

# **Speaking for Ourselves**

Masculinities and Femininities Amongst  
Students at the University of Zimbabwe



Edited by Rudo B. Gaidzanwa

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Masculinities and Femininities in the University of Zimbabwe: A view from the Affirmative Action Project

**RUDO GAIDZANWA**

### **Introduction**

The everyday lives of students and staff in academic institutions are shaped by the ideologies of masculinity and femininity that prevail within their societies, families and their specific educational institutions. As indicated by Kessler (1985) organisations have differing gender regimes that model the types of masculinity and femininity manufactured, reinforced and exhibited within them by students and staff. These behaviours vary depending on the social class, age, ethnicity and race of the males. The material for this chapter is based on teaching experiences and the research findings, submissions and contributions made by students to the Gender Studies Association/Affirmative Action Project, funded by the Ford Foundation at the University of Zimbabwe. This project was funded in order to produce data on gender inequalities amongst staff and students, to monitor and report on the progress of the affirmative action policy of the university and to lay down the basis for fostering gender equity, democracy and the respect of the rights of all the stakeholders in the university.

The Affirmative Action project was launched in 1995 with a grant to the Gender Studies Association and the Affirmative Action Projects. Academic activists who were interested in tackling gender discrimination at the university initiated the project. From the beginning, the project and Association activities were dogged by institutional problems, which related to the lack of an official home, building and at best, lukewarm support from the university. The affirmative action policy itself was opposed from many quarters despite the willingness of the then Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor to support it in keeping with the ethos of the Association of African Universities. However, within the university, some functionaries in various levels of the university structures and bureaucracy were unwilling to support it because it was concerned with issues of equality between men and women, which they did not support in practice.

In the university, males comprise 82% of the academic staff and 70% of the student body. This chapter analyses some of the gender issues raised by the project in dealing with the staff and students at the university. It alludes to the research findings of

the project and suggests ways of taking the work of the project beyond its present confines. It draws upon the experiences and testimonies of students who approached the project for help and gave feedback on their participation in student-focused gender initiatives in the Student Affairs department as it was structured for the duration of the project. It also draws upon the gendered experiences of secretarial, clerical and administrative staff at the university in dealing with university issues. These categories of people are feminised in terms of institutional power and influence and are therefore part of the gender structure that hegemonic masculinities use as a counterpoint in the university's gender politics.

It is also pertinent to outline the social, economic and political background within which the project was implemented. By the mid-nineties, Zimbabwe was, on the advice of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, implementing a structural adjustment program whose major thrust was to cut back on public spending and divert resources to productive investment in the economy. This thrust resulted in the levying of user charges for health, education and other services. It also manifested itself in the de-regulation of labour, capital and other markets for productive goods. The state was supposed to gradually roll back its intervention and limit it to facilitating investment and providing the necessary infrastructure for local and foreign investment in the economy to take place. These measures played out in various ways at the University of Zimbabwe.

The state was forced to begin to increase user fees for students, withdraw from non-core activities such as running halls of residence and providing food, shelter and cleaning services. Its core business was re-defined as academic activity, which, ideally, would provide education and recover the real cost of such education from students. On the other hand, over 90% of the students at the university relied on government loans and grants to finance their university studies. These cost recovery measures immediately pitted students against the university administration and the government, exacerbating an already existing problem between the students and the government. The students failed to understand the macro-political climate in which the government and the university were operating, ignoring the sustained resistance of Third World governments, the University and the Zimbabwe government, to World Bank/IMF exhortations and pressures, to cut back funding to tertiary education and to desist from subsidizing student fees.

### **Masculinities amongst students**

In 1993, Gaidzanwa's article on the politics of the body and the politics of control amongst students at the University of Zimbabwe outlined the hegemonic masculinities amongst the male students who dominated student politics. The masculinities defined and described in that paper encompassed the dominant forms of male behaviour exhibited by male students of various classes, ages, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds at the university. Since then, other masculinities have emerged and these masculinities are those of Christian fundamentalist students, older students and students with disabilities. In the chapters by Chivaura, Gore and Chagonda, these masculinities are described at great length. However, the hegemonic

masculinities remain those of the town-born working class and peasant men who comprise the bulk of the male student body. These are the students from whose ranks the politically and socially militant males are drawn.

The militance of these male students manifests itself in different ways. It is often directed at female students in the halls of residence, at female lecturers in the lecture rooms and at female non-academic members of staff in the various departments of the university. In a paper presented at the workshop on gender issues at the university from the perspectives of secretaries in December 2000, a secretaries' representative, E.Naka, indicated that students, particularly the males, often abuse secretaries. In the pecking order of the university, secretaries are often at the lowest level and they are the ones who interface with students and play a gate-keeping role for chairpersons, deans, registrars and other functionaries of the university in the academic and non-academic sections of the university. Secretaries are often tasked to receive papers, to make appointments for students wishing to see administrators, to type papers and other work for students, often during university time and with university equipment. The relationship between junior secretaries and male students is often complex because of their common interests, often against the academic and administrative staff. Junior secretaries may be able to earn extra money by typing the work of students during working hours. This may pit the secretaries and students against the academics whose work is shelved when secretaries type students' work during university time and with university equipment. These types of secretary-student relationships are very common in the social sciences, arts, and commerce and law faculties.

The junior secretaries are also young and close to the students' age. Thus, the performance of work for students also creates a gender relationship whereby the young women bond with the young men against older academics, most of them male, at the university. The subversion of the university system in this way also pits the masculinity of the older academics, particularly males, against that of the younger student men and against all the students who pay for work performed by secretaries against the regulations of the university. When the male students pay for typed work, they are empowered in these gender relationships because they are able to demand certain standards of typed work and can successfully subvert the university system. Thus, it is quite common to have student dissertations typed by secretaries who are formally acknowledged and the dissertations examined within departments where it is known that the secretaries have used university time and equipment and been paid privately for these services. Thus, while the masculinities and subversive activities of students against academics may be muted, they are nevertheless present in the university system.

### **Student masculinities in the classroom**

In classroom situations, the masculinities of students surface very clearly across faculties. Interviews with over fifty male and female academics at the university revealed that male students display and deploy their masculinities in the lecture

rooms and laboratories in varied ways. The deployment of these masculinities differs depending on the sex and age of the lecturer, the structure of the class and the subject and the gender climate of the department and class. Interviews by the Affirmative Action Program staff over the five years of monitoring the program show that there is pronounced resentment directed at women across the university. Some deans, chairpersons, lecturers, administrators and students exhibited this resentment. The resentment was targeted against women in specific disciplines, women as beneficiaries of the affirmative action admission policy, as academics in various disciplines and as students in the university.

In the classrooms, at least ten of the women academics who were interviewed in the last month of 2000, narrated their experiences of dealing with male student aggression against them. In one case, male students whistled at a young female lecturer as she started teaching the class for the first time. In another case, the female lecturer was asked whether she was qualified to teach the course by a male student in the classroom. In yet another case, male students told the lecturer that any research material or course reading with gender content was not academic. Since 1985 when the courses on women, gender and development have been taught in sociology, in the course induction and evaluations, the males who registered in and took those courses reported that they were heckled and their masculinity questioned because were perceived to have succumbed to "feminist indoctrination." Thus, the hegemonic masculinities amongst students are based on eschewing any academic contact with any course, staff and activities perceived to be feminine, feminist or women-dominated. This results in students seeking out those courses and activities they perceive to have 'manly' content and taught by "real men".

The masculinities of male students extend from the classroom into the social lives of the students. In classrooms, other students regard vocal, conscientious and motivated male and female students with scorn. Female students who are assertive are particularly stigmatized and they are usually "buzzed" or "hummed" at in class when they ask questions, make interventions or answer questions readily. As indicated by Chagonda and Gore in this volume, the ideal student fits a specific masculine ideal, which requires that a student excel academically, but should not show enthusiasm or show any co-operation or desire to please the lecturer in class. Thus, those students who show enthusiasm for women's, feminist or gender studies have their masculinities and femininities questioned. Female students who enroll for these courses are perceived to be difficult and non-marriageable women because they have endangered their feminine credentials by associating with courses, lecturers and issues that question the dominant masculinities on campus. Males in the gender and women's studies classes are often dismissed as opportunists who are willing to prostitute their masculinity to acquire skills for use in jobs in the non-governmental organizations where 'weak' masculinities are approved of.

Students in the Gender and Development Class of 2001 in the department of Sociology explained these sentiments to this author.

In one case in sociology, a female student, in a state of shock and in tears, came to see the lecturer and asked for another set of course materials because her boyfriend had torn up her papers when he discovered that she had enrolled for the "Women and Development" class. This policing of student women's academic and social choices and the enforcement of feminine behaviors acceptable to the hegemonic masculinities on the campus constitutes part of the process of reinforcing hegemonic masculinities on campus and in the classroom. At the same time, female students and staff make gender choices either through succumbing to, tolerating or collaborating with or resisting and subverting these hegemonic masculinities.

Student masculinities are also reproduced in collaboration and cooperation with dominant academic male masculinities. There are situations where masculine interests between staff and students converge and homosocial bonding against women occurs. This is particularly so in those situations where junior male academic functionaries such as graduate assistants, teaching assistants and tutorial assistants, recently graduated, are placed in charge of students with whom they have a shared academic past. Thus, a male graduate assistant may have attended classes with final year students whom he teaches. This creates an immediate bond and a shared past which cannot be obliterated by time, distance or position in the university bureaucracy. The bonding between male students and junior male academics may consist of preferential treatment in timetabling for tutorials, collaborating in stigmatizing female students who do not subscribe to the ideals and behaviors of the masculine hegemons or making fun of feminist academic readings, research and lecturers to the students. In some cases, such bonding has occurred to the extent that male lecturers rebuke students for reading, citing or quoting the published works of prominent academic women at the university. This occurs in arts and social science departments where the phobia against women and feminism amongst particular lecturers is well known. Thus, students, male and females, are forced to collaborate, willingly and unwillingly, with these types of masculinity as they are played out in the classroom.

These ideals of hegemonic masculinity may also pit student and junior academic males against each other. The young males usually compete for the same pool of young women as dates and future marriage partners. In the classroom, young student males tend to be disadvantaged in the competition for females because junior academic males have more money, institutional authority and the power emanating from their positions as graders of papers, usually, of first year students. The competition between these males takes place within the norms of the hegemonic masculinity, which make it difficult for any aggression to be openly dealt with. In one social science department, male students and junior male academic staff got embroiled in a dispute around a young woman. The younger student male was unable to deal officially with what he perceived to be aggression against him, which was played out in the academic arena through grading. He attributed his low grade in a particular course to the dispute between himself and the young male lecturer teaching that course, over the affections of a young woman student.

The struggles around masculinities also spill over to relationships between student men. The experience of the male students in the masculinities and femininities research of the project showed that some male students resented the revelations of the research by the six young students in the project. There was a perception that all the students, males and females, were blowing the whistle against other students by publishing information regarding drunkenness, fighting, multiple dating and sexually promiscuous conduct by students at the university. The male students were perceived as traitors to masculine interests and were accused of participating in the project for money. What was ironic was that the male students who were aggressive against the project privately pleaded with the project coordinators for research jobs, money, food and hotel accommodation, at project expense, during one regional workshop in which the research results were presented and discussed.

Thus, the hegemonic masculinity of these aggressive male students exhibited itself through insults, drunken ranting and arguments against the participants of the project. At the same time, these young male students felt excluded from what they perceived as privileges accruing to male and female students who subverted the dominant masculinities of the male campus community. Thus, the rowdy males denounced the gender politics, which they purported to detest while attempting to benefit from what they perceived to be the "spoils" of that non-hegemonic gender agenda and practice.

### **Fundamentalist Christian masculinities**

The less dominant masculinities of the fundamentalist Christian students show themselves in the classroom through opposition or resistance to any pedagogy that questions the rightness of male dominance over women. The reactions of many such students are varied as some student men choose to stay away and enjoin other students to desist from taking gender courses altogether or to become very disturbed by the gender discussions in the classroom. In one particular case, some male and female Christian students were so disturbed by a feminist critique of the history of the Christian church that they stayed behind and wanted to know whether the data on the Inquisition, the witch hunts, the brothels run by the church to raise funds for the buildings and other work of the church and the crusades against the Moslems, was based on fact. Thus, different masculinities converge in the classroom and produce varied reactions from students.

### **"Gentle" Masculinities**

Not all the student masculinities are arrogant, violent, disorderly and misogynist. Amongst undergraduate men, regardless of age, class, religion and ethnicity, there is a core of chivalrous young men who volunteer to perform errands, which they perceive to be masculine. For example, such students will help to carry overhead projectors, procure chairs, locate rooms and help out, often without waiting to be requested to do so by lecturers. Whether they perform these errands for all lecturers

regardless of gender, is not clear since the author of this article is female and has not inquired of male lecturers whether they too, are availed this help. However, it is also the experience of many male and female staff that safe passage is given to lecturers known to students whenever students erect barricades in the roads during demonstrations. It is also possible that students may bond with their lecturers on specific issues but may exhibit threatening or violent behaviors towards those lecturers they might not know or have constant contact with.

The class dimension of masculinities is also noticeable from lecturers' standpoints. Many male students, particularly those from boys' schools which, stress respect and chivalry especially towards women, exhibit very pronounced verbal politeness. In fact, many visiting academics at the university have remarked about the salutations such as "Good morning ma'am" which are directed at female academic staff. Whether such rituals of chivalry are also directed at female students depends on the perceptions of the students, their class and educational backgrounds and their upbringing. The age difference in the expressions of masculinities by male students is very obvious from an academic staff member's point of view.

### **Older male students' masculinities**

Post-graduate students, overall, are very well mannered, helpful, polite and very considerate of each other and of academic staff. The age of the post-graduate students differs depending on the faculty but in general, in the social sciences, the post-graduate students tend to be over 24 years of age except for the odd student who proceeds into graduate study directly from their undergraduate final year. Most post-graduate students are male because very few women take up academic careers in Zimbabwe. As established in the study by Gaidzanwa et al (1989) the age of post-graduate study is around 24 and coincides with the average female students' age of marriage. Thus, as postulated by Gore and Chagonda in this volume, post-graduate students' masculinities tend to be diverted into the academic arena and the relatively abrasive masculinities of the undergraduate years are replaced by very low-key, almost uniform masculinities, which are compatible with the expectations that academic staff hold of post-graduate students. The post-graduate students are often people who are already holding jobs and may aspire to enter academia. Thus, post-graduate study is part of the socialization into academic life and the students understand and comply with the expectations of collegiality, mannered and rational disputation and amicable disagreement.

### **Student masculinities outside the classroom**

Class, gender, ethnicities and other identities, also shape the masculinities of students outside the classroom. Gore, Chagonda, Chivaura, Ndlovu and Somerai describe these masculinities in great detail in the various chapters in this volume. What is very obvious from these chapters is that students from the University of Zimbabwe, the largest and the oldest of the universities in Zimbabwe, have earned themselves a

reputation for violence, arrogance, drunkenness and promiscuity. Students from the university have, since the establishment of the university in 1957, participated in counter-cultural behaviors. While the university authorities across regimes have tried to sanitize the image of students to the public and successive governments, arguing that students are young, spirited and needing public indulgence, governments have been less tolerant of students' counter-cultural activities. Black nationalists and a small core of white liberal students opposed the successive racist white-dominated regimes of Rhodesia, using the campus of the university as a safe haven from state harassment. A similar situation developed after independence as student support for the ruling ZANU (PF) began to erode in the mid nineteen eighties. Thus, male students have traditionally constructed masculinities based on opposition to state-sponsored politically inclined masculinities, which were dismissive of young people, women and economic and social minorities.

However, there are problematic issues in these student masculinities, which often decry the vices of corruption, violence, intolerance, dishonesty and graft amongst politicians. The masculinist behaviors described by the contributors of all the papers in this volume are problematic because they indicate the existence of the same vices amongst the students and their leaders. The press in Zimbabwe has covered the violence visited by students on members of the public during demonstrations widely. Gaidzanwa (1993), The Gender Studies Association's report "Breaking the Silence" (1998) on sexual harassment, various reports of the Student Disciplinary Committee and the Students' Affairs' Office, all indicate that there is religious, political, ethnic, gender and class intolerance and violence directed by students at each other and to other members of the university community. The university has ineffective machineries for dealing with these problems because there is a general tolerance and protection of image to the public both by students and the university authorities. For example, the verbal violence towards a female warden by a small group of Christian male students was swept under the carpet while male students' threat of verbal violence towards a male staff member in the office of students' affairs, who was allegedly involved in sexual misconduct with and harassment of female students, was quashed through the intervention of some university executives.

In general, all sections of the university who were interviewed by the project, ranging from secretaries, academic women, administrators and female students, security and administrative staff, agree that there is a high degree of tolerance of masculinist behaviors which are harmful to women on and off campus. In the workshop for secretaries held by the Gender Studies Association in 2000, the secretaries cited the punishment, intervention and the arbitration of disputes in favor of sexual harassers who are usually male staff, their alleged girlfriends and male students against women who are usually secretaries and female students. At least twenty female students in the social sciences and ten in the law faculty have given feedback to the GSA and the AAP to the effect that they would not participate in gender initiatives to democratize and defend the rights of women on campus because they felt that the university authorities were not serious about protecting

the rights of women on campus and would victimize those women staff and students who got involved in these initiatives.

These fears of victimization by the university academic and administrative and management were also articulated by administrators, particularly women, in a study conducted for the project by Chingarande in 2000. These administrators argued that their promotions and performance appraisals were based on the reports of their predominantly male bosses and they could therefore, not participate in or be perceived to be involved in gender-based advocacy which their bosses did not like or agree with.

The defense of the university authorities against these allegations that it aids and abets violence against women on campus has usually been to point to the banning of alcohol sales on campus, the hiring of one woman as Deputy Registrar (Academic) and the appointment of a female as Dean of Commerce, presumably, indicators of their commitment to women's welfare on campus. However, what is not mentioned is that the banning of alcohol on campus was primarily undertaken to reduce the abuse and violence of male students towards male authority figures and their offices and property on campus and in government when the university students riot on campus and on the streets and government offices. Most of the violence against women on campus is not perpetrated during demonstrations or on the streets. Student men usually drink in male groups on and off campus and women are not usually welcome in these male, drinking sessions.

Drunken and sober student males perpetrate violence on individual women on and off campus in intimate relationships, on dates and in other interactions. Male violence against women on campus is perpetrated in the classrooms, the common rooms, the recreational areas, the cafeterias, the dining halls and in the committee, boards and other formal settings where men defend their interests against women by excluding them, verbally abusing them and lampooning them in campus magazines and threatening their promotions or subjecting them to physical violence.

As indicated by Gore, student men's masculinity also involves protecting student women from the riot police during demonstrations or from sexual harassment by male academics. If anything, demonstrations are usually the occasions where male students act protectively towards female students against the state and its agents in the form of the riot police. Thus, while student men may 'protect' student women from violence from other men and their masculinities which they do not consider legitimate, male students are not above violating these student women in everyday situations and interactions which are not in any way connected to consuming alcohol. Students also target the male security staff of the university for violence when the security people try to defend university property from damage during riots and demonstrations. As working class people on campus, security personnel are looked down upon by students and are insulted and taunted and called uneducated workers. Verbal and institutionalized, bureaucratized violence against women and service staff in the university is perpetrated by a variety males from all rungs of the university hierarchy.

The university authorities overlook the negative consequences of the alcohol ban on campus. The image of the university is being dented even more publicly because of the public drinking, urinating, fighting and verbal abuse of members of the public, supermarket staff and other people at Groombridge and Bond Street shopping centers by some of these students. Members of the public who use the Mount Pleasant municipal library, swimming pool, post office and shops have to run the gauntlet of male university students, some in various stages of drunkenness, who disperse themselves and stake spots over the car parks outside these facilities. The scattering of students is intended to make it easier for students to evade the police who periodically raid bottle stores and shopping centers to rid these areas of public drinkers. This results in the dispersion of relatively large numbers of young men well on their way to drunkenness, making life uncomfortable for members of the public who are sometimes taunted, jeered at and verbally abused by some of the drunken students.

The most recent event involving students and witnessed by the author of this article and a senior male colleague occurred in March 2001. In this incident, a notorious student who had verbally abused and threatened male and female students on the masculinities and femininities project of the AAP and the GSA, was verbally abusing supermarket staff at Bond Street shopping center. The supermarket staff had admonished him and three or four of his friends for consuming alcohol in the supermarket before paying for it. He accused them of racism and railed against them to the embarrassment of most of the shoppers including two university staff. He carried on his tirade for the best part of 30 minutes and was eventually relieved by one of his friends who continued for another 15 minutes after the first student had tired of verbally abusing the supermarket shelf and security staff.

The militant male students particularly, attack the university and state authorities for mismanagement and fiscal indiscipline. At the same time, Gore, Ndlovu and Chagonda, in this volume, note that misappropriating funds and distributing them, as largesse amongst friends, relatives and political henchmen is part of the accepted behavior of the non-Christian student males in leadership roles in student government. It is notable that for many years, successive students' executives have not accounted for student funds properly. In fact, some students' executives have been accused of and suspended for embezzling union funds. Given the graduation of some student executives into national politics with this background, many student politicians cannot claim to be immune from these vices of fiscal indiscipline, corruption, intolerance and non-transparent governance.

Thus, the contending masculinities of the state, the university and the student bodies share some disturbing similarities, which cannot be dismissed. While the dominant strands of these masculinities may sometimes appear willing to give some concessions to the presence of women at the university, they tend to dominate most women and subordinated men whose masculinities are 'weak'. At the same time, student executives profess to be interested in the well being of all students. It is necessary to examine these masculinities in juxtaposition with femininities at the university.

## **Student femininities at the university**

Student masculinities and femininities co-exist and feed off each other on campus. Student femininities are the dominant forms of female behavior exhibited by female students depending on their race, class, religion, age, ethnicity and other characteristics. While the masculinities are dominant and uniform in subordinating women, the femininities are also focused on men, resistance to them and control over them. There are various femininities, which vary by class, age, ethnicity and religious belief. These femininities follow the classifications of peasant, called "severe rural background", working class, called "born location" and middle class, called "nose brigades", appellations which are accepted and widely used amongst students. The middle class femininities of women students who have attended group A schools are fun-oriented and stress the activities of dating, clubbing and acquiring the status symbols such as fashionable clothes, hairdos, mobile phones and other material goods of 'modernity'. The female students who have attended Group B schools tend to focus on dating and marrying educated men, attaining good grades so as not to disappoint parents and staying out of trouble. The more religious women students are usually from the latter group and their femininity is expressed in biblical terms stressing submission to God, modesty, and seriousness and maintaining virtues such as chastity.

There is some fluidity between these femininities as many members of the university community have observed. Women students, who may arrive at university for their first year and are peasant and small town people, can quickly transform themselves into trendy, fashionably dressed young women of the campus within a few months. It may be difficult to ascertain the background of a young woman who has undergone a transformation once she has been inducted into the dominant middle class "nose brigade" femininity. Nevertheless, a common feature amongst these femininities is that they focus on earning the admiration of men on and off campus. There are other agenda such as earning good degrees, highly paid jobs and status but many student women are also expected to prove themselves on the marriage market.

## **Dominant femininities on campus**

The "nose brigade" femininity is the most dominant one to which most of the young women aspire. This femininity is premised on access to money, middle class education and family who reinforce the norms and values of this femininity. While the 'nose' femininity is considered embarrassing in its western-ness, many student women and men, in various ways also aspire to it. The consumption patterns of the middle classes are the dominant ones that are aspired to by both male and female students. Thus, while "non-nose" students profess to dislike the 'nose' ways, most of them aspire to consume the goods that 'nose' men and women have access to through their middle class families. In addition, many 'non-nose' men would like to have relationships with 'nose' women if the women would have them. Many student

and working class men feel threatened by the confidence of the ‘nose’ women while considering them as high status women in the marriage market.

The gender dynamics between ‘nose’ women and non-‘nose’ men were explained by a male student who acted as research assistant to the author in a research project. He was involved in a relationship with a ‘nose’ woman and was very happy in this relationship. He was an “SRB” man who was very conscientious and very pleasant. He explained that some of the aggression against ‘nose’ women was due to their unavailability to the “SRB” and township or “location” men on campus. Thus, the class-based hostility to women of more affluent backgrounds played itself out on campus as contempt for middle class or western behaviors, consumption, clothes and accents. However, those “SRB” or “location” men who were confident and able to master the conventions of the middle classes in terms of deportment, behavior, personal hygiene and a chivalrous attitude towards women, were able to form relationships with all types of student women on campus. In any case, the “SRB” and “location” men constitute the majority of men on campus and most student women are likely to explore marriage relationships with these men in the long term.

### **Subordinated femininities on campus**

As stated by Ndlovu in a chapter in this volume, the “SRB” and the “location” student women also resent being looked down upon by the men and the middle class student women. The “SRB” and “location” student women are amongst the most subordinated women on campus because they are thrust into an alien, male environment, which considers their qualities a drawback in academia and in social interaction. Many such women have attended religious or government rural and urban schools with little exposure to the urban areas and the middle class norms and values of academia. These female students have to navigate their campus environments fairly quickly and many sense the negative attitudes of males and middle class women students towards them. As in the larger population of Zimbabwe, these female students also comprise a significant proportion of the Christian fundamentalists. These students tend to be more reserved, conformist and docile in comparison to all other student categories. As indicated by various contributors in this volume, the women defer to their male counterparts who play the leading roles in the Christian civic activities on campus. Their femininities are the most muted on campus.

The femininities of the “SRB” and “location” women are expressed through the idioms of domesticity. Some ‘nose’ women prefer to stay off campus because they do not want to share rooms, ablution and other facilities. However, the “SRB” and “location” women find it expensive to commute from home. Their homes may be outside Harare and their parents cannot afford to rent accommodation for them off campus. As indicated by Somerai and Ndlovu, in different chapters in this volume, such student women prefer to stay on campus and comprise the bulk of the resident female campus population. Some of these students can therefore perform domestic services for their student boyfriends. In the female residences, it is quite common to

find men's clothes occupying a significant proportion of the laundry lines on weekends. These female students cook, clean and do their boyfriends' laundry and everyday chores. As stated by a female "SRB" student to the author:

"You have to show that you will make a good wife by washing, cooking and cleaning for the man if you want him to marry you. If you refuse to do so, you are just providing him with an excuse to dump you and marry a little schoolteacher or secretary who does whatever he wants."

On being asked whether she would continue with this behavior after she had successfully seduced the man into marriage, the student woman just laughed.

The 'nose' women are perceived by the men to be difficult matrimonial material because they have grown up with domestics who perform domestic chores for them. Such women do not often do their boyfriends' laundry unless they are under pressure to 'catch' a man in marriage. "Nose" women's femininity is also perceived to be troublesome in that it may be hostile to rituals of subordination to men, to in-laws and to other people whom "SRB" and "location" men prefer to be respected through these rituals. While the "SRB" and "location" women are perceived to make better wives, there is a problem, which many student men may articulate in muted voices. Many student men maintain, in private, that the "SRB" and "location" women are not as glamorous in public as the 'noses'. As one "SRB" student man confided to the author:

"When you are an MD, you want a wife who will acquit herself creditably at cocktail parties, dinners and other company functions. You do not want a woman who can only cook *sadza* (the national staple) and who will come to these company functions in her *mufushwa* (dried vegetables) hair. I have to be proud of her when I am with my colleagues. But I do not want a woman who does not know her position in the marriage. A woman has to respect her husband and support him in his career."

The problematic assumptions in the "SRB" student man's statement were lost on him. He assumed that he was likely to secure a job in which he would rise to managing director position despite his background. He also assumed that he could marry a woman who would be all things to him, a suitably docile, fashion-conscious helpmeet who would probably shelve her career for his. He also did not think natural hair was good enough on an MD's wife!

However, the difference between the student men and women of all classes is that the men are expected to earn or inherit high status goods for themselves while the majority of women are raised to believe that they can earn these goods themselves or access them through the men with whom they make strategic alliances. These alliances can be through marriage or through dating and maintaining long-term relationships with materially successful men. The need to 'catch' a boyfriend for marriage is very pronounced and has been observed by different sections of the campus community who have had to deal with the problems generated by student women's single-mindedness in acquiring husbands before they leave the university

as graduates. The 'third year syndrome' is a term used to describe the behaviors of female students who feel that they have to use any means necessary to 'catch' a husband on campus before their graduation, usually after three years of study. Many degrees are three years in duration and students explain that women students need to 'catch' a suitable husband who is a graduate before they leave.

A female student in Business Studies explained to the author:

"If you do not catch a husband by third year and you eventually find a job outside the major towns, you will end up marrying a rural schoolteacher who might not even be a graduate. Where will you go with a teacher for a husband?"

These status and income considerations are spoken and unspoken and fuel the aggression of male students against women students on campus. The male students understand the sub-text of these sentiments which are terribly uncomfortable to them in a tight job market, driven by class, race, gender, ethnic, political and other considerations. As indicated by Gore, Somerai, Ndlovu, Chagonda and Chivaura, many young student women prefer to date and have fun with men who have money to pay for outings to movies, nightclubs, picnics, holidays and other activities. Such men cannot, obviously, be student men who depend on a mean government stipend to survive frugally.

In Zimbabwe, most men tend to marry down, that is, they marry spouses who are less economically and socially accomplished than they are. Women, on the other hand, tend to marry up and this creates a very troubled gender atmosphere on the campus, as the women are perceived to prefer men with money and other material goods. The location of the university in Harare, the capital city, also creates a large pool of men who are in business, diplomatic service, politicians and other men who have more money and status goods than male students. Therefore, the female students have a larger selection of men to 'have fun' with than women in other towns. These men might not necessarily be available or serious about marriage but are willing to have dalliances with younger nubile women who are perceived to be intelligent and moderately sophisticated, at least enough to understand the demands of uncomplicated and temporary dalliances.

On one occasion, a female 'nose' student with a high public profile was severely assaulted by an older non-student boyfriend in the car park of one of the female residences. The incident was quite distressing because the male students cheered the violent male who complained about the woman and her infidelity to him after she had taken his money and gone on to enter into a relationship with another man, younger and less wealthy than him. After assaulting her, he used his mobile phone to call for a private ambulance to take her to hospital. The incident was told and re-told with relish by many male students on campus. While they identified with the violent man's 'disciplinary' action, they also resented him for flashing his symbols of affluence and manhood, namely, his flashy luxury car, his mobile phone and his ability and willingness to pay for a private ambulance to convey an unfaithful paramour to the hospital.

The dating and sexual activities of the university students and the violence and drunkenness of the male students have contributed to the negative images of

university students in the public domain. As the chapters by Somerai and Ndlovu, in this volume show, there is a definite problem in that male students get involved in casual, commercial sex in the town while some women students cultivate relationships with men for money and other luxury goods. However, there is more public tolerance of student men's sexual and other exploits than for women students' sexual and dating strategies. In September 2000, a Sunday paper ran front-page articles, which implicated students in prostitution in the city. This article raised some furore in diverse political, religious and social circles. Prior to that, the same paper had published another article describing male homosexual prostitution with tourists, which also implicated male university students. However, the students' research, which is published in this volume, indicates that these articles described what was happening in the city with respect to the sexual activities of young men and women, some of them university students. As the students argue, the meager nature of their stipends, the absence of jobs and the high costs of accommodation, food, transport, books and stationery, all create the pressures, which force or facilitate students' participation in commercialized sexual activities regardless of gender.

### **Strategies associated with dominance, subordination and marriage**

The foregoing complicates the gender dynamics between students because female students might have dalliances with men with whom they do not or cannot settle into marriage. Thus, male students resent being 'shelved' until female students want marriage partners. These male students usually rationalize these complications by marrying women who are trainee teachers or nurses or secretaries because such women are less competitive and do not have the same capacity to undermine the student men's masculinities as the female university students. These antagonisms between male and female students over dating and intimate relationships often result in the violations of women's rights on campus. These violations may take the form of insisting on unprotected sex to 'prove' commitment to a man, providing laundry and sexual services at the man's will, informing the boyfriend about a woman's movements all the time and falling pregnant "for" a man especially if he is graduating before he has made a firm commitment to the woman.

The pregnancy issue as part of the "third year syndrome" works both ways in that a man may desire to 'mark' and 'disable' his' woman who may be remaining on campus after he has graduated. As a show of commitment to him, a woman has to be willing to fall pregnant by him. This accomplishes the triple goals of curtailing her desirability and mobility on the sexual and marriage markets, testing her docility and submission to the man's wishes and demonstrating her ability to bear children. This is a risky venture for the woman because he might abandon her if he meets other women when he leaves the university. The investment demanded of her is so high that if her gamble does not work, she is literally left holding the baby and will have reduced her attractiveness on the marriage market. Her show of submission

will have been worthless because she is not guaranteed any of the rewards of that submission, namely, the man's support, marriage and respectability.

The women students sometimes use pregnancies in the bargaining process. A woman who has little time left at the university and no marriage prospects in sight may often contract a relationship in which she falls pregnant as a way of compromising the man in question into marriage. According to some student men, the man may even be younger than the woman involved, showing that the women are willing to throw the age rules and norms of Zimbabwean relationships out of the window in their quest for marriage. This strategy calls on the men to do the honorable thing and marry the women they have compromised through pregnancy. However, the strategy does not always work because the men may not have intended marriage by embarking on a sexual relationship. Whatever the merits of the strategy, it is also clear that the femininity deployed here depends on a woman making herself vulnerable to a man and taking risks which may result in public humiliation and long term marginalization.

## Femininities in the classroom

Female students' femininities in the classroom are quite complicated. On one hand, many females in Zimbabwe are socialized to be unobtrusive in public and to defer to men. However, the demands of academia often contradict these norms and values governing mainstream femininity. In class, students are expected to participate in discussions, ask and answer questions, debate issues, read and research around their coursework. In general, most lecturers note that female students tend to be more reserved than their male counterparts regardless of class, ethnicity, age and religious persuasion. However, 'nose' women tend to be more daring, confident and voluble than other student women and this often stigmatizes them on class grounds. Male students censure 'uppity' women by 'buzzing' and 'humming' at the more voluble ones whenever they talk or argue beyond the limit that males and more conservative women consider acceptable. Male lecturers may also resent such women students especially if the lecturers themselves are of peasant and working class background. As two female students who had been to group A schools asserted during interviews for the project:

"We were picked upon by our lecturers. They did not like us to contradict them or to present alternative explanations to events that we discussed in class."

One of the women described her experiences with a particular lecturer:

"On a couple of occasions, I ended up in tears after the class in the Arts faculty. That man just hated me and felt that I was too 'uppity' for him. Other students just kept quiet and agreed with him in class although out of class, they made fun of his prejudices and complained about his bullying."

Subsequently, one of the women did take up a career in which she has ended up in a more senior position than the junior academic man who had bullied her as a

student. The other woman also has a successful career and has drawn the project's attention to the problems of sexual harassment that the man who used to bully her has been embroiled in.

The issue of visibility and its risks in the classroom was also referred to in Kajawu's chapter in this volume. In her study of a peri-urban school, she noted that many girls preferred to keep quiet in class as a defensive strategy. According to them, it is safer to keep quiet and not be harassed by male students and possibly, the male teachers. In the university, some female students used the same strategy to ensure their safety from harassment. One very attractive student in a faculty noted for the sexual harassment of female students by male staff confided that:

"It is safer to keep silent, to dress down and not be noticed by the lecturers. If you are too pretty, you can get into trouble because the lecturer/s might target you for sexual relationships. Once that happens, you are in for it. If you succumb, everyone talks about you and resents you. If you do not, the lecturer will humiliate you in class, ask you hard questions and show you to be stupid. He may even mobilize his friends to punish you with low marks. Once you have low marks in many subjects, it is difficult for you to claim that one lecturer is harassing you because they will gang up against you."

Many female students from that faculty said they could not participate in gender activities because some of their lecturers had come out vehemently against affirmative action for women at the university. In the same faculty, some male lecturers had argued against a code of conduct governing sexual relationships with students. Some of these lecturers argued that student women were legal majors and were free to make their sexual choices. This sentiment was not confined to this faculty but was articulated by many lecturers across all faculties, who felt that the situation should be left as it is. At present, there is no rule or regulation governing sexual relationships between students and lecturers. Thus, lecturers are free to teach and examine the work of students with whom they might be sexually involved. This situation has created problems for female students because they are the ones who are usually suspected of involvement in these relationships with male lecturers.

Some good female students have their achievements denigrated when male students accuse them, justly or otherwise, for having earned these marks in bed. Male students resent some of the women students whom they suspect of having deployed their femininity and sex to earn good grades. These accusations are very difficult to deal with because the male lecturers suspected of involvement comprise part of the grading system. In one unfortunate case, it is alleged that a young woman who was obviously academically outstanding was denied a professionally sponsored prize because her faculty was embroiled in a dispute over her grades. It was alleged that she had had relationships with two lecturers, creating bad blood between them and making a consensus around the award of the prize difficult to achieve. This institutional acceptance of vagueness in the gender codes of the university makes it difficult to instill confidence in the academic integrity of the system since male students distrust the femininity of women students when it is deployed supposedly,

for grades. Similarly, male academics create friction with male students by refusing to or abstaining from sponsoring and supporting a transparent gender code, which would reinforce the integrity of the men who are gatekeepers of the academic system.

There is another facet to the 'troubled' femininities in the university. At least six male academic colleagues have indicated that they too are harassed by some female students who deploy their femininity, offering sex for marks. While some women academics have complained about being offered presents by students, presumably for marks, males tend to be offered sexual favours in those instances where female students attempt to deploy their femininity to their advantage. Thus, the coercion of female students by some male academics is also coupled by the subtler offer of sex for marks by a few female students. This is a strategy that is costly for the student if their offer is rebuffed. Usually, when such incidents are reported, there is an informal whisper campaign against the student since most men said they would feel awkward and embarrassed filing a complaint of sexual harassment by a student. In fact, when this issue was discussed in a faculty tearoom, the male staff laughed uproariously and some even expressed a desire to be harassed sexually by female students!

This reaction indicated that the female student who unsuccessfully deployed her femininity this way would get away with it or be penalized informally in the same way that the students argue that a female student turning down an academic man's sexual overtures would be penalized. In any case, many male academics did not feel threatened by the sexual overtures of the female students because the initiative and control in an actual or attempted sexual relationship with a student would remain in the male academic's hands. The male academic could give or withhold undeserved grades as he saw fit and a female student could not demand good grades and enforce that demand against the man's will. The power and authority of the academic men against females, especially students and female secretarial staff is demonstrated in the outcomes of disputes in the university.

In one case that is cited frequently, an academic man was allegedly able to get away with punishing a secretary who protested against unfair privileging of a junior secretary who was alleged to be involved in a sexual relationship with the male academic. The more senior woman allegedly complained about unfair treatment and the dispute was allegedly resolved by arbitration at a high level, which allegedly resulted in the senior woman being deprived of her bonus and transferred to another department. The younger woman was promoted and remained with her boss, alleged to be involved in a relationship with her. It is quite difficult, in a system run by men to institute any consistently just treatment for 'unconnected' young student men and women, women who are not allied to privileged men and lower status persons.

In the gender classes across campus, the numbers of women have been higher than those for men in these classes since the middle of the nineteen nineties, reversing the trend of the nineteen eighties when the numbers of men and women were almost equal in these classes. Many of the women describe their interests in these courses as motivated by a search for alternative femininities that do not disempower them or render them overly dependent on men. Most of these are optional classes, showing

that there is a need amongst students that is being met by these courses. The difficulties with masculinities and femininities described above are being played out in the classrooms, committee rooms and boardrooms in the university.

### Femininities outside the classrooms

Outside the classrooms, student women's femininities tend to be deployed in the dating and social interactions described earlier in this chapter. While men participate in sport and clubs around campus, most women do not participate in sport because sporting activities may conflict with the norms and values held by a significant proportion of the men and women in the population outside the university. Women's bodies are regarded as valuable to men, be they fathers or husbands and these bodies are usually deployed in the marriage market. Deploying or displaying them arbitrarily is perceived to be unnecessary. The apparel that has to be worn by sportspeople consists of shorts, tee shirts and tight clothing which many conservative, young, Christian and shy women consider difficult to appear in publicly. The discomfort that many women experience with their bodies is partly related to their Christian and traditional values around women's modesty. Women's bodies are not supposed to be exposed more than is necessary to conduct everyday activities. Therefore, tight, short, scanty clothes create discomfort in many women. It is only those middle class women or women who have attended girls' schools with a variety of sporting disciplines who have developed alternative body images which facilitate their participation in soccer, hockey, tennis, swimming and basketball.

In general, the sports' department has tended to focus on and emphasize men's sports, neglecting procurement and encouragement of sporting disciplines in which females, students with disabilities and older students can participate. In any case, male students tend to ogle, jeer and stare at sporting women and women's bodies whenever they encounter them, making life difficult for those women who may be interested in swimming, tennis and other sports that expose women's bodies.

As in the sporting arena, in the political sphere, all the contributors in this volume have already stated that participation in political activity is not considered feminine. Those few women who have dared to run for office have found it very traumatic since their posters were defaced and they are expected to use foul language, which is demeaning to themselves, the university authorities and the state. If anything, women's femininities work against them during demonstrations and riots when the male students fight the riot police, scaling walls and fences, throwing stones and other missiles. The women who participate in these riots and demonstrations use verbal means to denigrate the riot police. The riot police usually target the women as objects of violence, manhandling them and tear gassing their residences precisely because the women students are not as physically violent as the men and cannot run as fast or scale high walls and fences as well as the men. It is during such occasions that student men are able to deploy their chivalry to protect their female counterparts by helping them over fences and walls and fighting the police while the women flee the campus.

The issue of sports is also influenced by class, exposure and school background. Many group B and missionary-run schools do not offer a variety of sporting and recreational activities. As a result, many students, male and female, are not exposed to the sports and social activities at the university and many sporting facilities tend to be underutilized. The swimming pool and tennis, basketball courts and hockey pitches tend to be utilized only on weekends and late afternoons. Many students, male and female, cannot swim or play hockey, tennis, basketball and badminton. Thus, the campus climate circumscribes the types of femininity that student women can exhibit, favoring conservative femininities and censuring the more daring and less conservative ones.

## Conclusion

The chapter has described and analyzed student masculinities and femininities, arguing that the hegemonic masculinities tend to be created and deployed against women staff and students as well as older student men and working class men and women who are in service occupations on campus. There is homosocial bonding in classrooms through ridiculing women students and staff. Hegemonic student masculinities also express themselves in verbal violence towards service staff. Some of the machismo, which is deployed in the classrooms in academic contexts, is also channeled into protest activity against university authorities and the state. Those students who exhibit their masculinities through academic excellence have been overshadowed by the political masculinities, which are 'brawny' rather than 'brainy'. Women help to define the hegemonic masculinities through exclusion from many activities such as soccer, the dominant sport associated with hegemonic masculinities on campus. Women are treated as an out-group that is polluting the men's environment so that denigrating women becomes a major and sometimes, defining activity for maleness and masculinity.

These masculinities are carried over into the academic and administrative ranks, in more muted and less obvious ways where they continue to exclude women from the important institutions of the university. As Chivaura's figures on staffing by gender in the university indicate, there is little official effort made to improve the gender environment of the university so that it can be more acceptable to women as students and staff. The hidden curriculum of the UZ is driven partly by contempt for women. As the chapters of this volume have shown, the dominant masculinities at the university may be under threat by economic forces but they defend themselves by accentuating the exclusion of and dominance over women as a way of dealing with these economic problems. Thus, the women are forced to withdraw from or to act reserved within the university as a way of individually dealing with institutionalized denial of an entrenched and visible problem.

Many young women who encounter this masculinity earlier on in academia may choose to leave before they find those areas of academia that might be attractive to them. This partly explains why many academically accomplished young women leave the university and pursue careers elsewhere. The university campus provides an

environment for student men who are socially vulnerable because of their class and blighted economic prospects to symbolically regain their masculinities and to play out their aggressive masculinities within which they an dominate women, subvert the masculinities of the university authorities and of the state. Although these students are willing to produce sharp critiques of the IMF and WB's chauvinisms, they are unable to recognize their own subscription and reproduction of those chauvinisms on campus. Their individual victimization tends to be overplayed while they in turn, dominate women and subordinate them on the campus. The sense of individual powerlessness and alienation that these students are experiencing because of the erosion of state funding is similar to that of the state against the international funding institutions. However, the students fail to make a connection between their alienation and that of the state that they protest against.

The femininities exhibited by the women students are no less problematic in both their conservative and more radical manifestations. Most of the femininities tend to be focused on earning male approval and are subordinated to the masculinities as defined by the males. Those femininities that are rebellious are silenced through official, formal and informal verbal and physical violence, as described in the chapters by the contributors in this volume. Some femininities may also be deployed academically for earning unfair advantage over other students. In such situations, these femininities ultimately undermine women's credibility and make women dependent on the males with whom these femininities are transacted. The more dominant and glamorous femininities are underpinned by material resources, which many young women cannot secure independently of men. Thus, only a few women espouse femininities that are not parasitic of men. Those few students, who espouse 'autonomous' femininities that depend on women's abilities, tend to be marginal and are dismissed as feminist or man hating.

In any case, the university authorities, structures and personnel as presently configured, have shown themselves unable and largely unwilling to deal with these problematic issues of masculinities and femininities which disturb the teaching and learning environment and render it undemocratic. With the proliferation of universities and the tightening economic climate, the universities that do not foster good gender environments are likely to be deserted by those students who can afford to pay for their education within and outside the country. The present trend whereby middle class families prefer to send their children overseas is likely to escalate. It will be tragic if the University of Zimbabwe becomes a university of last resort where class polarization thrives, and where misogyny and violence are tolerated and the the rights of women, the disabled and service workers and other disadvantaged groups are flouted with impunity.

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