

# Speaking for Ourselves

Masculinities and Femininities Amongst  
Students at the University of Zimbabwe



Edited by Rudo B. Gaidzanwa

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# Masculinities Amongst Resident Male Students at the University of Zimbabwe: Gender and Democracy Issues in a Climate of Economic Austerity

TAPIWA CHAGONDA

## Introduction

This chapter analyses the masculinities exhibited by University of Zimbabwe male students or the University Bachelors Association (UBA) as they affectionately identify themselves. The way the University male students deal with issues of masculinity and how these issues impinge on gender equity, democracy and human rights at the University of Zimbabwe will be examined. Special attention will be paid to the harsh macro-economic climate and how this economic climate has impacted on the masculinities of the male students.

Traditionally, the University male students (UBAs) have tended to affirm their masculinities through activities such as heavy drinking sprees, sexual exploits, which involve going out and having sex with female university students (USAs) or non-university females (NASAs). However, the ways in which the male students exhibit their masculinities have, in some instances, tended to impinge on and subvert the human rights of other students, especially the female students. Male student masculinities have also subverted and soured the teaching and learning environment at the University of Zimbabwe.

Gaidzanwa (1993) alludes to the problems associated with excessive consumption of alcohol by male university students. She referred to the Senior Proctor's report of 1990, which chronicled incidents of knifing, sexual harassment ranging from rape to groping and whistling at women, alcohol abuse and public violence by students during demonstrations.

Although the (UBAs) are still, to some extent, affirming their masculinity through activities like drinking and embarking on sexual escapades, it must be noted that the above activities require students to have the financial resources to engage in them. The reasons why some students engage in these behaviours at the University of Zimbabwe may be related to deprivation. Many students, male and female, have grown up in homes where they are 'caged' and kept in check. When they get to the University of Zimbabwe, some of them behave like wild animals that have been unleashed, hence this abusive behaviour. As a result, university authorities and the

public in general, have denounced UBAs' participation in the 'manly' activities mentioned above. The current squeeze on the incomes of many Zimbabweans has forced the UBAs of diverse cultural and class backgrounds to reaffirm their masculinity in line with the current economic situation. The various ways the male students are trying to deal with masculinity will be examined with special attention on the lecturer – student interface and on the relationships between male lecturers and their female academic colleagues. The chapter will also examine how the masculinity of male lecturers relates to the issue of democracy and the teaching and learning environment at the University of Zimbabwe.

## **Theoretical approaches**

In order to understand how the male university students construct their masculinities, the Marxist theoretical framework of class systems and the symbolic interaction perspective, which was advocated by the Chicago scholars, notably Cooley and Herbert Mead, will be used. According to Karl Marx's class theory, there is a connection between economic development and social class formation. The class theory of Karl Marx holds that a person's class situation tends to determine their "life-chances" and that members of a class tend to share a common fate. This class theory advocated by Karl Marx can be applied at the University of Zimbabwe, to analyse how male students construct and assert their masculinities. The male university students can be classified according to their backgrounds, which are determined by their economic statuses.

At the University of Zimbabwe, there are three discernible classes of students, namely the "Nose-Brigades", the "Born Locations" and the "Severe Rural Backgrounds" (SRBs). The ways in which these respective groups of students affirm their masculinities are different and are determined by their economic backgrounds. These three groups will be analysed in greater detail in the later sections of the chapter. However, it must be noted that the class system is quite fluid because, a "Born Location" student can affirm his masculinity in the same way that a "Nose Brigade" student does. The 'Born Location' might still retain some characteristics that can be identified with "Born Location" students, such as actively taking part in union activities.

On the other hand, the symbolic interactions framework is important in determining how the male university students construct and affirm their masculinities. It is evident that the UBAs construct their masculinity and how UBAs act and behave is shaped through interactions with other students. Social life is formed, moulded and changed by the basic meaning attached to it by the interacting people on the basis of meanings they assign to their world. Consequently, it is also through symbolic interactions that the UBAs affirm their masculinities. As a result, it is through the Marxist theoretical framework of class and the symbolic interactions perspectives that the masculinity of the UBAs will be examined at in this chapter.

## Historical context

The University of Zimbabwe was inaugurated as the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland under the Royal Charter in 1955. It became the University College of Rhodesia in 1966 after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 by Ian Smith's regime and later the University of Rhodesia in 1971. After independence in 1980, it was renamed the University of Zimbabwe. Although originally intended by whites in Southern Rhodesia for the education of whites only, the University was established as a non-racial institution, partly because of the influence of the British colonial government, which offered to fund certain developments at the colonial university. With the advent of Independence in 1980, the University of Zimbabwe ceased to be a racially elitist institution and strove to increase the enrollment of the poor black students.

Prior to independence in 1980, only a few blacks could make it to the University of Zimbabwe because of the rigorous elitist education system, which aimed at screening and marginalising the black students. This was one of the oppressive policies of the settler regime and this policy was designed to keep the blacks backward. However, soon after Independence, the University of Zimbabwe began to undergo massification because of the black advancement initiative instituted by presidential directive, which had an effect on the student body. By the middle of the first decade of independence, the children of the new black middle class were attending the university with the children of the peasants and working class who benefited from the expansion of primary and secondary school facilities. With the shift of University of Zimbabwe from an elitist institution to greater openness through massification, there has been a decline in the standard of education and facilities. The massification of the student body has not been matched by a corresponding increase in financial resources and students are suffering as result of shortages of textbooks and journals. In addition, lecture rooms and the main library have become overcrowded.

According to Gaidzanwa (1993), in 1980, student numbers stood at 2 240 and the library could seat 300 readers. In 1983, extensions to the library increased its seating capacity to 1200 users but there are almost 8 000 students and staff who require these facilities. In the residences, students are sharing rooms intended for single occupation and currently, there are 3 128 male students who stay in residence and most of these are in shared rooms.

It is understood that the financial resources and other facilities at the University of Zimbabwe help to create a comfortable learning environment. However, the government in the face of an increasingly massified system has not improved the availability of these resources significantly. It is necessary to understand the prevailing national and global macro-economic climate. The prevailing macro-economic climate in Zimbabwe is making it difficult for the government to increase the financial assistance it gives to the University of Zimbabwe.

If anything, the government has steadily been cutting down the budget that the University of Zimbabwe receives, arguing that the University should concentrate on



core activities of teaching and research. In light of the increase in tuition fees, inflation over 50%, fees, food prices, accommodation and transport costs resulting from the devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar and other measures associated with economic restructuring, students expected the government to increase the grants and loans of University students or to continue to subsidise the education system. The prices of imported books, computers and other teaching and learning aids, soared. Continued subsidies to higher education became more difficult for the government to sustain due to the economic crisis that is facing the country and due to pressure from outside forces such as the World Bank. The Bretton Woods institution, the World Bank, proposed, seven years ago, that university education in Africa be given lower priority, since universities in Africa are not cost effective. Many Africans understood this suggestion to be informed by a desire to turn Africans into artisans and to punish any government that subsidised its higher education system by withholding or reducing financial assistance from the World Bank. This has put pressure on Third world countries like Zimbabwe, which depend on international financial institutions for support for its economic reforms and restructuring. That is partly why the government is cutting back on its financial assistance to institutions like the University of Zimbabwe.

Consequently, with the massified education system and a severe shortage of financial resources, it is now less economically sustainable to have a very large resident student body at the University of Zimbabwe. As a result, students' income support from the government has declined dramatically in the prevailing macro-economic environment in Zimbabwe. It is in the context of this economic austerity facing the University of Zimbabwe and the massification of the system, that the masculinities of the male students have been severely challenged, especially with regards to those activities, such as drinking alcohol and going out with female students, which require money. Male students perceive female students to be materialistic by nature so the lack of income severely curtails the interaction between male and female students. As a result, the masculinities of the male students have had to be redefined in some instances, and the ways in which male students cope with this situation are examined in this chapter.

## **Definitional issues**

Masculinity is quite a contentious concept, which is affirmed, not in a universalistic way but in different ways by males of different cultural backgrounds, class and age. Hearn (1989) argues that masculinity entails having the qualities or characteristics of a man or being virile. Masculinity has also been represented as a 'deep centre', an essence of men. For example Kimmel (1990) has characterised masculinity as:

"No sissy stuff", "be a big wheel", "be a sturdy oak", "give 'em hell".

Masculinities that are displayed by males differ greatly and this is due to men's different cultural backgrounds, class and age. Connel (1989), writing on young men

in the United Kingdom, argues that young men choose forms of masculinity through the processes of schooling.

Ghail (1994: 42) writing on young men in the United Kingdom, affirms that secondary school curricula organise knowledge hierarchically and concomitantly locate young people in the hierarchy by their academic success or failure. While academically successful young males are more likely to choose high status subject areas, those who are less successful, are directed into low-level, practically based vocational subject areas whose cultures continue to reflect the masculine world of manual labour, chauvinism, toughness and machismo. As indicated by Chivaura in a chapter in this volume, these forms of masculinity are unequal to those of the middle-class young men with higher qualifications who can later wield power in large institutions and in personal relationships. As a result, the masculinity of the academically successful is affirmed on a much wider scale than that of working class young men. Working class young men's power is usually affirmed in personal embodied activities like sports, drinking and fighting, to show that they are tough and not "sissies" or by showing their sexual prowess, through having sex with as many girls as possible. (Connel: 1989)

On the other hand, it appears that age is another variable, which has a bearing on how males assert their masculinity. Ghail (1994) argues that older males are steadier and cooler, unlike their younger counterparts, such that their masculinity is 'dead'. This deadening effect of age on masculinities can be observed at the University of Zimbabwe, especially amongst the older males who are in the Bachelor of Education program. These older males, who are married in most cases, do not normally exhibit their masculinities through union activities or by exhibiting their sexual prowess as the younger male students do. During demonstrations, the older males who are usually reluctant to join demonstrations are normally forced by the younger university male students (UBAs) – to do so and labelled as "Madhara e Amnesty" (Old men of Amnesty). The Bachelor of Education male students are referred to as beneficiaries of an 'amnesty' because they entered University through the mature entry route rather than through the tough points system. Undergraduates straight from school, have to score high passes to compete successfully and qualify for entry into the university. These older males generally tend to want to exhibit their masculinities through activities such as excelling in their academic studies, in order to show their competence. This form of masculinity is somewhat 'muted' and not very visible and so may render the masculinity of older male students difficult to discern in the teaching and learning environment.

To some extent, masculinity is an ethnocentric concept and Gilmore (1993; 229) argues that although masculinity may be self-serving, egotistical and uncaring, in some cultures, 'real' men exercise selfless generosity. Consequently, the notion of masculinity is quite a contentious one and what is meant by masculinity often unclear. This is largely due to the fact that aspects of their class, cultural backgrounds and age determine the construction of masculinities by males.

Language is strong form through which males affirm their masculinities. Some definitions of masculinity may require men to be strong and powerful and not express

any weakness. Language can express such definitions of appropriate masculinity, which, in effect regulate and actively place male behaviour. Wood (1984) conceptualizes male sex talk as embodying more than a simple process of sexual harassment. One way in which males within peer group networks normalise masculine identities is by directing terms of abuse at other males' sexuality as occurs in respect of references to males without girlfriends as 'wankers' or gays. At the University of Zimbabwe male students also use language as a tool of sexual harassment of female students and other male students. Male university students sometimes make sexist comments such as "*USA uri chocolate pamubhedha*" (USA, you are like chocolate in bed) "*Paita gumbo apa!*" (Nice legs here) or "*ndinoda kuku cutter*" (I want to cut you, meaning, I want to have sex with you.) The male students who are not very sexually active may be referred to as "*ngochani*" (homosexual man).

Another aspect of the argument is that particular activities are naturally masculine, and if men are discouraged from engaging in them, they then lose their masculinity. Gilbert and Gilbert (1988) argue that the distinctive character of men survives only as long as they participate in particular kinds of activities such as owning and driving sports cars, making money, competing etc. However, it is not clear whether these are seen to be masculine pursuits in themselves, or only when carried out in a masculine, that is aggressive or combative way. Given the wide range of men's interests, and of women's, the argument that to be masculine means being involved in particular kinds of activities can only narrow rather than expand men's opportunities to be human.

The source of masculine behaviour that is exhibited by males is a contentious issue, which scholars on gender do not agree on. Probably the most widespread beliefs about the essence of masculinity are those, which look to biology as the source. In this form of argument, masculine behaviour has natural origins, though the theories, again, vary. They range from emphasis on direct genetic inheritance, chemical theories such as the effects of testosterone, sociological arguments about species survival, and inferences drawn from the structure and functions of the brain. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998). Some of the most diagnostic claims about men's natures originate from writers who draw on natural science and biologically oriented psychology. The "boys will be boys" myth neglects the real diversity of boys and narrows the possibilities of boyhood for them. One of the most publicised of recent attempts to attribute sex differences, and hence masculinity, to biological causes has been based on studies of the structure and functioning of the brain.

The argument is that male and female brains are structured differently, meaning that they are organised differently in their operation of tasks, and that the different processing of data leads to different outcomes. According to this argument, men do better on tasks that suit their brain structures, while women do better on tasks that suit theirs. One of the most widely known of these arguments is articulated by Moir and Jessel in their book, *Brainsex*. The authors, in dogmatic style, claim that the sexes are different because,

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“The brain, the chief administrative and emotional organ of life, is differently constructed in men and in women, it processes information in a different way, which results in different perceptions, priorities and behaviour.”

Moir and Jessel (1992: 220). They claim that this is known “beyond speculation, beyond prejudice and beyond reasonable doubt”. However, Shawitz et al (1995) dismiss the argument by Moir and Jessel by arguing that large studies have found no significant sex differences in brain size and that some early claims about sex differences in brain structures have not been confirmed by later research. So what populists like Moir and Jessel claim is a powerful distinguishing feature of female–male brain differences turns out to be quite contested.

Another aspect of this debate is the role of testosterone in producing sex differences of various kinds. While there is strong evidence of the role of testosterone in reproductive sex differences, Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) argue that the effects on non-reproductive aspects on men and women are unproven. However, the popular translation seems unconcerned about such qualification as Elum and Elum (1992: 17) show when they state,

Boys are biologically driven via a drug-like hormone that is one of most powerful manipulators of behaviour the world has ever known. It turns a playful nine-year old human into a fourteen-year-old (“Incredible Hulk”). From conception to manhood, this force triggers the human male body and brain to take a masculine form. It is the hormone testosterone.

British biologist Greenstein discusses the role of testosterone in producing organisational changes in the developing brains of various species and shows that effects found in species like rats are not found in humans. To increase rather than constrain the possibilities for males, one needs to broaden their view beyond the biological. As Connel (1996: 211) points out,

Masculinity is not a biological entity that exists prior to society, rather masculinities are ways that societies interpret and employ male bodies.

Accordingly, we need to focus on the social practices through which boys come to understand themselves, and how these practices engage their relations with their bodies and with other people.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) concur with this point when they state that becoming a man is a matter of constructing oneself in and being constructed by the available ways of being male in a particular society. It is a matter of negotiating the various discourses of femininity and masculinity available in our cultures, those powerful sets of meanings and practices, which we must draw on to participate in our cultures and to establish who we are. Ghail (1994) also alludes to the fact that masculinity is diverse, dynamic and changing and that we need to think of multiple masculinities rather than some singular discourse, and that this is influenced by one’s culture, class and age.

## **Institutionalised gender violence**

In the past few years, there has been increasing interest in the links between masculinity and violence, especially in the institutions of higher learning. Osborne (1995) referred to the “chilly climate” as violence against women in Canadian universities. She alludes to the sexual harassment, institutionalised violence, degradation, sexism and misogyny that women in Canadian universities encounter and refers to this as the ‘chilly climate’. In one incident in 1989, a male student stormed into a Montreal University lecture theatre and shot dead 14 women. On being questioned about why he had committed such a heinous crime, the male student said that he had done it to control women socially and to ‘keep them in their place’.

When masculinity takes a violent form against women in institutions of higher learning, then it is undoubtedly infringing on human rights of women and severely undermining the notion of gender equity. In a similar vein, the teaching environment for the female academics at the University of Zimbabwe can be compared to the ‘chilly climate’ in Canadian universities that Osborne refers to. At the University of Zimbabwe feminist research is regarded as unscholarly and some male lecturers feel that they are more entitled to be in the university than the female lecturers. When the researcher and writer of this chapter was working on the research project on gender, one of the male lecturers commented that feminist research is useless research and that female lecturers who teach gender studies always received grants from donor agencies to carry out useless research. Consequently, it is apparent that many male academics perceive their work as being ‘manly’ and scholarly and anything that is done by the female academics as unscholarly. This conceptualization of masculinity in the academic institutions makes the teaching environment very hostile to female and feminist academics, since they are looked down upon.

The teaching and learning environment at the University of Zimbabwe is made more hostile to women academics because the institution is largely a masculine one, with most of the members of academic and top administrative staff being males. There are 959 male lecturers compared to 207 female lecturers, 5 female professors and 65 male professors and only 1 female dean out of the 10 deans who preside over the faculties. Due to the numerical inferiority of the female academics and administrators, they are easily sidelined in hiring and promotion processes in the largely masculine institution. Chivaura, has demonstrated this marginalisation of women and one of the processes of their exclusion from the UZ, in the chapter in this volume, where he cites the declining enrolment figures for women in some academic departments and in administration. In addition, Gaidzanwa (1993) alludes to the case of the female administrators who were ignored or sidelined for the jobs of deputy registrars in 1992 when the positions fell vacant and were offered to their junior male counterparts. This undoubtedly undermines the notion of democracy, which is supposed to exist in the institutions of higher learning.

## **Methodological issues**

For the purposes of this research, I used the qualitative methodology to gather data. I capitalized on the fact that I was a University of Zimbabwe student who stayed in residence from 1999 to 2000. I also carried out some unstructured interviews on some of the male and female university students and officials. I used a sample of 60 students and carried out some in-depth interviews on these male and female students. 40 males and 20 females were interviewed from the faculties of Social Science, Arts, Law, Medicine, Science and Engineering. In-depth interviewing was very useful because it yielded spontaneous reactions that I was able to record and which proved useful to me at the data analysis stage. In-depth interviewing also afforded me the opportunity to probe respondents when they gave answers, which were not clear and vague. Consequently, probing proved to be an important instrument for eliciting and encouraging further information. However, a shortcoming of in-depth interviewing is that it does not give anonymity to the respondents and some of the interviewees would not answer some of the questions, which they thought were embarrassing. In order to extract some of the information from the interviewees, I had to use the snowballing method to follow up some students who had information that was critical for understanding specific issues during the research.

## **The macro-economic environment and its impact on masculinities of (UBAS)**

Due to the depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar and the sharp rise on the cost of living, University of Zimbabwe students are finding it difficult to make ends meet. The situation has been aggravated by the fact that the Ministry of Higher Education is not willing to increase the payout of the University students to a level, which is commensurate with the cost of living. Currently students are receiving Z\$12 800 per semester in payout including the 100% increment on food allowances which was granted in March 2000.

However, if one takes into consideration that one meal at the dining hall costs \$50.00, transport to and from town costs \$40.00 (only if one takes only one bus or lift), tuition fees, accommodation, stationery and other necessities like clothes have to be bought from the payouts, one can understand that the payout is too little and that the students are being strained to the limit, financially. There are 3128 male students who stay within the premises of the University of Zimbabwe and they can be classified according to their social and economic classes.

## **Differentiation of Masculinities by class and cultural background**

### ***The “nose brigades”***

According to Gaidzanwa (1993), these are the middle class students, most of whom have attended the Group A schools, former whites only schools, and have access to disposable incomes. These students are able to wear both locally produced and



imported clothing and to enjoy local and foreign music and other western cultural products. The “nose brigades” are so-called because of their accents, which are closer to English and sound, to black people, like ‘speaking through the nose’.

It appears that the “nose brigades” masculinity has not been severely affected by the harsh macro-economic environment because they have other sources of income, other than the government payouts. Their parents subsidise their incomes in many cases. One male “nose brigade” student from the faculty of Medicine who is in his final year, pompously asserted:

“The payout I receive from the government is for buying myself the latest fashion in town and for entertainment. The money for food and transport is provided by my parents.”

The male “nose brigades” (UBAs) are few, and it appears that they affirm their masculinity by showing that they have access to financial resources. This enables them to demonstrate their virility and sexual prowess by asking out those female students (USAs) who are usually “nose brigade” as well and ensuring that they have sex with them. The promiscuous “nose brigades” want to go out with as many female students as they can, to show their machismo, since they can afford to buy the (USAs) what they want. It is evident that the “nose brigades” do not normally exhibit their masculinity through their enthusiasm and zest in fighting the riot police or the university security guards (Green Bombers) during demonstrations. “Nose brigade” males probably do not take part in union activities because of their upbringing at home and in the group A schools where they are taught to show their manliness by not embarking on violent behaviour. Instead, the emphasis is on gentlemen-like behaviour. One “nose brigade” student said that his conceptualisation of ‘manliness’ is incompatible with the violence and hooliganism, which is associated with demonstrations and the Student Executive Council (SEC).

### ***The severe rural background (SRBs)***

Gaidzanwa (1993) notes that these students are the sons and daughters of farmers or peasants from the rural areas. Normally, they are educated in the Group ‘B’, former blacks only schools and mission schools. They rely very much on their loans and grants to buy books, clothes and toiletries, such that with the sharp rise in the cost of living, the masculinity of the SRB males has been undermined. They can no longer embark on masculine activities, which require money.

Going out with women and with other men and heavy drinking is one way through which (SRBs) affirm their masculinity. The real men are those who can exercise self-control after drinking the most alcohol, or those that can drink the most alcohol. Embarking in fights after drinking is also one form of showing hardness and manliness, especially if the fights are against non-University of Zimbabwe students in the nightclubs. When the students’ bar, October 4, was still open, masculinity could be exhibited by going to October 4 and drinking as much alcohol as one could. After this, some of the (UBAs) would go to the residences of the female students to simply make noise there or try to persuade or force them into having sex. Thus, the

SRB men would exhibit their virility by making the (USAs) cry or moan during sex either out of pleasure or pain. The male students refer this as “*ku cutter*” (to cut a USA) and failure to do this is normally construed by the UBAs as evidence of weakness or not being man enough. One Faculty of Science female student who used to stay in Swinton Hall of residence in 1999 had this to say:

“When the male University students (UBAs) came from October 4 on their way to their residences, some of them would pass through Swinton Hall, making all sorts of noises such as banging on the doors of the female students, in a bid to gain access into the female students’ rooms.”

A male student in the Faculty of Arts had this to say about not having sex with a female student if you are going out together:

“If you are going out with a female student, you are under a lot of pressure, especially from your peers, to have sex with her. If you fail to do so you are not considered as man enough. The other fear I have is that if you don’t have sex with your girlfriend, then she might be having it with other guys. So you have to ensure that her sexual needs are satisfied.”

It must be noted that the expression of masculinity, which takes the form of sexual harassment and violence against female students, is quite prevalent, especially when some of the (UBAs) are under the influence of alcohol. This is undoubtedly a violation of the human rights of females affecting the institutions of higher learning. The Deputy Dean of Students (Campus Affairs) said that in 2 000, he had received three reports of sexual harassment from female students. These were victims of drunken male students who shouted abuses at them. However, the Deputy Dean of Students hastened to add that due to the tough economic times, the male students are facing and the closure of the bar October 4, which used to be a ‘no go area’ for female students, sanity has prevailed and incidents of violence or sexual harassment of female students have declined. However, it should be noted that the harassment has been transferred to nearby Bond Street and Groombridge shopping areas where the male students are now drinking. When some of the UBAs get drunk, they shout abuses at ordinary citizens and motorists or start urinating in the open, in full view of other ordinary citizens.

Some of the UBAs have exhibited their masculinity and virility by engaging the services of the commercial sex workers. However, with the tough economic times that have gripped the UBAs, they say they no longer exhibit their masculinity by embarking on activities such as heavy drinking, because such activities require a lot of money. Consequently, the masculinities of the SRBs have been reconstructed and have either taken the form of participation in S. E. C. affairs, elections and demonstrations with gusto and zest. In other instances, SRB masculinities have taken a dormant form whereby some of the SRBs exhibit their masculinity and manliness by concentrating on their academic studies and excelling in them.

## ***Born locations***

### ***Politics***

The avenue left open for most of the 'born locations' to exhibit their masculinity is by embarking on activities such as running for S. E. C. (Student Executive Council) positions and fanatically taking part in demonstrations. In student politics, students are divided on the basis of ethnicity. During students' elections, there is a section of the politically active student population, which mobilises potential voters by appealing to their ethnic identities. As a result, males of different ethnic identities are affirming their masculinities by taking part in student politics. In the demonstrations, they show their toughness and fighting prowess by engaging in fierce battles with the riot police and campus security guards, popularly termed, the Green Bombers. These security guards are so named because of their green uniforms. Students also sing revolutionary songs, with a lot of gusto, although Mate (1996) states that the lyrics of these mostly revolutionary songs, Christian hymns and advertisements are changed into vulgar lyrics, which ridicule and degrade female anatomy and female students.

It is also evident that some of the male students take to union activities with such fanaticism, that they do not tolerate any differences from other students who may have other opinions. This is quite evident in demonstrations where some members of the union use violence, such as throwing stones at those students who might want to attend lectures when the union has called for class boycotts. During demonstrations, the area beyond the administration buildings, towards the lecture rooms and the library, is normally cordoned off and declared a 'no go area' by the union members. If a student is seen heading towards the lecture rooms and holding books, that student experiences the wrath of the union members who will usually be armed with stones.

This intolerance of difference infringes on the rights of other students and totally undermines the democratic rights of other students to act in the way they wish. This intolerance of difference by the union members is totally at odds with the notion of democracy, which the S. E. C, ironically, advocates. As a result, one can see that the masculinity of the 'born locations' has now been strongly re-defined by the prevailing macro-economic environment. It has now taken the form of taking part in union activities with fanaticism.

### ***Religion***

It also evident that the religious male students, who have traditionally exhibited their masculinity in their churches by taking up leadership positions and fanatically taking up preaching roles, have now decided to contest positions in the S. E. C. In the current S. E. C. the President and the candidate who was elected as Secretary General but later opted for another post, were elected on a Christian ticket.

Christian males and females say they now want to assert their influence in student politics, a domain they traditionally have not been actively involved in. This is because, they claim, that their interests, as a Christian constituency, have been

neglected by previous Students Executive Councils. Many Christian students and one female avid churchgoer expressed this point, saying,

“We put forward three Christian students to contest in last S. E. C. elections because, as a Christian constituency, our interests were being neglected by previous student leaders.”

### **Masculinity and access to university facilities and common resources**

The masculinities of the male university students have a bearing on the use of university facilities such as the library. The library has a seating capacity of 1200 students out of a student population of slightly over 10 000. Consequently, during exam time there is a lot of pressure from the students to use the university library facilities. A lot of pushing and shoving takes place amongst the students in order to secure seats in the cubicles that are more secluded than the stack rooms and also to access some reference texts that are usually in short supply. Due to the superior strength of the male students, they are able to force their way into the library before the female students, and secure the most sought after textbooks and the secluded cubicles. Consequently, the toughness or masculinity of the university male students works against females in the learning environment.

The same applies to the students' union facilities where female students are afraid of getting embroiled in physical contact with male students.

### **The masculinities of male lecturers and their impact on the student-lecturer interface**

The lecturer–student interface is an important aspect of academic life that has to be analyzed when discussing masculinities in the institutions of higher learning. Generally, male academics tend to advocate a masculine style that revolves around authority, discipline and control. The masculinities of male lecturers are, in some instances, reinforced through their teaching styles, deviations from which are perceived to be signs of weakness associated with femininity. A ‘competent’ lecturer is perceived to be authoritarian and able to maintain discipline within the lecture rooms. The masculinity of male lecturers, may, in some instances, take the form of having affairs with their female students to show their machismo. Ndlovu supports this point, in a chapter in this volume.

However, such acts of masculinity can have negative consequences for the female students in the teaching and learning environment, especially if coercion and blackmail are involved. If the female students turn down the sexual advances of the male lecturers, they are normally victimized and may be failed. As a result, if the masculinity of male lecturers takes the form of sexual advances towards their female students, this can have implication for the rights of students in the institutions of higher learning and also on the teaching and learning environment.

Male lecturer against male student friction also occurs especially if they clash over a female student. A third year male student from the Faculty of Social Science asserted,

“I believe that I was awarded a third class in one of the courses in which I believe I deserved at least an upper second class because I asked out one of the female students in my class. This student was, incidentally, also being pursued by the lecturer whom I believe victimized me.”

## Conclusion

It is evident that the ways in which the male university students affirm their masculinities have been strongly influenced by the prevailing and very harsh macro-economic environment. Most of the (UBAs) and in particular the (SRBs) and the ‘born location’ students have been hit by these economic times such that they have had to redefine their masculinities by engaging in masculine activities that do not require much money. These activities include actively taking part in union affairs. It is also evident that in some instances the masculinities of the male students and male academics are put across in a negative and extreme form, especially the form of sexual harassment, violence and degradation of both female lecturers and female students. This undoubtedly infringes on the human rights of other people and totally undermines the notions of gender equity and democracy in the institutions of higher learning, espoused in theory, by the University of Zimbabwe. This is an issue, which the relevant university authorities need to address to ensure that the University of Zimbabwe becomes the zone of democracy that it claims to be.

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