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RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES: MASVINGO'S DOUBLE-ROOTED FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

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Abstract

This article results from research on female heads of households in a small Zimbabwean city. Urban-rural linkages constituted an important, on-going survival strategy for women in the research sample. Despite my respondents' desire to stay and to source a living in town, most maintained rural linkages in order to cope with various problems in town. Without a foot in the rural area, most women would not have been able to pursue their desired objective of being permanently urban. Although the women were urban-oriented, they used kin networks in ways that maximised their chances of surviving in town, against the structural constraints imposed by central and local-level bureaucracies. The article explores ways in which the women pursued the strategy.

THE STUDY ON which this article is based was carried out in Masvingo town, a provincial capital with a population of 52 000 according to the 1992 Census (CSO 1993, 13). Masvingo lies in the southern part of Zimbabwe, ravaged by repeated droughts in the decade extending from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Masvingo is Zimbabwe's oldest town, founded in August 1890. At one time in the 1890s, it was also the largest colonial settlement. It has twice changed names: Fort Victoria was the town's name up to 1982, then for a brief period it was Nyanda, a name rejected by the inhabitants of the town. From 1982, the town assumed the name Masvingo, and is now a regional economic centre as well as the provincial capital.

According to the 1992 census, only 33,7% of Masvingo women aged 15 to 64 were economically active (CSO, 1993, 59). Given the high participation of women in operations in the informal sector that were not enumerated in the census, it is not surprising that the census produced a very low female participation rate in the urban economy. The town had an official unemployment rate of 25%.

Masvingo had its economic roots in the free capitalist market that existed prior to the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. This was predominantly a male-oriented and male-controlled economy. The urban economy supported a migrant male population. Africans were considered as permanently rural. Job opportunities for women were very rare. Women worked in the domestic sector and service jobs such as nursing and teaching. Few of these could be absorbed into the two primary schools

and one secondary school (in Mucheke, then the town's only high density suburb), one clinic and a limited number of private medical practices. In the informal sector, beer-brewing, prostitution, and marketing of fresh produce, together with domestic service and child care, were activities characteristic of town women.

This study is based on urban anthropological fieldwork over a period of 14 months from early November 1994 to the end of December 1995. The results presented in this article comprise part of a larger project. I used multiple methods in order to gain greater insights of struggles by my Masvingo respondents not only to cope with poverty but at times to move out of it. Apart from informal interviews and observations in the community, I selected for in-depth and intensive interviews, 58 female heads of households (eight married bread-winners were later on removed from the analysis as they were not unequivocally female heads of households), and I also interviewed 31 officials.

The female heads of households who participated in the in-depth interviews from January to May were found by 'snow-ball sampling'. The snow-ball sample drew all its study population from Rujeko and Mucheke. These were Masvingo's only low-income or high-density areas, where the bulk of the town's population lived.

Kin are quite important at the time and point of entry into an urban area. Only 6% of the research participants were born in Masvingo town. The rest were migrants to the city. For my respondents, urban-rural linkages constituted an important on-going survival strategy. I argue in this article that despite their desire to stay and to source a living in town, most respondents maintained rural linkages. Without a foot in the rural area, most women would not have been able to pursue their desired, permanently urban objectives. Although female migrants were urban-oriented, they used kinship networks in ways that maximised their chances of surviving in the city, against the structural constraints imposed by central and local bureaucracies. This article explores the ways in which female heads were turning to rural-urban linkages as a survival strategy that enabled them to cope with Masvingo town life.

There were some for whom the urban strategy was dominant. The majority (68% of my sample) maintained the double-rooted strategy: these often had an ultimate aim to return to their rural villages at a later point in life. Irrespective of the dominant survival strategy, urban-rural interactions did accomplish the desired goals.

Basic data on Masvingo research participants

During data analysis I developed an analytical category to determine the socio-economic status of respondents. Initially I had adopted an impressionistic division based on total income, but this proved

unsatisfactory as a basis for categorising the behaviour of my respondents. I subsequently developed criteria that provided a classification of respondents into four groups, namely: 'burnt-out', 'hanging-on', 'coping with poverty', and 'climbing out of poverty'. These categories in many ways revealed that Cheater's and Jackson's (1994, 143) 'straddling strategies' in the rural context were being replicated in the urban context by my Masvingo respondents. Table 1 indicates the composite variables aggregated to produce scores that led to an objective definition of the socio-economic status of participants. It also shows the value assigned to the response in each score category. Finally it demarcates divisions on the basis of attaining a certain number of scores by a respondent.

Table 1
THE POVERTY INDEX VARIABLES

Variable	*Value = 1*	*Value = 2*	*Value = 3*
Education (self)	primary or less	Forms 1-4	post-secondary
Housing	lodger	rental	owner
Number of rooms	shared	one	two+
Persons per room	5+	3–4	2
Clothing	only donated	only 2nd hand	some new
Number of meals per day	1	2	3
Meat intake (last wk)	0	1-4 times	5+ times
Number of dependents	4+	2–3	1 or less
Total income	$>600	601–999	1000+
Remittances per annum	0	1–3	4+
Income minus expenditure	negative	break-even	positive

'burnt out' = total score < 14: those who could hardly sustain their urban existence
'hanging on' = total score of 15-20: in difficult circumstances but struggled to stay in town
'coping' = total score of 21-26: could balance the household budget but had no savings
'climbing out' = total score >27: had a healthy domestic budget, had savings and investments

Table 2 presents the two distributions of respondents on the basis of the composite score, compared to my initial hunches based on income only. Those with an income below $300 per month I had considered the 'burnt-out'; the 'hanging-on' had an income between $300 and $600; the 'coping' ones had an income range of $601 to $999. It appears that the

more complex criteria captured the real situation of my respondents. Very few were in the 'climbing-out' group. The majority struggled to exist in the city and were thus in the 'hanging-on' or 'coping' group.

Table 2
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF MASVINGO RESPONDENTS

	Use of Income Only		*Objective Criteria*	
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Climbing-out	17	34	8	16
Coping	14	28	17	34
Hanging-on	10	20	20	40
Burnt-out	9	18	4	8
Total	50	100	50	100

Table 3 shows that the research participants comprised five marital status groups.

Table 3
DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY MARITAL STATUS

	Total Number	*%*
Divorced	19	38
Never-married single mothers	11	22
Never-married single persons	7	14
Widowed	7	14
Mapoto (informal union)	6	12
Total	50	100

I noticed in only one case a discrepancy between the participant's self-classification of her marital status and that of the person who referred the person to me. One never-married, single mother identified herself as a married woman. She had spent at least nine months at her would-be in-laws' rural homestead. Her prospective husband, a soldier in the national army, never paid bride wealth, though he did pay her a nominal amount of $100 per month for maintenance. At the time of the initial interview, she was staying with her parents in Masvingo, having rejoined her family two months prior to the interview, but only in October 1995, did this research

participant indicate to me that her prospective marriage had failed to materialise. In a situation as in Zimbabwe, where marriage is idealised as near universal, a woman must be seen to have tried before giving up attempts at marriage.

Table 4 shows the distribution of the respondents into three age groups. It is not surprising that there were more women aged 26 to 41 than in the other brackets. This represents a phase in women's lives when they were more likely to seek gainful work in town in order to support themselves and their dependents. During this phase women try to invest in their children's future.

Table 4
DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY AGE-GROUP

Age Groups	*Total*	*%*
18–25	8	16
26–41	34	68
42+	8	16
Total	50	100

Table 5 shows that the majority in my sample had very little education. The percentage of women with a primary only or less educational level was high, only 8% had completed a post-secondary professional qualification. Hence the majority of the women in my sample could not easily sell their labour in the formal market. They relied on their own resourcefulness and entrepreneurial skills in order to earn a living.

Table 5
DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

	Total	*%*
Primary	32	64
Secondary	14	28
Post-secondary training	4	8
Total	50	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of the respondents by source of income. My sample had a high rate of participation of respondents in multiple

income-earning activities. The attempt to ward off poverty by engaging in multiple income-earning opportunities is what Cheater and Jackson (1994, 143) refer to as 'straddling' strategies. Poorer respondents relied more on multiple incomes. One woman had five sources of income. She was a cross-border trader, sold vegetables and tomatoes, rented out a room, was a *mupedzanhamo* operator (second-hand clothes dealer) and a retrenchee on a pension. She was one of the few successful ones who engaged in multiple income sources. It is no surprise, given the location of the research, that the majority of the research participants, in Table 7 identified themselves as Karanga.

Table 6
SOURCES OF INCOME

Main Source of Income	*Total*	*%*
Food vending	19	38
Cross-border trade	13	26
Formal job	6	12
Prostitution	4	8
Carrier bags	3	6
Hairdressers	2	4
Others	3	6
Total	50	100

Other = one in each of the following categories: a traditional beer brewer, a rentier and a recipient of maintenance money.

Table 7
RESPONDENTS' ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Ethnic Group	*Total*	*%*
Karanga Shona	35	70
Non-Karanga Shona	6	12
Ndebele	4	8
Other	5	10
Total	50	100

Non-Karanga Shona included 3 Zezuru, 2 Manyika and 1 Korekore. Other category had 2 Shangaans and 3 Malawians.

Table 8 shows that most of my respondents had a rural background and originated from rural districts surrounding Masvingo. This high incidence of persons with a rural background partly explains the reasons

why many of the respondents chose to have a foot both in town and the village. The proximity of the women's rural homes to Masvingo town made it easy for most of them to maintain rural links through remittances, visits or other regular contacts with those in their villages. Not only was it convenient for most of the participants to maintain one foot in Masvingo and another in the village, but it was a part of their survival strategies. For instance splitting the household into the urban and rural component reduces costs of urban reproduction. Keeping the rural links active is like an insurance against unforeseen future problems.

Table 8
RESPONDENTS' ORIGINAL HOME BACKGROUNDS — PLACE OF BIRTH

	Total	%
Rural Masvingo	33	66
Rural non-Masvingo	6	12
Masvingo urban	3	6
Urban non-Masvingo	7	14
Born in South Africa	1	2
Total	50	100

Unstable marital unions meant a reduced risk of pregnancy or a greater willingness to prevent pregnancy on the part of the women in the study. The fertility rate for the sample is well below the provincial average of 6,7 children per woman according to the 1992 census: my respondents averaged 2,2 children per woman. Even if we exclude the seven childless women, the average number of children was only 2,6 per woman. These results paralleled Finan and Henderson's (1988, 94) observations that single-mother households are small, less educated and impoverished.

All of my respondents contributed to the upkeep of their dependent children, whether the children stayed with them or not. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents' children were below the age of 18, the official age of majority. In some cases, child support continued well after attainment of the age of majority. However, 14% of respondents reported that they did not support their children. Their children were either grown-up or staying with their fathers. All those with dependent children staying with their fathers made irregular remittances to their children and yet they did not consider this as 'material' support. They thought that their contributions did not significantly count towards a child's upkeep. In one case a woman, who was the sole care-giver to her daughters aged three and six years, reported that she did not contribute to the upkeep of her children, because

Table 9
RESPONDENTS' OWN CHILDREN

	Total	%
One child	11	22
Two children	14	28
Three children	8	16
Four children	5	10
Five children	3	6
Six children	2	4
No child	7	14
Total	50	100

her only source of cash income for herself and the children was maintenance money from one of her children's fathers. She did not consider her labour input as 'in kind' income.

Seventy-two per cent of the women contributed to their children's education. Schooling was a common topic amongst the women when talking about their children. In a way they saw their children's education as an investment they had to make in their struggle to escape from poverty.

In a few instances single mothers with a grown-up child or children, tried to secure for themselves an investment in old age by partially caring for a brother's child or children. Hence for some female heads of households, reproductive responsibilities did not necessarily end with their own children.

Whilst the size of the urban household in many instances did not present a complete picture of the demands on the incomes of my respondents, it gave a glimpse of the day-to-day demands on resources.

Table 10
DISTRIBUTION OF SIZE OF URBAN HOUSEHOLDS

	Total	%
Less than 5 persons	13	26
5–9 persons	20	40
10+ persons	17	34
Total	50	100

Many of my respondents had lived in Masvingo town for quite some time, yet 68% had retained their rural roots.

Table 11
RESPONDENTS' LENGTH OF STAY IN MASVINGO

	Total	*%*
Less than 5 years	11	22
5–9 years	16	32
10+ years	23	46
Total	50	100

Many respondents, despite having lived in Masvingo for a long time, had a very high rate of residential mobility, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12
RESPONDENTS' PERIODS OF STAY AT THE RESIDENCES DURING INITIAL INTERVIEW

	Total	*%*
Less than a year	19	38
1–5 years	20	40
6+ years	11	22
Total	50	100

The single room for my respondents was a multi-purpose unit. It functioned as a kitchen, a bedroom, a lounge or sitting room and a storeroom. In my sample, 54% cooked inside the one room, 20% cooked in a room designated as a kitchen (the kitchen sometimes was used as a bedroom at night), and 26% cooked outside in an open space or in a shack or shed, the weather permitting. At times some of the members of the household used such shacks as bedrooms.

I solicited information concerning my sample's health. Up to 16% had been ill within the six months preceding the initial interviews. It was noteworthy, however, that all these women had applied self-care and home-made remedies or procured over-the-counter medicines. Only two had sought treatment, one from Mucheke Clinic and another from a herbalist. My respondents minimised or avoided altogether health-related expenses.

However, 40% of the respondents also reported that in the six months preceding the initial interview a member of their urban household had been ill and needed medical attention. Of the 20 respondents who had a sick household member, 15 noted that treatment was sought from a clinic, while three had received treatment at the Masvingo provincial referral hospital. Only two had sought traditional medical intervention. Thirty per cent of the respondents had spent part of their time caring for a sick dependent. Nine cared for own children, four for a sick parent and two cared for a relative other than parents. Eleven had spent more than three hours a day caring for a sick person. On the other hand, four had spent less than three hours a day caring for the sick. Twelve respondents reported that the sick person had recovered, five said that they were recovering and three noted that the sick person had died.

Access to rural resources

Andreasen (1990, 164) demonstrated the importance of access to rural land by a family or household head as a major determinant of split residential patterns. In Masvingo the situation was very different: only one respondent, a widow, claimed ownership of some 12 acres of rural land.

Ncube (1987, 20–21) noted that the Matrimonial Causes Act (1985) strove to establish a fair and equitable formula for the re-allocation of marital property at divorce: nevertheless, whilst the marriage lasts and upon the death of the husband, the woman remains unprotected by the law, leading many to argue that a woman was better off divorcing her husband than to wait for his death. For Ncube, the Matrimonial Causes Act excluded property by way of inheritance as well as that acquired in terms of any custom. Thus communal land appeared excluded from re-allocation.

The system of land tenure and ownership denies women control of the only form of meaningful property in communal areas. At marriage, women acquire only rights of use of communal lands. Most of my respondents had no access to land, mostly due to their status as female heads of households. A paltry 8% of the sample had access to rural land, owned by their male kin. Those widows and divorcees who had previously had access to land through marriage, had lost their land-use rights. Only one widow still maintained her rights to use land. Her rural homestead and livestock were looked after by a paid herdsman. She used hired labour to till her lands. This was despite the fact that she visited the village only infrequently. This small fraction of the respondents with access to land produced food crops for sale as well as urban consumption. For these respondents, food production was useful in balancing their urban household budgets.

With the exception of one respondent, a widow with 16 cattle, none of the respondents owned cattle, though four women owned goats. Kin

looked after the livestock of the research participants. Only one woman employed a herd-boy whom she paid $60 per month.

Widows and divorcees appeared to be the greatest losers in respect of getting a share of the property they had helped to acquire. Thirty-six per cent had built a house in their husband's homestead. They had lost this property to the husband or to his kin upon divorce or widowhood. Up to 40% of my respondents owned a hut, or one or two rooms in the rural area. Their children or kin, especially parents and families of brothers, used their rural housing units. Although the rural housing units were of little monetary value, they strengthened the respondents' double-rootedness. However, despite the fact that female heads had no access to rural land, they still maintained village ties so as to retain their right of return to the village should things not work out in town or for when they might retire.

Access to urban resources

Ownership of, and access to, urban land and housing in Masvingo clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of my respondents. Only 16% had an urban home, all but one in Masvingo. The one respondent who owned a one-roomed unit in Mupandawana growth point lived in a *mapoto* relationship in Masvingo and sold carrier bags for a living. All Masvingo home-owners except one were widows who had inherited their property from their deceased spouses. An urban home was thus beyond the reach of most of my research participants.

The research participants had two major uses of urban space. First, urban housing units were used as residences, and second, the house functioned to generate an income or as a place from which to operate one's business activities such as servicing clients by prostitutes or for verandah food sales. In my study, half the respondents produced crops from their urban gardens, mostly for their own consumption although few produced for sale.

My respondents had very limited access to urban facilities and services, including health facilities. Most women could simply not afford the cost of health provision even at the cheapest level of the clinic. Each visit to the clinic cost them $10. Hence self-care became the primary means to maintain health. In a similar manner these cost-related problems prevented any of my respondents from pursuing further studies.

Only one respondent received $100 per month from the Department of Social Welfare. She was a widow and had to supplement this grant through selling food. The rest did not qualify for Social Welfare assistance. As able-bodied women, they all failed the means test for Social Welfare assistance. Not only were they ineligible to receive welfare grants, they had no access to credit and financial institutions in town. Only three respondents had ever benefited from loans obtained from formal credit

institutions. Despite being in town, female heads of households had very limited access to urban institutions and facilities.

There is a tendency to associate towns with formal employment, but only 12% of my respondents derived their primary source of income from a formal job. My respondents depended instead on informal alternative sources of income. My respondents had no durable assets to fall back on. For most the only form of durable asset consisted of their furniture (generally a single or three-quarter bed), and a few utensils such as pots, plates, cutlery and dishes. Even when sold in times of crisis, these goods realised very little. However, 52% of respondents intended to accrue urban assets, another 20% wanted to accumulate rural assets, especially to build a rural home.

I collected data on the sources of energy used by female heads for cooking as well as lighting and heating. For my sample, 88% used electricity for lighting their rooms. Thirty per cent used only paraffin for heating and cooking purposes, 50% generally used electricity for heating and cooking purposes, 20% used both firewood and paraffin. Occasionally, the people who used electricity also used either paraffin or firewood. All the respondents whose source of energy was firewood or paraffin spent less than $20 per month on energy. Costs for electricity consumption varied between $5 and $80 per month. Many respondents used electricity for lighting purposes only.

Investments in rural and urban networks

Amongst the many strategies adopted by my Masvingo sample was the deliberate investment in rural-urban networks. Continued utilisation of rural-urban networks as a survival option was a pragmatic response to scarcity of resources, including jobs. Through an examination of rural-urban linkages, one is able to see how institutionalised regulations were side-stepped, manipulated and even resisted by the women. On the other hand, laws that had a bearing on migrants, especially women, such as the Vagrancy Act, conditioned and provided the arsenal, language and ideological space for understanding rural-urban linkages.

Kin connections underpinned rural-urban networks. Whilst the logic of urban living meant side-stepping some obligations to kin, the reality was that for most respondents kin continued to be significant. My respondents fell into two groups, the double-rooted and the permanently urban. These categories distinguished my respondents in terms of perceived attitudes towards urban stay. I constructed an index for double-rootedness and permanently urban on the basis of a composite measure of ten variables. The ten variables were intended to measure the degree of commitment to the rural village and town. The categorisation of double-rooted or permanently urban resulted from the total score of the ten

Table 13
THE DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS AND PERMANENTLY URBAN MEASURES

Variable	*Value = 1*	*Value = 2*	*Value = 3*
1 Housing situation in town	owner	rental	lodger
2 Split residence	all in town	some in vill.	all in village
3 remittances	0	1–3 per annum	4+ per annum
4 attitude towards kin	negative	non-committal	positive
5 length of stay in town	10+ years	5–9 years	0–4 years
6 frequency of visits to the village	0	1–2 per annum	3+ per annum
7 total income	$1000+	$601–699	<$600
8 number of dependents	1 or less	2–3	4+
9 urban attitude	positive	non-committal	negative
10 rural attitude	negative	non-committal	positive

double-rootedness = total score 23-30
urban-permanency = total score of 10-22

measures. For my study there were 68% double-rooted respondents. My research participants continued to use rural-urban networks as part of their strategy to ensure their continued stay in the city. Only 32% saw the town as their permanent home. Generally they considered the town a market place from which one derived a living.

My double-rooted respondents continued to activate rural-urban networks in their day-to-day living experiences. They intended eventually to return to their villages. In this context, none defined the villages of their ex-husbands or deceased husbands as 'their' homes. When asked where their 'home' is (*Kumusha kwenyu ndekupi?*), they invariably gave their village of origin, although as we shall see this does not apply in all contexts. Respondents saw their stay in town as temporary and believed that they would eventually return to the village. Consequently, they perceived that their rural village was their home: in the women's ordinary talk, 'home' is reserved for the village. Many respondents participated in village ceremonial activities such as weddings, funerals and other get-togethers. For instance, a never-married single mother noted:

> It is quite good for one's well-being to be constantly in touch with one's village. One should be present at family functions especially funerals. It is a pity that most women cannot afford to do so these days.

Interestingly, although this woman had no intention of ever returning to her village even in old age, she showed commitment to her village of origin. This is in contrast to conclusions reached by Schlyter (1990, 188) that

> It seemed impossible for women householders to maintain two places simultaneously as a survival mechanism; they were urban, or they left and resided for a longer period in rural areas.

The 68% of women who were double-rooted seem to be saying, 'Although I live in town, I shall maintain contact with my village of origin.' They wanted to hang on in Masvingo town for as long as they could, and had no immediate plans to return to the village, but regarded the urban situation as insecure, and knew that they would eventually return to the village in retirement or when everything else failed. This is the pattern of earlier generations of immigrants observed by people like Mitchell (1970). Those who opted for the double-rooted strategy thought that urban life was too expensive. They realised the impossibility of continued urban stay in old age. Many agreed that at some point they would go back to the village. Some female heads in the study contributed to the education of their village-based brother's children. This ensured easy re-entry into village life at some future date. Most continued to communicate with and care for village-based parents and kin.

The women who intended to pursue the permanently urban strategy had socio-economic benefits in mind. They perceived the standard of living to be better in town compared to the village, and that there were more survival options in town compared to the village.

Double-rooted/permanently urban and other variables

Five variables (respondents' age, ethnicity, number of children, educational level and frequency of rural visits) were not significantly related to each other even at the 10% level. Another three variables, namely the poverty index, sources of income and size of urban residential household, were found to be weakly related to the variable of double-rooted or permanently urban (DR/PU). They had significance levels of 0,0922, 0,07576 and 0,09181 respectively. However, Table 14 shows that DR/PU cross-tabulated against length of stay in town was significant at the 5% level. The longer one had lived in town, the more likely that one would be in the urban permanent category. Yet overall, despite the length of stay in urban Masvingo, most respondents maintained links with their villages of origin.

Marital status was also significantly related to the PU/DR variable at the 5% level. As shown in Table 14 all but one widow were in the PU category. Widows in my sample had acquired ownership of urban property after the death of their husbands. This explains the high preference by

Table 14
DOUBLE-ROOTED/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND LENGTH OF STAY IN TOWN

	<5 yrs	*5–9 yrs*	*10+ yrs*	*Total*	*%*
DR	10	12	12	34	68
PU	1	4	11	16	32
Total	11	16	23	50	100
%	22	32	46	100	100

DR = Double-rooted; PU = Permanently urban

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	5,66075	2	0,05899

widows for the urban strategy. They knew that even when things get tough they were unlikely to get the support of their affines. Yet widows referred to the homes they helped to build in their late husbands' villages as 'their' own, sometimes commenting that they had lost their homes to their in-laws. The never-married and single persons and those in *mapoto* relationships were predominantly double-rooted. A high proportion of divorcees and the never-married-single mothers opted to be permanently urban.

Table 15
DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND MARITAL STATUS

	NM	*D*	*Widows*	*LWM*	*Single*	*Total*	*%*
DR	7	15	1	5	6	34	68
PU	4	4	6	1	1	16	32
Total	11	19	7	6	7	50	100
%	22	38	14	12	14	100	100

NM = never married-single mothers; D = divorced; LWM = living with a man

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	12,08195	4	0,01675

Double-rootedness and permanently urban are cross-tabulated against housing status in Table 16. These variables are strongly related. All house

owners are in the permanently urban category. House ownership had a strong influence on the decision to stay in town permanently. Half of the tenants were in the permanently urban and another half double-rooted. Twenty-nine out of 33 lodgers opted for the double-rooted strategy, a rational response given their limited options.

Table 16
DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS AND PERMANENTLY URBAN AND HOUSING STATUS

	Lodger	*Tenant*	*Owner*	*Total*	*%*
DR	29	5	0	34	68
PU	4	5	7	16	32
Total	33	10	7	50	100
%	66	20	14	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	22,35684	2	0,00001

Available housing space for use by the respondent also had a bearing on DR/PU as shown in Table 17. The more space a respondent had, the greater the probability of urban permanence.

Table 17
DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND HOUSING SPACE

	One Room	*Shared Room*	*Two+ Rooms*	*Total*	*%*
DR	17	15	2	34	68
PU	4	2	10	16	32
Total	21	17	12	50	100
%	42	34	24	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	19,3498	2	0,00006

Table 18 shows that split residential practice (a situation in which some dependents reside elsewhere — this is what Croll [1987, 489] refers

to as 'segregated families') was the single greatest predictor of double-rootedness or permanently urban. Split household practice necessarily led to double-rootedness. Respondents had to cater for the welfare of their dependents, particularly children, who lived elsewhere, and this meant high rates of remittances, rural visits, etc. Resource ownership, whether of rural or urban property, significantly related to the DR/PU variable at the 5% level. Those with urban property, especially housing, were more likely to opt for permanently urban. The propertyless respondents were predominantly double-rooted.

Table 18
DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND SPLIT RESIDENCE

	All dependents residing in the village	*Dependents split between town and village*	*All the dependents residing in town*	*Total*	*%*
DR	15	14	5	34	68
PU	0	1	15	16	32
Total	15	15	20	50	100
%	30	30	40	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	28,47733	2	0,0000

Table 19
DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND RESOURCE OWNERSHIP

	Has Property	*No Property*	*Total*	*%*
DR	3	31	34	68
PU	9	7	16	32
Total	12	38	50	100
%	24	76	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	13,4167	1	0,00025

Respondents' total income was also significant at the 5% level in relation to DR/PU variable. Most respondents with an income above

$1 000 per month opted for the permanently urban strategy, while a higher proportion of those with incomes below $1 000, were double-rooted.

Table 20
TOTAL INCOME AND DOUBLE-ROOTEDNESS/PERMANENTLY URBAN

	<$600	*$600–999*	*$1 000+*	*Total*	*%*
DR	14	13	7	34	68
PU	5	1	10	16	32
Total	19	14	17	50	100
%	38	28	34	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	9,87854	2	0,00716

Table 21 shows that the higher the frequency of remittances to the rural village by a respondent, the more likely was the adoption of the double-rooted strategy. Respondents who remitted less favoured the urban strategy. At the 5% level the relationship between the double-rooted/permanently urban variable and frequency of remittances is significant, showing that these variables had an effect on each other.

Table 21
DOUBLE-ROOTED/PERMANENTLY URBAN AND REMITTANCES FREQUENCY

	None	*1–3 yrs*	*4+ per yr*	*Total*	*%*
DR	4	16	14	34	68
PU	8	6	2	16	32
Total	12	22	16	50	100
%	24	44	32	100	100

Chi-square	*Value*	*Degrees of Freedom*	*Significance*
Pearson	9,64934	2	0,00803

Investments in time and money

An important element that showed commitment to the village and one's dependents was the issue of remittances. Remittances were part of the

rural-urban support network. According to Bigstein and Kayizzi-Mugerwa (1992, 1428), 29% of households in Kampala remitted money or material means to children living elsewhere, mostly in rural areas. Remittances constituted at least 9% of total income. Figures elsewhere (e.g. Nairobi) showed that remittances could be as high as 20% of total income. My respondents remitted cash mostly, and sometimes material goods.

Some 76% of my respondents remitted money or material means to the villages where their children lived. They contributed to the welfare of their parents in part or in full. It was not possible to state categorically in quantitative terms the volume of remittances. On the basis of conversations, it seemed many respondents found it increasingly more difficult to remit something to their dependents living elsewhere. Especially those in the category of 'climbing-out of poverty' shunned connections with kin. Investments in networks of kin were more deeply entrenched amongst the 'hanging on' and 'coping' groups.

In addition to remittances, it is important to notice kin networks in examining Masvingo respondents' investments in terms of money and time. Hospitality to kin had its costs. It was clear that the respondents felt they could not sustain all the demands of rural kin on their meagre household resources in town, yet they felt they could not deny kin any access to their resources. Around half housed kin when they visited town. In most cases they also provided food for kin during these trips. They hoped that their rural kin would understand that they were also in difficult situations.

I observed that the double-rooted strategy pursued by most of my respondents involved the exchange of goods and services, a reciprocal flow of resources from both rural and urban directions. These issues are discussed in the next section.

The role of kin

Kin influenced the mobility of women in my sample, especially their initial move to, and arrival in, town. All but two respondents had discussed with kin their plans to migrate to Masvingo. Kin made it easy for new arrivals to explore the urban environment.

Most often rural-urban ties are articulated through kinship networks. On arrival in town for the first time, 84% had stayed with kin. New migrants to the city stayed more often with maternal relations than paternal relations. In fact only one respondent in my study had stayed with a paternal relative. The period of stay with kin varied from a week to three years. My respondents were without exception from a patrilineal and patriarchal society. A woman was thought more likely to compete for status, economic advantages and group leadership with paternal relations as opposed to

maternal relations. Competition over access to resources was regarded as likely to generate hostilities that undermine possibilities of co-residential options with one's paternal relatives. It is usually one's maternal relatives who are supportive in a non-antagonistic manner. More generally, a woman living with her paternal relatives would be expected to perform many mundane household chores and would generally be at a disadvantage.

During the initial phases of urban migration, kin assisted some of my respondents to get a job in the formal or informal sectors. In my sample, 20% had been assisted by their siblings to earn an income. They were spared household financial contributions during the initial phases of their entry into urban life, to enable them to build up capital to set themselves up in the urban economy. However, the role of their siblings in their life had diminished by the time of my study.

Not only did kin ease my respondents' initial urban stay by assisting with urban residence, jobs and income. The contributions had continued in 28% cases, in relation to children's residence, education and welfare. At the start of my research amongst my respondents, 8% had a child staying with kin in Masvingo, 6% received assistance for children's education and 14% noted that their kin assisted in the general welfare of children. Two respondents were assisted with baby-sitting by urban kin on a regular basis at least monthly. Another had had kin baby-sit once in the last three months preceding the initial interview.

However, as a general rule my respondents did not pool financial resources with urban kin. Income pooling occurred only among 10% of my sample. These were the cases where kin made a part contribution towards the household budget. Although they did not pool resources, aid from kin in the form of money as well as food occurred during my fieldwork. Some 26% of respondents had received monetary grants from kin in the year preceding the interviews. Whilst the amounts involved were quite small (almost without exception these grants were less than $50), they represented a continual re-enactment of kin obligations in town. Food aid was more common: 30% of my sample had received food donations from kin in the six months preceding the initial interviews.

The most frequent form of inter-household exchange of goods and services involving kin was in the form of moral support. Within the course of a three-month period, 50% of the respondents received advice from kin. In most cases the advice concerned personal matters. Only 8% noted that they got business-related advice from kin.

The extension of loans or credit by kin indicated that kin continued to play useful roles in the lives of my respondents. Twenty-two percent had borrowed money at least once in a 12-month period, 12% had received a loan two to three times over the same period and another 12% got loans from kin three or more times within a year. Bus fares to attend funerals

and children's education (school fees and uniforms) were the main reasons for loans from kin.

According to Mutambirwa and Potts (1990, 677) most urban families in Zimbabwe had a strong perception that the maintenance of rural links was essential as a form of economic security for the eventualities of old age, unemployment and hard times. The majority in my sample supported this view.

Table 22 shows the frequency of visits by my respondents to their villages within a six-months period. High-frequent visitors were those with three or more visits during the six-months period. Lack of financial means or not being connected to any village were the two reasons cited for not visiting communal areas.

Table 22
FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO THE VILLAGE

Frequency of Visits	*Number of Visits*	*%*
None	16	32
One to two visits	23	46
Three or more visits	11	22
Total	50	100

The existence of split households was the major reason for rural visits. The women went to the village to see their children, siblings, parents and other relatives. A family function such as a funeral, wedding or ritual occasion was often the reason behind the rural visit. The results differed from Holm's (1992, 248) findings that showed that 65% of respondents in his study went to their home village to attend funerals and weddings. My respondents noted in their general talk that due to the ever increasing, Aids-related mortality levels, funerals were no longer the main reason for going to the village. There were too many funerals and it had become too expensive to visit the village every time a relative died.

Village-based kin also visited their kin in town during fieldwork. Some of the respondents noted that kin visited town to conduct business such as buying agricultural inputs, for banking purposes during month-ends, in search of employment, in search of schooling for their children, for some to meet administrative bureaucrats at district and provincial levels, and sometimes for health reasons. There were times when kin travelled from the communal areas to seek financial assistance from urban kin. Up to 40% of respondents had hosted visiting rural kin within a six-month period. Kin visits occurred whether one was a lodger or tenant.

Split residence involving some or all the respondent's children living elsewhere, notably the rural village, was common: 60% of the research

participants had split-households, much higher than in Uganda where Bigstein and Kayizzi-Mugerwa (1992, 1436) found that 47% of their sample had dependents mostly children, living elsewhere.

For my sample children mostly stayed with maternal grandparents or some other maternal relations. It was very rare for paternal grandparents or relations to take the responsibility of looking after children; this occurred only in 6% of my sample. The split household ensured continued interaction between the female head of household in town and her village of origin.

Children were in the village mainly as a cost-cutting measure. The range of ages of children in the village was from infancy, through those at secondary school, to school leavers. Nearly all the women with children in the village wanted regular monthly contacts with their children. However, it was economically impossible to carry out monthly visits to rural villages.

Attitude towards urban permanency and double-rootedness

It was clear that whatever option the women took, whether it was permanently urban or the double-rooted strategy, it enabled them to plan how best to survive in town. The women in my sample regarded the urban context as offering better opportunities for earning an income. Hence for 60% of the respondents, a successful pursuance of the urban strategy depended on the rural strategy of split-residence. But a preference for one option did not entail abandoning the other. The women maintained both real and symbolic links with their villages of origin. Even in situations where respondents did not visit their villages, they frequently continued to perceive the village as their 'home'. Table 23 shows the women's attitude on whether they preferred their children to live permanently in Masvingo or not.

Table 23
PREFERRED PERMANENT HOME FOR CHILDREN

Preferred Home for Children	*Total*	*%*
Masvingo as permanent home	15	30
Masvingo not preferred	18	36
Indifferent up to children	7	14
Inapplicable no children	7	14
Total	50	100

The respondents preferred children to make Masvingo a permanent home because of the perceived existence of attractive income-earning opportunities. They noted that Masvingo was a rapidly growing town, with increased opportunities for earning a living. Some preferred Masvingo

because of its easy access to its rural hinterland and other towns in Zimbabwe. It was convenient staying in Masvingo.

On the other hand, those who disliked Masvingo noted that the town had experienced serious economic decline following the closure of several industries, notably the Cold Storage Commission, at one time Masvingo's largest employer. They did not wish their children to live in such a depressed state of economic affairs. Some of those who had a negative picture of town life tried to paint a rosy picture of the rural village. This group consisted mostly of those who were finding it difficult to stay in town, the 'hanging-on' category. Their attitude appears to be a rationalisation of their eventual and inevitable return to the village. They realised that their stay in town was only temporary and so tried to create a more positive view of their villages. It was clear that most women had no immediate plans to leave town for the village: they wanted to hang on in town for as long as possible.

Whilst many respondents acknowledged experiencing hard times, they had no intention of abandoning Masvingo. It was only those in the 'burnt out' category who conceded that they might be forced to go back to the village. I also observed that for the 'burnt-out' women, linkages with urban kin were weakly articulated or non-existent. The importance of exchanges that flow from urban to rural areas, mostly through networks of kin, was absent amongst those who needed assistance the greatest, i.e. the 'burnt-out'. Going back to the village for most respondents was not a preferred option. The women's attitudes were in opposition to the government policy of discouraging unemployed women from becoming permanent urban residents.

Another indicator used to measure the women's attitude towards becoming permanently urban was single motherhood. Masvingo respondents considered single motherhood to be a survival option for disadvantaged women. Despite its shortcomings, marriage remained a desired, but unlikely option for many women: all but one home-owner in my sample were widows. Housing was short, and the rules of access to housing put single women at a disadvantage. Preference went to those on the waiting list with full families. Also, the length of stay in town was a consideration and generally women have been coming to town more recently than men. So the criteria for the allocation of limited housing favoured men over women, and helps to explain why most of my respondents preferred marriage. Lodging and renting remained the only options for unmarried women.

At times the women used their rural networks to provide food for their own consumption and their households in town, as noted above. At times rural-urban interactions were mutually beneficial. Through kin networks in urban areas, some villagers managed to gain access to urban

resources, like housing or an urban job. Urban kin had accommodated many of my study respondents until they found a job and their own home. However, those respondents who opted for permanently urban status viewed kin negatively, seeing them as potential claimants to their resources. Yet, in my study the PUs were relatively well off compared to the rest in the sample.

Managing urban poverty: The 'burnt-out' in town

The poorest in town, the 'burnt out', have the fewest resources to invest in the countryside and to service kin networks. This is part of the poverty trap. This might leave them with no option but to squat. But with draconian policies, where? The second paradox is the way those who are precarious mobilise and use resources in such a way as to enable them to continue to stay in town. The rural strategy or double-rootedness is not about going to the village but how to delay or even avoid going back. The immediate thing most women do is to try to generate an income and this requires servicing both the urban and rural networks. Sometimes children are sent home or pulled out of classes. Some kind of 'delayed reciprocity' takes place as a strategy to stay in town. Through the activation of relations with kin and non-kin, the women try to resolve the paradox of being receivers only by engaging in some form of return payment. It is in the context of the problems that women confront in their attempts to mobilise assistance and resources to stay in town that the double-rooted strategy is adopted.

Respondents *Q* and *W* are singled out to illustrate how the poor develop strategies to deal with urban poverty, both in the 'hanging on' categories at the start of my fieldwork. They represent different strategies and outcomes pursued by my respondents in order to stay in town.

Q is a 40-year-old woman who had never married. She had four children whose ages ranged from 11 to 20 years. Her eldest children, two sons, stayed with her brother and sister-in-law in her village. They both attended secondary school. Her two other children, daughters aged 11 and 13, stayed with her in the one room where she lodged. Her two young daughters had to forgo schooling in 1995, to enable her mobilise resources for the education of her two eldest children. For *Q* the sex of her children did not matter: if the eldest had been girls she noted that she would have used the same strategy of temporarily taking the young children out of school. Her priority during 1995 was to mobilise resources to stay in town, although she was double-rooted. She mobilised the labour of her daughters to raise her urban income — they acted throughout my fieldwork as mobile town vendors. *Q* was able to raise the examination fees for her two boys, pay rent, buy food and remit some money to her village. The strategy of split residence helped her cope with town life. *Q*'s kin were a resource that

enabled her to hang-on to town life. She was planning to return her daughters to school at the beginning of 1996, something she was working towards: she showed me the school uniforms she had bought for them in November 1995.

Respondent *W* was a 34-year-old widow and mother of four sons. She was also in the 'hanging on' category at the start of my fieldwork and depended then for her income on rentals. By the end of 1995, she was 'climbing out' of poverty. Her four children ranged from a 14-year-old in form one to an eight-year-old in grade three, and all stayed with her. She had become the owner of the four-roomed residential unit after the death of her husband in 1994. Before the death of her husband, the family had used the whole unit.

At the beginning of 1995, *W*'s household was in dire financial need. She depended on income from rent ($240 per month for the two rooms she was letting out to a five-person lodger's household and a two-person household) and also the sale of vegetables, mostly to neighbours, from her house garden. Her husband had not allowed her to get a passport, since he thought cross-border female traders engaged in immoral sexual activities. *W* was thus denied the chance to develop her business skills during her husband's lifetime. Her first ever passport was issued at the end of February 1995, and she started cross-border trading at the end of April 1995. Her first trip to Pretoria, undertaken with a neighbour, was a fiasco. However, all her subsequent monthly cross-border trips to South Africa had been very successful.

For nearly a year after her husband's death, she relied on the family network and house rentals to sustain her town life. She was able to use her kin networks to raise her cross-border start-up capital. As soon as she was on her feet she started servicing her kin network especially her affinal relations. By the end of my fieldwork it was becoming clear that *W* had a negative view of kin and wanted to minimise connections with kin. She had started making investments in non-kin networks.

Respondents *Q* and *W* highlighted two paradoxes that affected my respondents. The first was that the poorest in Masvingo, the 'burnt-out', had the fewest resources to invest in the countryside, in pursuance of the double-rooted strategy. Yet, the poorer respondents were in greatest need of keeping a foot in both the urban and the rural settings. This was part of the poverty trap; my poorest respondents found themselves caught in the trap. The second paradox as illustrated by *W* was the way those who are precarious (for instance the recently widowed respondents) mobilised resources to ensure their continued stay in town. It was in *W*'s case as if through widowhood, the resources the women had sat upon during their married life were released for immediate use. Widows, unlike other categories of single women, were in greatest need of financial as well

as emotional assistance, especially soon after the death of their husbands. In all cases their kin and friends rather than affines came to their side. Widows also sold some assets to meet their immediate needs. Turning the house to an income generating asset was very common amongst the widows who were house-owners.

Those respondents who were in precarious situations reacted by turning to social networks of kin or friends, which they used as resources for survival. Despite the determination of the 'burnt-out' women to stay in the city, in the few cases that I recorded, they were forced to return to the village, unlike the women in the 'hanging-on' category. The very poor had the least access to social networks. Servicing rural and urban networks on a more permanent basis was the wish of most respondents, but was not always possible, hence some kind of 'delayed reciprocity' when they acted as 'takers' in anticipation of paying back later.

The strategy of double-rootedness enabled most of my respondents to continue to stay in town. At the same time processes of returning to the village by the 'burnt-out' concealed the full extent of urban poverty. The administrative policing of poverty through statutes such as the Vagrancy Act, and attempts by the Municipality to regulate marketing through licensing informal traders, forced the very poor women to leave the city and take their poverty to the villages. The administrative policing of poverty created the impression that things were better off in town in comparison to the villages. This may be part of the processes that fuel rural-urban migration.

Officials reinforced the need for the double-rooted strategy by periodically carrying out clean-up operations to remove the public sores of poverty. The strategies used by the Municipality to prevent squatting did not achieve the desired results. The report by Masvingo's municipal Director for Housing and Community Services (1994/95) revealed in relation to squatters:

> During the past year the shacks they had put up by Mucheke river bank were demolished. This was not a solution as they are still squatting (p. 19).

These policies had nevertheless managed to prevent massive squatting in Masvingo and Zimbabwean towns generally.

The official regulation of urban poverty, dating back to the colonial period, by off-loading the urban 'burnt-outs' onto the rural areas has effectively meant these areas, and especially the communal villages, continue to act as rural 'dumping grounds'. For many people, including the women in my study, migration to town does not lead to a break with the village (see Logan, 1981, 238). Instead, it creates a continual exchange between city and country. Rural-urban migration, as demonstrated in my

study, has thus reinforced rather than destroyed rural-urban social networks. New urban arrivals use resources of their kin based in both urban and rural areas. In Masvingo many in my sample had learnt how to survive in town by adopting such a double-rooted strategy.

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