



Chapter Five

***Chi-UBA* Sexuality, Undesirability and Violence**

In the previous chapter I examined the masculine ideal at the UZ, focusing on the daily interactions between male students and with authority figures. In this chapter, I continue to investigate the experiences of masculinity at the institution, but this time I focus on their interactions with the opposite sex, especially as it relates to their sexual and romantic liaisons. As many scholars have shown (Silberschmidt 2005; Hunter 2001), sexual experience and the ability to attract members of the opposite sex are key markers of adulthood. For instance, male circumcision rites and their focus on the penis are as much about becoming a male adult in general as they are about becoming a sexual male adult (Heald, 1994). This is why adults actively encourage pre-marital sexual experiences by newly circumcised young men.

In a similar vein, when viewed as a ‘rite of passage’, university entails much more than merely acquiring one’s degree; it is also where boys become men and perhaps more importantly, it is where they truly become *sexual* men. Scholars such as van den Berghe (1977) and Moffat (1989) have shown that sex is of great importance during the liminal period of university life, when students find themselves suspended between childhood and adulthood. One must not forget, however, that, for many young people, sexual debut often occurs long before they make it to university. In Zimbabwe, sexual debut for both men and women tends to occur at age fifteen and older (*Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey 2005-6*: 209).

Although university offers ample opportunities for sexual experimentation and sexual flirtation, and although young men are generally seen as being ‘sexually in control’ (Gutmann 1999), this chapter demonstrates that this is not necessarily the case for the typical male student at the UZ campus. I argue that many male students have difficulty living up to the image of the sexually successful male. In fact, the average *UBA* is considered to be sexually inept by both female and male students and has very little success attracting sexual or romance partners on campus. Many female students also consider the typical male student to be undesirable as a sexual or romance partner. Following Henrietta Moore (1994: 66), I will show that this situation leads to a ‘crisis of representation or thwarting of ideological investments in dominant male identities’. Moore defines ‘thwarting’ as ‘the inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position, resulting in a crisis, real or imagined, of self-representation and/or social representation’ (*ibid*).

In the first half of the chapter I examine male students’ experiences of ‘thwarting’ as they pursue romantic and sexual liaisons with their female counterparts at the institution. In the second half, I show how different kinds of sexual and romantic liaisons, termed ‘gold rush’ and ‘one-day internationals’, are part of the strategies adopted by male students to overcome the ‘crisis of representation’ that they experience. Sexual and romantic relationships, I argue, offer male students opportunities to reconstruct themselves as sexually successful male adults as well as live out what Moore (1994) refers to as ‘fantasies of power’.

UBA's, Undesirability and Powerlessness

Many feminist scholars have expressed reservations about the notion of male powerlessness (Kandiyotti 1994; Canaan and Griffin 1990). They assert that all men, by virtue of their dominant status in society, and regardless of their social class position, automatically benefit from what Connell (1995) terms the 'patriarchal dividend'. While true, it is important to remember that men do not benefit equally from the patriarchal dividend. Hanmer (1990: 30) points out, 'many other factors mediate [men and women's] personal experiences'. With this understanding in mind I turn to examine UZ male students' subjective experiences of powerlessness—real and imagined—not so much to critique the notion, as to show how it significantly influences the sexual choices that male students make while at the institution.

In their interactions with female students, male students were constantly made aware that they fell short of the masculine ideal of 'man the provider'. The incident involving the burning down of a car belonging to a 'sugar-daddy' described in chapter three is illustrative. Male students were enraged at the blatant manner in which older and wealthy non-university men, *NABAs* or *Big Dharas*, 'stole' female students away from them. I suggest that the presence of *NABAs* and *Big Dharas* on the UZ campus 'thwarts' male students' ability to properly take up gendered subject positions and throws into question who they are as 'men'. Moore (1994:66) argues that 'every person has fantasies or ideas of the type of person s/he would like to be seen to be by others' and that 'a lot of investments go into maintaining these fantasies'. For many male students, intelligence and independence of thought and action were central to their masculine identities. In fact,

one could argue that the *chi-UBA* principles of radicalism, rebelliousness and non-conformity to authority essentially revolved around male students' fantasies of themselves as highly intelligent and independent thinkers and actors. It is these characteristics that male students typically showed off in their interactions with outsiders, that is, with non-UZ students. However, when they were confronted with alternative markers of masculinity, embodied by *NABAs* and Big *Dharas*, male students were made aware of the inadequacies of their particular brand of masculinity, especially as it related to successfully attracting females as sexual and romance partners. Furthermore, they soon learned that intelligence and independence of thought and action are not enough to attract the ladies, unless these attributes were accompanied by an equal dose of what students referred to as 'fiscal power', that is, economic wealth.

According to Leonard, a third year male student, there were only two things that *UBA*'s found stressful during their stay on campus. These were 'assignments' and 'girls'. Leonard proceeded to ask, rhetorically, 'Besides these two things, what else would a *UBA* stress about?' Leonard explained that male students, in true *chi-UBA* fashion, often had a solution for everything and that they could get themselves out of almost any situation, save in these two areas. For instance, there was no way that one could negotiate their way out of the obligation to write assignments, short of failing their classes or completely withdrawing from the university. In this one aspect, Leonard clarified, the lecturer, rather than the *UBA*, is totally in control. 'Girls, on the other hand', he sighed, 'are way more complicated. You can never understand them'. This was the response he volunteered when I enquired why he seemed to be in low spirits. I had expected him to mention school as one of the reasons for his glum exterior given that the first semester

examinations were almost due. I had not, however, expected him to mention ‘girls’ in his answer as he always portrayed himself as uninterested in romantic relationships.

Leonard’s close friend, Nhlanhla, had even composed a rap song entitled ‘Types of Girls’. Its lyrics went as follows:

“There are many types of girls
There are those who are known as capitalists
This is because they only date men with money
Then there are those who are known as communists
Because they share their love with everyone
Then there are the motorists
These girls are addicted to the smell of petrol
There are many types of girls
There are those who are known as pharmacists
These girls will readily use love potions to get their way...”

The song captures his, and many male students’ anxieties about their sexual undesirability. The song also traces the major source of this undesirability: male students’ limited financial resources. In the song, Nhlanhla classified female students (and girls in general) into various groups: ‘capitalists’ (i.e. women who date only men with lots of money), ‘communists’ (i.e. women who are sexually promiscuous and have multiple sexual partners), ‘motorists’ (i.e. women who only date men who drive) and ‘pharmacists’ (i.e. women who use love potions in order to lure men). What the categories had in common is that they did not just portray female students in wholly negative ways, as sexually promiscuous and materialistic, but also simultaneously portrayed male students as hapless and powerless in the face of such active female sexual agency. For the average male student who was not as musically talented, the various discussion forums convened on campus provided them with ample opportunities to confront female students on these issues.

During fieldwork I recorded in my journal a conversation I had with a group of first year female and male students on their views of campus life. Almost all the students in this group had more negative things to say than positive, and their responses focused almost exclusively on the issue of relationships and dating. The first entry in my journal was a comment made by a male student that, ‘Girls are a problem. They are too materialistic’. This is followed by a comment from a female student who advised the previous speaker to ‘Go after your class...if she [i.e. a female student] is wearing her expensive jeans and her \$15,000 shoes, don’t try to reduce her to your class’. The first student protested this view and pointed out that he only went after ‘high-class’ women in order to ‘score points’ within his peer group. This particular conversation continued for a while with most of the students strongly advising against dating fellow students. The reasons they gave for this included the ‘wild’ nature of both female and male students and the ‘absence of virgins’ on campus.

I highlight this conversation in part because it shows the extent to which concerns about dating and romance dominate the lives of students at the institution. Without fail, every conversation or discussion that I participated in or observed, and which focused on relationships and dating on campus, ended up with male students angrily accusing female students of being prostitutes. Having observed and recorded many such incidents during fieldwork, I was always struck by two things: first, that males seemed to view female students’ so-called financially-motivated sexual licentiousness as a personal affront; and second, that their feelings bespoke resentment rather than mere displeasure.

In one discussion forum, a male student characterised female students as ‘myopic’ because, in his opinion, ‘They don’t even think about the future and they will do anything

for money, including having unprotected sex’. Another male student in the same forum agreed and lamented that ‘*USA*’s have a love for money and will not open their hearts for the sake of love. And with a *UBA* [sic], they know that he is not working, he is poor and so forth’. The poverty issue dominated the discussion for the next ten minutes, during which male students objected to ‘being used as ATM [automated teller machine] cards’, by which they meant that female students used men as a source of ready cash. However, a male student at the forum acknowledged that while it was unfair for female students to expect *UBA*’s to splurge on them all the time, he was personally in a position to provide the ‘cellphones and cerevita [an expensive cereal brand]’ that female students desired. He had a number of income-generating projects that provided him with money. This suggests that male students were not actually averse to fulfilling the ‘provider’ role in romantic relationships. Rather, what they resented was the fact that they often did not have the means to effectively meet this expectation when they were on campus. This resulted in them having very little power to control what happened in the sexual marketplaces of the university and compelled them to stand by and watch as *NABAs* and *Big Dharas* ‘stole’ their women. Male students’ sense of powerlessness must therefore be understood within the context of their marginal position as junior males in a broader masculine hierarchy.

The relatively disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds of the majority of male students explain their position of powerlessness and undesirability in the sexual and romance marketplace of the UZ campus. This fact is widely acknowledged by both female and male students at the institution. However, when this is added to the fact that most male students strongly believed in male superiority and female subordination, they become even less appealing as far as many female students are concerned. On campus,

many male students realized that they did not have as much control over female students as they imagined themselves to have. Some female students actively challenged existing gender ideals of the demure, subordinate female by being ‘active lust seekers’ and by engaging in transactional sex relationships. Furthermore, some female students also asserted their independence through their dress styles and challenged male control over their bodies and sexuality. The personal freedom that female students enjoyed on campus seemed to impinge directly on male students’ ability to dominate them. It is therefore not surprising that they experienced their greatest sense of powerlessness and thwarting when confronted with extremely independent female students.²²

Take for instance, Tawanda, who was two months into his first year when I interviewed him. Tawanda admitted to ‘experiencing shock’ when he first set foot at the UZ during orientation week:

“I was very traumatised to see one of my home-girls wearing some trousers [sic] the other day. Down there, where I come from, we have been groomed [sic] to look down upon such dressing [such as] mini-skirts, trousers and jeans. But I have had to adapt and be accommodating of such. Now I am no longer as affected.”

Tawanda was from Chiredzi District, which is located 418km away from the UZ campus, in the south-eastern part of the country. Communities in this rural area still practiced circumcision for young men and held elaborate sexual initiation ceremonies for young

²² Liz Walker’s (2005) gives an interesting account of a similar sort of thwarting that occurred among South African men immediately following the country’s independence in 1994. She shows how the granting of women equal status to that of men, and the independence that the latter consequently enjoyed, especially as it related to their sexuality, destabilized ‘old notions of masculinity and male privilege’ (p 225) and many South African men discovered that they would have to ‘negotiate their manhood’ (ibid) differently. Most men were particularly piqued by what Walker refers to as constitutional sexuality, that is ‘the liberal versions of sexuality that marked the country’s new democracy’ (ibid) and many responded to its challenge with acts of sexual violence. According to Walker, rape against women actually increased by seven percent, following South Africa’s independence.

girls. In contrast, Joseph, another first year male student I was interviewing jointly with Tawanda, explained that he was ‘very liberal when it comes to women’s dressing’. Tawanda attributed this to the fact that he had grown up in the capital city and so was accustomed to how women here dressed. However, even Tawanda admitted to finding some of the clothes worn by female students to be extremely sexually arousing:

“I can’t stand those hipsters! [laughs uncomfortably]. Hipsters appeal...they have a loud voice and they show everything that can be desired. You see, even the name shows that they are somehow connected with the hips, and you know what they say about hips? Hips don’t lie! [laughs]”²³

It must be remembered that the ability to control women—be they girlfriends, wives, sisters and, sometimes, even mothers— as well as women’s bodies, is seen as an important masculine trait in many societies, including Zimbabwe.²⁴

The third factor that explains male students powerlessness and undesirability in the eyes of their female counterparts can be traced back to their *chi-UBA* performances. The majority of female students with whom I interacted did not appreciate *chi-UBA* performances and considered these to be evidence of male students’ immaturity and irresponsibility. As a result, most pointed out that male students were ‘no different from our little brothers’. This statement also referenced the fact that most male students were of the same age—nineteen to twenty-four years—as female students. Here one sees how male students were not only under pressure to prove that they are ‘real’ men in their relations with other men, but in their relations with women as well (Edwards 2006). The

²³ This was a reference to a hip-hop song (Shakira and Wyclef Jean) that was popular at the time.

²⁴ In her study of students at an Indian university, Lukose (2001) discusses how male students harassed female students who wore modern skirts as well as jeans, rather than the traditional attire of the *pawada*, (a traditional long, full-length skirt). Skirts and jeans, she explains, were seen as immodestly modern.

various social scripts that are available to men, and which define how ‘men can be men’, or rather, how men can be ‘good at being men’ (Herdt 1981), often conflict with each other. For instance, while the kinds of bravado and macho-ism that male students displayed during their *chi-UBA* performances marked them as ‘*UBA chaiyo*’ (and hence ‘real men’) in the eyes of their peers, the very same performances marked them as ‘mere boys’ (and hence ‘not men’), in the eyes of their female counterparts. Shire’s (1994) discussion of the different, often contradictory spaces in which young Zimbabwean boys learn about masculinity perfectly captures this conflict. According to Shire, as young boys moved between the kitchen (a ‘women’s space’) and the *dare* (a men’s space), they were exposed to different, and conflicting, sets of masculine values in each space. However, both spaces played a significant role in ultimately shaping young boys into men. There is therefore, ‘no one way of being a man’, as many scholars have argued (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Connell 1995; Guttman 1997; Morrell 1998).

Related to this is the fact that the one *chi-UBA* trait that male students drew on when trying to attract women into sexual and romantic relationships—their intelligence—was usually ineffective with female students, who considered themselves to be equally intelligent, if not more so, and were thus not in awe of the ‘university student’ identity. Many male students shared stories with me of how the ‘UZ student card’, a photo identity card that is issued to each student upon enrollment, worked wonders in luring non-university women, particularly high-school girls, into romantic and sexual relationships with *UBA*’s. A male student narrated an incident, which occurred when he was in a bus and on his way home. He explained that there was a young woman that he thought was attractive, and so to gain her attention and interest, he had deliberately dropped his

student card at her feet. Luckily for him, the object of his interest picked it up and remarked, as she handed it over, ‘Oh, you are from the UZ?’ According to the male student, a friendship was established at that moment and he eventually had a sexual relationship with the young woman. The male student attributed his ‘luck’ to the power of the UZ student card. Another male student shared a similar story. He explained that in his neighbourhood back home, he was considered to be ‘good husband material’ because of his ‘UZ student’ status. He explained, ‘Many mothers throw their daughters at me. They ask me to help their daughters who are in A’ level with their school work. That [UZ] ID [identity card] is powerful out there!’ Unfortunately, for many male students, the UZ student card did not offer them any added advantages in the sexual and romantic marketplace on campus. Amongst their female peers, their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, their sexism and their perceived immaturity and irresponsibility continued to militate strongly against them.

Finally, *UBA*’s were deemed ‘unschooled’ in the art of courtship. ‘*UBA*’s do not know how to woo women’ [*UBA haigone kunyenga*] is a statement that I heard mentioned time and again by both female and male students. Even though the statement was usually accompanied by much laughter, I always observed an element of discomfort among most of the male students present each time the statement was made. This discomfort, I soon realised, was due to the fact that the statement was true. Recall Manwa’s (1995:77) observation that the term *UBA* ‘originally referred to any male student who did not have a girlfriend on campus or who was shy about proposing love to women’. Thula, whom I introduced in the previous chapter, explained, ‘The *chi-UBA*

spirit says you should never go out of your way to overly impress a woman [*musikana haanyengererwi*].

Female students considered this nonchalant approach to dating as one of the many flaws of *UBA*'s. A female student declared in a discussion forum '*UBA*'s are not romantic! I don't want you to rush. Woo me! Make me yours! Don't rush! This is not the land reform programme [*haisi hondo yeminda*]!' The last point referred to the country's infamous land invasions, which began in 2001, and are seen by many to have been carried out in a hurried and haphazard way. Put simply *chi-UBA* conflicted with female students' notions of what constituted romantic behaviour. While female student considered a protracted courtship as evidence of 'manliness', male students, in turn, did not. This refusal to be romantic can be interpreted as a form of protest against female students' perceived materialism and as an attempt to exercise some control over 'wayward' females. However, the following comment by a male student betrayed an even deeper meaning. *UBA*'s 'unromantic nature' is a strategy that they use to mask, and downplay their feelings of masculine inadequacy and failure:

"Why should I bend over backwards for them [i.e. *USA*'s]? They know very well that we [i.e. *UBA*'s] are struggling as it is. Even if I want to take you out for a movie tonight, you know I can't afford it. And anyway, we [also] know that *USA* is a no-go area; they are the territory of those who already have title deeds over them, i.e. *NABA*'s. So, when we date *USA*'s, most of us [*UBA*'s] are just doing it to keep ourselves entertained while we are here on campus".

Male students and the 'gold rush'

The pressure for male students to be sexually active, or at the very least to be known to be romantically linked to a woman, is quite high. At the UZ, a scoring system has been

developed to identify ‘sexually unsuccessful’ males. In this scoring system, no points are awarded for every year that a male student spent on campus without a girlfriend. Male students admitted that they tried to avoid ‘being beaten three-nil by the university’, that is, completing their studies without having ‘scored’. A male student observed: ‘The pressure to score at least one point is higher when you are in your final year’. The soccer metaphor that male students used to describe this scoring system aptly captured the competitive and often downright violent manner in which male students approached intimate relationships with female students at the UZ campus.

Despite their general undesirability as sexual and romance partners, male students did occasionally manage to attract and date female students. However, many accomplished this feat by using strategies that exceeded conventional boundaries of ‘wooing’ [*kunyenga*] and by employing *chi-UBA* tactics. I limit my discussion here to the three types of intimate relationships—‘gold rush’, ‘one day internationals’, (ODIs, in short) and importing—that many male students participated in. Following Moore (1994), I argue that aside from providing what was evidently a necessary sexual outlet for frustrated male students, these particular relationships also enabled male students to live out their ‘fantasies of power’ and to thus measure up to the masculine ideals of a sexual adulthood.

The ‘gold rush’ referred to a practice in which older male students competed for the attentions of first year female students. The ‘gold’ in ‘gold rush’ denoted a grading system that was used to rank the perceived ‘sexual purity’ of female students. When they first joined the university, female students were believed to be sexually inexperienced (that is, virgins), a highly valued condition in Zimbabwe, hence the ‘gold’ status accorded

to them. First year female students were also said to be ‘fresh’, a further reference to their perceived sexual purity. In their second year, female students were considered to have lost most of their sexual purity, hence their value diminished to ‘silver’. By their third year, female students’ sexual purity was considered to have been reduced even further, hence they were downgraded to ‘bronze’ status.

Even though the ‘gold rush’ occurred throughout the first semester of each new academic year, it was much more pronounced during the first couple of weeks when new students arrived on the UZ campus. This was particularly when first year female students were ‘in great demand’. For example, although Tawanda was totally opposed to dating a fellow female student, he was nonetheless willing to ask out a first year student during the first couple of weeks of a new academic year. Tawanda explained his preference this way, ‘I have to socialize her into my culture before she is socialized into the UZ culture’. This was despite being a first year student himself.

Many of the male students with whom I interacted during fieldwork voiced concerns that female students were difficult to have as girlfriends because ‘they are intelligent and can challenge you [as the man]’. One openly stated that he preferred a wife who was many years younger than him *and* who was not a university graduate. ‘I need someone I can control, not someone who will challenge me’, he explained. The ‘gold rush’ was thus one of the ways powerless male students used to enact their fantasies of power. Tawanda’s explanation betrayed his, and many other male students’ anxieties of powerlessness: they would only date those women over whom they could exercise some measure of control, such as naïve first year female students. But even then, this control was only possible under extremely limited conditions or for very limited periods.

I interviewed Joseph just two months into the 2006 academic year, and he had already been through one unsuccessful relationship with a fellow first year female student. Joseph claimed that when he first met her, she had presented herself as a ‘decent church-going girl’, but once she had spent some time at the institution she had changed and become sexually demanding. ‘It turned out that I was a better Christian than my ex because she had a sexual orientation [sic], whilst I was against sex’, he explained. He claimed that his girlfriend had left him for a *NABA*, that is, a non-university wealthy man. Ostensibly, the ‘UZ culture’ had corrupted her.

An analysis of how the ‘gold rush’ occurred suggests that its main objective was sex and control, not romantic love. It was also clear from students’ descriptions that male students who participated in the ‘gold rush’ took advantage of first year female students’ general lack of familiarity with university life and with university regulations. One of the key regulations that female students were often not aware of when they first arrived on campus was that they had full rights to their rooms and could therefore decide whom they admitted into these rooms. As a result, older male students visited Swinton Hall, a residence hall that was reserved for first year female students, and went about knocking randomly on doors and then forcing their way in when a door was opened. The majority of first year female students who had been ‘gold rushed’ described the experiences in very similar ways. Samantha explained:

“You can hear them [i.e. male students] knocking on doors. When you open they will say ‘We are looking for So and So’. They just give a fictitious name. And when you tell them that such a person does not stay here, they will then ask you for your name. And before you can stop them, they push their way into your room and refuse to leave”.

Reports of male students refusing to leave female students' rooms were extremely common and what made this practice particularly upsetting for many female students was that the 'gold rush' typically occurred in the evenings, after 7pm. Again, male students capitalized on the fact that, in the first week of their arrival on campus, most first year female students still felt uncomfortable with venturing out of their residence halls after dark. A first year female student I knew had unwittingly opened her door to a drunken male student. The incident had occurred at 8pm and the male student in question had refused to leave her room until it was well after midnight. When I asked the female student why she had not left the male student while she sought help, she explained that she had considered it but thought it unsafe to leave a total stranger alone in her room. She worried that he could have stolen some of her property, or worse still, taken something that belonged to her roommate. She also explained that she was worried that she would be blamed for having opened the door for him to begin with. During this period, the male student had professed his love for her and had made numerous attempts at physical intimacy, such as touching her hands and hugging her.

Besides being hounded by complete strangers, female students were also often at risk of being 'gold rushed' by male students they knew from their former high schools.

Tino, a first year female student explained her terrifying experience as follows:

"I was coming from a lecture when I met this guy that I knew from my high school. We started chatting, just catching up on high school stuff, you know. He walked me to my rez [residence] and we continued chatting until we got to my room. I was surprised when, as we were talking, he got up and he locked the door. I had left the keys in the lock when we entered my room. I tried not to look scared. He started telling me that he loved me, and [that he] had always loved me since high school and he threatened not to leave my room until I told him I loved him too. He was in my room for nearly three hours. The whole time I was

thinking to myself how easy it is for someone to be raped on campus and no one would ever know...”

Tino also explained that during the three hours that she had been trapped in her room, the male student had made numerous attempts at physical intimacy, such as touching various body parts as well as hugging. I often asked first year female students to estimate the number of male students who had made sexual or romantic advances towards them during orientation week. Many were unable to do so as there were simply too many to count. A female student, Regina, felt that she needed to first divide those male students who had asked her out into two groups—‘those who are persistent and even come to your room and refuse to leave’ and ‘those you just meet while going for your lectures and who only bother you there and then and leave you alone afterwards’—before she could hazard a guess of any kind. Another female student felt it necessary to exclude male students who ‘looked drunk or were drunk’ from her count as there would just be too many to consider. The first year female students suggested an average figure of about eight propositions from male students each day, although one informant confidently estimated that at least one hundred male students *a week* had made sexual and romantic advances towards her. This figure, she clarified, included *any* male student who had initiated a conversation with her and expressed the desire to be ‘more than just friends’.

The majority of male students who participated in the gold rush employed the same set of ‘wooing’ techniques. In the cases given above, male students used the fact that they had attended the same schools with particular first year female students in order to earn their trust and gain access to their room numbers as well as rooms. Some male students targeted females students in their departments. They would invite these female

students over to their rooms and offer to assist them with class assignments and texts. Yet still other male students simply resorted to outright physical violence and forced their way into female students' rooms. Although very few male students succeeded in establishing actual sexual contact using these particular 'wooing' strategies, many did manage some form of physical contact.

However, the real value of the 'wooing' strategies that male students employed during the 'gold rush' was that they gave them access to the room numbers of first year female students. Once male students had these room numbers they could then disguise their 'gold rush' 'wooing' strategies to resemble more 'conventional' 'wooing' techniques. Let me explain. In addition to having the right to determine whom they admitted into their rooms, university authorities warned female students against giving out their room numbers indiscriminately. When male students thus knocked randomly on female students' doors during the 'gold rush' it was a strategy that enabled them to gain direct access to the room numbers of attractive female students. This information would, in turn, facilitate repeated visits. It was during these repeat visits that male students would try to convince female students that they were not participating in the 'gold rush' but were genuinely interested in a serious relationship. They were said to visit particular female students' rooms numerous times a day, leaving notes of professed love each time. The female students with whom I interacted acknowledged that such attention could be flattering and that many first year female students eventually succumbed to male students' advances, only to realize much later that they had in fact been 'gold rushed'. My female informants also claimed that they knew of many female students who had

given in to male students' sexual and romantic advances as a desperate way of getting the harassment (i.e. the unwelcome visits and attempts at physical contact) to stop.

What is particularly striking about female students' accounts of their 'gold rush' experiences is the absence of actual rape cases, even though many admitted that they had found themselves in situations of 'near rape'. Brenda, a bubbly first year female student summarized her perceptions of male students' actions during the 'gold rush' in the following way, 'It's like they want to rape you or something'. She was one of my closest female informants and I had got to know her quite well when she told me about her 'near rape' encounter. Like most students, Brenda was not allocated a room on campus. This was despite the fact that her home was three hundred kilometres away and she had no relatives she could stay with in Harare. Again, like so many other students in her situation, Brenda had tried everything she could to secure a room on campus. This included submitting numerous application letters to the accommodation office.

After spending the first couple of days of the new academic year 'squatting' (i.e. illegally sharing a room with a student), she decided to approach the student council for assistance. A few days later, a council member, Tonde, had successfully secured a room for her. However, it was then that her problems began. Tonde made romantic advances towards her and, despite rejecting his advances, he began treating her like she was his girlfriend. Tonde visited her room daily and that he brought two or three of his friends with him each time. These friends always referred to her as 'Mrs. So and So', using Tonde's surname, implying that she was Tonde's girlfriend. Brenda also explained that Tonde's friends would even comment approvingly on her physical features and congratulate Tonde for his 'good find'.

In addition to these unwelcome daily visits, Brenda discovered that Tonde's friends also monitored her behaviour on campus. On one occasion, Tonde and his friends threatened to make 'life miserable' for a male student with whom Brenda was particularly close. When she went to the dining hall for her meals, Tonde's friends would be there and they would greet her out loud as 'Mrs. so and so', again using Tonde's surname. Brenda considered these actions a form of harassment and she knew that they were a consequence of her continued refusal to date Tonde. After almost a week of such harassment, Brenda decided to resolve the issue once and for all:

Brenda: I told him [Tonde] one day that I wanted to speak to him. He said I should come to his room at 8pm on a particular day. I was worried about going to his room alone at that time of the day, but I just needed to put an end to everything. I knew that I was taking a risk.

Me: What did you have in mind?

Brenda: I wanted to tell him to stop harassing me. And I was prepared to give up my room if it meant that he would leave me alone. I knew that I had to take action or else it would never stop. I mean, I couldn't even go to the dining hall anymore without bumping into his friends and being called by someone else's name. And you know people start to talk...

On the appointed day, Brenda made her way to the all-male residence where Tonde lived. When she confronted him about his own, and his friends' behaviour, Tonde apologized and tried to distance himself from his friends' actions. He also began professing his love for Brenda. Below, Brenda describes what transpired during the visit:

"It happened to me here on campus, in a place that I thought I would be safe. But it happened to me. Someone hugging me. Someone throws me on his bed. Imagine! He threw me on his bed and I thought to myself 'Should I scream?' But I couldn't scream. I always thought to myself that if a guy touches me this way I will scream, but you don't scream... So, the only thing that I could do, I touched [covered] his mouth, like this, because he wanted to kiss me. And then he said 'You are now an adult, so start acting like a grown up [*watokura so, saka chi-*



ekita semunhu atokura]. I told him that with regards to what you want to introduce me to, I am still a kid. And then he said ‘Go ahead and scream if you want to’.

Brenda claimed that as they were struggling on the bed, someone knocked on the door and called out that it was time to attend a specific meeting. It appeared that Tonde had forgotten about an urgent meeting that he had to attend. Brenda explained that she took advantage of Tonde’s diverted attention to free herself from his grip in order to sit up. Tonde acknowledged (without opening his door) to the person knocking that he would be there shortly. He had then turned back to Brenda, who was at this time on her feet and heading for the door, and had asked ‘How would you feel if I kiss you?’ She had replied, ‘I don’t think I will be okay with that’. However, she had granted him his wish for a kiss: ‘I let him kiss me. Yes, he actually kissed me. I remember that. I didn’t like it’.

When I asked Brenda why she had allowed him to kiss her, Brenda had explained that she felt that it was a small price to pay for her freedom. Like many female students, Brenda had not reported the incident to any of the university authorities because she feared that she would be held responsible for what transpired. After all, it was *she* who had gone alone and at night to the room of a male student who had been harassing her. Furthermore, it would just be her word against his. There was no evidence that the incident had occurred at all. This was the same dilemma that Regina had faced when a male student had held her hostage in her room for three hours. A number of scholars have pointed out that one of the many reasons that men perpetrate acts of sexual violence, including rape, is precisely because these acts go largely unreported. As a result, ‘men perceive rape as rewarding and low-risk’ (Bart and Moran 1993: 2).

The ‘gold rush’ was by no means an unusual occurrence at the UZ campus during the 2006 academic year. It was already in existence when I joined the institution as an undergraduate student during the mid-nineties and was a major part of the ‘campus culture’. Its meanings, however, seem to have changed over time. When male students participated in the ‘gold rush’ in the nineties, it was not primarily because they were considered sexually and romantically undesirable. Then, all students were generally assured of fairly well paying government jobs upon graduation and all students received a generous government stipend. Even though they still had to contend with *NABAs* and Big *Dharas* ‘taking their women away’, male students then did not seem to experience their junior male status in as disempowering a manner as male students appeared to during my fieldwork.

Deception, ‘one-day internationals’ and male students’ ‘fantasies of power’

Once the excitement of the gold rush had died down, male students became much less selective in their choice of sexual and romance partners, and started to target any female student. ‘One Day Internationals’, popularly referred to as ‘ODIs’ on campus, were the primary means by which male students ensured that they had sex on regular basis and thus lived up to the ideal of a sexual male adulthood. ‘One-day internationals’ were the equivalent of ‘one-night stands’ and casual sexual relationships. Although the latter are neither novel nor unique to the UZ, the term ‘one day international’ is. From what I gathered from male students, the term had been in use for about a year at the time I began fieldwork. It derived from the sport of cricket, which has gained much prominence in the

country during the last ten years because of the national team's international achievements. Since 2000, Zimbabwe hosted numerous international cricket games. During these periods, normal TV programming was usually interrupted and replaced with cricket matches, which could last up to six hours or more. This had given the sport so much visibility that many public schools had started to offer cricket as an extra-mural activity. Schools therefore transformed cricket from being an exclusively elite sport to a more popular one.

In the game of cricket, one-day internationals refer to those games that are concluded in a single day as opposed to test matches, which are played over five days. When applied to campus relationships, one-day internationals were considered to be less demanding and to require fewer commitments from male students. In contrast, test matches were the equivalent of standard 'boyfriend/girlfriend' relationships and were said to place many demands on men, such as regularly taking girlfriends out for meals and movies, all of which was expensive given the financial status of the average male student. I interviewed a second year male student, Solo, at length about his experiences of 'one-day internationals'. Solo was widely considered to be a sexually and romantically undesirable male student. He was from a small town and his family was very poor. He spent his vacations assisting his mother, who was a vegetable street vendor, sell her wares. At the time of the interview, Solo was squatting in a friend's room on campus and was too poor to secure his own accommodation. He always wore the same T-shirt and baggy jeans and appeared to be perpetually intoxicated. Solo described himself as a drunkard and admitted to smoking marijuana all the time. However, he insisted that he only drank and smoked in order to alleviate hunger, since he was too poor to afford

campus meals. Lastly, Solo actively participated in *chi-UBA* performances and this made him that much less appealing as a sexual and romantic partner. Solo was aware of his undesirability and he described some of the strategies that he employed in order to overcome his disadvantaged position the sexual and romance marketplace on campus.

He explained that it was important to ‘make a big impression’ when wooing a female student. ‘You have to show that you have a nice wardrobe and that you also wear labels. [You need] something expensive that shows that you’ve got financial muscle’. To satisfy this requirement, Solo explained that many male students, including him, borrowed outfits from their friends if there was a particular female student that they were pursuing. He claimed that male students pretended to be well off by dressing in ‘labels’, that is expensive brands, and yet, in reality they were not, ‘They do it just for the ladies’. Even though Solo had a girlfriend ‘back home’, whom he had started dating when he was in his first year and she was in her third year of high school, he admitted to engaging in casual sex. He narrated a recent ‘one-day international’ encounter. In short, he met a female student whom he ‘liked’ and invited her over to his room—or rather, his friend’s room since he was a squatter—‘for a cup of tea or coffee’. The encounter culminated in the two engaging in unprotected sex. When I enquired about the current status of his relationship with the girl, particularly if he had seen her since the encounter, he replied matter-of-factly: ‘If I have, I wouldn’t know because I don’t remember what she looks like. And anyway, the point is not to have a relationship with her. If you ever meet your ODI’s, you should not show that you recognise them. Pretend that you don’t know them’.

I would like to highlight a few key points pertaining to ‘one-day internationals’, especially as they relate to how these relationships enable otherwise undesirable *UBA*’s to

overcome—temporarily—their positions of powerlessness. Flattery was a central strategy that male students like Solo used to overcome female students’ general mistrust of *UBA*’s. As Solo narrated his ‘one-day international’ encounter, he spent considerable time detailing exactly what he had done to earn the trust of a female student whom he had just met. This involved distancing himself from *chi-UBA* masculinity as far as possible. He achieved this by reassuring her that he was ‘not like other *UBA*’s’ and even by bad-mouthing *chi-UBA* culture and by commending the female student for her wariness. Solo also detailed extensively how he had used flattery to ‘soften up’ [*kusofta chibhebhi* in Shona] the female student. The idea of ‘softening up’ girls implies making or coaxing something into a state of pliability which makes control possible. The ability to ‘soften up’ a woman, while a standard wooing technique in Zimbabwe, assumes great significance in the lives of powerless young men like Solo. Such men absolutely have to excel at the technique in order to attract members of the opposite sex.

“You gotta make them believe its love at first sight, you know. I can see you now [for the very first ever] and tell you that I love you and when you are gone and I see another girl, I tell her the same and not even feel any guilt.”

Solo captured the full extent of the desperation of his situation when described himself as ‘a one minute man’. By this he was drawing attention to the fact that he had to make the absolute most of his encounters with female students given his general undesirability:

“Once I got her talking, I knew that I was in! I was in! So I invited her to a room that wasn’t even mine! And once the door is closed [anything is possible]. You sit next to her...look for anything that gives you an opportunity to touch her. [Comment] on her nails or her hands. Touch her where you won’t let go! If you touch her and she is not pulling away, then you know that we are going there! Everything changes and you make your move! I was moving for real! I was moving! [i.e. making progress]”.



Solo's 'softening' strategies in the above incident were carefully thought out. First, he had focused on establishing rapport with the female student; then, he had focused on convincing her that he just wanted to be friends and nothing more. After having achieved this, Solo's next step was to get the female student into his room—hence the offer to make her a cup of coffee. Finally, once he had her in his room, Solo had gingerly initiated some physical contact. Eventually he had sex with her. Solo stressed that he always paid attention to a female student's body language as this provided him with important clues as to whether he would be successful with her or not. Simple things like a female student not pulling away when he touched her hand and a female student who was willing to engage in conversation offered important clues. When I asked Solo what the point of his 'one-day internationals' were, he responded that he did not want to be viewed as a 'Girl Guide', a name that was apparently given to those male students who were not known to have any romantic or sexual partners on campus.

Men's use of flattery and outright deception are traditionally considered to be central to the courtship process in Zimbabwe. This is denoted in the following Shona idioms: 'a man who does not lie, does not marry [*risinganyepi hariroore*]' and 'a man deceives [lit. 'bows down in deference'] when he is courting and only reveals his true colours after he has got the girl [*rinonyenga rinohwarara, rozotambarara rawana*}'. On one level therefore, the actions of these male students simply reflected, and conformed to, this particular cultural script for courtship. On another level, though, when the use of flattery and deception is assessed within the broader context of male students' powerlessness, it assumes far greater significance and ceases to be just a courtship

strategy. For these young men, flattery and deception were the only tools upon which they could rely, given their lack of fiscal power. In their desperation to achieve a sexual male adulthood, however, most male students exceeded the limits of what is considered culturally acceptable, as the ‘gold rush’ and ‘one-day internationals’ examples illustrate.

One last type of relationship that was common on the UZ campus was known as ‘importing’. The term was used when males brought sex workers to their rooms on the UZ campus. They were outsiders and distinctly out of place there, hence the term, ‘importing’. Like the ‘gold rush’, ‘importing’ had been practiced at the institution since the nineties, and probably even earlier (see Cheater 1993). In contrast to the ‘gold rush’ and ‘one-day internationals’, ‘importing’ was very lowly regarded by many male students as they considered it to be the epitome of desperation, and hence of masculine failure. While male students talked openly about having participated in the ‘gold rush’ and in ‘one-day internationals’ and even bragged about it in conversations, few readily admitted to having personally ‘imported’. ‘Importing’ carried the same sort of stigma that masturbation, and indeed homosexuality, had on the UZ campus. According to one of my male informants, Ranga, a lot of teasing occurred in the common rooms when male students were watching ‘tutorials’, a term that was used to refer to soft porn movies. Male students who walked out of the common immediately after a ‘tutorial’ or immediately after a sex scene were teased and were said to be going off to masturbate:

“Don’t make a mistake of walking out of the common room soon after a sex scene has been just been playing, because the other guys will start shouting and laughing at you saying [that] you are going to engage in the solo act of devotion! [a reference to masturbation].”

It is therefore not surprising that whenever the issue of ‘importing’ came up during my fieldwork, it was always narrated in the third person, as something that had happened to others. There were at least three incidents of ‘importing’ that were brought to my attention. The circumstances were always the same: a male student would bring an ‘import’ to his room and after having sex with her, the male student would find a way to abandon the import in the bathroom. Inevitably, other male students who resided in the same residence would discover the unfortunate sex worker and they would sound the alarm and she would then be harassed. Below is a male student’s description of an ‘importing’ incident that occurred during the second semester of the 2006 academic year and which he claimed to have been privy to:

“Last semester, a *UBA* from Baghdad [i.e. the colloquial name for one of the student residences that houses first year male students] brought a prostitute over and after spending the night with her, he did not want to pay. So, when morning came, he showed her the bathroom so that she could take a bath. That is how he managed to lose her. When she was discovered by some *UBA*’s lost in the corridor, they started calling out ‘Whore! Whore!’ [*Hure! Hure!*] You could tell that she was one [i.e. a prostitute]. She was rescued by one male student who offered to give her money for bus fare. From what I hear, the male student took her to his room and had sex with her before giving her some cash.”

Some of these incidents have even been reported in the national press (Cheater 1993). The male student quoted above attributed this type of behaviour to a variety of factors, such as the lack of entertainment on campus, which he said forced male students to patronise bars in the city centre, where they would drink and, once drunk, secure the services of sex workers. He was also of the view that male students resorted to sex workers ‘when life gets difficult’ [i.e. ‘*kana zvapressa*’], which in this case meant when they got really desperate for sex. Getting sex from sex workers worked out cheaper, in a

financial sense, in much the same way that ‘one-day internationals’ did. Furthermore, as the incident above showed, male students usually succeeded in completely evading the costs associated with ‘importing’.

Conclusion

Male students at the UZ face tremendous pressure to prove their masculinity through sexual encounters. This explains why most of the relationships that they establish have sex as its end goal, rather than romance and other non-sexual forms of intimacy. This chapter has illustrated the extreme lengths—such as the gold rush, importing and one-day internationals—that many male students are thus willing to go to just to meet the sexual male ideal. Additionally, I have tried to show that male students’ sense of powerlessness in the face of wealthy and successful outside men, who are also competing for the affections of female students, greatly influences their choices regarding the types of romantic and sexual partnerships that they eventually establish. As in the previous chapter, I have primarily focused on those relationship types that are dominant on the UZ campus as these inform the campus culture regarding love, romance and intimacy. This should not be taken to mean that other forms of partnerships do not exist at the institution. As the next chapter will show, many male students did not participate in the gold rush and were in committed, monogamous relationships.