

© Kamla-Raj 2011

J Soc Sci, 27(1): 7-14 (2011)

PRINT: ISSN 0971-8923 ONLINE: ISSN 2456-6756

DOI: 10.31901/24566756.2011/27.01.02

**Assessment of First Year Female Students' Experiences in
Historically Male Dominated Subjects in Higher Education from a
Cultural Capital Perspective**

Newman Wadesango*, Owence Chabaya, Symphorosa Rembe** and Patricia Muhuro****

**Walter Sisulu University, P. Bag 19712, East London, Republic of South Africa*

E-mail: newmanwadesango@yahoo.com, nwadesango@wsu.ac.za

***University of Fort Hare, School of Post Graduate Studies, P Bag X1314, Alice. South Africa*

KEYWORDS Male Dominated Subjects. Higher Education. Female Students. Cultural Capital

ABSTRACT Studies have confirmed that the composition of male and female students in higher education in South Africa is far more equitable than before. Surprisingly, there has not been a significant increase in the number of female students in the historically male-dominated subjects such as science, engineering, and mathematics. This paper was based on a phenomenological study that explored the experiences of first year female students taking science subjects in one University in South Africa. This study was a descriptive survey that employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The population for this study was all female first year students majoring in physics, chemistry and mathematics at an institution in higher education. Due to the relatively low numbers of females in these subjects, all were given questionnaires to answer. The findings show from students' ideas and perspectives the main aspects that influence inclusion or exclusion of female students in male dominated subjects like science and mathematics.