limitations. They maintained that without their high level of formal education, they would be disadvantaged and cut off from Kenyan society's mainstream in the sense that they would be fluent in their vernaculars or Kiswahili but not in English which is the business language.

Because they have mastery of English, the women are able to accomplish certain things in life which they would not have accomplished if they were not highly educated. For example, the women argued that their education makes them firm, gives them confidence to visit top government officials, helps their ability to visit funding agencies, both local and international, and gives them the ability to present their ideas effectively.

In particular, the women explained that their education has given them confidence in the sense that they feel comfortable in the midst of other educated people like themselves, can discuss and reason at the same level, and have nothing to fear. School taught them to work hard, to believe in their abilities, and to be independent, and above all it gave them knowledge and skills. The knowledge that they can approach and communicate effectively with those in power gives the academic women a heightened level of confidence and self-esteem. Akinyi, a successful associate professor explained:

.... Ability to communicate your thoughts, your ideas, plans is quite important. In a country like ours with forty-two or more ethnic languages, plus Kiswahili you find that if you are not well educated you face communication barriers ... Since I can communicate I feel empowered. I visit the bureaucrats, the lawyers, doctors, managers and tell them what I want done ... and when you are able to influence a few people to act in your favour, ... secure that research grant, you feel good about yourself ... you realize that you can do it and one success begets another ... Even when you have good ideas and you cannot communicate you are seen as dumb ... All those people illiterate in English miss a lot. ... I thank God that I was able to get my education because it has opened doors. Recently, I was able to secure research grants from Rockefeller Foundation ... and if summoned by higher authorities I know I can deliberate on issues.
The confidence these academic women have gained extends beyond the academic spheres to social circles. Angela happily commented: "I can interact with people of all strata. I am not afraid and I know I am knowledgeable and can deliberate on issues without sinking". The women feel privileged because they have a mastery of the elite language and as such can lobby, negotiate, and achieve certain goals in life.

Further the academic women explained that their high level of education has helped them understand their own situation and on the basis of that knowledge they can make informed independent judgements. Based on individual circumstances the women may choose to act or not to act in a given situation. This ability to discern, to decide to act, how to act or not to act gives them a sense of increased self-esteem. Edna argues:

... If anything my education has made me firm. My ideas, my convictions become stronger everyday. ... I do not take sides, for the sake of it. I study the situation, the pros and cons and based on knowledge ... I decide even in this university to hold on. Sometimes I am like a nightingale singing to itself ... When I know I am right I stick to my ideas and this is satisfying.

Santalo adds:

My education means a lot to me. I remember I mentioned I lacked confidence before I went for my undergraduate ... I went to a mission school and all they wanted was good girls who would eventually pass their exams and finally get married. ... In the university we had tutorials. Here you had to present papers, discuss and challenge others ... I think I started believing that I was as good as other people in my third year. My confidence stems from the knowledge that I do not have to depend on others to tell me what to do. ... You become a law in yourself, an autonomous discerning being ... you disagree, break social norms, expectations and law if you think they are unjust. ... You only obey just laws or traditions. That is why they [colleagues and friends] call me a social deviant ... As a single mother, Ph.D holder, a scientist and openly opinionated many people are uncomfortable with me ...Some call me a social misfit, others have called me Malaya [prostitute] but that does not deter me from my convictions. It is their problem to catch up with me not me to catch up with them ... I like it because I support something on basis of conviction ... Because of the confidence you have developed through your high education, you make decisions, select best options in life and you can argue a point even if all other people see it in the opposite direction. You are no longer a being for others.
From Santalo’s and Edna’s narrations it is quite evident that they are both courageous and self-confident. They have a high sense of their own selves. They have strong convictions that they are not beings existing for others. They do not have to please the group. As autonomous beings they question, challenge and even break unjust social norms and traditions. They also point to the fact that they have obligations to obey just rules. As informed rational beings they pursue their convictions. Santalo says, "you can argue a point even if all other people see it in the opposite direction."

Santalo, for example, seems to have silently deviated in word, deed and thought. Interestingly she tells us that she likes the deviant role assigned to her by her colleagues and friends. She in fact describes herself as a social deviant. In my view, Santalo may be prudent in accepting the deviant label because it gives her more leverage to act, select and think in a way which is not limiting to her achievements and convictions. By accepting the label of social deviant and defining herself as such she is no longer obligated to fulfil societal scripts. She can pursue her own script and as such achieve personal fulfilment. In pursuit of her convictions, she has acquired the secondary deviant status described by Lemert (1967).

For Lemert, secondary deviance refers to that deviance which occurs when a status conferred on a person through societal reaction creates, on the one hand, opportunities, pressures, and incentives to engage in further deviance and, on the other, barriers, penalties or other pressures against returning to conforming behaviour. Secondary deviance involves deviants’ adaptations that occur in response to societal reaction. These adaptations involve identification of oneself as a deviant, associations with people like oneself and a lifestyle in which one’s deviance is a central activity and an important source of identity.

From field observations and interviews I was consistently struck by how many academic women now and again referred to themselves as "social deviants", "social misfits" or simply as
"somebody who does not fit in". They made jokes among themselves about their perceived
deviance, and referred humorously to each other as deviants. It appeared to me that rather than let
the label stigmatize or disable them, they appropriated the label and used it towards the fulfilment
of their own personal agendas.

Using the confidence based on their knowledge that they are atypical women, that they are
more educated and less traditional than others, and that they had well-paying jobs, some had
decided they may as well accept and play their assigned deviant roles:

My education has made me confident, ambitious and brave. I am no longer afraid. I work very hard. I know nobody will make my life better other than myself ...
When you know you are right, you don’t care about what others think about you ...
When my marriage failed I was deeply hurt but I was already a deviant and many people expected my marriage to fail anyway .. I did my best to save our marriage including doing all those conforming things. Finally it was over and all fingers were pointed at me that I ruined our marriage ... these days I am a hardcore ... Doesn’t it make you feel nice when you are doing something and everybody is wondering "how can you do that?" ... You have to be sure, confident about yourself.

The women believed that in spite of the ambivalence, doubts, suspicions, speculations and
harassments they endured, they enjoyed a certain level of social esteem. They felt that they were
secretly envied, admired and in fact were perceived as role models by many of the Kenyan
women. In social gatherings some of the women reported that they felt honoured when
individuals shifted their perceptions and discussions after they found out there was an academic
woman in the group. The fact that they are referred to as a "teacher", as "daktari" (doctor), gave
gave them a special status in the society. Women enjoyed being in gatherings where parents tell their
children: "Look she is a university teacher, a doctor, I would like you to work hard until you
become a doctor like her". The fact that parents want their children to be "like me affirmed my
potential", Angela declared.

They felt respected and honoured when others realized that they (the academic women)
have accomplished what men are expected to accomplish. I was told that Kenyan men are used to
saying "Mke ni nguo" [Kiswahili - meaning that women are just clothes]. But when some men realize "you are not only clothes and can compete on their own turf, some look at you differently and this is really empowering". The women gave me examples of such situations. Aketch, speaking about her own personal experiences, asserted:

... In fact when they [men] realize you are like them in many ways they are ready to respect you ... some even become instrumentally helpful ... In this wedding I attended and a group of men sitting behind me were making funny jokes about women as good for nothing. In their argument women are only good between the kitchen and the bedroom ... As we stood to go and get the refreshments one of them was shocked when he realize that I was seated just in front of them ... He is actually my neighbour in my hometown. He insisted I must sit with them ... after introductions, the men become serious. When they realize who you are, they treat you differently ... It is a good feeling that some people recognize and appreciate what you have accomplished.

From Aketch’s narration, it is clear that she derived a lot of satisfaction from this shift of perspective when these men realized she was highly educated. This recognition, she tells us, boosted her self-esteem. However, as empowering as this discourse might be, it is also clear from Aketch’s narration that men seem to respect and honour those who are more like them. Indeed Aketch tells us "when they realize you are like them in many ways they are ready to respect you". What Aketch does not seem to realize is that being "like them" means achieving like a man. Her success is masculinized and now that she is masculinized she becomes visible and respectable to these men ("they become serious"), and their jokes deriding women cease. In my view, the newfound respect for Aketch is not on account of her being a person, a woman worthy of respect, but on account of her accomplishments. However, what is also important is that at a very personal level, Aketch and others enjoy the social esteem accorded them and as such their confidence level is enhanced.
Family Welfare

The academic women in this study were almost unanimous in their responses that their high level of formal education has greatly enhanced their fulfilment of their primary responsibilities as wives and mothers. Even the two academics who did not have children hoped that when they indeed become mothers their education would be useful. The women were clear in their view that their encyclopedic education in such areas as economics, psychology, health, biology, and management contributed to the women’s ability to detect possible health problems, social problems, and stressful environments and provide immediate interventions for their children. They are also able to detect signs of marital stress and to discuss with their husbands the problems affecting their relationships as well as knowing about home management, budgeting, and family planning.

Having been exposed to different cultures of the world and different modes of thought and different perspectives, the academic women felt that they were in an advantaged position to help their own children with their educational programmes, to explain the physical, social and economical changes in their developmental milestones, and to provide a more flexible and egalitarian parenting style where children and parents are friends. They explained that their parenting style sharply differed from the age-old conservative parenting style where parents were authoritarian. In the old parenting style a huge social gap existed between children and parents. Most of the academic women submitted that they would like to break that generation/communication gap between parents and children. This gap, in their view, can only be bridged by raising their children differently. One such academic woman is Angela. She states:

Also my high education helps me a lot to contribute to my children’s development. I can understand and discuss with them. If I think they are angry at something I discuss with them as my friends. I intend to raise my kids differently as opposed to the traditional parenting where kids are afraid of their parents. Traditionally, kids are not allowed to question old people ... traditions, etc. ... I teach my children to respect old people but not to be slaves of tradition.
Nyawira, as if supporting Angela, adds:

I believe my education is useful in several respects ... I help my children with homework, discuss with them as equals, provide adequately for their health and education. If I do not have my education and a well paying job I don’t think I would provide the same way for them ... I seek explanation from school teachers and officials, help in selection of academic programmes and in deciding the best school to attend ... as an economist I help plan our resources ... I understand my family better and I am better prepared to deal with family crises ... In a nutshell my education enhances the well being of my family.

The women believed that not only has their education helped them contribute to the social, psychological and economic well being of their families, it has made them better equipped to understand their husbands. They believe in openness and communication between spouses. Their higher education, they explained, helped them seek dialogue, helped them create bridges but not walls, and helped them sense when their husbands were angry, or something was not well, so they could arrest the situation before it exploded. However, the women held different views on the extent to which higher education contributed to marital stability. A majority believed that the demands of their careers, economic and social security resulted in marital stress. A handful explained that their education and economic independence enhanced their marital status.

The women also explained that their higher education enabled them to become instrumental in their children’s education. They considered the welfare of their children paramount and many were willing to make sacrifices so that their children could attend the best schools. Education has been and still is believed to be a panacea for all societal ills. It is also important to note that children are an important investment in a marriage, particularly in a society where the affective domain between husband and wife is mediated through children. As children
mature, they become a woman's best allies in the marriage union, as some of the men move to secure either a second legal wife or an outside wife.41

The women explained that their higher education helped them to be more progressive and to plan their families. Most of the women in this study had two to four children, a number they could adequately provide for. This qualitative change is phenomenal in a society which still embraces both modernity and African traditions simultaneously. According to African traditional world view, many children are a blessing from God and the more children, the better to ensure regained immortality for both the living and the dead relatives. Higher education helped the women transcend this traditional belief, have fewer children and defend their positions when accused of being selfish by their in-laws for failing to give their sons more children.

Not only are academic women better family planners but they also submitted that they were a source of pride and inspiration and acted as mentors, role models and consultants, particularly in their natal families. Most of these academic women were the first person and sometimes the only person in their natal family to acquire a Ph.D. A woman might be the only person in a whole location to acquire a Ph.D and this becomes a source of pride not only for her natal family but for all relatives and friends. Such success is not individualized but is perceived as a community good. As Maria stated, "Mucii wi inoro thome ndutuhagia tūhiū" (a Kikuyu proverb literally translated to mean that a home that has a sharpening stone by the entrance does not have

41 This expression is normally used to denote a secret liaison between a married man and a single woman who lives and behaves like a wife. In Kenya, there have been several legal battles upon the death of a husband when out of nowhere unknown women appear with children to demand inheritance. Usually these women have children fathered by the deceased and enough evidence to prove that they lived together like husband and wife although the deceased was legally married to another wife. What makes these claims possible is the existence of customary, religious and statutory laws as far as marriages are concerned (Nzomo, 1994, p.18). Western social scientists like Obbo (1980) refer to these women as "kept" wives. The notion of being kept denotes that the woman is in a passive position while the man is the actor and provider. Contrary to this view, outside wives are sometimes economically independent and sometimes bail men out of financial crunches.
blunt knives). These women are perceived as sources of knowledge, strength, direction, and as mentors to the family members. Most of the women indicated that they are very useful members in their communities in the sense that they help in school placements, employment, and training positions for their relatives and friends. It is important to reiterate at this point that these academic women, as well as any other highly educated and well-connected persons, play very important roles in mediating between the grassroots and mainstream Kenyan society. The Kenyan social system is not straightforward and sometimes getting employment, a training position or a placement in secondary school depends on whom you know and sometimes the ability to provide *chai*.

Most of the rural people may have money for *chai* but may not know whom to give it to in order to get employment or educational placement for their children. This kind of situation places an academic woman in a very difficult position particularly if she cannot secure employment or school places for relatives’ children.

In spite of the demands, many of the academic women explained that they do their best to help and when they succeed they feel very pleased. Edna, for example, indicated that by the beginning of the year when school results come out, her house is flooded with relatives seeking help. She also indicated that she plays the role of a family counsellor, advises them what to do, whom to approach, and how to apply for jobs, and this enhances her position not only in her marital family but in her natal home area.

It appears that the possession of a very high level of education and a university career temporarily supersedes the sex/gender hierarchies existing in the Kenyan society. Most of the academic women reported that on account of their education they are treated by their parents, particularly by their fathers, better than their own brothers who were not equally highly educated.

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*Chai* is a Kiswahili word meaning tea. But in Kenyan formal circles, *chai* means a bribe. It is a corruption of Kenyan hospitality where traditionally people freely offer tea to their friends and strangers.
or propertied. They explained that they were constantly consulted in major decisions affecting their natal homes, were allowed to eat certain cuts of meat which are usually forbidden to women, allowed into men's conversations, bequeathed land as a reward for their economic contribution in the home and even allowed to break age-old taboos with little fuss. Angela, a lecturer from a pastoralist ethnic community, told me that when she visits her in-laws in their rural home, she is allowed to sleep on the man's bed, which is almost a taboo. These academic women are therefore separated from and treated differently from their less educated sisters. Some of the women even reported that sometimes they are sent on arbitration missions to lobby for issues, roles that are not traditionally given to women. It seems to me that higher education and economic accomplishments facilitate the crossing of gender boundaries, at least at the family level. However, these women are regendered, reclassified and treated like men. Several of the women in this study repeatedly mentioned incidents when their gender had been denied. Edna provides an example:

... My high education has been a source of pride for my extended family as well. They see my success and their success. When I got my Ph.D my own father told a gathering in my house that he is proud that he has a doctorate ... In my personal success my father saw his success too ... When it comes to decision making I am not overlooked. They consult me as a mature member of the family. They consult me about schools to take their children, books to buy, whether they should commit themselves to marriage with certain individuals ... I am not treated as a woman. When I go home [her place of birth] and my father slaughters a goat for me, my father gives me those pieces of meat which are traditionally reserved for men only. .... I help my family in law courts, hire a lawyer for them ... have put a decent house for my parents ... I feel good about these accomplishments ... my father tells even my own brothers that "Edna ni kihii giakwa" [translated from Kikuyu to mean Edna is my son]. I see how hurt they become and I don't like it.

We gather that through Edna's own education and high paying academic career she is looked upon as a very resourceful person by her relatives. She is consulted as a mature person. Edna tells us that she is very proud of her accomplishments but does not like her father telling her

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43 Mature meaning not like an ordinary woman.
own brothers that she too is a son. Her father's "regendering" of her by proclaiming her maleness hurts her brothers and this hurt is not without reason. Three of the women academics in this study with similar experiences narrated to me tales of how their fathers have given them pieces of land which has led to a lot of family conflict. Kenya is a highly patriarchal and patrilineal society and, for that reason, giving land to women as an inheritance is quite unusual. Imbuga (1988) in his play Aminata excellently captures the tensions and ambiguities that achieving women encounter in Kenyan society. He illustrates how a brilliant, diligent and benevolent young woman lawyer, an acclaimed village celebrity, is made to suffer by her very close male relatives who are determined to see her as a woman first and everything else afterwards. To assert her human dignity, she has to passionately resist anachronisms that have warped the fast changing Kenyan society. I find this work by Imbuga very useful not only because it powerfully corroborates findings in this thesis, but also because it is an important admission by one of Kenya's senior male university professors that indeed Kenyan culture is deeply patriarchal and harms women.

Rhoda, one of the regendered and reclassified "male" women, explained to me how she devoted her money and energy to paying school fees for her brothers and sisters. She built a decent family house for her parents, and helped almost a whole family cross the valley of poverty. Her actions gladdened her parents, relatives and friends. Her father decided to give her a three-acre piece of land as a token of appreciation. From the day her brothers heard of this inheritance wish, despite the fact that she single-handedly paid their school fees, they have became her arch-enemies.

What is important to note from the foregoing narratives is the fact that some of these academic women maintain very strong ties with their natal families even after marriage. They use their economic power to maintain these strong linkages. Secondly, whatever they identified as an advantage leads to a disadvantage, a dilemma or contradiction. Due to their high education and
high salaries they become important economic as well as social contributors to the welfare of their families. On the basis of the above achievements, these women are then perceived by even their own fathers as men. As "men" they are consulted in major decisions affecting the home, are expected to keep the family flame alive and as a result are also bequeathed part of the father’s property. This attempt to treat women the same as men has led to a lot of ironies, as will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter.

**Demythologization of Life**

The respondents in this study indicated that their high education has provided a route to a demythologization of life. They were clear in their views that their education has enabled them to break away not only from oppressive traditional beliefs but also from Christian doctrines which taught them to accept pain, suffering and subservience on account of their being women. Their education has enabled them to question, analyze, make connections, and understand the causes of natural and social phenomena in terms that are no longer mythical. In their view it is not the will of God that humankind should suffer. It is not the evil spirit or dead ancestors who cause sickness, misfortunes, death or social failures. Unlike many of their illiterate sisters, they attributed the source of their problems to social, psychological, political, economic or physical factors. If their children are sick they quickly seek medical treatment without succumbing to the threats that their child’s sickness is caused by magic and witchcraft or by an aggrieved dead or living relative. Rhoda’s natal home is in one of the remote Kenyan regions where every occurrence must have a cause. According to Rhoda, if a person, and particularly a young person, died, the question would be why only him? Why did death strike A and not B? Even when lightning strikes a homestead and people die the same question is: "why us and not others? There must be a cause for these miseries". The explanations always point to people’s violation of certain
social norms, the will of God, or witchcraft and magical powers. This kind of belief system is another form of social control and helps keep oppressed groups in their place. (For example, it is the will of God that women be subordinate to men.)

Rhoda feels empowered through her own education because she can now rationally explain most natural and social occurrences. She believes her reasoning and interpretive power is superior, less painful and less mystical than that of her sisters who did not go that far in formal education. In her view she has better control over the events surrounding her life:

I feel empowered in the sense that I have no inhibition ... empowerment is a dignifying process where one feels in charge but under constant threats of curses and blessings. Empowerment means capability to make independent decisions. When I look back at the women went to school within and those who did not go to school that far I find there is a big difference between me and them. The way they look at life, I think my way of looking at life is superior. I don't know, maybe I am biased but I find their explanation of many things quite inconsistent with reason.

When I asked Rhoda to tell me exactly what she meant, her response was instructive:

Some of them explain the sickness of a child by magic and witchcraft. Others who have taken the Christian faith blindly accept that their children are sick as a sign of their sins. Some even refuse to take their children to hospital and pray for the children. Sometimes, the police have been called to intervene for the sick ... others clutch to the belief that man is the head of the family as Christ is the head of the church ... In fact some of the biblical explanations and Christian faiths are very oppressive to women ... I simply don't accept the dogma that privileges men ... and sanctions that men should be served by women. Christianity should be a liberating force.

Rhoda’s response was quite surprising because she had earlier described herself as a staunch Christian. After further questioning, Rhoda maintained that she is a practical Christian believer who does not interpret the Bible literally. For her, Christianity should be a means to personal empowerment, personal liberation and indeed happiness in this present life, but not an end in itself.

Freedom from cultural entrapments, inhibitions and stereotypes were also catalogued among the many advantages of high formal education. The women decried the conscious
miscapturing, misreadings and misuse of African traditions by certain groups of men and women in Kenyan society who have an expressed aim of keeping women in subordinate status. A highly educated woman is able to question and challenge old traditions which keep women in particular subordinate positions. A number of women paid glorious tribute to the enlightenment they have achieved through their education. They told me of their struggles as they tried to demystify their personal lives. Some maintained that their higher education has enabled them to demythologize life, to subject their indigenous knowledge, their formal education and socialization as well as the Christian faith to conscious interrogation.

After subjecting their acquired/learned knowledge to critical interrogation some of the women told me that they felt angry that even their own mothers lied to them. Maria told me that it took her many years of marriage and many years of high education to find out that she had been lied to. In her words:

... My parents were strict Christians. I attended mission schools and Christianity was central in our lives ... During school holiday my grandmother would tell me heroic stories and sometimes sad ones about disobedient women and how they were punished by their husbands ... I never heard my mother and my father quarrel. I grew up trusting the knowledge my grandmother, my mother, my Sunday School teachers and school teachers gave me. When I got married my own mother confided in me that if ever I had a sexual relationship with any other man than my husband my husband would die [here she laughs and then keeps quiet as if in retrospection and painfully continued]. I believed my mother’s advice. It was only after I embarked on my master’s degree that I broke the taboo "Cia Mūcii ti como kana kagutwi ka múcii gatihaka gwo ageni" [a Gikuyu proverb meaning matters of the home should not be exposed to the public]. We were taught never to tell those outside our homes that we have marital conflicts. I was particularly advised on marriage day that if I publicly told about my marital conflicts to my friends, they might be envious and help me break my marriage. ... The more I spoke about my marital conflicts the more convinced I became all those people lied to me. ... I am now divorced and my husband is alive and well. You can imagine that if I had not gone for my master’s degree probably I would not have met the women I shared with and would not have gathered the courage to speak out.

From Maria’s powerful narration it seems like all the social forces are in conspiracy against women’s interests. What is rather ironic is the fact not only that even our own mothers are
victims of gender oppression but that their patriarchal socialization is so complete that they fight on the side of patriarchy. Unwittingly, in the hope of ensuring her daughters’ success in marriage, Maria’s mother engaged in the patriarchal ploy by controlling her daughter’s sexuality. Even when her marriage was breaking down Maria believed in her mother’s words of "wisdom". It took her years of marriage and a master’s degree to break one of the societal taboos. After deconstructing her former myths Maria now is in greater control of her own body, her own sexuality and in greater control over her own life. By the time I conducted this interview she told me that she was happily raising her two daughters and was vigorously pursuing her doctorate. She was openly dating a progressive chemical engineer who was much younger, better educated and more open-minded than her former husband.

Mwende, also a divorced woman in this study, had similar views. Her education has helped her make rational decisions, given her better control of her own life and enabled her to carve out a strong personal identity without conforming to the social expectations of a "decent woman". Like Maria, she left her marriage only after demystifying all the strong, powerfully controlling social psychological images and taboos that she had learned and internalized:

When you are highly educated you are able to make decisions. You are no longer mythical about issues. You take control over your own life. You do not conform to the very strong controlling images of love, sex and marriages which I believe are only actualized in movies. You do not feel guilty or take responsibility or keep blaming yourself for taking control of your life. It is your life and you have a responsibility to live a meaningful life. I initiated my divorce because I clearly understood there is no need of remaining trapped in a painful marriage. I think it was my education which helped. I was able to open up and discuss my problems with other women friends who listened and sympathized... You know in our culture marriages are expected to be lifelong.

It is important to reiterate at this point that divorce is not very common in Kenya, particularly among the elite. It is something which is frowned upon by the general society. It is therefore ironic that Maria and Mwende see their divorces in positive terms and in fact explain that they feel "personally empowered" and "more in control of their lives", and more in control of
"their careers and their children" now that they are divorced. However, their empowerment is only at the personal level. In the larger society their very individual empowering acts are frowned upon and this means that the women are in a no-win situation. There is no outside to society, particularly in a closed social system where every brother and every sister is a keeper or guardian of each other's morals. Despite all of the advantages accrued from the possession of higher education, all the academic women found that these advantages give birth to dilemmas and contradictions.

**CONTRADICTIONS AND DILEMMAS**

... Their mothers feel rewarded when they see their daughters drive their cars home... The mothers term this as success or progress... However, their mothers are often unaware of the fact that their daughters are living under more social, economic and psychological pressure than they themselves did. Their daughters are victims of hypertension, peptic ulcers, and mental depressions. They live in a world of conflicts. (Gakuo, 1985, p.377)

The academic women in this study perceived their formal higher education to be a double-edged sword. Whereas possession of such an education leads to a number of gains, as catalogued in the previous section, these very gains have led to contradictions and dilemmas in the social, career, and personal lives of these women. Social expectations are that they will be subordinates to men in both social-economic and political life. Women are expected to display docility, submissiveness, obedience, caring, an unquestioning attitude, pleasantness and coyness, while working tirelessly in their reproductive and producer roles. Consequently, the academic women experienced considerable conflict.

Almost all of the academic women in this study in one way or another referred to a sense of anxiety, doubt, alienation, inner loneliness, stress, ambiguity or confusion as they tried to reconcile these contradictory expectations. Again and again they accused Kenyan society of demanding the impossible from them. They are highly educated, critical, knowledgable and
economically able, and yet they are expected to behave as if they are "little fools", as Edna indignantly put it, while Sopiato sadly lamented:

It is a difficult situation to be a highly educated woman in this society. Sometimes you keep wondering why you went to school that far and whether it was the right thing to do. It is a mixed bag situation or the chicken and egg situation. It is all contradictory ... The society wants highly educated women and in fact you get a feeling that you are envied. Then the same society rejects you as too big headed, too qualified, aggressive, too knowledgable, uncontrollable and unwomanly.

The data suggest that these academic women are in constant conflictual situations, perhaps because they have achieved more than what their society intended. Their dilemmas are illustrated in the following sections.

**Education for Two Salaries: Economic Dilemma**

All academic women in this study seemed to concur on one theme: that they experience excessive economic demands. As highly educated women living under the economic stress experienced throughout the Third World, they have witnessed their real earnings decline while the cost of living and relatives' needs for financial support escalate. As shown earlier, possession of a higher education and a career has given them some measure of economic independence, and more choices in life. Yet this very advantage has led to tension in both the natal and marriage family.

Traditionally, they are not only obligated to help their siblings and parents but also close relatives. As O'Manique and Dotse (1991) quoted in Dei (1994, p.12) pointed out: "Africans reject the Hobbesian image of the competitive isolated individual living in fear of others and protected from them by the state." The women complained that as highly educated persons they are seen as providers, but not given a position of authority. Some women explained that despite declining salaries, they are under great pressure to maintain middle-class status and at the same time assist their brothers and sisters to live a better life.
Some of the married women faced further problems. A husband might insist on controlling his wife's salary. In those cases it seemed that their higher education and careers had only resulted in enhancing the position of the man as the head of their family. These women felt that their main reason for being educated was not so much to improve their personhood as to make them better economic contributors. This kind of economic valuation of education only serves to enhance the free appropriation of the products of a woman’s labour, particularly by her husband and to some extent by her natal family. Akinyi’s response to my question "can you tell me what your high education means to you" encapsulates these women’s complaints:

... this education for two salaries should be thoroughly interrogated. It is important to note that a woman gets educated and then employed ... she has her own salary. It may appear that you are okay, you have a salary but who has control of the salary? People are going for salaried wives but these men in most cases control these salaries. If he is taking your salary, he is really controlling you and you are but a means for him to earn a higher salary ... to buy better status symbols and increase his prestige among his friends and even more power to control you.

Regina, as if supporting Akinyi, queries the purpose of educating women in Kenyan society:

... I think there is a whole problem of societal concept of what education is for, particularly for women. Are you educating women so that they can continue enhancing the position of the man or are we educating them so that they can get meanings of their own lives through questioning, planning, controlling their own salaries or is it the same functional education ... Education so that you become better worker, better paid, economically productive so that you can serve others and if you question the administration of that salary domestic peace is broken ... I know some women who have been brutalized when they refused their husbands control of their own salaries.

Rhoda seemed critically aware as to why her husband allowed her back into higher education:

... When I married I was only a form four [grade twelve] graduate. It was funny because I come from a very humble background ... My husband was a bank manager by then ... We would attend cocktail parties and he would whisper in my ear instructions and how to hold the wine glass ... I would feel embarrassed. I did not have courage to join in the conversations either ... After two years he decided
I should go back to college so that I could learn the social skills ... It was an opportunity for me but I did not only learn the grace of serving tea and polishing up as an elite wife as per my husband's intentions, I seized the opportunity ... I went for more and that is how I became a university lecturer ... this education has become a source of marital stress.

These three narratives suggest that some of the academic women were highly critical of the intended aim of their own education. They stated clearly that a higher education for a married woman leads to further disempowerment. Their responses are particularly intriguing because these women had argued earlier that their high formal education empowers them. There is an important issue here. For a long time, following the 1975 UN declaration proclaiming an International Decade for Women, Third World women have been integrated into development programmes and education is one of them. But what is not clear, given the questions raised by the academic women in this study, is whether educating women to become better workers, better parents, and better providers is always in the women's best interest. Some women explicitly cautioned that we should be careful when talking about women's empowerment, because in many cases this empowerment has meant disempowerment. Anna, for example, argued that as an empowered Agikuyu woman, she is expected to shoulder the whole burden of the family, make up for her husband's failed responsibilities and in case of divorce keep the children without any alimony or child support. Accordingly, when women are empowered and it means their work has more than tripled, their social, psychological and emotional strain is increased. Indeed, Anna declared, women who claim to be empowered are living "very desperate lives". Anna's arguments seem to echo earlier ones by Gakuo (1985, p.377), who notes that seemingly successful women live in a world of tensions. They suffer from hypertension, peptic ulcers and mental depressions. They have more social, psychological and economic strain than their mothers did. Indeed, some of the academic women complained that they are now perceived as economic assets and that a woman's salary has become an important consideration for marriage and in particular in the negotiations of
bridewealth. The higher the education, the higher the bridewealth, and the husband and his people pay the commodified bridewealth with the hope that they will regain their wealth back through free or forcible appropriation of a woman’s labour. More often than not the women find that their salary is not theirs any more. Edna, for example, lamented that the market women have more control over their finances because their husbands have no way of knowing how much money they make on a daily basis. For the academic woman, her salary is an open secret and some women are forced to account down to the last cent.

Economic strain was not only experienced at the marriage level, for these academics were expected to help so many people that their education became a barrier to interpersonal relationships. Consistent with the nature of our African societies, some of these academic women were educated through harambee and as such were expected to pay back the community. Others were the first and the only ones to possess a university degree or white collar job, while for others the family assets, including critical resources like land, were sold to see them through their education in the hope that they would in turn uplift the whole family. This kind of expectation creates insurmountable expectations, as articulated by Anna:

Being highly educated, people take you to be very resourceful financially and intellectually ... Sometimes the expectations of the society are too high that you cannot meet them ... In terms of finance and ideas your people expect you to help them. ... If you do not help they think you are selfish particularly if you were sent to study through harambee. The community expects you to pay back ... Help the whole community ... If you live in town you are expected to help out in accommodating relatives looking for jobs, or take care of sick relatives as they undergo treatment in a major hospital in town ... this is expensive ... If you fail to help you are ostracized as selfish, anti-community and isolated even by one’s own family ... for a woman this expectation is complicated because you are expected to help both natal and marriage families ... these expectations can lead to tensions and

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44 Harambee: means to pull together. It was initiated by the first President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Individuals are persuaded to pull their resources together in order to develop their communities. Education as a key to development is one of the areas where individuals are called upon to contribute generously for particular individuals to study overseas in the hope that they in turn will make an even bigger contribution to their families and communities.
conflicts which can even set apart brothers and sisters as well as threaten a stable marriage ... Some educated people cut themselves off from relatives to avoid this problem and they become social outcasts.

From Anna’s narration, it is clear that the very salient and positive virtues of African communities such as interdependence and sharing create a dilemma for the educated elite. When a whole community may have pooled resources to pay for an individual’s education, this individual is expected to pay it back. What is revealing, however, is that most of the married women did not have control over their salaries and had to plead with husbands to help their natal families. But these demands are too excessive for one individual, even after achieving a Ph.D. Failing to meet these excessive economic demands, some of these women may relocate in an attempt to cut off some of the more demanding relatives and to create some social space for themselves. As they relocate, these women are cut off from their kinship and lineage support systems and upon marriage they become even more isolated and individualized. Instead of strengthening their communities, their education ruptures the communities’ goodwill.

**Marriage Dilemma**

Higher education and academic careers have created a dilemma for women, particularly within marriage. Repeatedly, the women stated that marriage is perceived as the primary role in a woman’s life. Marriage marks the coming of age. It is an important rite of passage, a gateway to procreation and theoretically to self-fulfilment. Unlike comparable men, the academic women were expected either to marry when they were still pursuing their undergraduate degree, or to defer their education or make other concessions to enhance their marriageability. These marriage considerations do not only hurt their career progress but also their potential to achieve self-actualization. The women were cognizant that marriage confers needed respect from society and no woman wants to make herself the object of ridicule. If their marriage failed or they failed to
get married, they would be branded as socially irresponsible, their backgrounds might be blamed and in fact their education would be blamed for making them uncontrollable. Education raises doubts about their suitability for marriage, their reproductive potential (since they have spent many years in school), and their degree of submissiveness, obedience and morality.

Consequently, some of the academic women indicated that they experienced denial of affiliative needs, insurmountable conflicts within marriage, social isolation and inner loneliness, domestic violence and disconfirmation on account of being highly educated. Some women argued that formal education is an irony and indeed a paradox in their own lives. In spite of the fact that their education brings social and economic prestige to their families, this ability threatens a man’s dominant role or high moral ground in the home and this becomes a source of more marital trouble. Instead of leading to accelerated personal, interpersonal and organizational power, higher education can lead to a more disadvantaged status.

Some of the single and divorced women in this study expressed dissatisfaction with the double standards regulating the marriage and moral lives of both men and women. On account of their being unattached they experience all sorts of verbal, psychological and social harassments. The women complained that if a man decides not to marry or to postpone marriage he will never be accused of being too old or immoral or have his procreative potential doubted. In very clear terms they lamented that whereas a man’s high education and career enhance his social status, a woman’s high education and a top career lead to contradictions, tensions, conflicts, anxiety and dilemmas. Some complained that on account of their high achievement, they in particular faced rejection in the marriage market and yet the society continues to blame them as irresponsible and to hold them in disrepute.

These women perceived themselves as victims of societal conditions and gender stereotyping. Stereotyping is the process by which society establishes the means of categorizing
persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. Not only are stereotypes disabling for persons stereotyped, they are disabling for the stereotyper for they act as filters colouring all that the stereotyper sees. The academic women in this study have achieved what only men are expected to achieve. Some have even achieved more than their male counterparts. As such they have flouted all the gender rules. Their achievements earn them societal disbelief, doubts, labelling, reclassification and denial of affiliative needs, as succinctly put by Mwende, a single academic:

... There are certain role expectations and biases in this society ... biases that men are the only people capable of achieving and occupying certain positions in this society. When a woman is seen to do what only men are expected to then people tend to speak in a different language which sounds more like deriding the performance of the women ... You see now they start saying you are too ugly, old and bitter and you are working hard to compensate ... In this sense some would only want to be your social friend at arm’s length but not anything close.

Under such ambiguous and contradictory expectations it is not surprising then that for nine of the fifteen married women in this study, their main concern was how to ensure their high education did not seriously disrupt their marriages. In fact, they were very protective of their marriages and held conservative views when they discussed marriage among themselves or during the interviews. For the five never-married academics, three were ambivalently considering marriage while two had given up the idea of marriage altogether. They openly declared their educational degrees as their husbands. They explained that their degrees and academic career positions were too threatening to the males’ taken-for-granted moral authority. The four separated or divorced women academics were very clear in their views that the social cultural expectations,
coupled with the continued existence of customary and religious laws (which govern marriage) simultaneously obstruct their success.

The married women, in particular, explained that they experienced tensions, contradictions and anxieties because in spite of their high education and careers their marriages continued to be governed by tradition and religion. Many academic women explained that they were disadvantaged in comparison with their illiterate sisters because they could not easily resort to the traditional court for resolution of their marriage conflicts. They were too educated, too distanced from traditional authority, and, in any case, the elders are convinced that their education makes them unruly. To resort to traditional authority they must symbolically shun their education. On the other hand, an illiterate rural woman would almost always have the support of her elders, the clan and indeed the whole village if she made it open that she had marital stress. In the case of divorce, the academic women stood to lose everything. This duality also allowed the men to use any of the laws at any given time to the women’s disadvantage. Traditions and religious laws which govern marriages are based on patriarchy and the ideology of subordination of women to men is supreme. To explain their family dilemma further, these academic women argued that as women, despite their high education and careers, they continue to be perceived as the property of their spouses if married or of their fathers and male relatives if not married. This particular expectation caused a lot of tensions and conflicts in the academic women’s lives as they tried to carve an identity of their own. It is not, therefore, surprising that most of the women in this study

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45 In Kenya, there are about 52 ethnic communities and each community has certain indigenous traditions governing marriage and divorce. In case of a marital conflict, more often than not, indigenous African traditions are used even in a court of law to determine how an individual case should be judged irrespective of whether one contracted a church or civil marriage. There are also many communities which define themselves by religions such as hinduism and Islam. Islamic or Hindu traditions are used to resolve marital conflicts. The exception here is that for the Africans who have embraced the Christian faith, it is not always clear whether African traditions or Christian laws should govern the marriages. In most cases, tradition overrides everything else.
reported experiencing conflicts as their husbands demanded that they account for their salaries to the last cent. Some of the fathers and male relatives of the single women avoided their economic responsibilities and passed them down to their highly educated daughters. Under the traditional law which is still the basis of Kenyan society, a woman, as a daughter or a sister, has a greater status and more rights in her own lineage than in her husband's family. Paradoxically, upon marriage and particularly in the Christian or civil marriage which befits her status and education, she loses her status and personal identity and becomes a Dr./Mrs., as Edna humorously puts it.

This complaint parallels Ogundipe's (1984) analysis of the situation of Nigerian women. She writes:

Married she becomes a possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband's family, except for what accrues to her through her children. She also loses much of her personal freedom, which she can only regain at prices expensive to herself: the admittance of other wives or publicly acknowledged girlfriends of her husbands. She has to submit to dominance by her husband or face blame from the total society. (Ogundindipe, 1984, p.501)

However, it is important to note that not all women in this present study shared the views expressed above. Six of the fifteen married academic women explained that they were happily married and maintained that their education, indeed, enhanced their marital status.

Nyawira encapsulates this view:

... Education is very important in a woman's life. In marriage particularly it helps a lot. My husband and I deliberate on serious family issues, plan together and sometimes he asks me to do some of the thinking for the whole family ... Also the fact that you are also an equal contributor to the family purse makes your husband respect you. If I did not have an education my relationship with my husband would be different ... he respects me as an intellectual and funny enough my father in-law too is very proud of me ... All this respect is based on my education and the fact that I am responsible and can act on behalf of my husband in case of anything.
Denial of Affiliative Needs

Single women repeatedly explained that they experienced social psychological problems because even after gaining high academic credentials and secure careers, they daily experienced negative treatment because they have not tied the marital knot. They reported feeling dissatisfied, isolated, and lonely, not so much because they are constantly rebuked as too overqualified, too aggressive, too ugly, too old for the marriage market, but because they are daily confronted by societal pressure to get married even when they cannot get a man who matches their marriage expectations. As unmarried women they become the butts of jokes and scandal and the quarry of every passing man, married or not. The woman is often seen by the males as an unclaimed and degenerating commodity, to be exploited in all ways, including emotionally, sexually, financially and intellectually. Ironically, these single women lamented that other academic women, even those in crumbling marriages, pitied them and advised them "that even a bad husband is better than no husband", while others resented and referred to them as husband snatchers. This kind of response from other women colleagues only aggravates their sense of isolation and loneliness. It goes without saying, as Aidoo (1984, p.260) has argued, that in African societies "being married to the worst man (read vicious, mean, brutal, stupid) is better than not being married at all."

These academic women argued that their sense of social isolation is heightened by the fact that most Kenyan men, like other African men, do not normally marry women who are perceived as their equals. Men usually prefer to marry women who are younger, less qualified, less articulate or less of everything than themselves to ensure total social control. Spending several years in pursuing their higher education raises doubts about these women's morality, their ability to procreate, and their submissiveness. Their dilemma is mainly how to be highly educated without seeming overeducated for suitors. The women decried that even when some men were flexible and were willing to marry women more educated or equally educated, or slightly older
than themselves, these men faced great social pressure from their peers as well as from their parents not to marry highly educated or competent women who might end up controlling them. Two of the single academics in this study reported that they had relationships which failed when their prospective mother-in-laws protested their over-accomplished status. One such over-accomplished academic woman, who is hoping to tie that marital knot one day, is Sophia. Her response to my question about whether there are any ways in which high education can harm a woman resonates with that of many in this study. She tells us:

... Oh yeah. There are. When you are highly educated you tend to be isolated. You will find that a lot of highly educated women, if they are married, they got married, I have no statistics and I hope you will be able to carry out research and find whether this is true, that most of them married before they came to the university. But those who manage to become university lecturers and pursue all the way to Ph.D, few of them get married. There could be two reasons for this: (1) They spend a lot of time pursuing their education. As you know in Africa you do not get a Ph.D before you are thirty ... By the time you are finished your Ph.D and back to the marriage market most of your agemates are married. Normally women do not marry younger or less qualified men than themselves. (2) It could be that there are few men with doctorates and they are too intimidated to marry a woman who might appear like an equal. For a man, even if they spent fifty years pursuing a doctorate before marriage it is different because they can even marry a woman who has no formal education or as young as his granddaughter. This is negative for people like me who would like to have a family, I mean marriage and children ... Most of my male friends are just social friends ... I sometimes think I intimidate them ... so you see they all want to be your social friends and not anything more .... you are accused of choosing a freelance life. It is frustrating but I value my education most.

Sophia sums up the predicament of these academic women who would like the best of both worlds by first pursuing their Ph.D and then seeking marriage. By the time this interview was conducted, Sophia had completed her Ph.D from a prestigious university in England and four years later she was still looking for a possible suitor but without much success. It is important to note the contradictory nature of women’s lives in the sense that Sophia reverts to self-blame. She asserts: "I sometimes think I intimidate them." This is serious because by locating the blame in herself she may fail to connect her sufferings to the larger social system and as such the system
remains taintless. Problems are located at the personal level and the myth perpetuated that if women changed themselves, made themselves more feminine and agreeable, then they would easily get marriage partners.

Surprisingly, during my field interviews and observations I encountered some single women academics who deliberately masked their accomplishments, and who refused to buy property like houses or luxury items such as cars or exotic furniture in the fear that their seeming success might turn away prospective suitors. This kind of mentality indicates that in spite of their formal education and careers, these women continued to define themselves through a traditional mode. It is, therefore, arguable that instead of engaging in conscious and critical challenge and deconstruction of the traditional family organization, many of the academic women unwittingly perpetuated it. Although their acts of downplaying or concealing their own education and career may indeed get them a marriage partner, this gain, I suspect, would be a temporary one. In the long run it would uphold patriarchy and produce marital stress. Once married one cannot conceal academic qualifications forever.

Aketch, a Ph.D holder and single parent, perceives her predicament differently than Sophia does. She directly locates the blame in the large social system, in particular the social cultural traditions. She maintains that academic women experience dissonance in their attempt to reconcile their high education and their socialization, which are western in nature, with the African traditional cultures. In her view, the conflict of cultures creates tensions. The women's high level of education has allowed them some freedom of movement and autonomy to decide where to live and with whom to associate. However, these very personal freedoms contradict the social cultural expectations. For example, women are not expected to live alone, particularly in cities. By virtue of their education and careers, these women live alone in cities and towns and as such are
perceived as "too exposed", "too wild", "too independent" and "morally loose" for any man's liking.

Aketch's views make it evident that higher education is a mixed blessing for women. Whereas possession of a high level of education leads to somewhat greater personal freedom in the sense that the women can exercise control over their lives outside the jurisdiction of their fathers, brothers and male relatives, and as such relocate and live in the towns containing universities where they teach, this very freedom minimizes their chances of attracting a suitor. Interestingly, irrespective of a woman's academic or career achievements, failure to get married constitutes a social failure. The single and divorced/separated women in this study explained that even in the university circles they are pitied or scorned for this social failure.

Santalo's comments illuminate this predicament clearly:

... Whether you have fifty degrees you cannot ignore tradition. ... I am not bothered by the fact that I am not married. I am free to travel to pursue my career. I think I am very happy but at times the societal pressure wrecks your nerves ... some people are not prepared to accept the fact that a woman can be single and yet very happy ... I always get unwarranted comments like "don't worry one day you will get a husband" or such put-downs as "after all that education you failed to get a husband" while others [men and women] in this university [where she teaches and the interview was conducted] dismiss my accomplishments with such comments "after all she is not married..." Others are convinced there is something terribly wrong with me. They simply cannot understand how after all that education, travelling, success, etc., I have failed to attract a suitor ... sometimes these comments can be overwhelming ... that is why I ask you can you ignore tradition?

From Santalo's personal experiences, it becomes clear that even when a woman may have consciously chosen to remain single in order to pursue her personal script or goals, she has to reckon with societal wrath for rejecting the societal script: marriage as the only way for a woman's fulfilment.

The denial of affiliative needs and the concomitant harassment experienced by the single academic women in this study are not peculiar to Kenyan women academics. Elsewhere in
African universities, women academics not attached to a man, for example, never married, divorced and widowed women have been pitied as well as sexually, verbally, psychologically and intellectually harassed. They have had their accomplishments discounted by their male colleagues simply because they were not married. Ama Ata Aidoo (1984), the celebrated Ghanaian scholar and poet, writing about her own personal experiences as an English lecturer in the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, tells us that despite her impeccable academic record, she bled internally. She suffered ceaseless emotional haemorrhage, particularly when she was constantly reminded by her male and female colleagues that "higher education for a woman is unfortunate postponement of her self-fulfilment". She bled when male colleagues refused to recognize her work. Even after participating eloquently in televised national discussions, for example one on how Ghana could assist in the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, her male colleagues put her down on account of her single status. In particular, she remembers one male colleague who acknowledged hearing the discussion on television and was quick to offer her some advice: "Well, well. Actually my sister, I wish I could find a man to marry you ... you know, a man tough enough to soften your tongue somewhat" (Aidoo, 1984, p.260). A female colleague warned: "My sister, could I caution you to be careful of how you interact with these male lecturers", and when Aidoo asked her why, her response was instructive: "Because I am a married woman. I know that sometimes their wives feel so uneasy when they see you with their husbands" (Aidoo, 1984, p.259).

Aidoo’s experiences parallel those of many women in this study. From the foregoing discussions it becomes clear that life is not easy for academic women, least of all for those who do not get married. To maintain a vibrant intellect they have to live a life of condemned ostracism. The ostracism occurs because they have become "too qualified", "too independent" for the marriage market. It goes without saying that most of the unmarried women may not have chosen to remain single, but nevertheless have to pay the price for their predicament. What is important
to note, however, is the fact that the patriarchal culture in Kenyan society is so hegemonic that few of the Kenyan people see these women as victims. In fact, these women are branded daily as morally loose women who dated married old rich men while in their undergraduate programmes and thus failed to attract young men to marry them when they were marriageable. These women get blamed, the system is exonerated, and patriarchal hegemony is reinforced.

**Marital Stress**

Ironically, even the academic women who have tied the marital knot and are presumably perceived by the wider society as respectable, responsible and morally upright, also reported experiencing in one way or another marital stress, anxiety and conflicts related to their being highly educated. Despite the deeply entrenched social cultural belief that marriage leads to a woman’s social and personal fulfilment, nine of the fifteen married women in this study told me that their marriages were conflicted. Some experience verbal and psychological harassment from their spouses. Some gave examples of friends and colleagues who were physically beaten by their husbands. But only Amina, who held very conservative views, was forced by circumstances to admit that her husband physically hits her:

It’s on a beautiful Saturday morning, March 16, 1992. I arrive and Amina welcomes me in. I notice she has a bloodshot eye and I wonder what happened. I am impressed by the surroundings. Rich and beautiful people live in this area I thought. We sit on the beautiful verandah and a houseboy serves us some tea. We discuss my study and Amina asserts: "this is a very important study". We chat about how beautiful the lawns, flower beds are. Relaxed I ask her about her bloodshot swollen eye. She explains: "I fell in the bathtub and got hurt..." Before she could complete the statement a young boy aged four and five years [whom I later learnt was Amina’s last born son] comes towards us like lightning and embarrasses his mum "eeh mami ulipigwa ni dadi" [eeh mum you were beaten by dad]. Dead silence falls between us. I feel guilty about having gained this knowledge, I feel like an intruder into her private life. The cold silence stretches. Amina is undergoing the shock and dismay of being "undressed" by her own son. Finally her tension diminishes and she clears her throat ... she continues to speak in a very pensive mood: "Margaret, you know about our men. Sometimes they can run amok and in this case I don’t know why we fought" ... she fails to hold in
her emotional hurt and tears run down her cheeks. I am confused as a single younger woman and junior academic in relation to Amina ... I hold her hand and assure her I understand and after composing herself again we exchange stories on domestic violence ... Amina shares with me that her husband always "tells me to hang up my degrees in the cupboard or leave them in the university before I get home." (Field Notes)

Observing and interviewing Amina gave me deeper insights into the tensions, anxieties and private pains inflicted on these academic women, as well as their concerted efforts to conceal their private sufferings. In very ingenious ways they attempted to conceal what is considered socially shameful. It is interesting to note that when I interviewed Amina earlier, she had denied that gender was a factor in her career advancement or in her family. She believed success was the responsibility of the individual. I sensed a contradiction between what she seemed to profess and what was actually happening in her personal life. Amina’s contradictions are not unique. They only serve to illustrate that women’s lives are not linear, and that their reasoning is at times circular, particularly when they have been socialized that the onus is on them to protect the integrity of the family. In my view, one of the plausible reasons why women like Amina hide their domestic abuse is that admitting openly that violence is inflicted on them is tantamount to exposing themselves to ridicule, accepting shame, pain and helplessness. Secondly, I was only a researcher who had come to be accepted as a friend but not a confidant. Thirdly, as a successful academic woman, she is under great social pressure to project the expected social image as strong, successful, capable and respectable. This social expectation may have driven Amina to resort to acts of covering up her victimhood. In her covering acts, she continues to appear as if she is in full control of her life. Indeed, she tried to convince me that she "fell in the bathtub". She did not want to wash dirty linen in public. However, for some, the scars are just too visible to hide.

The nine academic women who saw their marriages as fraught with stress explained that most of their marital fights centred around their lacking time to take care of their husbands, being absent from the family home for long hours, failing to remit a certain amount of money for their
husband's future projects and being accused of using their degrees to run the family home. In their view, a high level of education and demanding careers do not mesh well with marriage. The demands of their careers contradicted the traditional role expected of a woman as a wife and mother.

Again and again these women lamented that whereas their higher education had given them analytical skills, rationality, independence and a respect for the value of hard work, any attempt to use those very skills to question, analyze, or discuss issues within the family home was always met with rebuffs like: "You are too big-headed", "You are just too deep-minded", "You have a big mouth", "You are too aggressive", "You are too money-minded", "You are anti-African values", and other humiliating and silencing charges.

Cognizant that marriage conferred on them generalized social respectability and status and that their careers gave them some degree of personal and economic freedom, their greatest concern was how to reconcile marriage with their academic careers. These women are in a double bind. If they persist in fulfilling the traditional expectations of their marriages, then they would have to stagnate or completely give up their careers for the sake of domestic peace. By so doing, they become economic liabilities to their husbands and this too aggravates their subordinate status as well as compromising themselves. If they pursue their careers vigorously, they risk abdicating some of their traditional domestic responsibilities and this could lead even to divorce, and as divorcees, they would have no social respectability. Trapped in a double bind these women are always trying to make the best out of a bad situation. Always trying in very ingenious ways to balance the societal script of marriage and personal script of career advancement, they at times encounter even more contradictions. One such trapped woman is Awinja. As a mother of two children and a wife, she was forced to defer her education for the sake of domestic peace, but she
soon found that no amount of self-sacrifice could atone for her sin of possessing a higher education. She narrates:

... Not everybody wants to be seen as a deviant. There is this belief that once you go to the university, that is your last chance to get somebody to marry you. It is a trade-off. I knew I wanted marriage because that is what the society wanted. I also knew I wanted a higher and brilliant career. I got married when we were both graduate students. I somehow feel trapped in. My husband doesn’t seem to understand. It is as if the higher he got educated the more he became closed in. He constantly complains that I am too argumentative, too high-headed. Whenever there is a small conflict around the house his main recourse is that "you’re doing this because of your degrees". He lastly told me that he is worried because it seems like he married a degree not a woman. He is unhappy that I spend a lot of time pursuing my intellectual dreams... My main worry is that if my marriage failed, I would be seen as fulfilling the societal prophecy that highly educated women are unmarriageable. The difficulty here is that the society expects the woman to keep the marriage [here she laughs and asks] or is it the ring? Marital peace requires that I forsake the hours I spend in writing my academic papers. This would mean that I would never be promoted. Yet I am expected to provide equally economically in the family ... I truly would want to become a university professor just like my husband.

Awinja clearly cannot "win." Society expects a decent woman to be married and to remain married. If she fails to get married or gets divorced, she is categorized as a social deviant, unmarriageable and uncontrollable. Yet if she chooses to retain her marriage she has to bear the verbal, psychological and at times physical violence, and by so doing perpetuates patriarchal order.

However, when I questioned Awinja further why she persisted in marriage if it was that problematic, it became evident that what may appear like a compromising act is also a prudent choice, because it is easier to deal with marital problems than to bear societal labelling as deviant, and deal with the pain of social isolation and stigmatization inflicted on single women. Rhoda, one of the embattled academics who described herself as a no-nonsense type, highly motivated, perceptive and uncompromising, surprised me by her response to my question "can you tell me some of the advantages of high education for women?" Instead of cataloguing the advantages accrued, she forthrightly declared that a woman’s high formal education brings antagonism into her marriage. I was further shocked by the fact that, although she had described herself as a "no-
nonsense academic", she appeared to be condoning a lot of that nonsense, particularly in her marriage. In her words:

"... High education has created a dilemma for women. You find there is this contradiction here. Education is perceived as a good thing in life and in fact it enhances the quality of life ... We are also saying that all people are equal and we want to give them an equal type of education without gender discrimination. But still there is this social belief that a woman belongs to the homestead but not to the outside world ... the irony here is that the more educated a woman becomes, the more she is exposed to the public world. The more exposed a woman becomes to the public world, the more men reject you ... You are not supposed to be reasoning or criticizing as men do ... Take for instance my husband [here she hesitates and lowers her voice and continued]. He is well educated and in fact a member of staff in this university [where Rhoda teaches and this interview was conducted] ... When his friends visit home I entertain them all right ... but trouble erupts if I engage in their charged discussions ... Sometimes my husband asks me why I like arguing with men and that this makes him uncomfortable ... My husband keeps quiet and I sense there is war ... I tell you I do not know how to behave. When I engage in discussions, sometimes on issues I strongly care for, hardly do his friends leave than he starts complaining that I embarrass him by competing with men. He complains that I have a big mouth, that he cannot understand why I like the company of men so much ... he asks "are you a man or what?" I, therefore, decide to keep quiet next time when his friends visit ... he accuses me of letting him down "you just served food and kept quiet there ... my friends will think that I am married to a village woman who understands nothing."

Rhoda and many other academic women in this study were in that contradictory situation. They consistently experienced gender ambiguity. By arguing or engaging in the men's discussion, Rhoda was flouting one of the gender rules that a woman should be modest, quiet, gentle, non-assertive, seen and not heard and, in a nutshell, feminine. In spite of their high level of education, the society demands and expects these women to obey fixed sex/gender hierarchies. However, this expectation led to conflict for them because sometimes these gender rules do not make sense, to the annoyance of their husbands. Rhoda tells us when she decides to obey gender rules by keeping quiet, her husband complains of being let down, and when she speaks, he accuses her of competing with men and again letting him down.

Seeking to understand the root cause of this woman's predicament, I think an examination is relevant of how the more egalitarian gender ideology which existed in the African indigenous
societies was reconceptualized and reconfigured by the western colonial capitalistic Victorian patriarchy and continues to be shaped by neo-colonialism. In my view, the post-colonial Kenyan society perceives gender as a fixed category, unchanging across place, space and time. The gender roles/rules are so rigid that achieving and articulate women like Rhoda are blamed for having "a big mouth" and for behaving like men. This view sharply differs from and contradicts the flexible gender ideologies that existed in pre-colonial Africa whereby women could excel in men’s roles without losing their gender identity or being stigmatized. Upon colonization, rigid sex/gender systems were enforced and roles were strictly feminized or masculinized (Draper, 1975; Buenaventura & Brown, 1980; Amadiume, 1987; Albers, 1991, Ohadike, 1994). Unlike the indigenous society where marriage rested ideally on a bond which created mutual consensus and respect, present-day marriages are based on the dominance of one spouse and subordination of the other. However, this contradictory expectation gives birth to a further dilemma. Rhoda’s spouse is a university professor and would like to impress his friends that he is not married to a village woman. To do this, then, Rhoda has got to engage in and challenge men’s discussions but this would render her unfeminine. What this situation tells us is that the academic women in this study are judged by their spouses and society at large through two sets of gender rules simultaneously. The women are trapped in a double bind. It is interesting to note that although Awinja appeared more accommodating and indeed played her expected traditional role perfectly in spite of the fact that she had defined herself as uncompromising, she was still met with blame.

From Awinja’s experiences it also becomes clear that academic women’s intellectual power is not affirmed. They experience intellectual oppression, particularly at the household level. It is also clear that their higher education and career present a moral challenge to a husband’s taken-for-granted dominant position in the home. This finding seems to agree with Amadiume’s (1987) comment that marrying a highly educated woman is seen as tantamount to bringing another
man into the house. In a very similar manner, Wachege (1992) decried the predicament of highly educated women in Kenya:

> Intellectually and particularly concerning decision-making women are taken to be naive simpletons. They are expected to adhere to whatever men think and decide. It does not normally matter whether the woman is a professor and the husband a primary school drop-out ... It is arguably believed that a woman can only be at best on the same intellectual level with her husband no matter how low her husband’s education. But never above him. (Wachege, 1992, pp.90-91)

Due to these contradictions, confusions and dilemmas, many of the academic women submitted that they suffered from an inner loneliness which was undescrivable. They perceived themselves as mostly misunderstood, misjudged and ambivalently viewed by the general Kenyan society. In efforts to minimize these misunderstandings, ambivalences and doubts, they use phenomenal amounts of time trying to be modest, concealing their accomplishments, and working extra hard to evade societal rejections and spousal battery. But some, despite these efforts, do not meet with much success. As Angela lamented, "Success is good but I did not know that it leads to such loneliness and frustration." When I asked her to explain what she meant by her statement, it became clear that the women were always on guard, vigilant lest their behaviour sparked suspicion or misunderstanding particularly within the marital domain. The women had a long list of many highly accomplished women who had been brutalized and some even killed for being perceived as overeducated and thus uncontrollable. Angela, in particular, narrated to me a horrendous incident about one of her very talented female graduate students who was butchered in cold blood by her husband who had less education than she, on suspicion that she had a relationship with her male supervisor. The man was only given a jail term of seven years. He is free and now happily re-married. Many of the academic women have learned their lessons and are not willing to open themselves to such suspicion.
CONCLUSION

From the evidence in this chapter it is concluded that the academic women in this study perceive their high levels of education and careers as a mixed blessing. Whereas possession of a high education is beneficial to them in the sense that it has given them high-paying academic careers as well as confidence, high self-esteem, personal and interpersonal power, these very gains have given birth to a lot of anxieties, tensions, conflicts, ambiguities, contradictions and dilemmas in the social, economic and career lives of these women. The women suffer great tension particularly because they are more aware, knowledgeable and critical of their social realities and at the same time they are confronted by stronger societal forces which reject their potential and aspirations.

The experiences of married women do not differ fundamentally from those of single women academics. Whereas single women are denied affiliative needs on account of their being too qualified, too old, too ugly or too aggressive for the marriage market, the married women academics are daily confronted with accusations that they are arrogant, bossy, too manly, too high-minded, or are using their degrees and economic power to emasculate their husbands.

Both married and single women were very sceptical about the empowerment potential of higher education and indeed suspected that the main reason they were allowed and even encouraged to pursue high education and careers is the economic need for two salaries in order to maintain middle-class status. Indeed, the women consistently described their education as an education for two salaries and in fact expressed the view that a functional education aimed at making them better reproducers and producers only disempowered them further. It was clear that the western type of formal higher education was an enabler in many respects. However, it also disabled and stigmatized most of the academic women. I therefore conclude that higher formal education for women is both desirable and potentially very threatening.
Professionally, higher education has been a plus for the academic women. They are able to pursue their ideas, enjoy the tranquillity and peace in their small planets in lecture halls or their offices as well as publish and research on issues that intrigue them. However, this advantage is short-circuited by the fact that as women they are not expected to be critical, aggressive, vocal, and as such they suffer dissonance as they try to reconcile societal expectations of them as women and expectations based on their careers. They suffer image dilemmas in the sense that if they act aggressively they are seen as too manly and therefore not good material for promotion. Conversely, when they conform to the expected feminine script they are perceived as too soft for the academy and as such, promotions are denied. The academic women are in a double bind, and therefore bound to lose. The study also revealed that the western type of high education, despite its liberative and transformative potential, has only empowered some of these women at a very personal level. Some of the women, for example, declared that education and power do not correspond. Purchasing power, negotiations of conjugal contracts or education alone cannot lead to women's empowerment. The women's problems extend far beyond the education system to all social institutions in the society.

It is my argument and conclusion that western type of formal education has led to social and psychological dissonance for the majority of the women academics in this study as they try to reconcile the gender script as constituted and reconstituted under the meshing of indigenous patriarchy and western capitalistic patriarchies. In my view, this dissonance is a positive outcome. It is only when people begin to experience tensions, conflicts, contradictions, status ambiguity that they might begin to critically question their social conditions. This questioning or awareness is the first necessary step in any social change. This dissonance seems to me as the first step towards change if we consider that the academic women in this study are the first generations of women academicians. As more and more women academics experience dissonance, the chances are high
that the women will collectively organize and engage in the struggles to redefine womanhood as well as their status in the university organization and administration processes with an aim of empowering themselves.
CHAPTER TEN
COPING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

Presented and analyzed in this chapter are the coping strategies academic women employ to resolve or minimize the anxieties, tensions, stressors, contradictions and dilemmas they experience in their daily lives, as well as to achieve their desired social and personal goals. Five main coping strategies are identified: (1) disengagement, self-isolation and avoidance, (2) conformity and impression management, (3) resistance, (4) super-performing, and (5) social support. This chapter is, therefore, organized and discussed under these five broad headings. To understand how the women managed or survived within the university as well as within their families, in spite of numerous social, cultural and career conflicts, I asked the women follow-up questions such as: "Since you have explained that the university discriminates against women, what has enabled you to succeed this far?"; "Can you tell me how you reconcile the tensions between your marriage and your academic career?" or "How do you survive as a successful career woman and yet you are not married?" These questions and many others were triggered by the women’s description of their careers and personal lives as very conflicted. I wanted to understand why and how they persisted in the very institutions they were blaming. I was particularly struck by their resilience and reluctance to exit from the university or the marriage institution where they maintained that contradictions were sharpest. Specifically I wanted to understand how the women managed to make institutions work for them, and how they dealt with the stressful conditions in their daily lives.
Although five strategies are identified, the argument advanced in this chapter is that the women were flexible enough to adopt one or a mixture of the five strategies to deal with the problem at hand. It is clear that individual women preferred to utilize certain strategies over others. They only switched to others when their preferences failed. Individual problems and personal dispositions dictated the strategy or strategies to be adopted. The women adopted the various strategies after a very careful analysis of their situation. The women adopted strategies which they perceived as capable of rendering their situations less stressful and more beneficial to them.

It is also the argument in this chapter that the coping strategies, though beneficial to the individual women, seem to yield contradictions and dilemmas. For example, when women choose conformity and by so doing may succeed in their careers and in their marital lives, their very acts seem to support the status quo and are thus detrimental to the cause of women as a group. Conversely, when some women adopt confrontational style, they are not only isolated by their male colleagues but are also rejected by their own womenfolk for challenging what the latter have always taken for granted. They also risk losing their jobs as well as their marriages. As such, the dilemmas women encounter seem to be unresolvable. At best the coping strategies can only reduce the tensions, dilemmas and contradictions.

**DISENGAGEMENT, SELF-ISOLATION AND AVOIDANCE**

**Withdrawal from the University: Avoidance of Toxic Men and Women**

Some of the academic women were actively engaged in acts of withdrawal, self-isolation, disengagement as well as avoidance in an attempt to resolve or minimize the dilemmas, contradictions, conflicts, tensions, anxieties and ambiguities they experienced daily as they tried to reconcile the societal script of the typical woman's role with their personal scripts as competitive
academics. Like men, the academic women in this study wanted power, autonomy and status. To achieve these goals, individual women carefully studied the conditions of their own lives, choosing to act in ways perceived as less stressful, less threatening and more beneficial to themselves. For example, at the family level, despite the importance of kinship ties, some academic women to avoid kinspeople who made excessive demands on their meagre financial resources and strictly budgeted time. At the university, to keep out of trouble they avoided individuals whom they perceived as toxic.

Most of the women who avoided toxic men and women maintained that, after years of battling the university administration and especially chairs of their departments, they became disillusioned. The majority of these women were more often older and married. They believed that success was one's own making. They also believed that if they worked hard and "played it safe" by avoiding situations that might bring them into direct conflict with university authorities, their promotions would be guaranteed. Imbued with a strong desire to hold onto their careers and progress within these careers, they avoided any association with those individuals perceived as discreditable or troublesome by university authorities. In particular, these women avoided any close association with single, divorced or separated women whom they perceived as "discreditable", "trouble-makers", home-breakers", "combative", or "lazy".

In the hope of keeping out of trouble, these women also maintained a social and physical distance from the university. They spent very little time around the university. Their writings and course preparations were done from the safe enclaves in which their homes were situated. They only went to the university for official meetings and giving lectures. By maintaining self-isolation, they hoped to accelerate their academic production. Their self-isolation was dictated by fear of identification, fear of being scapegoated, or fear of jeopardizing their promotional prospects as discussed in chapter seven.
While at the university, these women policed themselves. They dressed very conservatively, monitored their behaviour and their speech, concealed their feelings and checked their body language. They attempted to ensure that they did not display any behaviour that might be perceived as rude, threatening or aggressive by their male colleagues. In a nutshell these women strictly adhered to cultural codes governing inter-gender communication. Akinyi, for example, an associate professor, had tried to advocate for students. Failing in every instance, she became disillusioned and adopted a "mind your own business approach". She now believes that success lies in one’s ability to strategize:

My students are my personal concern. I have no time for nonsense. If I deliver my lectures and my students are happy I am okay. After speaking out in staff meetings and conflicting with a lot of my colleagues, I decided to mind my own business ... I was unhappy with students’ discontinuation, expulsion on mere suspicions46 ... I questioned and I got no support. It was a waste of time and I realized I was not getting anywhere professionally. Today I mind my own business ... It took me a long time to make up my mind that the university’s problems are not in my backyard ... I don’t bother ... I mean I would like to do something but it’s no use trying. I gave up ... These days I concentrate my energies on my family, writing and teaching ... If you speak up you are seen as a trouble-maker and it destroys you.

Nyambura, another senior lecturer, explains that she keeps away from the university to avoid "noisy militant women who only succeed in ruining the promotional chances of other women":

... In the university they call me alone, alone, because I am always walking alone. I hate flocking and have strong distaste for groupings in the university ... It is all a waste of time. I teach alone, mark alone. I am particularly perturbed by some noisy women, particularly a group in the French Department. They call themselves happily single and unattached. ... In fact they are known as troublesome in the university. They don’t publish ... they only politic and then complain that they are discriminated against ... I think there is a pervasive western culture in this university that when women become vocal they will be rewarded ...

46 In the Kenyan university a student is "discontinued" if she or he fails to score the required grade. Alternatively, the student may be asked to repeat the year. If she or he fails again then she or he is discontinued. Expulsion occurs when students are suspected of being involved in political activities which might lead to the common unrest (strikes) in the universities.
some are seeking social recognition ... these women make the situation bad for all of us ... How do you get promoted if you spend all your time battling and arguing? It's a waste of time ... I work at my house. I only go to the university for lectures, meetings and for references in the library ... [Laughs loudly] maybe I am an introvert ... I believe it's worthwhile to keep a distance from toxic people ... well with my publications. I am doing well. With publications it is possible to get ahead ... Mere talk as some of the women do here is self destructive ... It is believed that birds of the same feather flock together ... You have to be vigilant, extra cautious lest you are associated with the wrong group.

Fear of jeopardizing one's chances of advancement, coupled with the fear of destabilizing one's marital life, has forced many of these women into self-silencing. After witnessing the careers and marriages of their outspoken, political women colleagues going to ruin, these women have drawn their own conclusions. Some learn to ignore the problems. Others, like Anna, learn to deny any existence of problems or to disengage themselves from any involvement which might jeopardize their career or their social and marital lives:

... My twelve years' experience in the university has taught me that politics ruins both men and women ... In particular women suffer most ... We were shocked when the outspoken English professor and head of the English Department fled the country ... she spoke openly on issues ... she was outrightly political. Her marriage was the first thing to go ... It's safer to keep quiet in this place. Some realize too late that it is hurtful to speak ... I mean when you speak out you take a big risk. You open yourself to criticism and insults ... they know you, your thoughts and you are categorized ... You will find that many women these days keep to themselves. ... I personally do my writing and preparations at my house. ... I like it because it's peaceful and you don't have to spend sleepless nights wondering "why did I say this or that or did I hurt their feelings".

Critically analyzing these women's responses, I find the thoughts of Goffman (1963) quite useful. His concepts of "covering" and "stigma" management seem to correlate with the coping strategies adopted by some of the women described here. Coping strategies, according to Goffman, are used to minimize the obtrusiveness of a stigma or undesired difference that is deeply discrediting. Such an individual deviates from established norms in one way or another. Normatively, women in the Kenyan society are not expected to question, to be independent, outspoken, highly educated or university lecturers. Furthermore, the university is a male terrain.
Academic women are "the other", and are highly visible. Their actions and their ideas are viewed with great concern, particularly if theirs is a voice of difference.

By adopting self-isolation, silence, and information control, these women, in my view, appear to be covering for their high visibility and subsequent vulnerability. By maintaining a physical and a social distance from other colleagues they are not only restricting the tendency of others to stereotype them but are also creating a safe space for their academic operations. Academic women are deliberately and consciously fencing themselves off from those individuals whose associations might jeopardize their academic careers.

Whereas individual goals might be achieved through the utilization of withdrawal or self-isolation strategy, in the long run, this strategy may work against the interests of women as a group. As women continue to work from the safe enclaves of their homes, they cut themselves off further from academic networks and other informal sources of information and university politics, so necessary for promotional lobbying. They also limit the chances of female friendships, bonding and solidarity in the university. It seems to me that even the strategies women adopt to resolve initial problems breed yet other contradictions. For example, as these women choose to isolate themselves from others they consider toxic and to develop their careers peacefully, their very actions, though beneficial to their own self esteem, seem to support the status quo. As isolated individuals, they cannot possibly wage a concerted challenge to the established male hierarchy. But what is interesting is that the interviewed women were clear in their views that their actions of withdrawal, disengagement, avoidance, or information control empowered them as individuals. They were able to achieve their individual goals: namely, family stability, mental peace, a clean record and publications, which they felt were important currencies for their survival and career progress.
When, for example, I queried Anna about the potential danger of being cut off from the university's social and political life, her response was as follows:

... I have a family to think about ... I have managed to get promoted without being involved in the university politics ... It's helpful and therapeutic sometimes to keep away from corrosive men and women in this university ... In any case, you might be listened to by administration if you are known for not politicking, and as a committed, serious academic ... they [administrators] may not have personal information to use against you and your record is clean and that way it's possible to get a few things done.

Unfulfilled expectations and the "double speak" of the university forced many of the women academics into withdrawal, self-alienation, detachment and diversion of their energies and friendships. For example, Rhoda, like many other academics in this study, told me that she really wanted an academic career not only for the flexibility in time and a higher salary but most importantly for academic freedom. After serving as a high school teacher she felt socially and intellectually stifled. To her utter disillusionment, she found the university even more controlling. She was shocked when a close male colleague was arrested and detained without trial for expressing his views publicly. She found that lecturers suspected each other as government agents. Some of the students were also planted in class to report which professors taught material unacceptable to the government. Rhoda resorted to looking for friends outside the university, and started to withhold responses, to engage in silences, to monitor whom she spoke to in the university and eventually to detach herself from the university. Her main relationship with the university was that it paid her for her teaching. In her words:

... I was active for the first four years in this university. I was naive. I believed university was more open, democratic and upholds the tenets of freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of association ... I realized you cannot speak up without penalties ... You cannot associate with certain individuals without being labelled ... The censoring and presence of government spies stifled my intellect more than high school teaching did ... I believed in power to change. But universities are closed institutions ... don't be lied to about academic freedom. It is all theory ... I felt betrayed, angry when they arrested and detained some professors because they expressed different opinions ...
I frequent [the] university for very official things. Instead of being frustrated that things are very bad ... I do a lot of farm work. It is enjoyable, meaningful ... in fact another way of changing the world. In any case my salary is not enough ... Now I have more time for my siblings, nephews, cousins and incidentally I find myself relating better with friends who are not necessarily academics.

In the women's perspectives, their acts of withdrawal, avoidance, self-isolation, silence, information control, and investment of their energies elsewhere did not only give them a means of control and survival. They were also acts of "passive resistance". At the individual level, adoption of these strategies enabled women to survive and, at times, to thrive. For example, some successfully earned promotions while others had their side businesses succeed.

**Avoiding Overdemanding Relatives**

Social scientists have documented how African migrants to towns go to the known address of a relative, acquaintance, villagemate, agemate or co-ethnic in order that immediate needs, such as accommodation and food as well as job hunting, may be taken care of by someone who knows their way around the town (Obbo, 1980). While kinship obligations and other African virtues like interdependence, mutuality and community feelings continue to be some of the important and resilient features of the African cultural heritage, these ties can, at times, be stressful to academic women. Whereas almost all the academic women reported benefiting substantially from their family and community support, they also reported experiencing emotional, social, economic and career stresses because of the excessive demands on their time and money and for cultural conformity made by their kinspeople. Some of the academic women reported hiding and concealing their work departments, their telephone numbers, and their residential addresses in an attempt to limit interference from kinspeople. The women spoke about "mother-in-law at arms", "sister-in-law at arms" and of the strong bond between a husband and his relatives, which can interfere with the relationship between husband and wife.
Marital status seemed to be an important factor related to the avoidance of kinspeople. Never married, divorced and separated women reported incidents of avoiding relatives more often than married women did. Some of the single women in particular complained that their relatives, including siblings and parents, take advantage of them in the guise of protecting or assisting them. As single women, their money, their houses and their property in general are perceived as "open", "free", or "ownerless" since a husband is normally expected to control property. As such, many relatives would frequent a single woman’s house for days or weeks because it was regarded as free with "no man to look at me badly", as Angela puts it. Although some of these relatives brought foodstuffs from their farms in the rural areas, they expected their hosts to repay this good turn with jobs, hospital bills, school placement for their children and accommodation. Failure to support less fortunate kinspeople is grounds for ostracism from the community. These demands are not only socially and psychologically exhausting, but are also time-consuming and economically draining. In order to minimize these stresses, the women opted to avoid relatives, as succinctly explained by Maria:

... I really would like to support all my relatives. .... but practically that is not possible. As an academic woman I have to manage my time carefully ... When a sick aunt, relative or a friend of your parents drops into your house you are expected to look into their welfare ... Sometimes take them to hospitals which is a lengthy process ... Sometimes a live-in sister or brother or simply a young relative arrives looking for a job or a placement in a training college ... You cannot ignore them lest you are characterized as anti-people, selfish ... all this costs time, money and psychological stress ... Instead of concentrating on your career you use all your time helping relatives ... I really would like to help out, but times have changed. There are no jobs ... and some of these people don’t understand that your salary is small and sometimes not enough to pay your bills leave alone helping others ... It’s a bad feeling that a brother, sister or relative is jobless or sick and you cannot help but I had to almost cut all ties for my sanity ... These days I am very careful. Only very close relatives have my address or telephone number ... I make sure I don’t meet any one of them ... sounds selfish but I had to avoid them.

Relocation was adopted in an attempt to maximise the academic women’s time for their careers and to avoid nagging former in-laws. One such woman who adopted this strategy is
Mwende, a divorcee and mother of two children. After her divorce she was so troubled by the constant surveillance and questioning by in-laws that she decided to transfer her services to another university where she felt more in control of her life, money and time, and ultimately her career progression. To maintain her social distance and her privacy, she refused to reside in a university house. In her words:

... You realize that your formal education alienates you from them [kinspeople]. They look at you differently. You are not one of them. For example, as an academic woman you do not have the traditional kinship support. When my marriage was ailing, my mother-in-law and in fact my own natal family sided with my ex-husband. They all believed that I was the problem. After my divorce there were rumours even in the university where I was teaching that I was unfaithful in my marriage. ... that is how they finish you as a woman ... I decided to apply for this position to keep a safe distance from my relatives and former friends. ... Now I have peace of mind and can concentrate on my career ... I live in town ... that way it would be difficult for them [relatives] to find out my residence ... Relatives can at times be your Msalaba [Kiswahili meaning "cross", signifying suffering].

A critical examination of the responses makes it quite clear that these academic women are trying to avoid more than their relatives: they are trying to make a break with a cultural tradition deeply embedded in their consciousness. Avoiding relatives and seeing kinspeople as a source of stress run contrary to ingrained African traditional thought and a world view whereby the "we" feeling is very strong. An individual operating alone has no place in the African context (Mbiti, 1978; Dei, 1994). Possession of a higher western type of formal education and an academic career seems to pit the African woman against her own people who, ironically, are her stronghold. However, the paradox is that if she devotes all her energies, time and money in the services of her own people, she may not have time to develop her career and she may end up as an economic failure, her career in ruins. Moreover, the women interviewed testified that these very relatives would be the first ones to issue sharp criticism if any failure occurred. In pursuit of personal space, autonomy and status, academic women progressively become "alienated" and "detached" from their roots. They are cast into an overwhelmingly patriarchal culture without the kinship ties
that are pivotal in countering domestic violence. Some of the academic women reported tensions in their experiences of "the homeless mind" or "torn between two worlds". In fact, some of the women perceived themselves as casualties of the modernisation process [capitalism] as it was grafted onto indigenous African institutions. Their tension was how to reconcile the African values of interdependence, mutuality and cooperation, while their education, the institutions they worked in and their daily struggles were rooted in capitalism and individualism. Some noted that, in the past, sisters bonded with their brothers and that bond guaranteed women’s safety. With ongoing transformations in formal education, the economy and career opportunities, women are forced to move from their kinspeople in search of employment in towns and as such are forced to bond with husbands or boyfriends who afterwards treat them as subordinates.

**Spousal Disengagement**

Disengagement, withdrawal as well as avoidance were not only utilized at the university level but also in the marital home. Some of the married academic women maintained that in order to resolve their marital tensions, conflict and dilemmas, divorce or separation is not a preferred choice. Rather it is the last option. Cognizant that it is easier to cover marital problems and thereby maintain social respectability, some women explained that they try as much as possible to avoid potential conflict situations within their marital life. Some of the women reported deliberately refusing to challenge spouses who shirked their marital obligations, while others reported withholding their emotions and psychologically "writing off" their spouses. Angela’s comments figuratively illustrate this point:

... You know in our society, a man and particularly a husband is considered to be supreme. It’s no use fighting every day ... divorce is shameful, embarrassing and a painful social fact ... I always advise my friends: "why should you stress yourself and the children? Why can’t you just treat him [spouse] ignore him, just like a piece of furniture, a table or a seat which doesn’t annoy you. ... So long as they
[spouses] do not interfere with your career, your travel or your money why not ignore them?"

When I questioned Angela further to tell me how practical her advice was and whether this was her practical experience, her response was succinct and to the point:

In the African society you would be destroying yourself as a woman to invest your emotions, feelings and even money [here she burst our laughing and then continued] with your husband. You have to find other useful and interesting things to do with your life ... otherwise you get crazy ... so long as he [the spouse] pays school fees for the children, the house and other necessities ... why should we keep quarrelling? They [men], they all have girlfriends, mistresses ... the society blames you as a woman if you complain ... you are supposed to understand. ... It is painful but you have got to be pragmatic. You either remain in the marriage or divorce ... it is for the sake of the children you decide to detach yourself psychologically and life continues ... I see no reason to keep fighting.

This response was unsettling, particularly because Angela had earlier described herself as a happily married woman, as goal-oriented and as someone who does not entertain nonsense. I noted earlier, sometimes the women seemed to hold diametrically opposed views simultaneously, which I saw as a clear reflection of the social contradictions they experienced in their daily lives. They were usually categorical about what they expected from the university, but from their marriages their expectations were often unclear. A distinct gap existed between the theories the women espoused and what they indeed practised.

Interestingly, when I encouraged the women to tell me whether psychological withdrawal from their spouses was not tantamount to supporting the status quo, their interpretation of their own behaviour was quite surprising. I perceived this withdrawal as compromising and conservative. On the other hand, the women argued that their ability to maintain societal respect by persisting in the marriage and pursuing both mothering and academic careers with dedication was a hallmark of their personal strength. Anna, for example, was pragmatic: "Marriage is a title deed. If you are married, many doors open."
CONFORMITY AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Despite their age, ethnicity, marital status or seniority at the university, well over two thirds of the women in this study in one way or another reported utilizing conformity or impression management as survival strategies. Critically aware of their limitations and social contradictions as women academics in a society where the majority of the female population is poor and illiterate, in a society which is overwhelmingly patriarchal and trapped between African cultural traditions and the western culture, these women were actively engaged in meaning-making. These women chose to act in ways that seemed as though they had capitulated to the dominant order. However, further examination of their choices revealed that underneath the surface, they were engaged in a process of constructing and pursuing strategies not only to survive, but also to thrive. The strategies were not adopted randomly but were based on careful thinking and evaluation of the women’s desired goals. For example, the women clearly indicated that if they were perceived as adversarial by either university administrators or the other men in their lives, these men had the potential to short-circuit the women’s careers. To win the university administrators’ and spouses’ goodwill and support, the women explained that they reasoned, persuaded, and at times conformed, but in such a way that they did not compromise their ideals.

Reasons for the women’s acting in certain ways and not others were based on the conditions of their lives. The data, for example, show that some academic women continue to persist in troublesome marriages because it is easy to conceal marital conflict from the public eye. It is more painful, disruptive and dishonourable to deal with Kenyan society’s repudiation of divorce. Within university circles, and for the sake of getting ahead in the university, some chose to be agreeable in return for what they perceived as the great need for male support. From the data, it is clear that these women were willing to try every possible strategy in an attempt to transcend their limitations. However, they were also critically aware of the consequences of acting
against societal norms. For example, many of the research participants consciously decided to compromise their views for the sake of "keeping my job", "marital peace", "my children" or for "fear of disrupting my whole life." In my view, it seems that these women saw right and wrong in very relative terms. They no longer believed in absolutes. They have learnt to be pragmatic. To achieve their perceived goals, they assumed roles which were publicly acceptable, but psychologically they resisted these roles. They consciously manipulated traditional virtues of femininity to make societal institutions work for them.

**Utilization of Traditional Virtues at the University**

These women prudently chose to act in ways that were acceptable and rewarding in the long run. They based their choices on the realization that Kenyan society in general and the university in particular reward women who do not pose a threat to men, and the knowledge that they could be punished for acting contrary to the cultural expectations. Some of the women chose to utilize acceptable traditional transactions in order to make institutions work for them (Obbo, 1980). Marshall (1993, p.96) though analyzing coping strategies for women managers in western industrialized society, seems to have arrived at the same conclusion when she writes: "Women have a long history of having to read the dominant culture in order to survive as members of the subordinate group."

The women who decided to act in a conformist manner carefully manipulated the images which they presented, made themselves readily available at the university, made it explicitly known that they were willing to help (for example, by volunteering for several social committees), dressed modestly, and monitored their language. In particular, they policed themselves and paid attention to the impressions they were creating. They were careful to speak in acceptable terms and not to speak in ways considered unwomanly. While dealing with senior male academics, they
adopted a stance of deference. They feigned ignorance or softened their criticisms. They ensured that they observed proper postures and they did not stare directly into these senior male academics’ eyes. This would be perceived as impolite or as a direct challenge to the man. Some of the women shared with me what appeared at times funny, ridiculous and intriguing situations, namely that even the position of the hands, legs or eyes and intonation had a cultural significance. For example, Maria told me that it would be tantamount to disrespect if a woman stood with her arms akimbo [hands on her hips] or her feet apart, or whistled or raised her voice or looked a man in the eye while talking to him. These subtle expectations in body language in post colonial Kenya are a purposeful miscapturing of indigenous African body language [as it was corrupted by colonialist] for the purpose of controlling women in present day Kenya. Academic women who wish to get ahead consciously learn and observe these subtle and unwritten ‘cultural’ codes.

Women concerned with conforming to expectations, therefore, paid particular attention to body language. To manage the impressions which they created, they smiled, spoke softly and nodded appropriately. In addition, they were careful to preface their seniors’ surnames with the titles "Doctor" or "Professor" as a sign of respect.

These women submitted that they received phone calls at home requesting them to teach classes or to attend meetings on behalf of senior male academics who were travelling. The women interpreted these requests as a sign of recognition and indeed it finally paid dividends. Akinyi’s comments serve to illustrate this point further:

You have to be tactful in this university. ... From my experience they [male academics] only support you if you are agreeable ... It took me exactly five years to find out the nuances. To find out those hidden rules which govern the university. ... As a woman, you are expected to dress professionally, I mean in ways that show you are mature ... not sexy and not like your grandmother ... It’s all very complicated ... they [male academics] are generous if they find that you are hard working, intelligent and womanly enough ... these days I pay particular attention to my physical appearance, to my dressing and above all I don’t argue with them. I realized that it doesn’t mean or cost anything to avoid direct confrontation. Why stand up to them? ... Lower your eyes, be polite, let them
think you are stupid. You know you are intelligent and that is crucial ... When they [male academics] believe you are a hard worker, respectful, womanly enough, they support you ... despite your degrees, if they realize you are still an African woman they love it ... Without strategic action you cannot survive here [university].

When I asked Akinyi to explain further what she meant by "an African woman" she was quick to retort: "An African woman, a true African woman in spite of her formal education is expected to be respectful, not bossy, to take care of the homestead, work hard and above all care about her social reputation."

In agreement with Akinyi, Atieno, a single woman and a senior lecturer, also attributed her success to strategic planning and strategic acting. In her own words:

... I understood very well that physical appearances mattered in this university ... Dressing in the right clothes determines how you are perceived ... I had to do away with my trousers and jackets. You must create the right impressions as a woman ... I soon volunteered to help here and there ... I made it obvious that I was supporting the head of the department ... like the majority of the staff members I joined the usual nods and smiles as a sign of approval ... I realized the worst you could do to a man and in particular your head of department is to bruise his ego .... It does help and for me it has worked ... what does it matter to massage their [male academics] ego, get what you want, do what you believe in elsewhere? ... ... I got my senior lectureship through strategic planning, and acting ... At times it is difficult to do things you don’t believe in, but I think it is advisable to be prudent.

What is revealing from Akinyi’s and Atieno’s anecdotes is the fact that their actions were based on meaning-making. They learned that being aggressive, vocal and forward would inevitably mean failure in the university. Consciously, they chose to act in ways which appeared to compromise them but which rewarded them at the personal level. The irony, however, is that when women choose, as in this case, to compromise for the sake of promotions, their very acts reproduce and uphold patriarchy. They are caught in a double bind. If they fail to compromise and act in an aggressive or confrontational manner, they risk losing their jobs, or stunting their career advancement as Akinyi’s and Atieno’s stories testify. These women reported, however,
experiencing further tensions as they tried to reconcile their personal convictions and those acts deemed necessary to secure career advancement.

There were differences of opinion as far as conformity strategy was concerned. Moreover, not all women who adopted conformity succeeded. Some who adopted it and failed perceived it as wrong. Edna, who described herself as a radical, tried to act in a conforming manner but on each and every attempt she felt like a traitor, a fraud, and "suffered pains in my bones". She gave up trying to seek academic success through what she termed "boot licking". She reported experiencing pangs of cognitive dissonance when she tried to conform:

... In this university they do not believe in women's abilities. You are viewed ambivalently. You are neither here nor there. You are not expected to succeed or argue like a man ... Yes I tried to be nice, to be friendly, helpful and all that expected womanly stuff, but when a comment is made like "Edna you are such a sweet woman," or "Edna it is a woman like you we want in this university - hard working, unassuming and forward looking." ... I would ache inside. I felt excruciating pain like the Biblical Jeremiah. I wanted to shout no ... To get support you have to really lick boots. It is psychologically disturbing, tormenting and disorienting to believe in one thing and to do another. I gave up trying and I am glad I did. I feel stronger and happier now because I speak my mind.

Dramaturgy: Imagined Power and Feigned Submission

Some of the academic women reported that they were aware that they could not succeed within the academic ranks by blowing their own trumpets. They knew that "giving men colleagues a face"\(^\text{47}\) was an important ingredient for their continued collegial relationship. These women were very conscious of the impression that they were making and were actively engaged in the management and presentation of an acceptable self-image. Here, the ideas of Cooley (1952) and Goffman's (1959) idea of dramaturgy seem to be useful in understanding the actions of these academic women. Cooley and Goffman posit that we take into account the perspectives of people

\(^{47}\) This means allowing men to "save face": protecting their egos or not embarrassing them publicly.
with whom we are interacting. We project an image of ourselves which represents the way we think they see us. Cooley’s concept of the "Looking Glass Self" seems to agree perfectly with the efforts which these women were making in order to present themselves in exactly or nearly the same social images and roles as those expected of them.

As argued earlier, the academic women have entered into universities which are predominantly male, and they simply do not quite fit the role or status of a university lecturer. Just like a stigmatized person in the company of "the normals" as Goffman (1963, p.15) argues: "[there] arises the sense of not knowing what the others present are ‘really’ thinking about him. Further, during mixed contacts the stigmatized individual is likely to feel that he is ‘on’ having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impressions he is making, to a degree and in areas of conduct which he assumes others are not." Likewise some of the academic women who adopted this strategy of feigned submission were conscious of the impressions they were making. In order to counteract the assumptions and perceptions of others, particularly male academics who held the reins of power, these women engaged in miniature dramas as they defined and managed the impressions they wanted to create.

During my interviews and observations, I noticed women who had otherwise described themselves as "strong" or "no nonsense" playing by the traditional rules. They lowered their eyes, spoke softly and were extremely polite while in the company of male professors. For example, Angela, a senior lecturer, who described herself as a warrior determined to fight for a worthy cause, shocked me one evening when I was shadowing her. That evening, she was apparently requested by a senior male colleague in her department to help him reorganize his office. As we lifted the cartons and shifted files here and there, I was surprised by her reiterations of "professor" at the beginning and end of every statement. Her projection of deference was equally profound and I wondered why. Perhaps my discomfort was due to the fact that I had just returned for my
fieldwork from a Canadian university where I was uncomfortably learning to address my seniors by their first names. When I further questioned Angela why she persisted in saying "yes prof., yes prof.,” and on being helpful, she explained that she did not believe in the "tradition of deference" but "it is the only way to get on". It was necessary to appear "respectful", "feminine" and "agreeable".

Edna’s drama was different. She was perceived by her colleagues, male and female as a very strong woman and incidentally, she described herself to me as such. She was elected by her faculty as the staff representative to the senate. She liked this recognition, but the idea of sitting on a senate committee overwhelmingly dominated by male professors made her "stomach turn." She explained to me that she could not let her colleagues know how intimidated she felt inside. The need to live up to her colleagues’ expectation of her forced her to feign courage. In her words:

... I spoke out many times on issues. At any faculty meeting if I want to speak on an issue that I strongly feel for, my heart beats faster, my palms sweat, my stomach turns and I have really to calm myself ... They [staff members] do not seem to understand what is going on in my mind. They asked me many times to push for this or that ... they did not understand how fragile, weak I felt inside. They entrusted me, voted me into the senate committee ... I sometimes feel very weak right inside, but as you know I cannot quit. I cannot disappoint them ... I have no choice but to imagine and act as if I am not afraid ... It would be self-destruction if I told them that I feel this way. I don’t understand my feelings too ... It’s a very contradictory feeling. Sometimes I feel as if I am powerful, other times very weak inside. I enter that senate meeting my heart is pounding fast and hard ... I feel restless ... But I soon settle down and it’s funny because I end up putting up a brave fight for my colleagues.

Like Edna, many other academic women in this study were consciously involved in acts of impression management. Actively they kept writing, rewriting, editing and acting their scripts in an endeavour to project the image which they thought others expected of them. Edna drew on her inner strength in order to sustain her performance. She confided that she was forced to maintain the image of a very strong warrior though on the inside she was caving in.
Buying Domestic Peace

Conformity for the sake of achieving one's own perceived social and personal goals was also utilized in the marital sphere where social contradictions and dilemmas were at their sharpest. The women wanted marriage, children and promotions within the academic ranks. Marriage expectations dictated that a woman should perform the numerous wifely and motherly duties which left her with little or no time for her career pursuits. This role contrasted with the indigenous Kenyan gender ideology where women were not relegated to the domestic space and indeed a wealthy woman was coveted. In the new gender ideology as shaped and reconstituted by encounters with western Victorian patriarchy, by the turn of the century, Kenyan women were relegated to the home. Yet they were still expected to feed themselves and their children. According to this new gender ideology which came to be called "traditional culture", a woman belonged to the private domain. She was not expected to outshine her husband, nor own property independently, nor have a mind of her own. This "traditional cultural expectation" results in marital conflicts. Torn between their socio-cultural and career obligations some of the women adopted conformity or impression management in the domestic sphere as a strategy to help minimize these social contradictions.

In the name of what they referred to as "domestic peace" they deferred their graduate work and gave up ideas for travelling to scholarly conferences or seminars in order to save their marriages. Atieno, for example, spoke of "deferring my Ph.D because I do not want to be seen as competing with my husband," while Anna spoke of her fear of "eclipsing my husband". Though women who adopted this strategy reported that they experienced marital peace, they also argued that this strategy could be a source of more stress. This stress is based on the recognition that indefinite deferral of their graduate work might either result in the denial of promotions or outright dismissal from their academic positions. Anna, after years of deferring her doctoral work,
sometimes "for the sake of my children" and at other times because "it made my husband upset that I was failing in my conjugal contract," was eventually disillusioned. She wondered: "For how long can we keep postponing our own fulfilment?" In her words:

I joined the university many years ago ... I realized the many hours of my doctoral work made my husband upset ... sometimes he would come home late and furious that I was still in the study room, he would lock me in there ... I could not take it ... I decided it was no use ... I did not want to ruin my marriage particularly for the sake of my children ... Five of us [women] realized we had similar problems. We started to meet once a month ... We thought we should include our husbands ... after three months they stopped attending ... for the sake of domestic peace we disbanded the group ... but I wondered, "for how long can we keep postponing our own fulfilment"?

When I urged Anna to explain to me further why they disbanded the group if it was beneficial to them, factors which further limited their strategic actions came in to view:

You know, as a married woman, you are not like a single woman ... As an academic woman, you are overeducated and the society expects your marriage to fail ... To prove them wrong you have to work extra hard on your marriage ... You also do not want to disrupt your personal life and indeed a family which means so much to you ... therefore you decide to conform even when you disagree internally.

To avoid appearing overeducated, overexposed or too independent for their spouses' liking, some of the women voluntarily subordinated themselves further to their husbands by feigning ignorance, downplaying domestic conflicts, or by being excessively nice to their husbands. Some reported going that extra mile to make their spouses happy in the hope of spousal support and approval. Nevertheless the women were firmly resolved to protect their interests. At the same time they were aware that they could not be successful without the goodwill of their spouses. To get their spouses' goodwill the women calculated their moves and acted in ways that seemed to compromise the cause of women in general. Indeed, some seemed to blame themselves and others for their own predicament. They seemed to believe that, if only women conformed, their problems might be minimized and men would become more agreeable.

As Mina emphatically stated:
In our society you have to be extra careful ... marriage, business or career success is a gamble. To gain you have to lose ... One needs to be strategic enough ... Fighting makes the situation worse. If you realize your husband is hiding something from you why don’t you engage him psychologically? Don’t forget fire begets fire. ... For example, don’t concentrate on his coming home late ... be nice. Butter him up. Serve his favourite hot meal, massage his ego. Let him believe he is the most cherished husband ... You will be surprised. He will even support your ideas. He will stop shirking responsibilities and arrive early from work ... It’s a trade-off ... the society, his mother-in-law are all on his side. You cannot win by fighting ... don’t give them an opportunity to blame you ... My husband is very supportive of my career, my ideas, but it is at times expensive. You have to be on guard ... It sounds unrevolutionary but it works and has worked for many women.

Keeping certain kinds of information from the spouse was also a means of minimizing marital conflicts. I was particularly touched by a story narrated by Sophia in which a woman friend, a graduate high school teacher, was divorced by her husband (also a graduate high school teacher) after some unknown assailants broke into their house which was located on the school compound and raped the woman along with her sister and a house girl. Apparently the woman’s husband was not in the house at the time. A couple of months later, the husband divorced the woman on account of her being careless and defiled.

Based on their knowledge of stories like this one, some of the women involved in the study felt that it was safer to maintain secrets and silences, in order to protect their marital interests. To protect themselves and their incomes, some of the women ensured that their husbands did not learn the exact amount which the women received from the university or side businesses. Some women told me of friends who invested their extra cash or bought fixed property in the name of their children, siblings or a trusted friend just in case "the marriage failed". This hiding of income mostly happened when men began to shirk their family responsibilities or when the wife realized he had an "outside wife" or mistress. Interestingly, none of the women in my study admitted to having secret investments. Some of the women involved in the study engaged in side businesses if their salaries failed to meet the family’s domestic needs. These businesses represented attempts to minimize the fights over a husband’s refusal to contribute
what the women referred to as "umga money" (money to purchase maize meal - a staple diet in Kenya). The husbands usually argued that their salaries were tied down to fixed investments, such as a house mortgage, land, a car and so on.

Other women involved in the study resorted to invoking African traditional customs. According to the hybrid of African traditional gender ideology as reconstituted upon colonization, a man is the expected bread earner. Public knowledge that a man cannot feed or clothe his family is an embarrassment. To ensure that their spouses did not shirk their family obligations and contributed generously for the daily maintenance of the home, some of women interviewed resorted to a range of strategies including "sweet talking", deference, and threats of exposure. Others carefully utilized the age old wisdom, as Akinyi humorously put it, that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach". As one of the primary marital obligations, these women ensured that they budgeted time to prepare food and this was met with substantial success as Regina's comments illustrate:

... I don't regret that I have to personally prepare my husband's meals. It is one of those things which ginger his life ... In serving his meals he is flattered ... He is very agreeable, supportive of my struggles ... all that most men need is an ego booster ... I ensure that baba Juma [Juma's father] believes he is the best husband, father and a lover ... When they [men] believe they are loved, appreciated, and they are in charge, they can do anything for their family ...It is a gamble. It's a give and take programme ... When I realized what to do, baba Juma is no longer withholding. .... I can assure you that many men can only support their wives' dreams only when they believe their wives' success will not disrupt the family .... It's up to the women to balance the act and, above all, give their husbands a face particularly in public.

When I urged Regina to tell me why she advocated that women should continue acting in such conservative ways, her response indicated that women's lives are characterized by multiple social contradictions. Angela clearly encapsulates this view:

As academic women there are ways that the society perceives us ... as well-educated, economically successful, successfully married, ... you do not want to disappoint your people ... As academic women there are ways we also want to portray ourselves to the society, to the world ... We do not want to jeopardize
what we have established so far ... but for the grassroots women, life is what it is. She is spontaneous, says what is on her mind, quote and unquote she has nothing to lose than her miseries ... but an academic woman has to protect her social image, honour, status, personality ... she has a lot to lose ... As an academic woman you are not sure you are doing the right thing ... sometimes you feel you are not accepted ... you are seen as one who brews trouble. It's all a contradiction ... you think you have power and the society tells you so, but you are punished if you question your husband ... you cover your problems to appear right and successful ... that is what society rewards ... educated people and indeed economically successful people are expected to be happy Christians ... you act happy ... and the like.

The same strategy of "seeming conformity" has been reported elsewhere in Africa (Obbo, 1980). Obbo reports that the Ganda women (Uganda) and Yoruba women (Nigeria) lowered their eyes, knelt and talked softly when greeting or serving their husbands despite the fact that Yoruba women in particular actually controlled the food supply and accumulated wealth through trading.

It is important to reiterate that women who utilize conformity or impression management as a way of achieving their social and personal goals reported experiencing a certain level of discomfort at not being able to vocalize publicly what they indeed believed in. On the other hand, they expressed satisfaction that their strategies worked and they were willing to handle the private pain of "conformity", which they considered less painful than public disapproval. This strategy minimized the chances of career or personal loss which they perceived as possible if they adopted a confrontational stance. Moreover, some of the women submitted that it was easier to achieve individual and social goals by negotiating, convincing, pleading, and reasoning with men, than by confronting them.

**Single Women: Not Passive Victims**

Single, divorced and separated women academics utilized conformity and impression management within the university and as part of their social life in almost the same fashion as married women academics. The only difference was that being single, well educated, and having
an academic career and material things minimized their chances of having romantic relationships with the opposite sex. Critically aware of their disadvantaged social status, some single women resorted to downplaying their accomplishments, refusing to buy material things such as fixed properties, faking marriage status through the wearing of rings and conservative clothing, strictly using surname only and concealing personal information. Others adopted Christianity in order to regain and maintain respectability.

Angela, a single mother who described herself as a social deviant, explained to me that when she and her friends attended social functions they were very careful about their interactions. Afraid of scaring all men away, they concealed their academic careers and economic success. In particular, Angela maintained that she introduced herself simply as Angela. If a man asked her about her career, she would answer, "I am a teacher." She found that the men happily assumed that she was a high school teacher and engaged her in some interesting discussions. Just as deviants seek to pass as non-deviants, these academic women adopted identities that would make them attractive in men’s eyes.

Feigning ignorance worked its magic and opened new social interactions, as Aketch explained:

... you know in our society a woman is not expected to be that informed ... sometimes you are forced to act like a little fool, to act dumb with men for the sake of friendship ... Even when my friends (both men and women) argue about certain issues particularly in a social place, even if I disagree with them I do not openly show my disagreement ... You know if you tell them they are wrong they will pick on your degrees ... They alienate, isolate you if you come out strongly ... It’s funny most of the times I zip up my mouth and just listen, observe ... that way they do not perceive you as an arrogant woman and you are ensured of continued friendship.

In an attempt to make themselves attractive and acceptable in the marriage market some of the women who never married refused to invest their money in fixed property, such as cars, houses or land, in case they appeared too successful. Instead, some chose to invest heavily in cosmetics, fashionable dress, or simply in supporting their siblings and parents. Some of the
women confided in me how their valued intimate relationships terminated when it became apparent that they were successful economically and intellectually. The women explained further that their success was viewed negatively and, in most cases, attributed to the support of a rich man behind the scenes. These mistaken assumptions were not only morally damaging but also led to denial of these women's affiliative needs. As Aketch's comments demonstrate:

... You have got to be extra careful if like me you still wish to get married ... If you buy those houses, cars on top of your degrees ... which man in Kenya would dare look at you ... They are too scared of successful women ... You have to make yourself appealing, less competitive ... I decided to first build a house for my parents, invest in my brothers' and sisters' education ... I don't want to appear too successful to scare them off ... for now I have postponed personal investments ... I am sure I will tie that marital knot.

When I inquired further into their behaviour, it became quite clear that the majority of the women were busy presenting a front which they believed was acceptable and beneficial to them in the long run. In the "back region" (Goffman, 1959) they were less careful, were more relaxed about their identities and did those things they sincerely believed in. The single women whom I interviewed engaged me in numerous informal discussions of what it means to be both highly educated and single in Kenyan society. We shared several familiar stories. To win societal approval, the women had to consistently manage the "front region" by acting out the expected societal script. The following field note serves to illustrate this point further:

It's about 9:00 p.m. and we are hurrying for a party at one of the prestigious Asian clubs. Maria has invited me for a party at the club to celebrate Kenya's Independence day ... I am fascinated by Maria's beautiful outfit. I notice she has a wedding ring on. I ask her about it and she tells me "although I am divorced I keep my ring for functions. It helps. When they [men] see the ring they know you are already owned and therefore unavailable. You are titled and therefore respectable." We both burst out laughing ... In the club we are seated in rows -- the classroom style. Dignitaries on the podium facing us ... The guest of honour, a prominent man in government, stands to address the gathering .... Akina Mama kama bwana hakupigi anakupenda kweli? [Kiswahili translated to mean, "Womenfolk if your husband does not beat you does he really love you?"] I hear applause, claps and u llulations from a segment of women. I get furious that the women are not protesting. My host Maria urges me to keep my peace, whispering that the dignitary is a fool, but you have to act respectfully if you value your life
... After the 'hotuba' (speeches), it is time for socializing ... Maria introduces me to a couple of her friends. She introduces me to some of the dignitaries who seem very pleasant. I urge Maria that we privately ask the guest of honour why he felt wife beating is an expression of love. Almost shocked Maria tells me that this would be suicidal. She reminds me that to get on in Kenyan society you have to play act, make these people feel good about themselves. It's all role acting.

"Don't you understand?" Maria asks me in an agitated manner. "Get what you want from them and then forget them. It's that simple" ... Maria complains: "Margaret you seem not to understand ... this is acting. Even the guest of honour, I suspect does not believe in his words ... With this seriousness you are doomed to fail ... You don't want to antagonize or communicate in a way that pits you against them ... they won't like it. If you want people to like you, you must play act with them. You must be prudent ... almost like a shrewd politician to survive in our society. If you appear clever, you end up being a loser." (Field Notes, December 1992)

After months and months of careful reading and re-reading and analyzing and reflecting on my data, I am left with the impression that, to understand women's actions, we must look deep beneath the layers. Some of the women in this study first struck me as conformists, unquestioning, and completely subordinated to the dominant order. But a further examination of their actions, intent and purposes revealed that they were careful strategists. Clearly they understood what is at stake. Based on their own knowledge of their situation they decided whether and how to act or not to act. Cognizant that communicating in certain ways was acceptable, or not acceptable, and that breaking the rules would result in marginalization, these women chose their strategies prudently. As Anna humorously put it, "though appearing to be sitting down, their hearts were standing up". Silence, therefore, when consciously chosen should not always be seen as the voice of consent to the dominant order. Sometimes it is a form of resistance or strategic act as the data in this study demonstrate. Elsewhere in Africa, too, single women have adopted "conformity" in an attempt to cope with their loneliness or to redeem their fading respectability. Obbo (1980) explains that unmarried women whose reputations were in doubt or who were lonely adopted the symbolic use of the veil to gain respectability. To minimize their stigmatized status they joined the Nubi Islamic community. As long as they had a
flimsy veil, they no longer suffered status ambiguities and could safely continue in their disrespectful ways:

Nubi (Islamic) community offered an attractive option for women willing to put themselves in purdah ... as long as their heads were covered Nubi men were convinced no one would approach them for immoral purposes as this violated the Islamic law. Nubi Muslim and non-Muslim men did not have any difficulty in approaching Nubi women. But constant lowering of eyes in public gave the appearance of submission and obedience, and was recognized as effective strategy that obtained respect for women who thereby appeared to be under proper male control. (Obbo 1980, p.110)

RESISTANCE

Confrontational Style: University Experience

Some of the younger women academics and particularly those women who had earned their Ph.Ds had chosen a more confrontational style to achieve their career and social goals. They took on a more public mission by confronting the dominant culture in its various expressions. Some of these women believed that they were self-made. They publicly accused the societal institutions, including the university, of being undemocratic and biased against women's interests. These women believed that, through their actions, life choices and speaking out, they were not only educating others but also fighting for an egalitarian society for all. They perceived themselves as acting and teaching for social change. They defined themselves as social deviants, self-made and "no nonsense" academics. They were vocal. Also, they published articles in the Kenyan newspapers attacking gender inequality and specifically some aspects of African cultures which they considered oppressive to women in general. They challenged inconsistencies in university policies in ways that not only left the male academics dismayed but also angered the more conservative women academics. Marshall (1993, p.90) writes: "These people are 'offensive' in at least two senses. They attack inequality. Also they cause offence because they challenge what others take for granted." Spender (1982 quoted in Marshall, 1993, p.91) writes: "openly
questioning the way the world works and challenging the power of the powerful is not an activity customarily rewarded."

In spite of the potential threats posed by a resistance strategy, academics imbued with the desire for social justice insisted on being "listened to" "heard", "responded to" and "being recognized". These women explained that, at times, they would like to "shut up" but they suffered, if they tried. As if to explain reasons for their speaking out, they often submitted: "I can’t live a double life", "I can’t hide my feelings", "It hurts to keep quiet", "All that fear they [society] pumped into me is all gone", "I detest hypocrisy", and "I am not a conformist, really I just can’t watch and keep quiet".

Some of these women explained that they were happily married to very supportive spouses while others were single, separated or divorced. All were relatively young, had a strong sense of commitment to issues of social justice and a robust sense of self and of their values. They were tactful and resilient. They carefully studied the nature of their problems and how best they could deal with them. In particular, they understood how their views were shunned in faculty board meetings. To get support from an overwhelmingly male meeting is a difficult task. But these women seized opportunities to act when the mood was right and struck in ways that could not be ignored. This quote from Mwende helps to illustrate how women made gains by being tactful:

... I remember that faculty board meeting. I dressed well, taking in every detail to appear professional. I prepared my notes clearly ... after the items on [the] agenda were discussed, the chairman asked whether there was any other business (AOB). I stood up. I glanced around the room and then raising my voice asked the dean to explain to the faculty board why, in some departments, some members were denied recommendations for promotions even when they are qualified ... I refused to be silenced or to sit down ... The dean said these matters should be resolved at the departmental level ... My chairman attempted to explain ... but due to my insistence that the dean must explain ... but by now I had won lots of collegial support ... The dean promised to take a personal interest in this matter ... After a couple of months I was invited for an interview. I was promoted but I asked for a transfer from that department. To survive here you have to be strong and keep fighting. That way, they can’t ignore you.
When I asked her further to explain to me why she had to take so much apparent pain in preparing for that meeting, she replied:

You have to be surgical in this university. In order to attract their attention [male lecturers], you have to appear intellectually challenging, aesthetically agreeable, and then hammer hard. I had some bad news but I wanted it to appear right.

From Mwende's words, it is quite clear that she was acutely aware of the need to manage the drama. She prepared her script meticulously: dressed professionally; stood up to speak (ordinarily members deliberate while seated); raised her voice which is not expected of women; and challenged the dean personally and demanded an explanation from him. In this very strategic and deliberate way, Mwende seemed to be writing, editing, rewriting and acting her script with tremendous success, consistent with Davies's (1983) notion of scripts.

Other women explained to me that breaking the silence is a rewarding experience in the long run. Some of these women had suffered years of unwanted sexual advances and exclusion from academic networks; moreover, they had been denied chances of promotion, yet they lacked the voice to articulate, to speak their feelings. But once their rage exploded and they were able to label what was bothering them, the words were like fire in their bones. They simply could not keep quiet when someone trampled on what they considered their personal rights. They had subscribed to the philosophy which they referred to as "dawa ya moto ni moto" [Kiswahili translated to mean "medicine for fire" or "you have to fight fire with fire"].

The women shared several stories of when and how frontal attacks worked for them and how relieved they felt. For example, Wambui said that, after years of experiencing sexual harassment from a senior male colleague, and trying to downplay or turn this harassment into a matter for humour, she only succeeded in stopping this behaviour after she threatened to go public:

... He would always come and tell me things like "old cats drink milk" ... another day "oh yes I know you only date rich men "..., Other times "oh my sister I envy the man who is in your life" ... At first I did not want to antagonize myself with my seniors. I would turn these remarks into jokes and hope that he would
understand I was not interested, but his misbehaviour only escalated ... I was getting furious and this morning he came and repeated his sexist innuendoes ... Angrily I shouted at him and marched to the chairman of our department's office .... I had thought about it for a long time ... I asked him, "Professor Mohammed do I look like a malaya (prostitute)?" and he was startled. Embarrassed and confused [he] asked me "why?" My whole body was shaking, sweating and looking right into his eyes I asked him "then why does Professor Xuma think I am a loose woman?" ... I threatened to make his behaviour public. The chairman pleaded with me to hold on until he personally spoke with Dr. Xuma ... From that day Dr. Xuma has kept his social and personal distance ... I believe when you speak out they kind of get scared and respect you too.

Some women believed that, by being outspoken, forthright, courageous, and direct, they cannot be ignored. Santalo, who abhorred the unequal treatment of women, systematically employed this strategy with a high degree of success. In her view, if women become more vocal, courageous, united and supportive of each other's struggles, there are many men out there who would be on their side. The magic is only to speak out in one voice consistently and fearlessly. She explained to me how in senate meetings, she was vocal and consistent in challenging the inconsistencies in policy, and how she made substantial gains for women academics:

... I kept hammering the point that the policies are inconsistent ... sometimes they [male academics] would laugh, smirk or pretend that what I have to say is not important. This did not deter me ... I was consistent in my attacks ... "Chairman can you explain the inconsistencies that when we are hired here, we are all hired on qualifications, but when it comes to fringe benefits like house allowance, we are left out as women or dependents?" ... "Does the chairman know that some of our husbands, and indeed the entire family are dependent on us?" ... The chairman promised that a committee would be set to explore these issues ... All women in our university get a housing allowance today ... We can change things ... Change is possible but it's not without sacrifices.

During my fieldwork, which coincided with the first multi-party general election in Kenya, I found that a number of women academics had become very vocal. They seized the opportunity for action and, using any cracks within the political confusion resulting from the first multi-party elections, these women clearly articulated the need to give a fresh look to women's plight in Kenyan society. Despite the negative labelling and sanctioning from politicians and the university mainstream, these women organized seminars and workshops to educate rural woman about their
civic rights and the need to vote wisely. This was a period of consistent, tactical and strategic lobbying organized and spearheaded by women who adopted a confrontational style. At this time, the National Council on the Status of Kenyan women was launched under the Chairpersonship of Dr. Maria Nzomo, a senior lecturer in political science and international relations.

However, confrontational or frontal attacks did not work for all women who utilized this strategy. Some reported failure. Atieno, for example, explained to me that each time she raised an issue at the senate meeting, she was met with hostile opposition. Though she raised the same issues that Santalo had successfully raised in a different university, Atieno would be asked, "Who are you?" "On whose behalf are you speaking?" "Which women are you speaking for?" Though determined and consistent in her approach, her questions fell on deaf ears. She felt dejected, isolated, and doubly silenced in the sense that even her women colleagues tried to shut her up. As I wrote this analysis, I received some communication from Kenya that she had already quit the university because of what she termed "frustration" on the part of the administration. This is not surprising, because as she had earlier explained to me, she had been warned by the university administration and even by her own female colleagues and friends at the university that she should be more flexible and a little bit conforming. She had been advised that being vocal and persistent would lead to no good. She even had been threatened that those who want to change the society radically can be crushed.

This potential rejection and disconfirmation has been alluded to by Marshall in her writing:

... This position is demanding. Individuals may need the support of like minded women and men to affirm their interpretations in a world that disconfirms or rejects them. (Marshall, 1993, p.103)

This strategy also has its own contradictions and dilemmas. Culturally women are not expected to be vocal. For example, among the Agikugu ethnic group, a woman is always reminded of the Agikugu proverb "Mutumia etaguo mutumia niundü wa gütumiria" [a woman is
called a woman for her ability to listen, to understand, to take in so much and yet keep her mouth zipped up]. Women are not expected to talk about men who sexually harass them. In fact, a woman is seen as stupid for speaking out and she may become a laughingstock. Being confrontational interferes with congenial working relationships at the university level. To succeed in the university, women need to be assertive and hard working. By adopting a confrontational stance, some women were further marginalized, disconfirmed not only because their behaviour was perceived as unwomanly, but more so because only low class women (illiterate and poor) are expected to resort to aggressive or confrontational behaviour. These women are labelled "aggressive" and "combatant" deviants. They do not fit the societal or cultural stereotypes.

Conscious of their great need to survive and thrive, some of the academic women resisted their gender oppression in a very unprecedented fashion. They carefully appropriated the negative labels assigned them and systematically twisted and utilized them towards their own empowerment. Their strategy is discussed in the next section.

**Degree is My Husband**

With a high degree of sophistication, creativity and resourcefulness, some of the single, divorced and separated women appropriated negative labels intended to silence and control them and utilized them towards their own empowerment. On the whole, single women are perceived as transients. They are expected to be anchored in marriage and only then they would be seen to "have arrived". Those who fail to "arrive" are therefore perceived as social failures and thus disreputable. As social deviants they are excluded not only from the societal mainstream but also are discriminated against in the university on account of being single. In unprecedented ways, these academic women challenged the inevitability of marriage, creating options for themselves by investing their salaries, buying houses and land and bearing children out of wedlock. Bearing
illegitimate children is viewed with great concern, particularly because it is a behaviour not
normally expected of formally educated women. One of the initial reasons why women were
allowed into the formal education system was to provide "civilized wives" for "civilized men" who
were western trained (Jeannes, 1976). Only low class, non asomi [uneducated in the western
sense, washenzi or uncivilized] heathen women are expected to bear children out of wedlock. In
any case, there is no clear distinction between Christian education and formal education. Formal
education was and still is intended to produce moral wives.

However, as discussed in detail in chapters six and nine, when women attain higher
education, their chances for attracting a marriage partner are minimal. Yet society blames them
for refusing to get married and for choosing to live a morally loose lifestyle.

To resolve this contradiction, and to regain their respectability, some women utilized
marital metaphors and openly declared that their education was their husband. Itemizing carefully
the expected role of a husband as that of providing for the family, these women declared that they
might as well be married to their degrees, which they considered long lasting, and beneficial both
to themselves and their children. Santalo's comments encapsulate this view:

... As a single woman in this society you are perceived as a social failure ... Worthless.
And rarely do people give you respect ... I have decided to work hard, to invest in my
education ... Yes even when you excel in academics, career, they always say "but she is
not married." ... Yes, today I tell them, "my degree is my husband." I have bought a piece
of land, a house, a car and I am paying fees for my siblings ... What is that a husband can
provide? ... tell me what else does a man [have] to offer ... maybe more stress. These
days they [male academics] are careful not to talk about my singleness ... When they argue
on morality basis I question them about their own and yet they are married.

Throughout my interviews and observations I encountered several single, divorced and
separated women who were heading households. They explained to me that they were happy,
economically successful, relaxed and goal-oriented. They were "married" to their degrees. Instead
of "waking everyday to serve a hot meal to a man, I serve my children and devote my energies to
my career," Santalo added. The women explained that they can expect bonding and affection from
their children, their trusted friends and economic returns from their careers. Their economic success, and their ability to bring up responsible children have forced many people to re-evaluate the negative judgements imposed on unmarried women. These women were certain that, through their economic and career success, they can force society to reckon with them. Indeed Santalo follows her comments with the powerful statement: "It is up to the society to catch up with me, not me with it. I do what I believe is right".

To achieve academic and economic success, many of these women adopted with zeal the discrediting labels assigned them. Appropriating the labels of social deviant, combative, aggressive or loose woman, some of these women were able to frequent social places which men frequent for sharing information. These women have been able to infiltrate some of the male networks and they have reported experiencing personal successes. For example, Aketch spoke of her carefree attitude and the successes which she experienced:

... Being single and old enough like me you are seen as a social failure ... You are even pitied ... some people even ask me personally why I am not married ... I tell them I have other immediate goals ... It's nice when you are perceived as a deviant ... You are above social control and can do what you feel like ... I join men groups in nyama choma [meat roasting] places. They buy their round, I also pay for mine ... some grumble: "Aketch is not a woman" ... they treat me like one of the boys ... It's through this network I heard about a cheap plot on sale, about mortgage procedures ... economically I am doing fairly well ... they [men] treat you well if you play the deviant role like them. Otherwise why is it okay for them [men] to frequent bars if they are not deviants?

Critically examining the data, it appears that some of these single women have not only appropriated the negative labels assigned them but have deviated in word and deed. Interestingly, they seem to be proud of the deviant status assigned them and they described themselves as social deviants. In my view, these women were prudent in accepting and utilizing the negative labels assigned them because it gave them more leverage to act, to select and think in ways which were not limiting to their personal growth. As deviants, they could pursue their personal convictions. I also suspect that these women clearly adopted this strategy because, by defining themselves as
social rebels, they are no longer obligated to work within stereotyped scripts. By utilizing these negative labels positively, they not only delegitimized male authority, but hoped to achieve control over their own destiny.

On account of their confidence based on their knowledge that they were atypical women, that they were more educated, less traditional, and had well paying jobs, some decided that they should accept and play their assigned deviant roles:

My education has made me confident, ambitious and brave. I am no longer afraid. I work very hard. I know nobody will make my life better other than myself ... When you know you are right, you don't care about what others think about you ... When my marriage failed I was deeply hurt but I was already a deviant and many people expected my marriage to fail anyway ... I did my best to save our marriage including doing all those conforming things. Finally it was over and all fingers were pointing at me that I ruined our marriage ... these days I am a hardcore ... Doesn't it make you feel nice when you are doing something and everybody is wondering "how can you do that? ... You have to be sure, confident about yourself.

However, these women still could not entirely bypass the societal entrapments. Their ability to provide for themselves, to head households, to buy houses, or to consciously reject marriage could not override the societal stigmatization that "she failed to attract a husband", or "she is that educated, but she has no owner". Failure to tie the marital knot is interpreted by society to mean that the individual woman is uncontrollable, irresponsible, a loser, or normless. She is much better fenced off from the respectable society. These women were therefore stigmatized as "husbandless", "unclaimed", "ownerless commodities," as Mwende, a divorced academic, explained. These women were perceived by the general society to suffer from what Goffman (1963) termed a "spoiled identity." But these women were not passive victims. In order to make good their spoiled identity, some have worked excessively hard in order to accumulate enough funds to buy plots, build homes and provide for the welfare of their children. In their careers, and in their social and economic accomplishments, they hoped to divert the attention of the society from their singleness and redirect that attention to their accomplishments. In no
uncertain terms, these women were determined to change the negative perceptions of them through their economic and career success, and through constant rejection of their assigned status. They perceived themselves as winners, not as losers.

In my view, these unattached women, through their actions and decisions, were and are active agents of social change. Through utilization of marital metaphors such as "my degree is my husband" and by establishing matrifocal families, they challenge the conception of marriage as an immutable institution and reveal it instead to be a mutable social construct. In addition, they also redefine their relationships with men and challenge the traditional family structure.

SUPER-PERFORMING

Some academic women worked extra hard in order to prove their detractors wrong. These women were keenly aware that they were not only expected to fail in their careers but also in their marriages. The women who adopted super-performing (Glazer & Slater, 1987) as a strategy repeatedly made comments such as "I know they expected my marriage to fail", "I want to prove to them that you can be highly educated and still be successfully married", "I work hard to prove them wrong," "I work extra hard because I know, as a woman, they are looking for the slightest sign of failure"; "When they say women cannot achieve, that is when I work hardest".

During my fieldwork I observed that women who headed departments were always in their offices. When I inquired into why, it became clear that a lot more was expected from a woman chair of a department. Nyambura, one of the departmental chairs interviewed, argued that women have to work extra hard because their intellectual capabilities and administrative skills are not taken for granted like those of their male contemporaries. Nyambura had to earn respect, whereas it is given to most males as a matter of course. As a woman, she had to keep proving to her colleagues, including her female colleagues, that she was capable.
Even planning their lectures, the women submitted that they spent inordinate amounts of time ensuring that they had covered "all aspects" and "arguments" in a certain topic in case the students caught them off guard. Although the women stated that it was natural to fail, they felt that when it is reported that a woman academic had a problem in her lecture theatre, this problem is generalized to all other women. A single failure could be used to block the progress of many other women. The women spoke of "overpreparation", "overreading", and "meticulousness" in their work in an effort to outshine their male competitors. In their view, a woman had to work "exceptionally hard", "overpublish", "work ten times harder than a male professor" in order to acquire the same professional respect. Rhoda, who held a doctorate, encapsulated this view:

... Yes, I realized early enough that, in our university women are looked down upon. They frown when you talk of publishing ... They [male academics] think your work is mediocre ... I knew I had to work extra hard ... the men can afford leisure time ... I am busy cracking. I burn the midnight oil. It is common knowledge that women's work is evaluated more strictly. Their articles are over scrutinized. Unlike the men's publications women are not given the benefit of doubt ... you have to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that as a woman you are capable and worthy of promotion ... For a man, it is natural. Their career success is expected and normally attained ... I am always ahead of schedules, deadlines, careful planning ... but it has all paid dividends.

In the private sphere, too, some of these women reported working extra hard. In fear of fulfilling the prophecies of doom that highly educated women cannot make good wives, married women like Amina told me of "the extra devotion to keep my marriage". Like Amina, many married women academics told me that they took it upon themselves to perform their family duties with a high degree of commitment to ward off accusations that they sacrifice their families because of their careers. Interestingly, these women were critical of their own strategy and suspected that, in the long run, overwork may have a significant impact on their physical and mental health.
SOCIAL SUPPORT

Almost all the women in this study reported utilizing social support as a coping strategy. Social support has been defined in several ways. For example, Cobb (1976) defines social support as the exchange of information leading a person to believe she is cared for, valued, or part of a network having mutual obligations. Kahn and Antonucci (1980) see social support as an interpersonal transaction including one or more of the following key elements: affect, affirmation and social aid. Further, they identify two types of social support: tangible help and emotional help.

In the same line of thought, the academic women in this study maintained that they have been able to deal with the daily problems experienced both in the family and at the work place because of the support of some combination of friends, colleagues, spouses, children, parents or relatives. This interpersonal support involves one-to-one discussions either over the telephone, through the mail, or face to face with a trusted person. The women also spoke about group social support either in the form of prayer meetings or friendship groups.

Person to Person Support

Whether old, young, single, married, divorced or a university professor, the women reported experiencing insurmountable tension, anxiety and social contradictions. These feelings arose because they were still expected to play culturally stereotyped roles. The strategies that they adopted to resolve or minimize these contradictions resulted in creating more dilemmas, as clearly discussed in the foregoing sections in this chapter. The women not only faced cultural contradictions, but also economic and inter-and intra-role conflict. To maintain their sanity, they depended on interpersonal relationships. The nature of the problem dictated the best person to share their feelings with. For example, most of the married women told me that their spouses and
their children who were old enough to understand played a significant role in sustaining their mental health. As Rhoda explains:

... Sometimes the stress is too much ... You go to the university and you find this memo accusing you of failing to do this or that or a student petitioning his or her grade ... the professors are not helpful either and you realize you are alone ... For me, my husband has been very helpful. He listens to my troubles ... He encourages me on. He also shares with me about his work problems. Sometimes we talk until the middle of the night and I feel better ... I step out in confidence. If my husband understands what is bothering me I don’t care about the university staff .. I teach and I know I have a loving family to fall back to.

When the problem troubling the academic women is not work-related, but concerns her marital life, then she has to look for support elsewhere. Married women reported having trusted women friends who were usually married, of the same social economic background, of almost the same level of education, but not necessarily teaching at the university. These women called on each other for support on marital and family and even issues related to money. Edna’s comments highlight the importance of this strategy:

... You can call any of your friends at any time of the night and empty yourself if you are psychologically tormented. Sharing problems experienced is such help ... the social problems that are encountering us everyday are so many that they may even become a mental block ... so when you have somebody you can call upon at whatever time of the night and that person will listen ...

And as if supporting Edna, Angrippina who had elsewhere argued that gender is not an important factor, particularly in the university, also explained to me how she called upon her friend:

... Women are cursed. Sometimes you sit there waiting, and baba watoto [Kiswahili for father of the children] is not arriving. ... You are worried because you don’t know what happened. You are also angry because with men you cannot be sure. ... I hate quarrelling ... We discuss with my friend Janet. I call her and we are on the phone for hours. We make fun, joke about our problems, share stories over and over and we comfort each other ... Instead of concentrating my mind on baba watoto. Janet helps. We need to encourage each other, talk about our failures and successes, map out a plan of action ... We do this with Janet all the time. It’s healthy and keeps [me] strong.

From these two anecdotes, it is clear that these women’s interpersonal relationships are not only therapeutic but that they provide the type of support necessary for survival in a man’s world.
The women strengthened each other and, through sharing of their miseries, realized that they were not alone. Many other women suffered sleepless nights — for example, when their husbands failed to turn up. As a result of this interpersonal sharing, some of them explained that "these days I sleep soundly", "I encourage him to carry his house keys so that he doesn’t wake us up"; "I do my writing instead of the usual just waiting".

**Single Women and Social Support**

Academic women who were single, divorced or separated utilized personal friendships to deal with their particular experiences of social isolation and denial of affiliative needs. These women emphasized that they were single, but not lonely. They dealt with their isolation through networks of both male and female friends. However, when revealing what made their hearts ache, they only confided in their trusted women friends. Some wrote lengthy letters; others visited or invited their friends to their houses; still others telephoned and "poured themselves out". Like married women, single women deliberated at length about their specific problems. Siblings as well as children were identified repeatedly as sources of moral support. Single women joked and laughed about the social contradictions in their lives. They also shared and celebrated their successes. This sharing with trusted, loved and caring friends enabled these single women to face life’s storms courageously, as Sopiato explains:

... There are times when forces of nature conspire against you ... days when nothing good happens in your life ... I remember this time when if I did not have a caring family and trusted friends, I would have quit my career. ... I had applied for promotion three consecutive times. I would always be told so and had an edge over you ... my relationship was also breaking at the same time ... Then this chairman of my department met me walking and told me ... You know I can marry you. He was joking he said after I got angry at him. But he explained that I was second hand ... meaning I had children. Although he did not categorically explain, I knew what he was telling me "only an old man could marry me" ... I felt pretty bad ... Nothing was working. I felt worthless ... but, thanks to my friends we spoke about this incident and many other things ... Finally we ended feeling better and laughing at the stupidity of this old man. These days I don’t
mind his comments. We all know he is berserk, foolish, why bother about him? ... That is why I tell you to survive in this place [university] you need the understanding, empathy and support of those you care for.

Critical examination of Sopiato's comments clearly reveals that through social support the women do not only take control over their own lives but also challenge male power. When the women dismiss the chair of their department as "berserk" and therefore, not "worthy of paying attention to", they are not only subverting male authority, but they are intervening in their own social reality. In effect, they create a social psychological space for their survival. As such, they avoid further stressful interactions with toxic academicians. This particular finding seems to agree with Greenglass (1993, p.155) who writes that research is demonstrating the beneficial effects of social support on psychological and physical well-being. Those who have good social support resources are relatively resistant to the deleterious effects of stressful events.

**Informal Support Groups**

Both single and married women joined informal prayer and friendship groups. These groups, like friendships and other personal relationships, were utilized to deal with women's social isolation, as well as work-related problems. Friendship groups were established on the basis of marital status and socio-economic background. Prayer groups were more open. Both single and married attended, but the common factor was that these women lived in the same estate and had almost similar interests.

Friendship groups were organized around the same estate and sometimes further. The women met once a month, on a rotational basis, in each other's houses. As discussed in chapter five and six, women, and in particular married women, are not expected to frequent public places. Decent professional women are expected to be home with their children after their official engagements, while husbands are not normally expected home immediately after office hours.
Some husbands arrive home late at night. Culturally, men and women occupy separate social spaces. Women are expected to be alone in their private homes, while men attend late night meetings or socialize together in bars or at meat roasting parties. Moreover, some men are accompanied to these places by outside wives or girlfriends. With men frequenting social places or official meetings at night, women become lonely and isolated. In the end, women resort to social support groups as Angela illustrates:

As a group of friends, we realized as women we had a problem of socialization. We realized that our men work during the day and after they pick up you and the children from your working place they drop you home. They go out ... We also realized we had our own things to talk about. They go out to discuss things which concern them and we too had things concerning our families, our children. We had problems within our families and we would like to discuss, see how they affect our families and how we can help our friends. ... We were about six of us. We would come with our children ... they had their games to play outside as we deliberated on our domestic issues ... We spoke about our children, our marriages ... and we thought that was very encouraging. By the end of the session, we were all feeling better and we go home. By the time we are feeling low again, we had something to look forward to.

The women also met for instrumental support. Overburdened with the problem of feeding their families and the need to maintain a certain social class which matched their level of education and careers, these women found their starvation wages inadequate. They had to pool resources as Angela explains:

We also realized we have a certain status in society and would like to portray that image. We felt that we needed to lead a certain kind of life that matched the societal expectation of us ... you are always under scrutiny ... We wanted to give our homes a facelift. On a rotational basis, half of the money would go to one woman and the rest to the bank.

All the women in this study subscribed to one of the religious faiths in Kenya. The majority attended church on Sundays. However, in addition to Sunday worship, some of these women met other faithful fortnightly for fellowship and prayer. The prayer groups were organized also on a rotational basis and usually occurred in the evening. These prayer groups were localized in individual estates. Most often, married women attended the prayer meetings, but their spouses
and single persons were also encouraged to attend. I had the privilege of being invited to attend three prayer meetings. I attended all three. To my surprise, domestic workers in these residences did not attend. The prayer groups were social events where women of the same economic background, but not necessarily academics, met to discuss how they could make their marriages work, help their children achieve higher education, and better their families; they also discussed other problems affecting them as individuals or as a group. They shared ideas on how and where to get extra money, and prayed for all those things they felt only God could change. Interestingly, these women persuaded their husbands to attend and believed that the only way to make their husbands become more responsive and available to their families was by making them active Christians. When I queried these women further, it became clear that they also hoped to secure the goodwill of their husbands by appearing religious. They hoped to convert their spouses into being better Christians through their faith. Some of the academic women who had "God fearing" husbands reported receiving a lot of spousal support which was beneficial not only for their personal well being, but also for the family. It also helped the advancement of their academic careers. Anna, for example, had utilized this strategy successfully and encouraged other women to do so:

... Through your faith your husband can be saved ... my [husband] used to drink, come home late ... not pay bills. I worked myself to death. I engaged in several research projects to help ... all these time I would attend church, prayer meetings and pray God for my husband. All the women prayed with me [Laughs very happily]. We prayed and knew God acts in His opportune time. His ways are not ours. This prayer group is very useful to me ... It was my backbone. It gave me hope, courage and confidence that things will be better ... Today my husband is a born again Christian. He is home early, helps with children's homework ... we are doing very well. His support has enabled me now to focus on my career ... I encourage all the women even you to believe in God ... come pray with us and you will see God's blessings.

From the foregoing women's voices, it is clear that social support, whether on a one-to-one basis or group support in a prayer or friendship group, worked for the women. Through these
social support networks, the women encourage one another, provide caring, loving and listening ears, and help each other with ideas, financial support and strategies for further survival. In some ways they subvert patriarchal authority, but, in others, they seem to support patriarchy. The important point here is that their individual and personal goals are achieved. Greenglass (1993, p.155), echoing the voices of the women in this study, sums up the important functions of interpersonal relationship into three types:

First interpersonal relationships may contribute to health because they are a source of intimacy, i.e., emotional support. Second, there is consensus that social support may provide useful information, advice and guidance, i.e. informational support. Third, people may assist with instrumental problems by providing financial assistance, goods, or services, i.e. instrumental support. (Greenglass, 1993, p.155)

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have shown that the women in the study are not passive victims. As knowledgeable social actors they intervene in their social realities. Based on conscious knowledge of their situations, they adopt various strategies while dealing with the problems they encounter in their daily lives. Each academic woman in her own way and depending on the problems to be resolved adopted strategies such as withdrawal from the university, disengagement, self-isolation and avoidance, conformity and impression management, resistance, super-performing and social support.

Although the academic women reported utilizing these strategies with a high degree of success at the very personal level, some of these strategies in the long run might be counter-productive to the individual woman or to women as a social group. The women who adopted resistance, for example, reported experiencing social isolation, rejection and disconfirmation. To cite another example, when women used disengagement or impression management, they succeeded in achieving personal goals, like promotions or marital peace. However, these women
remain in a no-win situation. When they act and choose for themselves, their very actions help to reproduce patriarchy. It appears to me therefore that the problems that academic women face and, in fact, the dilemmas they are trying to resolve through adoption of the various strategies are unresolvable. As the women attempted to resolve their dilemmas, they found that dilemmas are unresolvable but can be minimized.

It is also important to reiterate that, although the women identified several strategies, they were not rigid as to which strategies should be adopted. From the women's evidence it is shown that women who had otherwise defined themselves as "fighters" adopted strategies that can be labelled conservative while some of the women who had earlier indicated that gender is not a factor in their lives utilized resistance as a strategy. At other times, a combination of strategies was used. Individual personal circumstances and the nature of the problems or dilemmas to be resolved/minimized dictated the strategy or strategies adopted.
CHAPTER ELEVEN
CONCLUSION AND ISSUES ARISING

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the major findings in this thesis. The research problem as well as the methodological approach are revisited with an attempt to bring together the texture of the whole thesis. The chapter is organized under three broad sections, namely: retrospective overview, recurrent themes, and a reflective account.

RETROSPECTIVE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to investigate how western formal education has enabled Kenyan academic women to question their situation, challenge and organize collectively for themselves and on behalf of other underprivileged women in the Kenyan society. I wanted specifically to understand what decisions the academic women make concerning their own lives, their careers and families. In a nutshell, as the title of this thesis denotes, I wanted to understand what it means to be a woman and in possession of higher education and occupying a high status job.

To achieve this goal I formulated four broad research questions which guided my research process. These questions are:

1. Who are the academic women? What is their background, their earlier educational experience, their career experience?
2. How do their educational success and career accomplishment benefit other academic women as well as grassroots women? What linkages and alliances exist?

3. What barriers, if any, prevent academic women from achieving their social and personal goals?

4. What is the nature of women's participation at the university?

To capture the daily lived experiences of the academic women, I decided to steep myself in intensive field work, utilizing in-depth interviews and participant observations for a period of seven months. I conducted participant observations and in-depth interviews in an open, relaxed and conservational style with each of the twenty-four academic women. The flexible conversational style not only allowed me to gather detailed information but also allowed the women to express their views and add personal questions which contributed to the enrichment of this study.

Literature reviewed in this study as well as the voices of academic women interviewed show that although educators, national governments, international development agencies and consultants have great faith in western formal education as an unqualified good and indeed as a panacea for all socio-economic problems affecting the African peoples, practical realities contradict this view. Data presented in this study show that formal education and formal employment are crucial elements in the struggle for women's empowerment; but education and employment alone cannot change the subordinate position of Kenyan women. The extent to which formal education and higher status jobs can improve women's status depends on the conditions under which that education and employment are utilized. Formal western education in most of the Third World and in Kenya in particular continues not only to be unequally provided but to be gendered. Gendered education supports a gendered labour market. Data gathered and analyzed in this study overwhelmingly indicate that although Kenya was politically liberated from British colonial rule,
formal education, which is an important tool for socio-economic and political development, continues to be embedded in the Victorian capitalistic patriarchy. Formal education continues to serve the neo-colonial political economy and as such its liberatory potential is limited.

It is the argument of this thesis that the subordinate status of Kenyan women can only be alleviated through degendering the educational system as well as the labour market. Women's empowerment can only be achieved if women's access to education and to the labour market is accompanied by genuine changes of stereotyped social cultural attitudes and perceptions towards women as well as political, economic and indeed structural changes to accommodate the changing role of Kenyan women.

This study demonstrates that in spite of the unequal experiences that women and men encounter both at the family level and at the university, the dominant group continues to propagate the ideology that everyone has an equal opportunity for equal results as far as career development is concerned. Analysis presented in this thesis deconstructs the myth that women academics and male academics have equal opportunity for equal results. It reveals that obstacles are deliberately put in the way of women, for example, exclusion from male academic networks and social cultural expectations that women should participate in domestic chores. At the same time women's interests are trivialized. The university is presented as fair and meritocratic and as a result those who encounter barriers and do not succeed are blamed for their own predicament while the system remains untainted.

Women academics who do not publish as much as their male counterparts and whose promotions lag behind are blamed for not working hard, for lacking career motivation, dedication, and commitment. Ironically, slightly over a third of academic women in this study seemed to have internalized this strong patriarchal gender ideology and were locating the blame in themselves. They rejected gender as having any impact on their social and professional lives. In
their view those who worked hard and met the stated criteria got promoted. These academic women's reasoning seemed to indicate that they have imbibed male forms of thought and view of the world as succinctly put by Smith (1987):

The making and dissemination of forms of thought we make use of to think about ourselves and our society are part of the ruling and hence originate in positions of power. These positions of power are occupied by men almost exclusively, which means that our forms of thought put together a view of the world from a place women do not occupy. The means women have available to them to think, image, and make actionable their experience have been made for us not by us. (Smith, 1987, p.325)

However, the majority of the women in this study expressed dissatisfaction with bias in promotion procedures. Other factors beyond the stated criteria dictated that men get promoted faster than their female colleagues. The women complained that their careers lagged behind those of male colleagues because they were excluded from male academic networks, lacked information about the unwritten rules, were forced to defer or postpone their education in order to accommodate domestic responsibilities; or their promotions were deliberately stymied when they failed to play the accepted stereotyped gender script. On account of their gender, ethnicity, class and marital status, their careers suffered. Single women argued that singleness constitutes a barrier to being included in male academic networks while single men are not isolated. Some of the academic women were resilient and were waging resistance against their own oppression. Although the academic women in this study did not in any way refer to themselves as feminists, the position arrived at in this thesis is that the majority of them were actively involved in feminist acts.

In spite of the women's divergent views in regard to their careers, personal and family life, there are common themes cutting across chapters four to chapter ten. All the academic women seem to agree that although formal education is a good thing and indeed enhances these women's sense of self esteem, it produces a series of contradictions, dilemmas, ambiguities,
tensions, paradoxes and ironies in their daily lives. Even though they were highly educated and employed in academic careers they were also subjected to a subordinate status shared with the rest of the Kenyan women. It is the conclusion of this thesis that higher education for the women is both desirable and potentially threatening as the recurring themes in this work show.

RECURRENT THEMES

Several interrelated themes recurred throughout this thesis. They include contradictions and dilemmas, the adopting of strategies, socio-cultural constraints, the culture of fear, and divisions among women. Perhaps the most prominent theme is that of contradiction. As reported in chapter four, for example, the women complained that their earlier formal education was not an education for empowerment but for domestication. Yet, these women vigorously pursued this gendered, irrelevant, domesticating education because it was only through it that they could afford to escape poverty and rural drudgery. Education was therefore pursued for its perceived social and economic returns. However, this education produced conflict in the women’s lives because their teachers encouraged academic success while at the same time they were training them for passivity (femininity). Moreover, all but two of the academic women reported that their male role models (fathers, brothers or male relatives) encouraged them to be aggressive, critical, inquisitive and hardworking. As a result almost all the academics reported that they were labelled as atypical girls, aggressive, rebellious and tomboys by their teachers. This means that the school encouraged them to conform to a feminine gender script while at home their fathers encouraged them to fight successfully and win in their own right.

Encouraging their daughters or sisters or nieces to be aggressive and to be high achievers showed that their fathers were willing to utilize the flexible indigenous gender script that allowed women to succeed independently. The current rigid definition of what is feminine or masculine is
not rooted in history. It has its roots in the colonizing powers. Strict gender roles were propagated through the colonial education system and Christianity and government as part of the modernizing process. Whereas in pre-colonial Africa flexible gender roles allowed women to succeed and even excel in men’s roles without being regendered and reclassified as males, under the new gender ideology imposed by the colonialist and perpetuated by the African male elite, women could not succeed without being stigmatized or regendered. This new gender ideology emphasized masculine and feminine traits as if people spend all their lives thinking that they are men or women. As a result, there exists no accepted script for academically or career achieving women. This situation results in the multiplicity of dilemmas, contradictions, tensions, anxieties and ambivalences I observed in the lives of the academic women in this study.

Throughout the thesis, cases arose where academic women were presented with these two mutually exclusive scripts and whichever they adopted they were bound to fail. Evidence in chapters five, six and nine shows that they are expected to behave like typical women and at the same time are expected to produce like men academically in order to develop their academic careers. As a result academic women are trapped in a double bind. For example, when they chose to act in feminine ways they were perceived as too soft and as unsuitable material for academic promotions. Conversely, when they acted aggressively, spoke up and lobbied for their promotions, they were perceived as dangerous, atypical women and labelled "combative", "militant", "aggressive" and therefore not promotable.

Two important and equally conflicting demands are made on the academic women. Education and in particular higher education and careers are highly prized for that extra income that allows maintenance of middle class values. At the same time marriage and motherhood are glorified. As knowledgeable social actors, some of the academic women in an attempt to choose for themselves decided to slow down, defer or completely give up ideas for higher education for
the sake of maintaining that marriageability attraction if single or for the sake of domestic peace if already married. It is well demonstrated throughout this thesis that whereas single women who pursue higher degrees are denied affiliative needs on account of their being perceived as too qualified, too uncontrollable, too old, too ugly, too aggressive, too independent minded, or too self-serving for the marriage market, they are at the same time chastised and blamed for rejecting marriage in favour of loose lifestyles. These women are characterized as morally loose home breakers and, therefore, as unacceptable role models for the rest of Kenyan women. They are perceived as a real threat to the social and moral fabric of Kenyan society. As a result, the women get blamed for their predicaments while the patriarchal system is exonerated. The married women academics also are daily confronted with accusations that they are arrogant, bossy, too manly, too high minded and use their higher degrees to emasculate their spouses. Entrapped further, married women academics experience tensions, anxieties as they try to balance their academic careers and family obligations. Some of the more outspoken respondents complained that they were subjected to unequal competition with their male colleagues who do not and are not expected to participate in domestic labour. At the university, the women suffered from multiple roles because they were not only expected to teach, but also to grade examinations, participate in committees, conduct research and publish as much as or even more prolifically than their male colleagues. At the same time, they were expected to excel in domestic responsibilities and in particular in the labour of love - preparing and serving meals for their husbands personally even when domestic help was available. As a result the women lacked the time to devote to their careers and suffered tensions while seeing their work increase daily.

Higher education and careers therefore have led to further entrapment of the women. Formal education, in spite of its liberatory potential, created social and psychological dissonance as the academic women tried to reconcile the expected societal script and their own personal agendas.
Adoption of strategies is another theme cutting through all the chapters. It is demonstrated in this study that the academic women are not passive victims. They are active participants involved in a struggle to shape or influence their own history. Based on the conscious knowledge of their situations, they adopt various strategies ranging from withdrawal, self isolation, exit, avoidance, conformity, resistance, super-performance as well as the seeking of social support in an attempt to influence or make institutions work for them. However, although the academic women used these strategies with a high degree of success at the personal level, in the long run some of these strategies are counterproductive not only for the individual woman but also for the women as a group. Atypical women like Mwende (see chapter eight) chose to resist, to question openly the systematic discrimination against women in the universities. With a sense of mission she fought fearlessly and hoped that other women academics might empathize and support her. Surprisingly, women failed to support her. Mwende and other women who chose to openly resist gender oppression reported experiencing a high degree of social isolation, an inner loneliness, private pains, rejection, and disconfirmation not only from their male colleagues but also from their female colleagues who distanced themselves and accused these outspoken women of going too far. When, finally, Mwende’s marriage broke down and she was politically targeted, her friends not only stopped visiting her but also stopped telephoning her for fear of identification. To her utter amazement, some of her female colleagues supported the men who were tormenting her. This lack of gender solidarity is precipitated by a clear lack of gender politicisation not only in university circles but also in the wider Kenyan society. The need to play safe dictated the choices and actions of the majority of women academics. However, even playing safe does not guarantee success for the academic women. Other conservative women like Wanja and Akinyi adopted conformity and, as shown in the second half of chapter five, vehemently argue that there is no gender discrimination in the universities, that the university is fair and meritocratic and that those
who work hard get promoted. These women more often than not used disengagement, self-isolation, withdrawal and impression management strategies in order to achieve their personal goals. However, they found themselves in a no-win situation. Although it is clear that most of their decisions were based on prudence, when they chose for example, to advance their personal careers or secure their marriages by not rocking the boat, they not only failed to use their education and status to challenge patriarchy, they unwittingly helped support and reproduce patriarchy. Marriage and promotions alone cannot lead to individual women's empowerment. Education and money do not correspond to power, and women's problems go way beyond the educational system and extend to all institutions in the society.

It is argued and concluded that the strategies women choose to resolve their education, career, family or marriage dilemmas breed further contradictions and dilemmas and, as such, the dilemmas are unresolvable. For example, the women who decide to keep away from economically overdemanding relatives find themselves isolated from kinship and lineage social support. They end up being socially isolated and painfully trying to establish support from an individual man in the marriage union. The dilemmas, contradictions and tensions the academic women face cannot be easily resolved so long as the conflicting traditional and modern expectations continue to govern the academic women's lives. In spite of the gains women have made in education and in the labour force, these gains get detoured by the fact that the sexual division of labour in the home and practices and policies in the workplace do not change to accommodate women's interests. The old norms demand that women must be passive while the new norms demand that women must not only be passive but that they must also be well educated and employed in well paying jobs in order to provide that extra salary to maintain middle class status, with a warning that "they must always remember that they are still women after all" (Pierson, 1986).
Analysis of the academic women's lives clearly reveals that they are not only strategic but are also powerful resistors and survivors, resilient and optimistic that change is possible. Their personal stories show that even when women may appear to be supporting the dominant order, some of them are only being prudent. At base it is the personal circumstances of each woman which determine her bargaining position. As prudent resistors and survivors, with a great degree of sophistication, creativity and resourcefulness, some of the women like Mwende and Santalo skilfully delegitimize male authority and achieve control over themselves by adopting and utilizing the negative labels assigned them.

Some of the single, divorced and the outspoken young and married academic women were stigmatized and labelled social deviants, misfits and trouble makers. In a very powerful way, instead of allowing the negative labels to debilitate them, these women appropriated the role of secondary deviants and celebrated their deviancy status in an attempt to force the society to give them a fresh look. They defined themselves as social deviants, referred to each other as social misfits, joked about their stigmatized status and with great humour and irony tried to renegotiate their status. In chapter ten, for example, Santalo claims that her degree is her husband and works hard towards her socio-economic and personal fulfilment. These women have found that they cannot realize their potential by simply fulfilling the stereotyped societal gender script. A majority of the older women, though appearing conservative, were also involved in their own personal strategic acts of resistance such as maintaining silence, refusing to be coopted, disengaging, withdrawing, exiting and appearing to conform, as data throughout the thesis and in particular in chapter ten demonstrate.

All these individual personal struggles and the little gains that women make at very personal levels hold the promise for change. What, however, needs to be done is a systematic move to sensitize and politicize the academic women to harness their energies together in order
not only to claim their own emancipation as elite women but also to lobby for issues affecting grassroots women. Unless the general status of Kenyan women is improved, the few elite women will continue to suffer contradictions and dilemmas because their elite status does not in any meaningful way supersede their gender.

Socio-cultural constraint is another theme in this study. Culturally, a married woman has no autonomy to travel to learned conferences, seminars or workshops where important information necessary for career advancement is being released. As mothers and wives they are expected to be home before their spouses arrive and as such they are excluded from male academic networking, some of which is held in the evening and in social places that "decent" career women are not expected to frequent. Due to these constraints, women's academic production remains low in comparison to their male counterparts. As their publications remain fewer, their promotional chances remain limited. In spite of all the institutional and social barriers that academic women encounter daily it is remarkable that so may held high career aspirations and that their goal was to achieve the top rank of a full university professor.

Strong cultural stereotypes also forced women to defer, postpone, or completely abandon their career development in favour of their spouses. A woman is not expected to outshine her spouse and this expectation forces some women to set limits for the sake of marital peace.

The sexual division in the spending of the family finances also deeply undermines the position of the academic women. Like the indigenous society where the women provided almost all the food for their families, most of the women academics are expected to feed the family single handedly even when the prices of basic needs are skyrocketing and their salaries are stagnating. Their spouses are expected to invest their finances in fixed items like cars, land, or a house, items which can be used later for subordinating women. More often than not this sexual division of financial spending ends up privileging the role of the man in the home and reducing the role of a
woman to that of a helpmate in the marriage union. Also the academic woman is expected to pay the salary of the housegirl because domestic responsibilities are assumed to be solely hers. The availability of domestic help means that the entrance of women into waged employment has not challenged the men’s position in the home. Moreover, this has also resulted in women in waged employment pushing their domestic responsibilities onto underprivileged women. The availability of housegirls has not only legitimized a sexual division of domestic labour and the subordination of women but serves to create and maintain class division among women as implied in chapter eight.

The conclusion drawn from all the analysis is that the problems experienced by academic women are systemic. They are rooted in the culture, politics, education and in the social and economic arrangements of the society. These women’s higher education and subsequent access to elite status does not change the fact that they are women and, therefore, subordinate to men, particularly those in their daily lives.

Academic women’s lives were also characterized by a culture of fear. Fear dictated the choices the women made or did not make. Throughout the thesis the women spoke of fear of losing their jobs, fear of jeopardizing their promotional chances, fear of being identified as anti-men and being further marginalized or singled out for blame, fear of social isolation, fear of jeopardizing their marriages, fear of becoming too overeducated for the marriage market, and fear of alienating the grassroots women from the men they depended on. This fear dominated the lives of academic women so much that few were willing to speak out or to collectivize their voices in order to fight their own oppression. Because of fear the academic women were hesitant to establish linkages and alliances with grassroots women in order to fight for the overall emancipation of Kenyan women.
This fear was so real that even the most outspoken academic women were hesitant to complain when confronted by discriminating acts such as exclusion from academic networks, denial of promotions, sexual harassment or the questioning of their credibility by either their male colleagues or male students. This fear also prevented them from forming alliances and linkages in the university even when they knew very well that collectivizing their voices might lead to their increased empowerment. Their fear is based on either their personal experiences or observation of their female or male colleagues who dared to swim against the current and were consequently detained without trial, dismissed from their jobs, denied promotions or had their personal lives disrupted.

This culture of fear exacerbates divisions not only between men and women but also among women in the same social class. Fear also separates academic women from grassroots women. There exists no women’s constituency in the university and the women do not see enough issues to bring themselves together. In an attempt to keep out of trouble either with the university administrators or their own spouses, most of the women preferred not to join any women’s groups or associations. Remarkably, the majority of the academic women in this study preferred male bonding to female bonding for the safety it provided. They believed that men and women should work together to bring about egalitarian gender relations. They also feared that if they failed to include men in their struggle this might lead to their being marginalized, sidelined, or brutally crushed. Such action might also lead to gender polarization in the university and in the wider society and women would be the likely losers. The academic women expressed fear that they are in the minority and are concentrated in junior positions and as such are vulnerable.

Divisions among the women and the preservation of class privilege is another recurrent theme. Despite the fact that the women complain openly or secretly about their subordination and the unequal treatment of equals, they seem not to support one another. The nature of their formal
education and the whole academic culture promote divisions among women, not unity. In the university, women are expected to compete for promotions and awards and this expectation divides them particularly because women see their female colleagues as their competitors. Evidence in this thesis shows that academic women were more threatened by the promotion of a female colleague than a male colleague. The women were unsupportive of each other. In fact, the majority of the women in this study preferred to work under a male dean. Few of the academic women in this study were willing to listen to and support each other. It appears that the task of dealing with the male world makes divisions between women more visible than what unites them. As Smith (1987, p.258) has argued, it has not been easy for academic women to take what women have to say as authoritative, nor is it easy for women to find their own voices convincing. The success of a female colleague, rather than becoming a source of strength for other women academics, becomes the dividing line.

This study shows that academic women are divided on class lines. They establish solidarity not with other academic women, but with women outside the university who shared the same social class. These women meet to discuss how to better their families, which schools their children should attend and to support each other socially, emotionally and economically in order to project the socially expected class image. Their solidarity to a great extent, however prudent, does not challenge the man’s dominant role in the family. By not challenging male privilege, the women hoped to preserve their class interests.

Solidarity between the academic and grassroots women is tenuous. Factors such as intellectual, social and economic differences between the academic women and the grassroots make it difficult to work together. More often than not, academic women’s interests are security in marriage and better terms of service, while for the vast majority of the grassroots women the basic priority is survival. It is argued therefore that the incorporation of Kenyan society into the
overdeveloped capitalistic economic system of the west leads to more divisions among women.

Right from the inception of western formal education by the colonialists and missionaries, the gap between elite women and grassroots women was set in place by allowing a few into the educational system and constructing them as "civilized" - asomi or wastaarabu [readers], and excluding the majority and stigmatizing them as illiterates or "uncivilized" - washenzi non-asomi [illiterates]. The post-colonial male nationalist government has not in any way other than in symbolic terms tried to bridge this gap in education and wealth differentials.

While on the surface the women exhibited a semblance of unity and in fact sporadic incidences of collective action were reported, underneath the surface these women were divided on the basis of class, marital status, ethnicity, and age as well as rank at the university.

To summarize, it is argued and concluded that although formal education and high status jobs are key to women's struggle for empowerment, education and employment must be accompanied by other socio-economic and indeed structural changes if education is to benefit women. Kenyan education continues to be embedded in the values of western Victorian capitalistic patriarchy, and as a result, continues to train women for subordination. At the university they experience problems with their career advancement because of a host of barriers, such as the stereotyped expectation that a woman's primary role is as a wife and mother. They also experience contradictions and dilemmas as they try to reconcile their individual personal script and the societally prescribed one.

There also exists a very thin link among the academic women themselves as well as between them and the grassroots women. However, the academic women are not passive victims. As conscious and prudent actors they adopt various strategies in an attempt to change their social realities. However, the strategies they adopt seem to lead to further dilemmas and in some cases their actions unwittingly support patriarchy. Academic women face a challenge to work across
differences and aim at celebrating their strengths, rooted in the diversity of their experience. Working together women will have a louder voice as well as the potential for claiming their liberation.

A REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT

While the findings in this study are not meant for precise generalization to the whole academic women's community nor to the rest of Kenyan women, they are an important indicator of broad patterns of experiences of women in similar positions.

The findings make an important contribution to the literature by systematically revealing that the national government's commitment to the integration of women into the modernization process (formal education and waged employment) without any genuine desire to change the sexual division of labour at home or indeed readdress the strong patriarchal culture in Kenyan society are only symbolic politics. As the experiences of these twenty-four academic women show, their higher education and entrance into academic employment has led to enormous social and personal pain. These women's academic and career success more often than not alienates and isolates the women not only from their unschooled sisters in the rural areas but also from their own close family members. They experience great social and economic pressure because they are expected to uplift their underprivileged family members. Failure to meet these social and family obligations can lead to an individual being ostracised by and isolated from her kinship group and cut off from her lineage. Contemporary Kenyan society lacks a script for women to succeed as women and this has led to the stigmatization of achieving women. The findings raise important theoretical and methodological issues. Repeatedly, the academic women raised the question whether higher education is really a good thing for women. After analyzing their dilemmas, they summed the situation thus: "You are damned if you have it and you are damned if you don't."
The question which I think needs to be further investigated is whether there is any way formal education can function differently for academic women. What is to be done to minimize or resolve the tensions, anxieties, ambiguities, paradoxes, contradictions and dilemmas characterizing the daily lives of these women?

It is clear from the findings that part of the problem lies in the resilience of patriarchy. In Kenya, patriarchy has taken many forms. For example, when some of the academic women compared their life experiences with those of their grandmothers or illiterate sisters, they felt that the latter, although unsalaried, were more free, controlled more power and different standards were used to judge them. Educated women are expected to behave in certain constraining ways simply because they are modernized. Whereas an unschooled woman could fight back successfully and win, an educated women would be accused of being aggressive and resorting to underclass behaviour. Ironically, the same women were being constantly asked by their spouses to leave or hang their degrees in their office before they arrived home. Many women spoke of "leaving" or "removing their degrees" temporarily in order to fight back. Whereas in pre-colonial Kenya, indigenous patriarchy allowed women to succeed in their own right and indeed independent, wealthy hardworking women occupied high status in society, during the colonial era, indigenous patriarchy and British Victorian patriarchs colluded to exclude women from education, government, and waged labour. Women were relegated to the subsistence economy and to the private sphere, although this was inconsistent with African social and economic realities. Presently, in the name of modernizing Third World countries and for the sake of pleasing the donor agencies, legitimizing political powers and meeting the needs of a dependent capitalistic labour market as well as family's need for a second salary, women are being allowed into higher education and careers but with the expectation that they will remain conventional women. This means that women are being educated because it is functional for society. The aim is not to
change or challenge the status quo. There is a need to reexamine the quality of education with an attempt to integrate the perspectives of women. There is a great need to resocialize our teachers as well as the general society. The experiences of the academic women in their subordinate role in Kenyan universities is a direct reflection of the dominant gender ideology in Kenyan society.

Another important theoretical question raised in this study is: since Kenyan society values marriage, children, the family and careers and in fact most of the women confessed making many social and personal sacrifices for the sake of their children, how are the work and family sectors to be balanced? Should university promotion criteria and work policies be changed to account for the work women perform at home? Should women indicate the number of children and domestic duties in their curriculum vitae? Just how can academic men claim it is a fair game when the promotion criteria are stacked in their favour? These and many other intriguing questions were raised.

Methodologically, I think this research process, though very time consuming, was an eye opener and an empowering process for both the research subjects and for me personally. Many times the academic women indicated that they had never before thought about the issues we were discussing in quite the same way. In spite of my intensive and extensive literature search, I did not find any research on African academic women and as such it was at times difficult because I did not have any literature to draw upon. At times, the research process was overwhelming, particularly when it touched on the very private pains of the academic women. There were also times I felt guilty and conflicted by the kind of revelations made to me. However, after sharing my own personal experiences with the academic women we laughed and joked at our realization that these problems are not unique and affect almost all women. We agreed that women need to do something to change their situation. I was particularly touched by their courage and generosity.
Reflecting on the whole research process, I can say that despite some pitfalls, it was a very rewarding experience. The interviews and the participant observations worked very well. I was able to interview the women at length and some were willing to give a great deal of their time to my research because they believed it was very important.

Although the women listened to their tape recorded interviews and edited what they did not like and a few read their transcripts and gave me feedback, it was difficult for me to revisit the research subjects because of the physical distance. Many issues arose during the data analysis and remain unresolved to date. One intriguing and unresolved issue is that the academic women’s views were very divergent in relation to their experiences in the university. The women were clearly divided into two camps, the majority maintaining that gender discrimination exists in Kenyan universities while about one third argued that no gender discrimination exists in the universities. I began to wonder how women with the same amount of education, working in the same institution, could speak as if they lived on two different planets. What is known in the literature cannot adequately explain why these women’s views were so divergent. In particular, rejection of gender as a factor in their lives cut across class, age, ethnicity and marital status. I hope to investigate this gap in knowledge as a follow-up of my thesis.

Other issues arising from this thesis which merit further research relate to modernized African culture. Throughout the interviews the women took pains to differentiate African indigenous culture from African culture and customs as socially constructed and reinstituted by the British colonialists, which led to the erosion of women’s power. The general feeling was that in indigenous African society women were not always subordinate to men. Presently, women face problems when they want to adopt indigenous traditions which could empower them. There is a need for systematic investigation to establish the disjuncture between indigenous African culture which allowed for women’s empowerment and the modern corrupted form of African culture.
which is so often cited to ensure women's subordination and that of African peoples in general. Culture has been used to a large extent as a stop gap. When we say "something is cultural" or "by the "African custom", it becomes very difficult to tell what this means. More often than not "traditional customs" or "modernity" are invoked interchangeably for the benefit of men. In my view, the concept African custom needs to be deconstructed and altogether redefined. Reflecting deeply on the women's voices, the whole thesis process as well as my experiences as an African woman - western educated and an academic - I arrive at the conclusion that there is need for African women to investigate their history with the hope of reclaiming some of their indigenous strengths such as the culture of female bonding, in order to engage in a sustained struggle against all forms of oppression.

The findings of this study imply that women cannot make meaningful gains through education and careers only. What need to be questioned are the conditions under which women get educated. The curriculum and levels of education that women get access to need to be seriously interrogated. I think the important question we need to ask is: why does a society educate its women? Are women educated so that they can question? Or are they educated to serve an economic function? The data in this study show that women can be educated up to the university level, but remain uneducated about important issues affecting them. There is a need to include gender as a category of analysis in the education system as one step towards women's empowerment.

In my view, there is dire need for more specific in-depth studies like this one in order to present a clear picture of the experiences of the African women. There is an even greater need for studies which are culturally rooted, which in turn will be used to construct a culturally and historically informed theoretical framework necessary for the study of the experiences of African women. One of the difficulties experienced in this present study was not only lack of relevant
data to draw upon but also lack of a theory, feminist or otherwise, to draw on that specifically captured the historical and cultural milieu of the African women.

For the future, I hope this present study will provoke debates and inspire further research as well as action. I trust that these findings will be useful to Kenyan academic women, policy makers, and university administrators. Since the Kenyan women academics in this study were strong in their views that women and men should work together to bring about gender changes, and were not willing to polarize the Kenyan university, nor Kenyan society in general, it would be useful in the future to investigate what the perspectives of academic men are. Perspectives from both sexes will not only be important for comparative purposes but for examining and analyzing in which specific areas women and men can work together and in which areas women must work alone in an attempt to bring about a more just, humane, and indeed egalitarian society.
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APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear

I am an academic woman at Kenyatta University currently pursuing doctoral studies in Toronto, Canada at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). I am interested in understanding the experiences of academic women. In particular, how their higher education and careers enhance their social and economic lives. I want to understand what problems if any they experience the university and at home as well as in the general society on account of their being women and being in possession of higher education. I also want to understand how academic women are using their higher education and careers not only to better their lives but to establish linkages, alliances, and solidarities among themselves as well as with the grassroots women for collective action. I am doing this work for my doctoral thesis.

I am therefore, writing to ask for your participation in this study. With your permission, I would like to tape the interviews as well as to accompany you in a number of places namely in the formal setting of the university, at your home or any social occasion. The purpose is to document for example an academic woman’s use of time.

The interview session would take approximately two hours and will be conducted at a place and time convenient to you. I intend to be in the country for about seven months. The information you give me will be solely used for the purpose of my research and will be treated in strict confidence. The tapes from this interviews will be transcribed and your identity will be protected by use of pseudonyms throughout the process. Your name will not be given to any other person in connection with the interview material. If I quote any information obtained from you in my thesis or in any papers or publication resulting from my study, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified.

I believe this study is very important as a means of enabling academic women identify problems they encounter on account of their being women both at home and in the work place. The findings of this study will help in highlighting these problems and might influence change in favour of women.

Your participation in this study is nevertheless, voluntary and you can refuse to respond to may particular item or ask for the tape recorder not to be used or withdraw from the study at any particular time. I would however, greatly appreciate your participation. If you have any questions I can be reached at:

Kenyatta University
Educational Foundations Department
P. O. Box 43844
Nairobi

or at home → P.O. Box 294
Kalimoni Juja
Tel: 21639, Thika
CONSENT FORM

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the consent form provided.

I, ................................ have accepted to participate in Margaret Njoki Kamau's study as described to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that my identity will remain anonymous at all times.

Signed:......................................

Name:........................................

Date:.........................................
APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW GUIDE

SELF INTRODUCTION

My name is Margaret Njoki Kamau. I am a lecturer at Kenyatta University in the Department of Educational Foundations. Currently I am on study leave pursuing a doctoral programme at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto, Canada. I am particularly fascinated by issues affecting academic women.

A. BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. (a) What department are you in?
   (b) For how long have you been here?
   (c) What is it like working here?

2. (a) Tell me something about your schooling when you were younger.
   (b) Did you ever think you might become a university lecturer in those days?
   (c) When did you decide to go on to the university?
      (i) What did you study?
      (ii) Why did you pursue these subjects?

B. EDUCATION/EMPOWERMENT

1. (a) When you were a student, what were your educational experiences like?
   (i) Do you think your school experiences has had any impact on your life today?
   (ii) What was the nature of the educational set up etc.

   (b) Can you tell me about some of your successes during your student life?
(i) What were some of the failures?

(ii) If you were to go back to school life, what are some of the things you would do differently?

2. (a) What degrees and other qualifications do you have?

(b) Now that you are a highly educated woman, what do you think enabled you to succeed this far?

3. What does your formal education mean to you?

4. (a) What are some of the advantages of being a highly formally educated woman in our society?

(b) What are some of the disadvantages?

(c) Is there any way in which formal education may harm a woman?

5. Now that you are highly educated and in a responsible position in the university, what vision do you have for the education of women and girls in this university?

C. CAREER EXPERIENCE

1. Tell me about the jobs you had before you came here.

2. How did it come about that you became a university lecturer?

   (a) When did you come here?

   (b) What was your title/status when you came new?

   (c) Why did you choose a university lecturing career?

3. (a) What courses do you teach?

   (b) What is your area of specialization?

   (c) At what levels do you teach?

   (i) Diploma
4. (a) How many hours per week do you teach?
(b) Are you happy with the courses you teach or not?
(c) Have you encountered any problems or obstacles in your job?
(d) What are the advantages of your job?

5. (a) What other duties are you involved in the university other than teaching?

6. What is your relationship like with the:
(a) Dean of Faculty?
(b) Chair of your department?
(c) Other academic women?

7. Are you involved in any research at the present time?
   Yes [   ]  No [   ]

8. If no, what about in the past?

D. ACHIEVEMENTS
1. (a) Can you tell me what you enjoy most in your working here?
   (b) Can you tell me about some of the accomplishments you have made at this university?
   (i) If no accomplishments, why?

2. (a) What are your personal goals in this career?
   (b) What are your strategies towards these goals?
E. MECHANISMS USED TO KEEP WOMEN DOWN

1. Can you describe for me what are some of the social expectations (ethos/culture) of your department?

2. How often do you get a chance to:
   (i) Publish?
   (ii) What about attending conferences?

3. What kind of work gets rewarded in this university?

4. What is the position of women like in this university. What have they accomplished?

5. (a) In your professional life in this university are there any barriers/obstacles to women's advancement in their career?
   (b) What kind of provisions are there to help women academics?

F. HIRING, PROMOTION AND FIRING

1. Can you please tell me how you got hired here?

2. Can you tell me what the requirements for promotion in this university are?

3. Do women face any disadvantages in these procedures?

4. Can you tell me about firing procedures in this university?

5. Are there any burning issues in the hiring, promotion and firing of academic women?

G. OTHER POSITIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

1. What other positions/responsibilities do you occupy/perform within this university?
   (i) Dean of Faculty
   (ii) Chair of Department
   (iii) University Senate Council
(iv) Programme Coordinator
(v) Supervision of thesis
(vi) Clubs
(vii) Committees
(viii) Other

2. Do you experience any problems executing your duties in these positions/responsibilities?

3. How are your recommendations effected by the university administration?

4. (a) Are women usually nominate into the university council or not?

(b) What issues if any are these women mandated to pursue?

   (i) issues affecting academic women;

   (ii) girls’ educational programmes

   (iii) needs

   (iv) safety

   (v) other

H. ALLIANCES/LINKAGES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

1. Can you tell me about the nature of female solidarity in this university?

2. What does this female solidarity mean to you?

3. Are you involved in any of the women’s networks and social support groups in the university?

4. What issues, if any, do academic women as a group lobby for in this university?

5. What kind of changes would you like to see in this university to cater for the interests of women?

6. Do you think women should work together to bring about these changes?
7. Can you perceive any barriers/handicap to women’s working together to bring about this social change?

I. ALLIANCES/LINKAGES OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY

1. Do you get any invitations as a resource person:
   (i) in issues affecting educational change?
   (ii) to women’s groups’ meeting?
   (iii) to schools to talk to students?
   (iv) to commissions and committees?
   (v) other

2. Do you know of any existing alliances/linkages/networks between academic women and other women in the society?
   (i) formally educated
   (ii) illiterate women

3. (a) Do you belong to any of the women’s associations?
    (b) What position if any do you occupy in these association?

4. If the networks exist,
   (a) what is the purpose of this network?
   (b) what are:
      (i) the strengths
      (ii) the weaknesses of such a network?
   (c) What role do academic women play in these networks?
   (d) What kind of issues are addressed in these networks? If the network do not exist,
(i) Do you think it is necessary for academic women and non academic women to work together?

(ii) What do you think would be:

(i) the advantages

(ii) the disadvantages of this network?

(iii) Do you think academic women should offer any leadership role in women’s upliftment?

(iv) What do you perceive as some of the barriers to academic women’s networking for this change?

5. How best do you think women can build or strengthen:

(a) academic alliances and networks?

(b) social and political alliances:

   (i) within the university;

   (ii) outside the university?

6. In your view, what do you think:

   (i) enhances academic women’s participation in the wider society?

   (ii) discourages their effective participation?

7. What is your vision of women’s participation in the Kenyan society?

K. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY/ROLE CONFLICT

1. Can you please tell me about yourself:

   (i) married;

   (ii) single;

   (iii) divorced;
2. Do you have any children? How old are they?
   (i) number of children;
   (ii) age
   (iii) Do you mind if I ask you what your age is?

3. How do you manage your academic life as well as your family responsibilities?

4. What problems if any do you experience in your role as an academic women and as:
   (i) a mother;
   (ii) a wife and mother.

5. (a) How does your family contribute towards the strengthening of your career?
    (b) To what extent does your family jeopardize your career development?

L. CONCLUSION

1. Is there anything else you would like to say about:
   (i) working here;
   (ii) being a mother as well as an academic women;
   (iii) leisure time;
   (iv) family responsibilities;
   (v) networking;
   (vi) promotions, etc.?
   (vii) anything else?
APPENDIX 3

ACADEMIC STAFF BY DESIGNATION AND GENDER IN THE FIVE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES, MAY 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>1,167</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Lecturer</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Fellow</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
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<td>69.8</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>450</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,356</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Collected by Author from the University Records of 1993.

* The five universities are Moi University, Kenyatta University, JKUCAT University, Egerton University and Nairobi University.

Total Faculty = 2,356**

Women = 450 = 19 per cent

Women comprise 19 per cent of the academic staff. However, the majority of them 387 (86 percent) were concentrated in lower ranks of lecturer and below.

** This figure does not represent Maseno and Laikipia Campuses as well two departments in Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology (JUKCAT) - sensitive information. Missing figures are small and therefore do not change the results significantly.
### APPENDIX 4

ACADEMIC STAFF BY FACULTY AND GENDER AT NAIROBI UNIVERSITY, MAY 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Engineering</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Architecture, Design and Development</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Medicine</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Social Sciences</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Extension Studies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Science</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Law</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Agriculture</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Commerce</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>1,030</td>
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</table>

Source: Computed by the author from the university records of 1993.
## APPENDIX 5

**ACADEMIC STAFF BY DESIGNATION AND GENDER AT MOI UNIVERSITY, MAY 1993**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
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<td>92.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>83.3</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>73.8</td>
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<td>26.2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Fellow</td>
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<td>86.4</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>28</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>62.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>412</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>493</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Computed by the author from university records of 1993.*

*This figure does not include seven (7) visiting professors who were all male.*
APPENDIX 6

ACADEMIC STAFF BY DESIGNATION AND GENDER AT KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, MAY 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Professor</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Lecturer</td>
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<td>71.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial Fellow</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61.3</td>
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<td>38.7</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant/</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>386</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>563</td>
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</table>

Source: Collected by the author in 1993.

Female academics = 31.4 per cent

Male academics = 68.6 per cent
### APPENDIX 7

ACADEMIC STAFF BY DESIGNATION AND GENDER AT JKUCAT, FEBRUARY 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Lecturer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>146</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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Source: Computed by the author from university records of 1993.

* This figure excludes Department of Agricultural Engineering. It was impossible to get information from this department.
## ACADEMIC STAFF BY DESIGNATION AND GENDER AT EGERTON UNIVERSITY, FEBRUARY 1993

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
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<td>80.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>90.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Lecturer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant/</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>143</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This total does not include Maseno and Laikipia Campuses.

**Source:** Compiled by the author from the university records of 1993.