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Sexism, Sexual Violence, Sexuality, and the Schooling of Girls in Africa: A Case Study from Lusaka Province, Zambia

Cynthia Grant Bowman
Cornell Law School, cgb28@cornell.edu

Elizabeth Brundige
Cornell Law School

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**SEXISM, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, SEXUALITY, AND
THE SCHOOLING OF GIRLS IN AFRICA: A CASE
STUDY FROM LUSAKA PROVINCE, ZAMBIA**

Cynthia Grant Bowman* and Elizabeth Brundige**

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*Dorothea S. Clarke Professor of Law, Cornell Law School.

**Executive Director of the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice and Visiting Assistant Clinical Professor of Law, Cornell Law School.

While the education of girls is central to development in Africa, persisting obstacles have prevented the full implementation of this goal. African countries have made significant progress in expanding girls' participation in schooling, yet many girls remain unable to access and benefit from a quality education on an equal basis with boys. This study, involving interviews of 105 schoolgirls in and around Lusaka, Zambia in May 2012, describes and discusses the following obstacles: (1) discriminatory treatment that reflects the persistence of sexist ideas about the position and capabilities of girls; (2) sexual abuse of schoolgirls, including constant harassment by boy pupils and requests for sex by male teachers; and (3) issues of sexuality involving teen pregnancy and societal attitudes toward sex. After presenting these findings and situating them in the social and economic context of modern-day Zambia, the article sets forth a variety of recommendations for change, including those of the girls interviewed, approaches attempted by the Zambian government, and others emerging from this study.

INTRODUCTION

Since at least 1990, international organizations have identified the education of girls as a key indicator of economic development.¹ This relationship can be understood in at least two ways. First, the elimination of illiteracy and other indicia of increased life skills count among the “capabilities” enumerated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum as the very definition of development itself.² In this sense, education has come to be defined as a basic human right.³ Second, the education of girls has been seen as causally related to the process of economic development. Educated

1. In 1990, delegates from 155 countries and representatives from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank, met in Thailand and affirmed the importance of the education of girls to a country's economic and social development. See U.N. Educ., Scientific & Cultural Org., *The World Declaration of Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs* (Mar. 9, 1990), available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000975/097552e.pdf>. See also *Girls' Education*, World Bank, <http://go.worldbank.org/1L4BH3TG20> (last visited Oct. 13, 2013).

2. See, e.g., Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (2000); Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities passim* (1985).

3. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights art. 13, Dec. 16, 1966, S. TREATY DOC. No. 95-119, (1967). See *Convention on the Rights of the Child* art. 28–29, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3; *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* art. 10, Dec. 18, 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13 (entered into force Sept. 3, 1981); *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), May 22, 1962, 429 U.N.T.S. 93; *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, at 71, U.N. Doc. A/810 (Dec. 10, 1948).

girls may themselves contribute to the life of the nation and the economy by expanding the pool of educated and skilled workers. Girlchild education also indirectly attacks a variety of obstacles to economic development in developing societies, such as overpopulation and health problems. Generally, educated girls marry later and have fewer children.⁴ Moreover, educated women can provide better health care and education to their families.⁵

Cognizant of the benefits of education, and long deprived of it by colonial powers, newly independent African nations embraced universal education as one of their first goals. However, their understanding of the importance of educating girls came somewhat later.⁶ Along the way, nations encountered problems resulting from economic decline, increased debt, and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed as a condition of international credit and/or loan forgiveness, resulting in the imposition of user fees for education previously provided free of charge.⁷ More recently, African countries have made significant progress in expanding access to education and narrowing gender gaps in schooling that had once

4. A Zambian woman's increased level of education correlates with a higher median age of first marriage and a lower total fertility rate. According to a 2007 survey by the Zambian Ministry of Health, for women ages 25–49, the median age at marriage is 17.3 years for women with no education, 17.5 for women with a primary education, 19.9 for women with a secondary education, and 24.4 for women with more than a secondary education. CENT. STATISTICAL OFFICE ET AL, ZAMBIA DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY § 6.4, at 95 (2007), available at <http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR211/FR211%5B%20revised-05-12-2009%5D.pdf>. Women's total fertility rate declines as educational attainment rises, with 8.2 births per woman for women with no education, 7.1 for women with a primary education, 4.2 for women with a secondary education, and 2.4 for those with more than a secondary education. *Id.* § 4.3, at 57.

5. See, e.g., Sonya Anderson, *The Pedagogy of Difference: Understanding Teachers' Beliefs and Practice of Gender Equity in Benin*, in 10 GENDER, EQUALITY AND EDUCATION FROM INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES 39 (David Baker & Alexander W. Wiseman eds., 2009), and sources cited therein.

6. See, e.g., MUTINDI MUMBUA KILUVA-NDUNDA, WOMEN'S AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WOMEN OF KILOME, KENYA 80–81 (2001) (describing the various policy reports in Kenya from 1964 to 1991 and noting their attention or inattention to gender issues).

7. In the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank began imposing economic policies known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) upon Zambia and other developing countries as a condition of the provision of loans. SAPs generally include measures to liberalize the market and privatize state-run industries, and have resulted in decreased government spending on social services, including education. See BRENDAN CARMODY, THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA 56–58 (2004); Monisha Bajaj, *Intergenerational Perspectives on Education and Employment in the Zambian Copperbelt*, 54 COMP. EDUC. REV. 175, 180–81 (2010) [hereinafter Bajaj, *Intergenerational Perspectives*]. The enrollment declines that followed the imposition of user fees were not surprising in countries where the majority of people were living at subsistence level or below. See *infra* text accompanying note 13.

discriminated against girls.⁸ Yet, although their school enrollment and retention rates have significantly improved, African girls seeking an education face important obstacles not shared by their male peers.

This article explores three primary obstacles identified during interviews with 105 schoolgirls undertaken in May 2012 in the Lusaka province of Zambia: the persistence of sex discriminatory attitudes, sexual violence directed at girl students, and problems posed by sexuality in general. Our goal is not only to give a lively sense of these obstacles but also to discuss what legal or policy changes might address them. Part I describes the context in which these issues are encountered, and Part II explains the methodology of our empirical study. In Part III, we discuss persistent obstacles described by the girls in their responses to our interview questions: (1) discriminatory treatment of girls within and outside the classroom; (2) sexual violence and the fear of sexual violence; and (3) issues of sexuality involving pregnancy and attitudes toward sex. The final section, Part IV, deals with possible remedies, including both those suggested by the girls interviewed and others implicated by this discussion.

I. Zambia: The Context

Zambia's economic welfare has long been tied to the fortunes of the market for copper, which is mined in the northern Copperbelt region. At independence in 1964, Zambia was relatively prosperous, but a decline in the price of copper in the 1970s and 1980s had a disastrous effect on the economy.⁹ Due to the decline in the price of copper, substantial financial mismanagement, and corruption by early governments,¹⁰ Zambia became one of the poorer nations in Africa by 1998.¹¹ After the elections of 1991,

8. See generally LOVENESS JAMBAYA NYAKUJARAH AND COLLEEN LOWE MORNA, SADC GENDER PROTOCOL 2012 BAROMETER 95, 100, 103 (2012) (noting that education has generally been "a success story for gender equality" in southern Africa in terms of improvements in school enrollment and retention, but that many challenges remain to ensuring the quality of girls' education, including gender biases and gender-based violence in schools); Monica J. Grant & Jere R. Behrman, *Gender Gaps in Educational Attainment in Less Developed Countries*, 36 POPULATION & DEV. REV. 71 (2010) (discussing the narrowing of the gender gap in educational attainment in developing countries, including those in Africa).

9. Morris Szeftel, "Eat With Us": *Managing Corruption and Patronage Under Zambia's Three Republics, 1964-99*, 18 J. CONTEMP. AFR. STUD. 207, 208 (2000).

10. *Id.* at 215-16 (2000). See also Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa, *Explaining Zambia's Elusive Growth: Credibility Gap, External Shocks or Reluctant Donors?*, in FROM CRISIS TO GROWTH IN AFRICA? (Mats Lundahl ed., 2001) (identifying political failures as responsible for Zambia's poor economic performance throughout the 1980s and 1990s).

11. In 1998, Zambia's GDP per capita was \$317, the 19th lowest of 42 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF), *Report for Selected Countries and Subjects*, WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK DATABASE (Apr. 2012), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01/weodata/index.aspx>.

the new government faced enormous debt and demands from international lenders for neoliberal reforms, in addition to the structural adjustment policies accepted in the mid-1980s. Parastatal industries were privatized, public sector employment was cut substantially, and services previously provided to the population were eliminated or greatly diminished. Government ministers took advantage of these policies and the ensuing privatization to enrich themselves and their families.¹²

The impact of economic decline on the educational system was severe. In 1985, cost-sharing was introduced into both primary and secondary education, resulting in a 20% decline in the number of children completing grades one through seven.¹³ User fees were abolished for grades one through seven in 2002¹⁴ and for grades eight and nine by the new Education Act adopted in 2011.¹⁵ However, substantial indirect costs remain for uniforms, shoes, books, supplies, and transportation.¹⁶

The Zambian educational system consists of nine grades of “basic” schooling, the first seven of which are equivalent to primary education, followed by high school, which includes grades ten through twelve.¹⁷ At each of three stages—grades seven, nine, and twelve—a competitive examination determines whether a student will progress to the next level.¹⁸ Even if a student passes the exam, success does not necessarily guarantee a spot will be available at the high school or university level, and there is corruption in the assignment of spots.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the number of Zambian children to be educated has increased rapidly from 2,666,177

12. Szeftel, *supra* note 9, at 216–21.

13. Bajaj, *Intergenerational Perspectives*, *supra* note 7, at 181.

14. CARMODY, *supra* note 7, at 58.

15. Education Act No. 23 § 119(2) (2011) (Zam.). A number of the girls in grades eight and nine who were interviewed for this study indicated that this provision had not yet been implemented at their schools and that school fees remained a significant barrier to education.

16. See CHRIS PETRAUSKIS & SHEILA NKUNIKA, HOW FREE IS FREE EDUCATION? THE COST OF EDUCATION IN LUSAKA, JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION 2–4 (2006), available at http://www.jctr.org.zm/index.php?option=com_joomdoc&task=doc_download&gid=9&Itemid=76. Based on a recent survey, these indirect costs in the Lusaka region amount to about 7% of a household’s average annual income for each student in primary school. *Id.* at 4.

17. WORLD BANK, 1 ZAMBIA EDUCATION SECTOR PUBLIC EXPENDITURE REVIEW, 2–3 (2006), available at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2006/07/26/000012009_20060726123654/Rendered/PDF/365521ZM0rev0pdf.pdf. The educational system is in transition, moving away from a system of seven years of primary school and five years of secondary school. Because the transition to nine years of primary and three years of secondary education is incomplete, grades eight and nine are taught either in basic or high school.

18. FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALISTS IN ZAMBIA (FAWEZA), NATIONAL SCORE CARD ON ZAMBIA’S PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION 19 (Nov. 2010) [hereinafter “FAWEZA”].

19. Bajaj, *Intergenerational Perspectives*, *supra* note 7, at 189.

enrolled in grades one through twelve in 2004, to 3,617,160 in 2009.²⁰ This rapid expansion reflects the abolition of user fees at the primary level as well as the establishment of community schools, which are run and partly supported by local communities. Community schools have increased access to education, but the quality of the education they provide is often inadequate.²¹

Meanwhile, the gender gap in school participation has narrowed substantially and even disappeared in the lower grades, with about equal numbers of girls and boys in primary grades one through seven (80.1% of girls and 80% of boys were in primary school in 2007) and only a modest differential in secondary school, where there is substantial attrition for students of both genders (about 38% of boys and 35% of girls attend secondary school).²² However, school dropout rates are significantly higher among girls than boys at all levels,²³ and boys consistently outperform girls on all three examinations.²⁴ Literacy rates are much lower for girls and young women than for boys and young men; in 2007, the literacy rate for females fifteen to twenty-four years old in Zambia was

20. Zambia Ministry of Education, Directorate of Planning and Information, Educational Statistical Bulletin 25, Tbl. 9 (2009) (preliminary draft). [hereinafter *2009 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin*]. Enrollment in grades one through nine increased at a rate of 5.0% (4.7% for boys and 5.3% for girls) between 2004 and 2009, and enrollment in grades ten through twelve increased at a rate of 8.4% (8.2% for boys and 8.6% for girls) during this same period. *Id.*

21. See CARMODY, *supra* note 7, at 64–67; MARGARET MACHILA, SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) GENDER PROTOCOL 2012 BAROMETER: ZAMBIA 43 (Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah et al. eds., 2012) (noting the lack of learning materials and training for volunteer teachers).

22. CENT. STATISTICAL OFFICE ET AL., *supra* note 4, § 2.3.2, at 18–20. These percentages reflect net attendance ratios, the percentage of primary-age students (seven through thirteen years) attending primary school or secondary-age students (fourteen through eighteen years) attending secondary school. *Id.* UNESCO statistics indicate that primary school net enrollment rates (the percentage of primary-age students enrolled in primary school) reached 96% for girls and 94% for boys by 2011. See UNESCO Institute of Statistics Data Centre, Custom Tables – Zambia, available at http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0 (last visited May 19, 2013) (select “Zambia” in the country field, “2011” in the year field and “Education” in the data field to view 2011 statistics). The narrowing of the gender gap in school participation in Zambia is consistent with a recent study of Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in thirty-eight developing countries, including Zambia, that found that while boys were more likely to be enrolled in school than girls in South/East Africa and most of the other studied regions, girls who had ever attended school had equal or greater educational attainment than boys who had ever attended school in all of the studied regions and all age groups, except sixteen through eighteen year olds in South Asia and West Asia/North Africa. Grant & Behrman, *supra* note 8, at 72–73.

23. In 2009, 2.9% of girls and 1.8% of boys in grades one through nine dropped out of school. Among students in grades ten through twelve, 1.8% of girls and 0.6% of boys dropped out of school. 2009 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin, *supra* note 20, Tbl. 23.

24. FAWEZA, *supra* note 188; MACHILA, *supra* note 21, at 46.

58.5%, compared with 70.3% for males of the same age.²⁵ Zambia's Education Act of 2011 includes a number of promising provisions aimed at expanding access to quality education for girls, although much work remains to ensure their implementation.²⁶

Although teachers in Zambia are provided with housing, their salaries remain below basic subsistence level. Morale is low, and strikes have been common. Teachers supplement their income with "private tuition," tutoring students after school hours for a fee. Schools are crowded, with an average basic school pupil-to-teacher ratio in 2004 of fifty-five to one.²⁷ Classrooms, with as many as seventy students to a room in some cases, are jammed with desks, and books and supplies may not be available. As a result, teachers lecture and write as much as possible on the blackboard, and they are under pressure to cover all the material that will be on the national exams. Moreover, double shifts are common, with one group of students attending from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. and another from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., with the same teachers in place.²⁸ There is general agreement that the quality of education has declined substantially as a result of these factors.²⁹

Additionally, Zambia is one of the countries in Africa that has been hardest hit by HIV/AIDS. Recent statistics show that 13.5% of the population aged fifteen to forty-nine was infected in 2009; the average life expectancy by 2010 was forty-nine years.³⁰ HIV/AIDS is generally more prevalent among females than males in Africa; its prevalence among people ages fifteen to twenty-four in Zambia is 4.2% for males and 8.9%

25. UNESCO INST. OF STATISTICS, UIS STATISTICS IN BRIEF, GEN. PROFILE – ZAMBIA (2011). It is estimated that, in the same year, 51.8% of all Zambian women over the age of fifteen were literate, compared with 71.9% of men. *Id.*

26. *See infra* text accompanying notes 129–135.

27. WORLD BANK, *supra* note 17, at 30.

28. Students attending schools with double shifts receive the same number of instructional hours in four years as a child in a full-day school receives in two and one-half years. *Id.* at 30.

29. Of the parents responding to the Lusaka survey referred to above, 70% opined that the quality of primary education had declined due to poor pay, strikes, teachers' focus on private lessons, underfunding, crowding, lack of materials, and the like. PETRAUSKIS & NKUNIKA, *supra* note 16, at 7.

30. *Zambia Statistics*, UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zambia_statistics.html#89 (follow "HIV/AIDS" hyperlink) (last visited July 25, 2012) [hereinafter UNICEF, *Zambia Statistics—HIV/AIDS*]. By comparison, the average life expectancy in Ghana and India in 2011 were sixty-four and sixty-five, respectively. *Ghana Statistics*, UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_statistics.html (follow "Basic Indicators" hyperlink) (last visited July 25, 2012); *India Statistics*, UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_statistics.html (follow "Basic Indicators" hyperlink) (last visited July 25, 2012). The average life expectancy in the United States in 2008 was seventy-eight. US Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract for 2012, Tbl 105 (2012), available at http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/births_deaths_marriages_divorces/life_expectancy.html.

for females.³¹ It is estimated that 1.3 million children under the age of seventeen are orphans, 690,000 of them as a result of AIDS.³² Parental death is also a common cause of children dropping out of school. Moreover, when their usual caregiver is ill, young girls are often required to care for the family, increasing their dropout rate. In addition, HIV/AIDS has led to the death and absenteeism of teachers, causing negative consequences for children's access to education.³³

II. Methodology

In May 2012, we interviewed 105 schoolgirls at seven different schools in and around the capital city Lusaka. With some light industry on the outskirts, the city sprawls into villages, small towns, and densely populated informal settlements known as "compounds." Minibuses teeming with passengers run up and down the streets with their "conductors," partners to the drivers, jumping in and out from around a sliding door to round up business.

Lusaka Province includes not only the city of Lusaka but also the adjacent Chongwe and Kafue districts, where we also carried out interviews of girls in grades seven through twelve. Because of the proximity of the schools to the more developed area around the capital city, our findings may not be generalizable to other areas of Zambia, especially the poorer Eastern and Western regions, where conditions are likely to be worse.³⁴

There were similarities among the schools we visited. They consisted of one-story wooden buildings surrounding a courtyard. The bottom half of each building was typically painted a bright blue or green and the top half a yellowish cream, while the roofs were made of corrugated metal. Boarding facilities consisted of low buildings set to the side where students cooked for themselves. Sports facilities were sparse—in some cases

31. UNICEF, *Zambia Statistics—HIV/AIDS*, *supra* note 30.

32. *Id.* According to Zambian government enrollment statistics from 2008, approximately 20% of school children in grades one through twelve are orphans. Zambia Ministry of Education, Directorate of Planning and Information, Educational Statistical Bulletin 25, 73, Tbls. 100 & 101 (2008) [hereinafter *2008 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin*].

33. Monisha Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies and the Danger of Sugar: Cross-Generational Relationships, HIV/AIDS, and Secondary Schooling in Zambia*, 10 INT'L PERSP. ON EDUC. & SOC'Y 123, 133 (2009). ZAMBIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ZAMBIA'S PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS MDGs 7 (2010) (noting that HIV/AIDS has resulted in "reduced learning time due to teachers' absenteeism and death as well as learners' absenteeism and dropout (because of their own or family members' illness)").

34. The World Bank reports, for instance, that "[g]irls persist to Grade 7 completion comparably to boys only in Lusaka Province. Elsewhere, girls complete Grade 7 at lower rates than boys, due to higher dropout rates toward the end of the cycle." WORLD BANK, *supra* note 17, at 7.

simply a dirt field on which the boys kicked a soccer ball around or a basketball hoop without a court.

Classrooms were rather stark—unadorned by anything but windows and a large blackboard covering an entire wall facing the students' desks or tables. Adolescents' clumsy, in-process bodies of disparate sizes fit awkwardly into the desks. The students themselves all wore uniforms, ones that seemed ill-designed for the heat—sweaters or jackets over long-sleeved white shirts (and in some cases, ties) and, for the girls, long white socks and black shoes. Given the heat, long, dusty, red-dirt paths leading from building to building, and their long walks home, the socks and shirts must require daily laundering to stay so white.³⁵

Urban schools, especially more elite ones, had multiple courtyards, green grass, and more sports facilities. They were clean and pleasant. Some had relatively well-equipped libraries, none with very many books but at least containing the ones necessary for the courses taught there. Computers were available at most of the schools, but for administrative use only.

One school we visited was presumably more typical of those in rural areas. It could be reached only after a long drive up poorly maintained dirt roads with no sanitation facilities. Outhouses with pit toilets could be reached by climbing up a small hill. The students had no books; instructors wrote everything on the blackboards, which were covered with attractive longhand script. Many students, however, had no materials with which to take notes.³⁶

In all the schools we visited, classes were invariably large and the school day for any given student only four to five hours in length, leaving little space or time for attention to individual students' understanding of the material covered. The institution of "extra tuition" is designed to fill the gaps; in essence, the teachers are available for tutoring after school, for pay. A sizeable number of the girls interviewed mentioned that they would like to have extra tuition because they were having problems in one or

35. Indeed, one of the girls brought up the challenge of laundering her uniform when there was no money to buy soap in her home. She needed help buying soap, she said, "so I can look like my friends. If I don't look good, folks will talk about you at school." Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade eleven, urban high school.

36. These problems reflect poverty in the educational system at large. Compared to other African countries, Zambia devotes a lower share of its budget to the education sector—3.2% of GDP, of which 1.8% is on basic education and only 0.3% on secondary. These rates are similar to those of Malawi but lower than those of Kenya and Uganda. Zambia's per student expenditure is also about 30% lower than that of comparable countries. WORLD BANK, *supra* note 17, at 19–20, 27. Construction of new schools was limited during the 1990s as spending on education was cut to comply with SAPs. Bajaj, *Intergenerational Perspectives*, *supra* note 7, at 189.

more courses but were unable to afford it. Thus, poverty in the educational system is exacerbated by poverty of the children themselves.

Our study was carried out in partnership with Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), a well-respected research and advocacy organization that focuses upon the rights of women and girls.³⁷ A member from WLSA was present for all the interviews, an arrangement intended for the comfort and safety of the girls.

After obtaining permission from the Ministry of Education to carry out interviews in the Lusaka area, WLSA selected the schools to study. To include a variety of settings, the schools chosen were located in the city (two), in a suburban area (one), in small towns (two), and in rural settings (two). Those selected included four basic³⁸ and three high schools. Table 1 shows the distribution of schools and the number of interviews carried out at each:

Table 1: Schools Selected by Level, Location, and Number of Interviewees

School	Level	Location	Interviews
1	Basic	Urban	23
2	Basic	Suburban	12
3	Basic	Small town	12
4	Basic	Rural	17
5	High	Urban	10
6	High	Small town	16
7	High	Rural	15

At each school we first met with the headmaster, who had already received notice of the project from WLSA; each headmaster, without

37. See Women and Law in Southern Africa–Zambia (WLSA), <http://www.wlsazambia.org> (last visited July 25, 2012).

38. At the basic schools we visited, we interviewed only students in grades seven through nine.

exception, turned us over to a female staff member, either a matron or guidance counselor.³⁹ We then asked for volunteers among the girls in the classrooms she selected and chose among them randomly; this procedure was intended to introduce randomness into the selection process and minimize disruption of classroom instruction. We each carried out up to eight approximately thirty-minute interviews each day, aiming at a total of sixteen from each school. Each interview was conducted in a private room with the girl and the WLSA representative. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, Zambia's national language, but if a girl did not speak English fluently, a WLSA staff member provided translation into or from the local languages of Nyanja or Bemba. Neither the girls nor the schools were identified in our notes of the interviews.

Moreover, we provided each girl with information about individuals or groups they could contact if they needed to report anything or get help after the interview; no reports or inquiries were received. We used a common script of questions about the girls' experience of education in Zambia; although we varied somewhat in the questions asked in a particular interview, we always included a common core. The study was initially designed as part of a study of sexual violence and harassment against adolescent girls in Zambian schools.⁴⁰ This focus was reflected in the script, although it included additional questions about obstacles to girls' education. As we interviewed the girls, we heard detailed accounts of the complex and interconnected challenges they and their female classmates confront in pursuing an education.

All of the schools we visited were on double shifts, which may have skewed results if the shifts were not determined randomly. We visited four schools during the morning shift, two in the afternoon, and one school twice—once during the morning shift and once during the afternoon. At that school, the headmaster said the girls in the morning were “sharper,”⁴¹ and there are some indications that afternoon sessions were established in Zambia for students who were the “overflow.” At one school with a lopsided ratio of girls in the morning session (about 110 out of the total 151 girls), interviewees explained that they felt safer walking to school at dawn and returning in the early afternoon, so that they were never en route during the more dangerous hours of darkness.⁴²

39. In Zambian high schools, about 60% of teachers are male and 40% are female. 2008 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin, *supra* note 32, at 49, Tbl. 58.

40. See Women and Law in Southern Africa–Zambia, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School, and Cornell Law School International Human Rights Clinic, “*They are Destroying our Futures*”: *Sexual Violence Against Girls in Zambian Schools* 1–2 (Oct. 2012).

41. Interview with headmaster, small town high school.

42. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, rural high school.

The grade distribution of the girls interviewed and the age range of those interviewed in each grade are illustrated by Table 2 below. We made no effort to randomly distribute by age, selecting only a range of grade levels, and the distribution of grades was clearly skewed by the selection process. For example, at one school, all the students in one grade were taking an all-day exam; at other schools we selected just one or two classrooms in which to recruit in order to minimize disruption. Because the study originally targeted girls between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, we generally selected girls in grades nine through eleven, although we interviewed nine girls in grades seven or eight and two girls in grade twelve. By and large, the ages of the girls in each grade and classroom varied widely, including two twenty-year-olds in a basic school.

Table 2: Grade and Age Range of Girls Interviewed

Grade	Number of interviews	Age range
7	1	13
8	8	13–19
9	50	12–20
10	23	14–22
11	21	15–20
12	2	18–19

Interviews were recorded through written notes on the two interviewers' laptop computers. The notes were read closely by both authors and coded by them, at first separately and then after joint discussion, with reference to the major themes discussed in this article.

III. Findings

Our interviews revealed a large number of obstacles that confront adolescent girls in Zambian schools. For example, they showed discriminatory treatment that reflected the persistence of sexist ideas about the position and capabilities of girls. We also found substantial evidence of various types of sexual abuse of schoolgirls, including constant harassment

by boy pupils and requests for sex by male teachers. Teen pregnancy posed a particular obstacle to the completion of girls' education, and societal attitudes toward sexuality blocked implementation of measures taken in other countries to deal with this problem.

A. Sexism Within and Outside of the Classroom

Girls responding to our questions about problems faced by female students in Zambia mentioned (1) beliefs held by parents, guardians, and the community that education was for boys, (2) pressure on girls to marry rather than go to school, and (3) parental unwillingness to pay school fees to send a girl back to school after pregnancy.⁴³ It is a mistake to interpret all of these remarks as evidence of traditional culture. Some individuals remain unconvinced of the value of girls' education as a result of long-held beliefs embedded in pre-colonial Zambian traditions. Although the post-colonial period has been one of rapid social and economic change, some individuals' attitudes have been slower to change. Alternatively, beliefs and attitudes about educating girls and boys often reflect familial decisions made under the constraints of economic and social conditions in Zambia; that is, they result from rational cost-benefit analyses of the value of an education for their daughters under current circumstances.⁴⁴

Whatever their source, when biases enter the classroom in the form of attitudes and remarks by male teachers and students, they can have a detrimental effect on girls' educational experience, their ability to access academic resources, and their sense of competence. There is evidence from studies in other parts of Africa that discriminatory attitudes about gender persist among the ranks of teachers, even in the face of government policies

43. Interview with girl student, age thirteen, grade eight, rural basic school; interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, rural basic school; interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, rural basic school; interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, rural high school; interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade eleven, small town high school; interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school; interview with girl student, age twelve, grade nine, urban basic school; interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

44. There are by now enough unemployed graduates of secondary schools, and even of universities, that families are well aware of this fact. Assuming that families make decisions about education based on a cost-benefit analysis, the returns on an investment in education may be low or even negative. Peter Jensen & Helena Skyt Nielsen, *Child Labour or School Attendance? Evidence from Zambia*, 10 J. POPULATION ECON. 407, 414–15, 423 (1997). Under these circumstances, it may be economically rational to encourage a girl to marry at a young age if she can find a man to support her. See *Zambia Statistics*, UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zambia_statistics.html (follow "Child Protection" hyperlink) (last visited May 10, 2013) (noting that between 2000 and 2010, 42% of Zambian women married before the age of eighteen and 9% before the age of fifteen).

designed to ensure equity in education.⁴⁵ Studies have revealed similar gender-biased attitudes among teachers in Zambia.⁴⁶ Our study confirms these findings.

When asked whether teachers treated boys and girls differently in their school, most girls initially answered “no.” Girls perceived that, formally, they had equal opportunities at school, and several explained that girls speak up in class as often as their male classmates. After thinking about it, however, some revealed substantial differences in the ways that teachers treated male and female students. Their responses included:

When a girl fails to answer and a guy answers, the teacher will say, “Guys are more intelligent than girls.”⁴⁷

Some teachers look down on girls, especially in math and science. They say, “Girls don’t study. This school would be better if it were just boys. Girls are ruining the reputation.” That makes us feel bad, and we get demoralized.⁴⁸

You find that if the teacher is a man, he only wants to talk to boys.⁴⁹

Some teachers treat boys and girls differently. With some, for example, I have problems if I go to them for help. They don’t listen to me. Boys, they listen to more.⁵⁰

Teachers think that boys are always higher than girls, so if girls don’t do that well, teachers don’t look into the issue; they are okay with it. It is unfair to girls and makes us feel like boys are always better. Sometimes teachers come out like, “Girls, you never do well in anything.” It really deprives us down and doesn’t encourage us to do better.⁵¹

These girls’ descriptions aptly present the problems posed by this type of bias in the classroom. Several pointed out that teachers’ different responses to girls and boys make the girls “demoralized,” and feel “like boys are always better.”⁵² In addition, it appears that boy pupils may be able to get extra help from the teacher in schools where crowded

45. See, e.g., Anderson, *supra* note 5, at 40, 52.

46. See, e.g., CHRISTOPHER COLCLOUGH ET AL., *ACHIEVING SCHOOLING FOR ALL IN AFRICA: COSTS, COMMITMENT AND GENDER* 153–54 (2003) (discussing teachers’ biased attitudes toward female students in nine African nations, including Zambia).

47. Interview with girl student, age twenty, grade eleven, rural high school.

48. Interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade eleven, urban high school.

49. Interview with girl student, age eighteen, grade nine, small town basic school.

50. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

51. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

52. *Supra* notes 48, 51.

classrooms mean such attention is significant. On the other hand, girls cannot obtain assistance—or at least do not believe they can.

Interactions in the classroom, moreover, may have an important spillover effect upon male-female relationships in the society at large. As boys see their teachers' treatment of girl students, they draw inferences about girls and women in general. In the words of one fourteen-year-old girl:

Teachers here think girls are dull and boys more diligent. So a boy thinks he is all that, that he is on top of the world. And because he thinks he is on top of the world, man of the house, so he will slap or insult girls. If a girl does better in class, boys insult you.⁵³

These learned attitudes of male superiority and the hostile encounters they perpetuate between male and female students have serious negative consequences for gender relationships beyond the school setting.

A particular problem related to tradition remains: a persisting and fairly rigid division of domestic labor, one that no longer makes sense in the modern economy. Girls and women are expected to do all of the household work—cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, caring for children and family members who are ill, and performing related tasks. Even in non-agricultural settings where young men and boys are unemployed, these tasks remain “women’s work.”⁵⁴

The problem presented for schoolgirls is that they are expected to perform a heavy load of household chores, causing them to have no time to complete work assigned for school, while their male classmates have plenty of time to study before or after their school shifts.⁵⁵ In the words of one seventeen-year-old girl, “When I get home, I have to do the house chores, make lunch, sweep, do the dishes, wash the clothes, and go to the market. The only time to study is when everything is done and everyone is sleeping. But at my place it is difficult because I share a room with my brothers and they want to sleep. Boys have more time to study.”⁵⁶ One girl opined that the reason a girl student would be less willing to volunteer

53. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade ten, urban high school.

54. Katherine V. Gough, *“Moving Around”: The Social and Spatial Mobility of Youth in Lusaka*, 90 *GEOGRAFISKA ANNALER: SERIES B, HUMAN GEOGRAPHY* 243, 247–48 (2008) (describing how unemployed young women living at home are actively involved in housework while unemployed young men hang out in bars).

55. See PERPETUAL SICHIKWENKWE, *GENDER LINKS, SADC GENDER PROTOCOL BAROMETER BASELINE STUDY: Zambia 77* (2009) (noting that in southern Africa, “the care work that society expects from girls, which has increased with HIV and AIDS, means that girls spend less time on studies, therefore affecting their performance and attendance”).

56. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school.

in class or less able to answer the teacher's question if called upon was that she lacked the time to do the assignment due to household chores.⁵⁷

A total of twelve interviewees spoke of missing school to take care of siblings when their usual caregiver was unavailable or in order to care for a sick family member, sometimes, in the era of HIV/AIDS, their own mother. One girl was required to drop out of school and spend several years at home when her mother was ill.⁵⁸ Others spoke of being very sleepy and unable to pay adequate attention in class due to the heavy burden at home. The problem presented by burdensome household chores, however, was not universal; it appeared to be more common in rural areas than urban areas, although it existed in both. In urban areas and in families with adequate funds, girls spoke of being encouraged to study and of having a maid who performed the household chores.

When a girl's biological mother was not present, the problem of excessive housework demands appeared more intractable, especially if the girl was living with a stepmother. The stepmother-stepchild relationship is a difficult one in all cultures.⁵⁹ The situation is harder still if the stepmother has biological children of her own who compete for family resources. An econometric survey of Zambian statistics has shown an inverse relationship between living in a household with a non-biological head and school attendance.⁶⁰ Moreover, in an era of AIDS and decreased average life expectancy, living with a stepparent is not uncommon.

Several girls mentioned being treated differently than half-siblings, with overtones of Cinderella-like exploitation, because they were "steps."⁶¹ Here is what this problem looks like in the experience of one fifteen-year-old girl: "As soon as I touch a book, my stepmother will say do this, so I stay up and lose sleep in order to study. I wash the dishes, take care of my little brother, cook on the weekends."⁶² Other girls who were living with a brother, aunt, or other non-parental relatives spoke of similar problems.⁶³

57. Interview with girl student, age eighteen, grade eleven, small town high school.

58. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade nine, urban basic school.

59. See, e.g., Anne C. Bernstein, *Women in Stepfamilies: The Fairy Godmother, the Wicked Witch, and Cinderella Reconstructed*, in *FAMILY IN TRANSITION* 202, 207-09 (Arlene S. Skolnick & Jerome H. Skolnick eds., 11th ed. 2001) (proposing that women hold themselves to higher standards as stepparents than men do, while children "underestimate their stepmothers' involvement even as they overestimate their mothers' involvement in their lives").

60. Jensen & Nielsen, *supra* note 44, at 419.

61. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, suburban basic school; interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

62. Interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

63. Interview with girl student, age eighteen, grade eleven, rural high school; interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, rural high school; interview with girl student, age eighteen, grade ten, small town high school.

Although we had not originally included a question about parental death on the interview script, this issue came up on its own. Of those girls who did mention it, four had lost both parents, three had lost their mother, and eleven had lost their fathers. In addition, at least nine had parents who were separated or divorced, and the girl sometimes then lived with her father and a stepmother. The effect of this living situation was profound. Apart from the natural distress of bereavement, one girl spoke eloquently of the emotional impact of being a stepchild and of its effect upon her school work:

Sometimes when the teacher is talking, you just think about other things. Last year I used to think about where I come from, and about my stepmother. She doesn't take good care of me, so I can't concentrate. I ask her for [sanitary] pads, and she does not pay for them. Or tell her that I need new books; she doesn't buy them. Coming here, not having eaten, I think about food. And I think "Why is she doing this to me? Why does she hate me?"⁶⁴

Another girl suggested, "Why aren't girls more active in class? Some have been mistreated or can't focus because they have lost their parents. Or they do a lot of work at home and have no time to study; they may be behind."⁶⁵

Of the girls who proffered this information, we counted twenty-two who lived with family members other than a parent—a grandparent, brother, sister, or aunt—even though one or both parents were alive. Such an arrangement is not uncommon in Africa, where children live with relatives for periods of time for a variety of reasons.⁶⁶ As noted by one author studying the Zambian context, African families and households are dynamic social units and very fluid in membership.⁶⁷ Parents often move to seek employment, and children typically spend time in the households of other relatives in order to access a better school.⁶⁸ They may do this because the school is closer to the home of relatives or because a relative is willing and able to sponsor their education.⁶⁹ However, this arrangement is susceptible to abuse because relatives supporting a non-biological child may expect some form of repayment in labor, in some cases treating her like a maid.

Even girls living with their own mothers face extreme work demands, not only because of traditional respect for and obedience to their elders but

64. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, suburban basic school.

65. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, suburban basic school.

66. See, e.g., Alice Armstrong, *School and Sadza: Custody and the Best Interests of the Child in Zimbabwe*, 8 INT'L J.L. & FAM. 151, 184 (1994) (noting that despite the prevalence of children living with relatives, most people interviewed by the author thought it was in the best interest of children to live with their parents).

67. Gough, *supra* note 54, at 250.

68. *Id.*

69. *Id.* at 251.

also for rational economic reasons. The following story by a sixteen-year-old girl in a mother-headed household illustrates this point:

I've missed a lot of days because whether I can pay school fees depends on my mom's business. . . . When she gets home, my mom knits jerseys and scarves and I help her with that. . . . My mom would not tell my brothers to do all that work. They get time to study. I can't say "no" to helping my mother.⁷⁰

This girl's mother supports her family by knitting items of clothing in the evening and marketing them during the day. Her daughter helps her sew the pieces of clothing together after school, a form of unpaid, non-household labor. Even though the girl resents the fact that her brothers are not asked to help with this task, she realizes that it needs to be accomplished if school fees are to be paid and that her help is essential. She also expressed gratitude for her mother's hard work on her behalf. This vignette combines the traditional gendered division of labor with the current and possibly more intractable obstacles posed by poverty.⁷¹

B. *Sexual Violence*

Sexual harassment and abuse by fellow students and teachers present serious problems for Zambian girls. This issue has been extensively documented in other African countries as a substantial obstacle to gender equity in the educational system.⁷² Our interviews confirmed that Zambian schoolgirls face multiple forms of sexual violence while trying to pursue an education, including the following:

Frequent sexual harassment, including threats of, or actual violence, by boy students;

70. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade eleven, urban high school.

71. International Labour Office, *Decent Work Country Profile: Zambia* 15 (2012), available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/lusaka/download/publication/dwcp2012.pdf>. Poverty is a constant presence in the lives of many schoolgirls in Zambia, with 66% of households living below the poverty line in 2006. *Id.* The percentage is even higher among women (70%) and in rural areas (nearly 80%). *Id.* at 16. Eight of the girls interviewed had dropped out of school for substantial periods of time—up to three years—because they could not afford to pay school fees. Eleven others had missed days or weeks of school because they were unable to pay their school fees or buy the books, shoes, or uniforms they needed to attend school.

72. See, e.g., HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, SCARED AT SCHOOL: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS (2001); FIONA LEACH & PAMELA MACHAKANJA, PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE ABUSE OF GIRLS IN ZIMBABWEAN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS (UK Dept. for Int'l Dev. 2000); Alemayehu Belachew Bekele et al., *Sexual Violence Victimization Among Female Secondary School Students in Eastern Ethiopia*, 26 VIOLENCE & VICTIMS 608 (2011).

Sexual harassment and abuse by teachers, including comments, touching, enticing students into dating relationships with the promise of money or undeserved grades, and retaliation against them if they refuse;

Constant sexual harassment and threat of sexual attack when traveling to and from school or out in public; and

Rapes and resulting pregnancies that lead girls to drop out of school.

All of the students were asked whether these types of sexual violence had happened to them or to someone they knew; in some instances, the response described conduct that had occurred at the student’s previous school.

Of the 105 students interviewed, sixty-nine reported that they had experienced or knew of other girls who had experienced sexual harassment or abuse by male students. Table 4 shows the incidence of sexual abuse by male students that the interviewee personally experienced:

Table 4: Sexual Abuse by Male Students

Type of sexual harassment or abuse	Girl students
Pressured or forced to have sex	28
Touched in a sexual way without permission	10
Subjected to unwanted sexual comments	35

Of the students pressured to have sex, two did have sexual intercourse with the fellow student, and twenty-six refused. Two of those students reported that the fellow pupil used physical violence against her, while two indicated that the fellow pupil threatened to beat her if she continued to resist his advances.

Our conversations with the girls revealed unhealthy interactions between the sexes during this formative period of development. Boys come up to girls they barely know on the school grounds and propose sex and make comments about their bodies (“I like your ass,” “Can I touch your boobs?”). According to one girl, “Boys touch and grab girls at the school. They touch their breasts, their private parts. . . . If you are a girl [and] this happens, you just have to run away.”⁷³ Another girl’s statements similarly revealed how such harassment can be normalized into just

73. Interview with girl student, age nineteen, grade twelve, rural high school.

something boys do. "Boys touch girls' breasts and buttocks," she explained. "This happens a lot. It happens to me. Most of the boys do this. Girls have to just ignore and avoid them. If you see them coming, you move in the other direction."⁷⁴

Others described more threatening encounters. According to one girl, "In public the boys [who are boarders at this school] will threaten girls and say things like, 'I'm in 12G or B. If you fail to see me there, you will be in a problem.' They do that a lot. And when he calls you, you think, 'He can beat me,' so you go there and say, 'Oh, I love you.'"⁷⁵ A few described dangerous interactions in which they narrowly escaped being raped:

I was dating a boy who wanted me to have sex with him. I should say that he tried to kill me. He squeezed me so hard on my neck that I couldn't breathe. When he was hurting me and squeezing on my neck, I just stood there quiet; my tears were dropping. Finally he stopped doing that. I told him we are done. . . .

But then he started telling friends that I had sex with him, that I was an easy goer. . . . Everyone thought that I was pregnant from him, and everyone was talking about it. . . . My mom took me to the hospital to be checked to prove that I hadn't slept with that boy. . . . It really affected my performance at school. I really couldn't concentrate. If I would get a book and try to study, I would just start thinking about how everyone was talking about me. . . . It was a very bad time.⁷⁶

This detailed account demonstrates the long-term effects that sexual harassment or abuse by fellow students can have on girls and, in particular, its destructive effect upon their ability to concentrate on their studies.

Virtually all the girls reported that experiencing any type of harassment made them feel bad, uncomfortable, and afraid. One seventeen-year-old girl who had been pushed up against the wall in the corner of an empty classroom and forcibly kissed told us, "I felt bad, I hated him. I don't think I will ever forgive him. I was scared."⁷⁷ Girls who experienced harassment in public, where they were presumably safe from actual danger, also reported adverse effects of the experience. A seventeen-year-old girl who was constantly asked to have sex told us, "I feel bad. I will start thinking about that, why he was saying these things to me."⁷⁸ A sixteen-year-old student explained that when a boy commented, "I like your ass," she "felt hurt; I wondered what he would say next time. I

74. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school.

75. Interview with girl student, age twenty-two, grade ten, rural high school.

76. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school.

77. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, rural high school.

78. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade ten, small town high school.

felt scared too.”⁷⁹ A twelve-year-old girl said that she felt “bad, insecure when it happened, scared” after male students told her, “You have a big ass”; “You have a nice body”; and “I want to kiss you.”⁸⁰ These responses show the fear induced by such behavior, which the girls either experience or witness on a daily basis at school. There also appears to be a note of guilt or self-blame (“why was he saying these things to me?”). Studies of sexual harassment in other parts of the world have amply documented the adverse and often long-term psychological and educational impacts of being a victim of such abuse.⁸¹

The girls we interviewed responded in a variety of ways to this type of abuse by fellow students. Some just turned or walked away, while others shouted at the boy to stop and a few attempted to engage in dialogue intended to shame the boy into better behavior. One girl, for example, responded to a male classmate commenting that she had nice boobs by telling him: “Those are bad manners and I don’t respond to them – I didn’t come to school to hear your bad behaviors.”⁸² One thing the girls almost invariably did *not* do, however, was report the incident to authorities at the school. They told their close friends about it, and some (very few) told their parents, but only one of the girls interviewed had ever lodged a complaint about sexual harassment by a classmate with a teacher or headmaster, and in none of the few examples that described attempted rape did a student report the incident to the civil authorities.

Perhaps one reason for non-reporting at school was that the girls were acquainted with the fact that male teachers themselves engaged in similar behavior. Out of the 104 students who were asked about this type of abuse, fifty-seven said that they knew of teachers who had sex or relationships with girl pupils.⁸³ The following incidents were reported as happening to the interviewee herself at her present or previous school:

79. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, suburban basic school.

80. Interview with girl student, age twelve, grade nine, urban basic school.

81. CATHERINE HILL & HOLLY KEARL, AAUW REPORT, *CROSSING THE LINE: SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT SCHOOL 20–28* (2011) (highlighting the negative implications for student survivors and student witnesses of gender-based violence in the short and long term); HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *supra* note 72, Part VI (noting that gender-based violence “frequently results in: intimidation; poor levels of participation in learning activities; forced isolation; low self-esteem or self-confidence; dropping out of education or from particular activities or subjects; or other physical, sexual and/or psychological damage”); Debbie Chiodo et al., *Impact of Sexual Harassment Victimization by Peers on Subsequent Adolescent Victimization and Adjustment: A Longitudinal Study*, 45 J. ADOLESCENT HEALTH 246, 250–51 (2009) (explaining that sexual harassment early in high school led to elevated risk for suicidal thoughts, self-harm, substance use, feeling unsafe at school, and future victimization).

82. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, rural high school.

83. This figure includes the responses of fifteen interviewees who reported abuse occurring at a school they previously attended and responses of two interviewees who

Table 5: Sexual Abuse by Male Teachers

Type of Sexual Abuse	Number of girl students
Propositioned for sex or a relationship	9
Touched in a sexual way	2
Received unwanted sexual comments	6

No abuse by female teachers was reported, but it is possible that we might have uncovered some instances if we had interviewed boys. In addition, none of the girls reported accepting a teacher's proposition or being forced to do so by the teacher. These results—with a large number of students reporting knowledge of sexual interactions between teachers and other students, but few acknowledging personal involvement in such interactions—may reflect girls' reluctance to speak about their own experiences given the stigma that typically attaches to intergenerational sexual relations.⁸⁴

A number of girls were in classes with teachers who subjected their students to sexual harassment. One student reported that one of her teachers constantly talked about sex in the classroom in a manner designed to discomfit girl students.⁸⁵ Other interviewees similarly described teachers who “would embarrass girls and talk about sex”⁸⁶ or say “insensitive and embarrassing stuff that made the boys laugh.”⁸⁷ Conduct of that sort—or even being told by friends about conduct of that sort—has an intimidating effect on girl students and makes them feel less than welcome in the classroom.

Some teachers went further, touching girl students' breasts or buttocks or “proposing love” to them or their classmates, trying to persuade the girls to engage in sexual relationships with them. One fourteen-year-old girl in

reported learning from friends about abuse that occurred at their friends' schools.

84. See Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies*, *supra* note 33, at 125 (noting that “[g]iven strong social taboos, discussions about cross-generational relationships are often carried out in the third person”).

85. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade nine, urban basic school.

86. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade ten, small town high school.

87. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school.

ninth grade told us about teachers who had tried to touch her and ask her out:

Sometimes teachers come and say I'm pretty; they try to touch me. Two or three teachers have done that. One time, I was in the canteen with my twin sister. I took off my jersey, and my shirt was a little bit open. The teacher stared and said, "Wow, you have nice boobs." I said, "How do you say those things? I'm young." He kept quiet but kept approaching me and telling me I was pretty, asking me out and offering to take me here and there.⁸⁸

Another ninth grader, age seventeen, described a teacher who frequently propositioned her, sending other students to tell her to see him and saying things like, "I love you; just say yes, and I'll make you pass grade nine."⁸⁹ His persistent harassment went on for several months.

This type of behavior by teachers is unacceptable and illegal, but it persists and is largely ignored. Only two of the girls interviewed had reported a teacher who had sexually harassed them to another teacher or guidance counselor. In both situations, the other teacher or counselor talked to the perpetrator privately and told him to stop bothering the student. Neither of the abusive teachers was disciplined, and both continued to teach at the school.⁹⁰ Quite apart from the fear of negative publicity that may motivate school officials to seek quiet, internal resolutions to sexual harassment by teachers, any schoolmaster would be put in a dilemma if he were required to fire a teacher in the face of a massive shortage of trained educators.

As several interviewees explained, most girls do not report incidents of sexual harassment by a teacher because they fear that nothing would be done about it, that they would be blamed for what happened, or that the teacher would retaliate against them. Fear of retaliation is well justified as teachers have the capacity to punish students who do not comply with their requests or who report them. Corporal punishment is now outlawed in Zambia, but we heard repeated accounts of its use. The following account describes the use of physical punishment in response to a student's refusal of sexual demands by a teacher:

My geography teacher proposed to me, and I refused. After that, when I tried to answer a question in class, he wouldn't call on me

88. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

89. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade nine, urban basic school.

90. A third girl told her mother when a teacher proposed love to her and then retaliated against her. Her mother reported the case to the headmaster, who held a private meeting with the mother, the accused teacher, and several other teachers. The girl never learned what happened to the teacher, but she noted that he was no longer at her school. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, small town high school.

or would send me out of the classroom. When the noisemakers made noise, he would beat me. He used a stick on my hands or buttocks. . . . This happened almost every day that we had geography. When this happened, I was discouraged at school. When I woke up in the morning, I didn't want to go to school because I knew that the teacher would beat me. I stayed home from school for one week until my mother got me changed to another class.⁹¹

This account of resistance to sexual harassment leading to physical and psychological abuse illustrates the coercive power that some teachers wield over their students and the damaging impact this can have upon students' emotional well-being and educational attainment.

Such incidents also make a serious impression upon students who witness them. One student recalled that on five separate occasions, she had observed teachers punishing students who refused their advances by slapping them in front of the class or by saying bad things about them to their parents. Describing her reaction to this pattern of harassment and retaliation, she explained, "I am afraid to become close with male teachers. I don't feel safe with them because so many of them do this."⁹² By observing and hearing about conduct directed at students who refuse sexual advances, the girls perceive an atmosphere in which the threat of sexual violence is pervasive.

Some students, however, did sleep with teachers. As previously noted, none of the girls we interviewed acknowledged that they themselves had ever engaged in sexual relations with a teacher, but many reported that they knew girls who did. Some girls, facing the pressure of their ninth or twelfth grade examinations, which students are required to pass in order to advance to the next grade, accepted a teacher's offer of a leaked set of exam answers in exchange for sexual favors.⁹³ Other girls entered into sexual relationships with teachers because the teachers would buy things for them and give them money. As one girl explained, "I have a friend who was dating a teacher. She needed some money to buy food and things. The teacher was giving her money sometimes."⁹⁴ These were understood as dating relationships; the student's teacher-boyfriend provided the student with money needed for necessities, such as school fees and food, or for

91. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, small town high school.

92. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, small town basic school.

93. One eleventh-grade student surmised that half of the twelfth grade girls at her school sleep with male teachers in order to ensure that they will pass their final exams. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade eleven, small town high school. Even if her estimate is hyperbolic, it shows what some female students fear. It is in fact highly unlikely that a teacher could "leak" a national exam in advance because they are sent out to them just before their administration.

94. Interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade eleven, small town high school.

small luxuries, like clothes or cell phones, that she otherwise would not be able to afford. As one girl noted in describing several of the teacher-student dating relationships at her school, “When a teacher proposes love to a girl, he starts giving her money, helps her if she is hungry, and buys her something, so she is having that interest.”⁹⁵ Others, seeking prestige or a way out of poverty, held out hope that the teacher would marry them.

These types of cross-generational sexual relationships—which have been described variously as “sugar daddy relationships”⁹⁶ or “transactional sex”⁹⁷—involve a close connection between sex and gifts. Unlike prostitution, however, they are constructed as a relationship between a boyfriend and girlfriend and are driven by a complex set of motivations that extends beyond a simple economic exchange.⁹⁸ These relationships exist somewhere in between sexual relations that are consensual and those that are coerced.⁹⁹ Our interviews revealed that teachers used their privileged status and position of power within the school to solicit sex from girls. Yet it would be a mistake to understand the girls as passive victims. Rather, according to the accounts of their peers, most girl students who engaged in these relationships saw themselves as having chosen to do so, although that choice was constrained by the sharp social and economic inequalities that were a daily part of their lives.¹⁰⁰ By dating teachers, girls obtained valuable resources and enhanced their ability to succeed in school. However, the benefits of dating a teacher could be fleeting and the consequences dire, particularly if the girl became pregnant.

95. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, small town high school.

96. Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies*, *supra* note 333, at 125.

97. Mark Hunter, *The Materiality of Everyday Sex: Thinking Beyond “Prostitution,”* 61 AFR. STUD. 99, 100–101 (2002).

98. See Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies*, *supra* note 33, at 129–30 (discussing various motivations for entering into a cross-generational relationship); Hunter, *supra* note 97, at 100–01 (2002) (explaining the difference between prostitution and “transactional sex”). Zambian schoolgirls also sometimes enter into relationships outside of school with older men who pay their school expenses in return for sex. See Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies*, *supra* note 33, at 129–30 (quoting a teacher at an alternative school in Ndola, Zambia, who reported that this practice was common among girl students, with “some of them [] being paid for by [] taxi drivers and minibus drivers. . . . [One] man has volunteered to pay [an 11th grade girl’s] fees up to whatever level the girl will go to, as long as she is obliged to bend towards the man’s requirements”); UN Human Rights Council, *Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences: Rep. of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Addendum—Mission to Zambia*, 34, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/17/26/Add.4 (May 2, 2011) (noting that schoolgirls in Zambia “are reported to have sexual relationships with minibus and taxi drivers as a way of coping with transport costs”).

99. Bajaj, *Sugar Daddies*, *supra* note 33, at 128–29.

100. This is consistent with Hunter’s insight that women exercise agency in approaching transactional relations, seeking “to access power and resources in ways that can both challenge and reproduce patriarchal structures.” Hunter, *supra* note 97, at 101, 116.

Twelve interviewees reported that they knew a classmate who got pregnant as the result of having sex with a teacher. Most of these girls dropped out of school, although one was able to complete her twelfth grade exam and another returned to school after giving birth. While school authorities tend to overlook or seek to quietly resolve most incidents of sexual abuse by teachers, they are more inclined to take seriously incidents that result in the undeniably visible pregnancy of a student.¹⁰¹ Two of the teachers cited by interviewees who impregnated students¹⁰² were fired or otherwise forced to leave their positions. Three were transferred to new schools, although one transfer apparently occurred for reasons unrelated to the pregnancy.

In other cases, however, the teacher denied responsibility for the pregnancy and was never disciplined by the school. For example, a sixteen-year-old student recalled that at her previous school a teacher had coerced her friend into a sexual relationship by preventing her from leaving the school computer room until she kissed him and “proved her love.” When the girl became pregnant, she left school, and her guardian “chased her away” back to her family’s village. Meanwhile, the teacher continued teaching, became qualified as a secondary school teacher, and joined the interviewee’s high school. Seeing the teacher at her new school made the girl feel very uncomfortable; her friend’s experience had shown her that school, far from being a safe space in which to learn, was a place where teachers could abuse girls with total impunity and potentially devastating consequences.¹⁰³

Finally, girls also reported being the victims of sexual abuse by community members. Although we did not ask questions about this topic, it came up repeatedly on a spontaneous basis or in response to other questions. Two girls had been raped, one by a stranger and one by a boy in the village, and there was one report of attempted rape by an uncle. Many girls (twenty-one) reported unwanted touching or grabbing in public places; seventeen of these incidents occurred while they were walking or taking the bus to or from school, as did all six of the reported incidents of receiving unwanted sexual comments. This is a serious problem because of the long distances many girls are required to traverse in order to reach school every day.¹⁰⁴

101. An official from the District Education Board Secretary office in Lusaka explained that his office only got involved in disciplinary proceedings against teachers accused of sexual harassment or abuse in “serious” cases, which he defined as those resulting in the pregnancy of a student. WLSA et al., *supra* note 40, at 40.

102. One of these teachers was mentioned by two different interviewees from the same school.

103. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, small town high school.

104. Many of the girls interviewed traveled long distances to school each day, several spending more than one-and-a-half hours in transit each way.

Many of the students accepted these experiences as an inevitable part of life as a young schoolgirl. “You just have to pretend you’re not hearing,” explained one girl who had been repeatedly harassed by men on her way home from school. You have to get used to that. It is everywhere. Sometimes, it makes us feel bad, but you don’t find them there all the time. You can look for different ways to pass to try to avoid them.”¹⁰⁵ Many other girls possessed a similar combination of resignation and resilience as they found ways to continue pursuing an education despite the harassment and risk of violence they confronted on an almost daily basis.

In sum, a total of fifty-seven students (54% of the girls interviewed) said that they had personally experienced some form of sexual violence or harassment by a teacher, student, or man they encountered on the way to or from school. When coupled with widespread knowledge of the rapes and murders of women and girls that are reported in gruesome detail in the media, female students pursue an education knowing that violence against women happens everywhere and all the time.

C. Sexuality and Its Consequences

Schoolgirls’ experiences of sexism and sexual violence were linked to their understanding of sex and sexuality more broadly. Discriminatory treatment in the classroom, community, and home meant that girls often needed to work harder and focus more intensively than boys on the goal of obtaining an education. The prevalence of sexual harassment and violence taught them school could be a dangerous place and interactions with teachers and male classmates could easily lead to violence. These experiences colored girls’ views of sex and their own sexuality. Although a number of the girls we interviewed were sexually active, many cautioned that men and boys were not to be trusted and emphasized the dire consequences that could follow if girls engaged in sexual relations and became pregnant, including the end of their education and futures.¹⁰⁶

We focus in this section on the relationship between pregnancy and dropping out of school, but the girls also knew that the consequences of pregnancy, given their very limited information about contraception and the unavailability of legal abortion, could include death.¹⁰⁷ One girl told us, for example:

105. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, rural high school.

106. See JENNIFER JOHNSON-HANKS, *UNCERTAIN HONOR: MODERN MOTHERHOOD IN AN AFRICAN CRISIS* 82–88 (2006) (finding that among the educated Beti women of Southern Cameroon, the shame associated with schoolgirl pregnancy is connected not to a view of premarital sex as dishonorable in itself but to a belief that the girls who become pregnant will drop out of school and lose the opportunity for a successful future).

107. Abortion is legal in Zambia in limited circumstances in which three medical practitioners determine that there is a risk to the life or physical or mental health of a

My cousin's boyfriend told her, "Today we are going to have sex." The girl refused, but then the boy just closed the door and forced her to have sex. She got pregnant and wanted to abort the pregnancy. She didn't tell anyone that her boyfriend had forced her. Maybe she worried that the school would take the boy to the police. She wanted to abort the pregnancy. The baby medicine they gave her didn't work. . . . After three days, she died because of the abortion.¹⁰⁸

Even when pregnancy did not result in death, the girls saw pregnancy as the principal cause of female students dropping out of school prematurely. This perception appeared well-founded: a 2010 UNICEF evaluation found that unplanned pregnancy was the reason for 25% of school dropouts among female students in Zambia.¹⁰⁹ The Ministry of Education statistics indicate that with the exception of a modest dip in 2007, the numbers of pregnancies among schoolgirls steadily increased from 4,428 in 2002 to 15,497 in 2009.¹¹⁰ Moreover, despite a government policy requiring re-entry after childbirth,¹¹¹ only 6,679 girls were readmitted in 2009, 43% of the number of girls who became pregnant that year.¹¹²

Virtually every girl interviewed named pregnancy as one of the biggest obstacles to girls' education in Zambia. Most of them knew friends

woman. Penal Code Act of 2005, Cap. 87, 7 LAWS OF REP. OF ZAMBIA (2006) § 152; Termination of Pregnancy Act, Cap. 304, 17 LAWS OF REP. OF ZAMBIA (2006). This includes cases in which a woman or female child becomes pregnant as a result of rape or defilement. Penal Code Act, Cap. 87, 7 LAWS OF REP. OF ZAMBIA (2006) §§ 131A, 152(2); STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING UNSAFE ABORTION MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY IN ZAMBIA 10 (Zam. Ministry of Health May 2009). Nonetheless, it is practically impossible for most women to procure an abortion due to lack of awareness of the law and the requirement that women obtain the approval of three medical practitioners. SICHIKWENKWE, *supra* note 55, at 9, 68–69.

108. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade nine, rural basic school.

109. JOSEPH SAMPA KALUNGU, UNICEF, EVALUATION REPORT ON THE SENSITISATION OF CHIEFS 25 (2010). In this respect, the situation in Zambia appears to differ from that in Malawi, where one recent study found that perceptions of frequent schoolgirl pregnancy do not reflect the relatively low actual prevalence (less than 10% of female school dropouts according to one survey). Monica J. Grant, *Girls' Schooling and the Perceived Threat of Adolescent Sexual Activity in Rural Malawi*, 14 CULTURE, HEALTH, & SEXUALITY 73, 75, 82–83 (2012).

110. 2009 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin, *supra* note 20, Tbl. 44.

111. The Zambian government formally instituted its re-entry policy in 1997. Previously, schoolgirls who became pregnant were typically expelled. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), *Keeping Girls in School: FAWE Zambia's Campaign for an Enabling Readmission Policy for Adolescent Mothers* 4–6 (2004). This readmittance policy was recently codified in Zambia's Education Act of 2011. Education Act No. 23 § 25(2) (2011) (Zam.).

112. 2009 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin, *supra* note 20, Tbl. 44. This figure represented 48% of the number of girls who became pregnant the previous year (13,926). *Id.*

or classmates who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy, of which less than one-quarter of them had returned. Two of the girls interviewed had themselves given birth (one of the pregnancies was due to rape); they had returned to school but only after missing several years and with great hardship (one was simultaneously working to support her child). Interviewees cited the inability or refusal of parents to pay school fees after a girl was pregnant, familial pressure to marry the father of the child, the burden of caring for a child, and fear of stigma and discrimination as reasons many girls do not return to school after pregnancy. Here are some of their comments:

The girls [who got pregnant and dropped out of school] won't come back. They have problems with their families and nobody to sponsor them. Families don't want to pay school fees for girls who get pregnant.¹¹³

Girls don't come back to school after getting pregnant. Some are married so they can't come back. Or they don't come back because of lack of money. One of my friends from Lusaka, she got pregnant and came back. But here, no girls come back after getting pregnant.¹¹⁴

I had a friend who got pregnant. She just had the child last week. Maybe she will come back. She said she would come back. But how is she going to care for the child while going to school? When this happens, girls are confused. They have to be looking at the child as a parent.¹¹⁵

Two girls in the last year came back to school. They were discriminated against. They also had a problem of not concentrating in classes, because they think that their friends are laughing at them or they are thinking about the child back at home.¹¹⁶

Although we did not interview mothers, we could hear their sentiments echoed in their daughters' statements to the effect that their lives would be destroyed if they got pregnant and dropped out of school—that they must stay in school and study hard if they ever wanted to “be somebody.” One fourteen-year-old girl, for example, said, “My mother got pregnant when she was in grade seven. My father refused her. He said that I wasn't his child. My mother doesn't want this to happen to me. She wants me to get an education.”¹¹⁷ Many girls reported such admonitions coming from the older women in their families, usually the mother if she

113. Interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade nine, rural basic school.

114. Interview with girl student, age fifteen, grade nine, rural basic school.

115. Interview with girl student, age nineteen, grade twelve, small town high school.

116. Interview with girl student, age seventeen, grade nine, rural basic school.

117. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade seven, rural basic school.

was still alive. Such advice reflected the older women's determination that their daughters receive the education they themselves were denied and their belief that the key to this was avoiding sexual relations that could lead to pregnancy.¹¹⁸

Apart from the gender violence described in the previous section, why do so many Zambian schoolgirls get pregnant? One reason is the total lack of sex education in the schools and the unwillingness of family members to talk about this taboo topic. Studies in other countries have shown an inverse relationship between comprehensive sex education and teen pregnancy.¹¹⁹ The inclusion of any form of sex education in schools in Zambia, however, is immensely controversial, and none existed in any school we visited.

Any information about sex that students receive in Zambian schools is a byproduct of the national campaign to prevent further spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is not included in the curriculum proper but carried out in various other ways—sometimes a talk by a classroom or guidance teacher, sometimes by bringing in an outside speaker from a church or NGO, but most often in clubs which students belong to on a voluntary basis. Students mentioned Anti-AIDS Clubs at several schools, and Girls Network or Girls Talk at others. Scripture Union Clubs also included strict instruction about refraining from sex outside of marriage. The most effective groups seemed to be the Anti-AIDS Clubs, which

118. Elsewhere in Africa, mothers have expressed a similar commitment to education as an ideal. One woman, Mutindi Mumbua Kiluva-Ndunda, who was the product of a rural school in Kenya and one of its only students to obtain a higher degree in the United States, returned to the area where she grew up to conduct field research for her dissertation, interviewing women of different generations about their experiences in education. She published her research in a 2001 book. KILUVA-NDUNDA, *supra* note 6, at 1. What is striking about her interviews is the women's intense commitment, reflected in their words and endless hard work, to the goal of their daughters obtaining an education and enjoying the freedom to choose whether to marry, thereby avoiding dependency upon men. *Id.* at 123–26.

119. See, e.g., Trisha E. Mueller et al., *The Association Between Sex Education and Youth's Engagement in Sexual Intercourse, Age at First Intercourse, and Birth Control Use at First Sex*, 42 J. ADOLESCENT HEALTH 89, 95 (2008) (discussing research “document[ing] the contribution of delayed sexual initiation and improved contraceptive use to the decreased teen pregnancy rate” in the United States). The most effective type of sex education appears to be in Sweden, which is very frank and focuses upon sexuality as a positive part of life. When budget cuts forced cutbacks in these programs during the 1990s, teen abortion rates and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases sharply increased. K. Edgardh, *Adolescent Sexual Health in Sweden*, 78 SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS 352, 352 (2002). Cf. FRANCES KATHERINE VAVRUS, *DESIRE AND DECLINE: SCHOOLING AMID CRISIS IN TANZANIA* 72–80, 87 (2003) (discussing how school sex education programs, when shaped by conservative views of school officials and other challenges, can convey misinformation about contraception and family planning).

worked in some areas to educate villagers about how to prevent infection. In this context, the girls involved became familiar with condom use.¹²⁰

From whatever sources girls learned sex education, the contents of the message were the same. It consisted of the following rules:

Stay away from sex;

Do not dress or present yourself in any way that may attract boys or male teachers;

Avoid boys; do not date them or trust what they say;

Avoid “bad” girls and bad groups that may lead you astray;

If you have sex, you will very likely get a life-threatening disease or get pregnant, either of which will destroy your future (or you may die from an abortion); and

The *only* protection against both pregnancy and HIV/AIDS is total abstinence from sex.

Virtually every girl recited to us one or all of these admonitions, which contained implicit or explicit messages about males. One high school student explained, “Our class teacher has said how to protect ourselves is not to be close to the boys; many of them have diseases. To protect yourselves from pregnancy, just do not believe boys; they lie. He may even be married, and you can get pregnant. Don’t listen to them.”¹²¹ Another girl told us that they had been instructed by teachers to “[s]tay away from boys; don’t be influenced by the group to go with boys. Don’t like money [or desire things other girls have]. If a man gives you money, it means you allow him to touch your body.”¹²² There were repeated references to avoiding girls of the “wrong sort” in their home neighborhoods—girls who go out to drink beer with men and end up sleeping with them for money.

The girls’ knowledge of contraception was extremely limited. At a few schools, they were told that if they *did* have sex (which they should not), they should make sure the male used a condom, and in one class a teacher even showed them a condom. One fourteen-year-old girl in grade nine explained that boys and girls received different lessons about sex in their religious education class, where “they emphasize to boys that if they have sex they should always use a condom” while “to girls they emphasize that we should behave ourselves—who is going to look after the child if the

120. We also encountered misinformation about AIDS, including the belief that it can be transmitted by exchanging clothing with or being coughed on by an infected person. The most common take-away from students’ anti-AIDS education appeared to be that one must never use the same razor blade as another person.

121. Interview with girl student, age eighteen, grade eleven, rural high school.

122. Interview with girl student, age sixteen, grade ten, rural high school.

boys denies [that he is the father]?”¹²³ One interviewee recalled that in grade seven she and her classmates were told “something about injections but that they would not protect you against disease,”¹²⁴ which is, of course, true. When asked for their suggestions about how to improve the education of girls in Zambia, many girls recommended that their schools teach them more about sex, and a couple even asked the interviewers to give them advice about it.

Finally, one traditional belief the girls appeared to have internalized was that if a girl gets pregnant, it is her fault. They believed that not only would she be blamed for having sex, but the school would punish her because she allowed a boy to touch her—a variant of the widely held, though inaccurate, belief that women and girls control the circumstances under which they have sex and are responsible for the consequences of it. “Us girls, we fail to defend ourselves,” one student told us. She went on to explain, “The key [to avoiding sex] is girls. Even if somebody proposes love to you, it is the girls who can refuse.”¹²⁵ Even if they were sexually assaulted, some girls said they would not go to the Zambian police because they thought the police would believe that if sex took place, the girl had complied and was not forced. The notion that girls would be blamed for any sexual interaction goes a long way toward explaining lack of reporting of sexual harassment and assault in the schools.

Moreover, students were actively taught that it was up to them to conduct themselves in ways that prevented both rape and pregnancy—not to wear short dresses, not to laugh with boys, not to go out at night, and not to “sit carelessly” (so that it would be possible for a teacher or male student to see up their skirts). Mostly, however, their task was simply to stay away from boys, which would obviously prove impossible in the long run. The message conveyed was that boys bear no responsibility for their own behavior with respect to sex, even though they aggressively pursue their female classmates for it. The underlying assumption, perhaps, is that a man’s sex drive is undeniable and unstoppable once aroused. Girls are also taught that men and boys are disease-ridden, presumably as a result of widespread promiscuity, and not to be believed or trusted. These attitudes are unlikely to foster the development of mature and mutually respectful relationships between the sexes as adults. At the same time, these views of men and male sexuality, socially constructed though they are, shape in a

123. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, suburban basic school. Cf. AMY STAMBACH, *LESSONS FROM MOUNT KILIMANJARO* 111–33 (2000) (describing the gendered messages conveyed by a sex education class in Tanzania in which boys were instructed to “preserve their bullets” and girls taught to control themselves by “locking their boxes”).

124. Interview with girl student, age fourteen, grade nine, urban basic school.

125. Interview with girl student, age twenty-two, grade ten, rural high school.

very immediate way the interactions between many Zambian men and women. In this context, the advice given to young Zambian girls may in fact serve to prepare them for the reality of gender relations that confronts them at school and in the world beyond. We discuss whether and how such powerfully constructed notions of masculinity may be changed over time in the next section.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Zambia has made important progress in increasing girls' access to basic education and narrowing the gender gap in school participation at both basic and high school levels. Moreover, nearly all of the girls we interviewed expressed a commitment to the goal of obtaining an education, which they viewed as a necessary condition of individual advancement. Yet our research reveals that Zambian schoolgirls continue to face multiple obstacles to obtaining an education, including sex discrimination in the classroom and at home, sexual abuse by teachers and male classmates, and attitudes towards sexuality that do not adequately equip girls to prevent pregnancy and lead them to devote significant energy towards avoiding interactions with boys and men. These obstacles help to explain why girls on average continue to have lower test scores, experience higher dropout rates, and are less likely to be literate than their male classmates. Addressing these obstacles would enable Zambia to come closer to ensuring that girls have access to and are able to benefit from a quality education on an equal basis with boys.

A number of possible recommendations emerge from our findings. In this section, we discuss suggestions offered by interviewees, initiatives undertaken by the Zambian government, and several further ideas of our own.

Many of the girls interviewed focused on the financial burdens of education that are more frequently absorbed by girls than boys. Many recommended that the government provide girl students who cannot afford school fees with scholarships and subsidies for uniforms, books, and other school costs to relieve the financial pressure on them. Additionally, it would give girls the freedom to focus on their studies and reduce the risk that they will drop out of school, enter into an early marriage, or give in to a teacher's sexual advances.

Some girls urged the government to adopt measures to help female students who had dropped out of school to return. One recommended that teachers and school officials go out into the community to talk to girls who had dropped out and to their parents about the importance of education and to encourage the girl's return. Another suggested that the government create special schools for girls who return to school after giving birth, in

order to provide a safe and comfortable space to learn along with emotional, educational, and material support.

Other recommendations focused on promoting equal opportunities for girls and boys. These included increasing the number of girls at traditionally all-boys schools, so that the girls would not be outnumbered. Others recommended that schools provide girls with quiet study spaces equal to those provided to boys, offer them an option to board at schools that make boarding available to boys, appoint an equal number of boy and girl prefects, and hire more female teachers.

Girls also urged the government to offer opportunities to learn in girls-only spaces by opening all-girls schools or offering classes separated by gender, with female teachers teaching girls and male teachers teaching boys. Introducing girls-only schools or classes within co-educational schools would reduce the threat of harassment and discriminatory treatment and expand girls' opportunities for participation.¹²⁶ Others said that schools should establish new, and strengthen existing, all-girls clubs that give girls the opportunity to discuss issues of concern to them.¹²⁷

The girls also called upon the government to address the sexual harassment and violence many of them had experienced or witnessed. Expanding boarding facilities for girls would not only cut down on time spent on housework and transit and make that time available for studying, but also alleviate the sexual harassment experienced during journeys to and from school. In addition, the interviewees suggested schools educate students about sex through classes, school clubs, assemblies, or outside speakers.

Several girls called for their schools to respond more effectively to sexual abuse or harassment by teachers, including firing teachers found to have engaged in such conduct. Other students focused their recommendations on persuading teachers not to engage in sexual abuse in the first place. In the words of a ninth grade girl, age fourteen:

If I was the head of the school, I'd want all the pupils to be free and not get scared because of a teacher saying that if you don't have sex with me, you won't pass. I wouldn't tolerate those things. . . . Teachers are supposed to teach pupils and not destroy their future by wanting to have sex with them. I would talk to every teacher and make them take this serious and understand that. What if their pupil was their child? They wouldn't like to

126. See COLCLOUGH ET AL., *supra* note 46, at 187 (noting that Zambia has successfully piloted single-sex classes in math and sciences).

127. Monisha Bajaj & Meera Parthmarajah, *Engendering Agency: The Differentiated Impact of Educational Initiatives in Zambia and India*, 23 FEMINIST FORMATIONS 48, 63–64 (2011) (noting that in countries such as Zambia, girl groups and clubs may enhance girls' status and agency through collective action).

know that their child was sexually abused by their teacher. I think they should just understand that these are children and that we are the future of tomorrow. If they destroy our future, and we don't learn, I don't know how our country will be in the future.

This girl's eloquent statement suggests adopting a multi-faceted strategy to address sexual violence by teachers, including a zero-tolerance stance to such conduct and sensitization of teachers to its consequences for girls and ultimately the country. By encouraging male teachers to put themselves in the position of a father, such sensitization efforts could remind them that they have a duty of care toward their students akin to that of a parent,¹²⁸ and, as such, should treat students not as potential girlfriends but as children.

Finally, girls proposed strategies aimed at changing the discriminatory attitudes that impede their ability to achieve their educational goals. They recommended sensitization campaigns aimed at educating teachers, parents, and students that girls have as much ability to succeed in school and careers as boys.

The Zambian government has undertaken a number of initiatives in an effort to expand girls' access to and participation in the education system. Provisions in the new Education Act address gender inequality and discrimination in education, as well as the specific problems of pregnancy and early marriage. The act prohibits educational institutions from discriminating against a student in any manner.¹²⁹ It requires the Minister of Education to promote equal access to participation in, and completion of, education at all levels regardless of gender and to "endeavor to provide" equal educational opportunities for boys and girls.¹³⁰ The Act also provides for the creation of an education board to ensure that the curriculum and teaching materials are gender sensitive and calls for incorporating gender-sensitive teaching methods into teacher training programs.¹³¹

In addition, the act criminalizes marrying or marrying off a student who is under sixteen years or preventing her from attending school for that purpose, prescribing a prison sentence of fifteen years to life for violators.¹³² In an effort to give teeth to the government's 1997 reentry policy, which has resulted in fewer girls returning to school after pregnancy

128. This is also a legal duty. See *R.M. v. Hakasenke*, (2008) ZLR 1 [HC] J7 (Zam.) (finding that teachers and school headmasters owe a duty of care to the children they teach equal to that of a careful father to his own child and finding teacher and headmaster liable for breaching that duty when a teacher sexually abused a student and the school did not adequately respond).

129. Education Act No. 23 § 19 (2011) (Zam.).

130. *Id.* § 31(1)–(5).

131. *Id.* § 31(3), (4).

132. *Id.* § 18.

than anticipated,¹³³ the Act provides that anyone who fails to readmit a girl to school after childbirth commits a criminal offense; if convicted, the violator may be fined, imprisoned for up to two years, or both.¹³⁴ The Act also provides for the creation of an education board or board of management to develop procedures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in schools.¹³⁵ The Act may go some way toward addressing many of the problems that female students encounter, but only if resources are devoted to its implementation.

The Zambian government is also developing, in consultation with UNICEF and other partners, a “National Child Protection Policy for Schools,” which seeks to protect children from abuse in schools and respond effectively to such abuse when it occurs.¹³⁶ The draft policy includes a number of promising reforms. It expresses the government’s intent to create child protection standards for schools and to ensure that each school develops a code of conduct for its teachers and students—something our research revealed most schools did not have. The policy also declares that the Ministry will establish reporting and response procedures for cases of sexual abuse, enforce more severe punishments for teachers found responsible, and strengthen inspection and monitoring of child abuse in schools. Importantly, given the many cases of retaliation that our interviewees discussed, the policy provides for establishing confidential reporting mechanisms, such as toll-free help lines. It also calls for strengthening the counseling services available to students at school, instituting a referral system linking students with outside legal, psychosocial and other support, and establishing and strengthening student organizations that give students a forum to discuss sexual violence and other child protection issues. Finally, the draft policy provides for various forms of education and training, including training teachers on preventing and responding to child abuse, educating communities about child protection issues, and instituting a life skills program for students. Many of these proposed initiatives echo the recommendations proffered by the girls we interviewed and would go a long way toward addressing discrimination against girls in school, although their success will depend upon how they are implemented at the national and local levels.

Our study suggests several further recommendations. As the Zambian government continues to develop and give effect to a national policy on child protection for schools, it should ensure that the policy is sufficiently detailed and robust to respond effectively to the multiple forms of sexual

133. See 2008 Zambia MoE Statistical Bulletin, *supra* note 32, at 81.

134. Education Act No. 23 § 25(4).

135. *Id.* § 32(1), (2).

136. Zambia Ministry of Education, Science, and Vocational Training, Draft National Child Protection Policy for Schools, Jan. 6, 2002 (on file with authors).

harassment and violence that Zambian girls experience in school. For example, the draft policy could usefully be expanded to address not only sexual (and other forms of) abuse but also the pervasive harassment by fellow pupils and teachers that negatively affects girls' educational experience. The child protection standards and code of conduct that the draft policy proposes to create should be distributed widely to all participants in the education system, and teachers should be required to comply with the code of conduct as a condition of employment. The Ministry should develop and provide to schools specific guidelines for responding to reports of sexual violence or harassment and for disciplining teachers or students found to have engaged in such conduct. These guidelines should include measures to protect students who file complaints against their teachers from retaliation, such as transferring them to another class. The government should also consider mandating the termination of a teacher's contract if he is found guilty of sexual abuse of a pupil, including engaging in a sexual relationship with a student at his school.¹³⁷ Education and training programs on issues relating to sexual violence and harassment should be required not only of teachers but also of school administrators and students.

Moreover, Zambia's important re-entry policy, now codified as law, could be strengthened by additional measures aimed at reducing the prevalence of teen pregnancy and its serious negative consequences for girls' education. In addition to reaching out to pregnant girls to encourage them to return to school, as suggested above, teachers and school administrators should ensure that girls who do return are provided with access to guidance and counseling resources and extra academic support, such as free private tutoring, to ease their transition back to school. A program of government-sponsored daycare for young mothers who lack childcare support within their families could further relieve the burdens that prevent many girls from continuing their education once they have given birth. In addition, providing sexual and reproductive health education, including information about contraception, to students in all basic and high schools would help equip girls to make informed decisions about sexual relations and protect themselves from pregnancy.

Lastly, the Zambian government and its civil society partners should explore strategies for displacing gender norms that perpetuate patterns of violence and discrimination against Zambian girls and women. In Zambia, as elsewhere, ideas about gender and gender roles are historically, economically, and socially constructed. One study examined how a group of Zambian boys learned to be men, first as they watched their fathers

137. South Africa recently adopted this requirement through legislation. Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 § 17(1)(c) (S. Afr.).

exercise power over women and children and later as, with other members of their peer groups, they began to construct and express their masculine identity through their sexuality.¹³⁸ This expression of maleness emphasized performance and aggression; it “was often figured as an inherently violent activity in which, in competition with other men, the conquest of women was the central element.”¹³⁹

Although both boys and girls may experience prevailing constructions of masculinity as a given, gender is, of course, highly unstable and subject to contestation and change.¹⁴⁰ This opens up space for policies that seek to alter gender norms that perpetuate violence and inequality. A low-cost private school in Ndola, Zambia offers a promising example.¹⁴¹ With the goal of fostering greater gender equality, the founders separated boys and girls into separate campuses across the street from each other and instituted specific policies that unsettled traditional gender norms. For example, both boys and girls participated in drumming and school leadership activities (traditionally male activities), and both boys and girls were required to carry out cleaning tasks such as sweeping, cleaning toilets, and washing windows (considered women’s work).¹⁴² After some initial resistance, the boys adjusted; many expressed changed views about gender roles, and some even began to help their mothers around the house.¹⁴³

Of course, the kind of education offered at this private school is not easily replicable in Zambian government schools, which struggle with overcrowding and must rush to complete the required curriculum in a half-day, leaving little time for daily assemblies and work crews. Moreover, it is not clear how far lessons learned in school will survive in a larger society that may not be ready to accept radically new attitudes about gender. Nevertheless, this example suggests the potential that creative school and

138. Anthony Simpson, *Sons and Fathers/Boys to Men in the Time of AIDS: Learning Masculinity in Zambia*, 31 J. S. AFR. STUD. 569 (2005). Moreover, schools do not simply teach gender norms in a straightforward way, but produce “gendered knowing” through continuous and contested interactions between practices and broader social life. STAMBACH, *supra* note 123, at 132, 167 (describing schools as “culturally contentious social spaces where gender and age are subtly woven into and out of non-school life”).

139. Simpson, *supra* note 138, at 585.

140. See, e.g., Hunter, *supra* note 97, at 107–08 (discussing how, in light of severe economic decline and an inability to afford marriage, young South African men subtly reworked constructions of masculinity to celebrate having multiple sexual partners while justifying this practice as part of a seamless “tradition” of polygamy).

141. Monisha Bajaj, *Un/Doing Gender? A Case Study of School Policy and Practice in Zambia*, 55 INT’L REV. OF EDUC. 483 (2009).

142. *Id.* at 489–93.

143. *Id.* at 492–93. Bajaj suggests, however, that girls may have less ability than boys to give effect to new understandings of gender roles once they leave the school compound. *Id.* at 496–97.

government programs may hold for displacing harmful gender ideologies that underpin the obstacles to girls' education identified in this study.