



‘Ndezve Varume Izvi’¹: Hegemonic Masculinities and Misogyny in Popular Music in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Popular music has proved a fertile ground for the display of masculine identities, and songs have proved a ready-made arena for the playing out of these identities. This paper endeavours to offer an analysis of popular music in Zimbabwe, showing how hegemonic masculinities and misogyny are celebrated and venerated. The study uses discourse and content analysis on popular songs released in the last five years to highlight how music is a medium for normalising and transmitting masculinities and femininities from one generation to another. It highlights how popular music recreates and reinforces the perceived inferiority of women and how messages portrayed in songs mirror the dominant and hegemonic ideas about social life and sexuality. Young males and females listening to such music grow up believing that these sexual stereotypes are true. The paper concludes that, ultimately, popular culture mirrors real life and as such the masculine nature of music is one way in which sexual domination of women is celebrated and reinforced.

Key Words: Hegemonic masculinities, popular music, gender, misogyny, Zimbabwe

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Résumé

La musique populaire s'est avérée être un terrain fertile pour manifester des identités masculines, et les chansons une arène toute trouvée pour exprimer ces identités. Le présent article tente d'offrir une analyse de la musique populaire au Zimbabwe montrant comment les masculinités hégémoniques et la misogynie sont célébrées et vénérées. L'étude utilise le discours et l'analyse de contenu portant sur les chansons populaires parues au cours des cinq dernières années pour souligner en quoi la musique est un médium pour normaliser et transmettre les masculinités et les féminités d'une génération à l'autre. Elle met en relief la façon dont la musique populaire recrée et renforce l'infériorité perçue des femmes, et comment les messages présentés dans les chansons reflètent les idées dominantes et hégémoniques concernant la vie sociale et la sexualité. Les jeunes hommes et femmes qui écoutent cette musique grandissent en croyant que ces stéréotypes sexuels sont vrais. L'article conclut qu'en fin de compte, la culture populaire reflète la vie réelle et, de ce fait, la nature masculine de la musique est un moyen par lequel la domination sexuelle des femmes est célébrée et renforcée.

Mots clés : Masculinités hégémoniques, musique populaire, genre, misogynie, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Popular music as an art form is highly gendered in Zimbabwe. It has proved a fertile ground for the display of masculine identities, and a ready-made arena for the playing out of these identities. Popular music also plays a significant part in the representation of gender and sexuality in contemporary social settings (Bennett 2005). Frith and McRobbie (as cited in Bennett 2005:337) have argued that, in some cases, such representation has emphasised dominant gender roles, for example, in rock and heavy metal music's portrayal of male domination, physical prowess and the sexual subversion of women. The role of music in constructing gender relations is increasingly coming under the critical lens in Zimbabwe and the mushrooming of youthful urban-based musical groups, commonly known as urban grooves, has rejuvenated the debate on the representation of women in the media (Chari 2009, Mate 2012 and Manase 2011). However, in spite of the heated debate on the representation of women in music, academic enterprise on this subject has been conspicuous by its absence (Chari 2009).

The paper's main interest is to examine the creation and re-creation of the woman's body and its portrayal in popular art. Women have

been a staple theme of Zimbabwean popular music as objects of either caricature or adoration from time immemorial (Chari 2009). According to Chenorff (1979), making music is not a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them. Messages portrayed in songs mirror the dominant and hegemonic ideas about social life and sexuality and popular music is far from being merely a passive pleasure (Bennett 2005). As noted by McClary (2002), for better or worse, music socialises us. Bjorck (2011: 9) has argued that unproblematised assumptions of popular music as 'free' may instead function as exclusionary normalisation. Ultimately, popular art epitomises real life and as such the masculine nature of music is one way in which sexual domination of women is celebrated and reinforced.

The objective of this paper is to outline the misogynistic representation of women in popular music, to document masculine and misogynistic symbols and language in popular music, and to analyse the gendered meanings of popular songs. We emphasise the production, reproduction and continuance of meaning, particularly through discourse. Borrowing from critical constructivism, our analysis highlights how meaning is constructed through language.

We define popular music in Zimbabwe to include all music widely played on the radio and which has dominated radio chart shows but our analysis concentrates on music produced in the last five years in all genres in Zimbabwe. Our focus is a nuanced analysis of the content and discourse in these songs highlighting how popular art forms are gendered. We subscribe to the view that songs as any form of art are a conduit of cultural transmission and, as such, the messages they carry are important in understanding the dominant ideas about social life in any society. What we sing and celebrate as a society influences our ideas about masculinities and femininities. Musicians are often called social commentators yet they are also influential in promoting dominant discourses in society. Music is not simply leisure or entertainment, but a site in which fundamental aspects of social formation are contested and negotiated (McClary 2002:54). As such, in this paper, we show how music influences and is influenced by discourses of hegemonic masculinity.

Our methodology focused on understanding the songs, their meanings and the context in which they are sung: hence, we applied qualitative content analysis whereby we sifted through the content of various songs, identifying the lyrics, the melodic phrases and language used. The qualitative content analysis sought to establish the meanings, representations and hegemonic gender stereotypes in the songs. We

focused on language, symbols, visual images and other forms of semiosis in the songs as means of portraying a particular gender discourse. Given the power of the written and spoken word in reinforcing particular gender regimes, we sought to describe, interpret, analyse and critique social life reflected in the text (Luke 1997). The language and lyrics of popular songs offer a glimpse into the social organisation of a society and how dominant discourses around gender and sexuality are celebrated, valorised and reinforced in popular art.

In choosing cases, we purposively selected songs from all genres which had either misogynistic or gender themes sung by both male and female artists. We started with 500 songs which mentioned women from a list of over 1,200 songs chosen from a yearly top-one-hundred chart on a local radio station. The top 100 songs from 2000 to 2011 formed the sample and this period allowed us to choose a wide variety of songs to ascertain that misogynistic lyrics are fairly entrenched within the music culture in Zimbabwe. The sample included international songs that were removed because we concentrated on locally produced songs and singers. From the 500, we purposively sampled songs that specifically described or alluded to women in graphic terms. In the end we selected 30 songs from various musical genres such as urban grooves, *sungura*², dancehall, reggae, gospel and house. The majority of the sampled songs were urban groove songs because of their popularity and gendered messages. Urban grooves are more prone than most genres to contain misogynistic messages largely because of the influence of American hip-hop music, which tends to portray women in sexually suggestive ways.

Conceptual Framework

To better understand the portrayal of women in popular music we employed the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2005) notes that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant and most idealised form of masculinity in any gender regime. It is a normative standard against which 'all other men... position themselves... and [which] ideologically legitimate[s] the global subordination of women to men' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Connell's (2005) framework points to the fact that people practice masculinities and femininities rather than having or being them. This means that aspects of various masculinities can exist simultaneously in the same person, so that someone can engage in protest masculinity while being respectful to women (Connell 2005). Certain masculinities can be viewed as the hegemonic discourses in particular societies. In this instance, in Zimbabwe, the dominant discourse that

is portrayed and venerated in popular music is hegemonic masculinity. Discourse can be defined from various standpoints. A number of scholars agree that discourse is related to power, ideology and can be understood in relation to social structural problems such as race, gender and class (Bhatasara 2010). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that discourse can be a group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be identified in text, verbal communication or social structures or a form of social action that plays a part in producing and reproducing the social world.

Gendered Nature of Popular Music

Several scholars have written on the subject of gender and popular music but the term popular music 'defies precise, straightforward definition' (Shuker 2005:203). While the term 'popular' connotes such diverse ideas as 'of the folk', 'contemporary', 'mass-produced' and 'oppositional' (as in counter-culture), particular genres or songs often – if not always – blur these categories (Kassabian 1999 as cited in Bjorck 2011:9-10). Williams (1976:199) asks what is meant by the word 'popular'? Is 'popular' what is well liked by many people or what is produced by people? Is it a derogatory word that refers to 'an inferior kind of work'? The distinction between what is popular and serious music is evident in the works of Theodore Adorno (1941) in which he differentiates popular music from other music by its standardisation and formula. For Adorno serious music does have a musical scheme and formula or repetitive style. The standardisation of popular music is a result of the culture industry and mass production that rob listeners of any choice (Adorno 1941:310). Connolly and Krueger (2006) defined popular music as music that has a wide following, is produced by contemporary artists and composers, and does not require public subsidy to survive, and this includes rock and roll, pop, rap, bebop, jazz, blues and many other genres.

Issues of gender and popular music have previously mainly been explored by researchers in sociology, culture studies, media studies, and popular music studies and while many studies have focused primarily on Western pop and rock music, the body of research also includes texts about a variety of musical genres and cultures (Bjorck 2011:10). The significance of gender is shown to be evident in a number of areas such as: the construction of popular music history, the perceived masculine or feminine nature of particular genres/styles, audiences, fandom, record-collecting, occupation of various roles within the music industry, youth subcultures, and gender stereotyping in song lyrics and music videos (Shuker 2005). Bjorck (2011) explained the gendered nature of popular music by focusing on what she termed sexual representation and gendered

signification. Sexual representation means that some genres have been pointed out as particularly over-represented by males, while gendered signification refers to how popular music appears to be broadly aligned with two traits associated with masculinity: assertive and aggressive performance, and technological mastery.

Writing on popular music and how gender is constructed in Taiwan and China, Moskowitz (2009) notes how Mandopop³ lyrics provide models for gendered thought and behaviour, and reflect pre-existing conceptions of gender. Largely, lyrical depictions of women promote remarkably traditional gender roles and men appreciate such depictions. Men are portrayed as energetic, hard-hearted, considerate, tolerant, free like the wind and drifting, whilst women are portrayed as emotional, meek, illogical, frail and dependent on men, childish, agreeable, yielding, passive victims to men's caprice, and pretty (Moskowitz 2009:71-72). At the same time Moskowitz cites some of the contradictions and paradoxes in Mandopops. For example, notions of innate differences between men and women are reified yet they are also undermined by allowing men to sing and write the songs about these images.

The nexus between gender and popular music has been similarly articulated by Valdez (1999) who highlights many tensions and conflicts concerning gender and social identities in the Dominican Republic. Valdez (1999) drew a connection between Bachata music, the emotionalism of the male characters, and the physical and psychological violence carried out against the female characters. Costello's (2009) also provides several examples of the problematic relationship between Bachata music and gender and, more specifically, of how the music intersects with misogynistic behaviour by the male characters. He argues that the combination of male emotionalism and violence towards women and its relationship to Bachata music is similar to the cultural dynamic that operates with the bolero and masculine identity in Latin America (Castello 2009:5).

Popular music can act as a purveyor of misogynistic attitudes. In his analysis, Shore (2009) pays attention to androgyny and misogyny in popular music. One could argue that the word 'androgyny' reveals the homosocial syntax of language, significantly, by placing the *masculine* part of the word before the *feminine* (Irigaray 1993). Since the 1960s, pop music has been a principally 'homosocial' discourse in which female, gay, queer and androgynous bodies have provided an embodied rupture to progression of hetero-patriarchy (Cooper 1985; Reynolds and Press 1995; Davies 2001; Lecklider 2004). Shore (2009) is of the view

that the Rolling Stones songs 'Under My Thumb' (1966) and 'Yesterdays Papers' (1967), for example, project an identity of women as subservient preachers of domesticated suburbia. Essentially, these songs describe how the Rolling Stones see a 'woman's role' that 'resides in her sex, in her mouth, (and) in her ability to give pleasure' (Whiteley 2000:37 cited in Shore 2009).

Valdez (1999) observes that the Bachata in the Dominican Republic, similar to other popular music in Latin America, provides a forum for men to express their emotions that does not threaten their sense of masculinity and may, in fact, foster a hyper-macho aggressiveness that finds an outlet in the oppression of women. Contrary to the characteristics of women, Castello (2009) talks about feminine subjectivity where the female characters seem to uphold the typical image of women in Bachatas: cold, calculating forces of emotional and social disorder, emotional detachment and unfaithful and uncaring in love. Gender stereotypes in Bachata music are thus reinforced in which women are forces of social disorder and tend to be more practical and less sentimental while the men are the romantic, idealistic victims who end up suffering emotionally (Castello 2009).

In Cameroon, similar to some countries in West Africa, Fuh (2011) observed that popular songs promote the phallus, defile femininity, denigrate women as objects of contemplation, portray patriarchy, and yet, reveal men in crisis. Fuh (2011) articulates what is termed 'crisis in masculinities'. This discourse of manhood in crisis presupposes 'that the failures of men are due to the successes of women, potentially disrupting the social/gender order' (Walker 2005:2). In such a context that has emerged in Cameroon, popular music has been focusing on the sorrows of unrequited love, infidelity, sexual promiscuity, poverty, misery, treason, despair, suffering and exploitation. Such songs carry contradictory messages of men as patriarchs and victims, and women as oppressed, whilst at the same time portraying women as oppressors and deconstructing patriarchy, liberating women and victimising men (Fuh 2011).

Vambe (2000) observed that most songs by male artists in Zimbabwe reveal a deep concern for society's need to control female sexuality. The major stereotypical images produced and circulated through songs by male singers are those that present women as hopeless victims of social circumstances, dangerous and loose (Vambe 2000:82). Vambe gives a number of examples such as male singer Leonard Zhakata, whose songs portray women not only as victims of male machinations but also as objects of male sexual desire. For example, Vambe noted that in '*Maruva*

enyika' (The flowers of the country), the singer raises the important issue of AIDS which threatens humanity in Zimbabwe. In the song women are perceived as 'flowers' that decorate homes, yet they have poison (AIDS) which leads to death. The song depicts women as 'dangerous' victims because they harbour poison within them (Vambe 2000:82).

Whilst many of the scholars cited above have articulated how female sexuality is demeaned in popular music in general, some scholars have drawn attention to specific types of popular music. For example, in Zimbabwe, Chari (2008) focused on the representation of women in male-produced 'urban groove' music. Other scholars in other contexts have paid attention to rock and roll, jazz, country, rap and hip-hop music (Middleton 1990; Armstrong 1993). Chari's centre of analysis was on whether representation in urban groove music empowers or disempowers men and women and the possible impacts on consumers of such music. The lyrical content of male-produced 'urban groove' music celebrates negative stereotypes of women, violence against women, commodification of women, and other negative representations which undermine the empowerment of women in society (Chari 2008). Male-produced urban groove music not only circumscribes women in positions of subordination but also sanitises violence as a means of hegemonic control (Chari 2008:102).

In relation to the above, Chari (2009), focusing on urban grooves and the impact of global popular culture, is of the view that sex, simulated sexual intercourse, sex dance, coarse humour and obscenities are the staple diet of urban groove music. Chari noted that urban groove musicians appear to be borrowing from Western popular musical icons such as Tupac Shakur, Eminem, Snoop Dogg and others who regard sex as a fetish and litter their music with sexual remarks and overtones, obscenities and swear words. Chari also makes a connection between urban groove music and violence. Violence is a staple theme of urban groove music and celebrated as the ultimate form of individual liberation. In such instances women become collateral damage when violence is committed (Chari 2009:180). Soft violence, which is verbal, is what mostly characterises the music of Stunner and Nasty Trix, which they celebrate beauty in 'pejorative' imagery – a kind of 'tongue in cheek' scenario (Chari 2009:180).

Similar to what Vambe (2000) pointed out, Chari gives the example of Nasty Trix's song '*Mwana Anotyisa*', which means dangerous child, in which the musician compares the beauty of a girl to the Rwandan genocide and also evokes the image of women as vectors of diseases.

Popular music also reproduces male hegemony and celebrates tough masculinities. Manase (2011) in his study of Winky D's music pointed out that in his song *Vanhu Vakuru* (Big Man), he expressed his survivalist identity by bragging that he is the 'most wicked' man in town, a big fighter, and a man of high class who is loved by all beautiful girls (Manase 2011:88). Manase also argues that the songs glorify violence; for example in *Nhinhi* (trouble maker), Winky D sings in praise of his tough image as a street fighter with a well-built physique and asserts that his heroic qualities surpass those of all his enemies and even the late armed robbers Chidhumo and Masendeke, who became notorious after escaping from the maximum Chikurubi Prison in Harare (Manase 2011:89).

Mate (2012) articulates the issue of language that has emerged within urban groove music in Zimbabwe pertaining to sex, sexuality and the objectification of women. According to Saul (2006), 'objectifying women' means presenting women as dehumanised and objects for male sexual pleasure. Mate (2012:124) argues that the stories in songs show that women are discussed in a context of neo-patrilineal identities as potential wives or as non-marriageable within a neo-patrilineal and consumerist context; and hence, males who can access resources can assert control over women and affirm their masculinity in both long-term and short-term relationships. Mate also highlights that street terms for young women may also be seen as a form of objectification and when considered together with names for men, it is clear that they are categories which speak to emerging subjectivities, punctuated by consumerism and related sexualities. For example, girls are referred to as (among other things) *koso*, *chimoko*, *jimbisi* (whore), *gero* (girl), *bhebhi* (baby/babe), and *chi-danger* (a small dangerous escapade/something that gets one into trouble) (Mate 2012:124).

In other Southern African countries, popular culture and popular music have also been subjects of contestation in relation to gender and sexuality. Malawian popular music in general is male dominated, with class and gender dynamics serving to replicate dominant gendered power relations between male and female performers or fans (Gilman and Fenn 2006:380). Female popular music has also been appropriated by men in Malawi which has led to a consolidation of chauvinistic attitudes and values (Lwanda 2003:137). Most songs as performed by males who appropriate female music may become subverted towards anti-feminism and it may be made to sound misogynistic and chauvinistic, and may be used to buttress male dominance (Lwanda 2003:138).

In South Africa during the migrant labour system in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a masculinisation of popular music performance supported by state apparatus which put men into positions of complete dominance (Ballantine 2000). This process also handicapped women by limiting them to being carriers of sexual frisson for men's groups, reducing them to passive objects of contestation and display, and restricting them to nurturing roles. For example, some songs by the Manhattan Brothers vilified women by presenting them as spendthrifts, temptresses and prostitutes or as fickle, loose, and defiled (Ballantine 2000).

In other contexts, Adeyele-Fayemi (1994), using a strand of Yoruba popular music as an example, showed how women function as consumers of a constructed representation and naming in Nigeria. In almost all forms of popular culture, women are derided, ridiculed, objectified, or rigidly categorised in accordance with male power and control as mothers, wives, good-time girls, and at best, as romanticised queens and goddesses (Adeyele-Fayemi 1994). According to Adeye-Fayemi (1994), sexual parodies of women are a regular feature in Yoruba popular music and most of the musicians employ the services of young women as dancers for their musical videos. The lyrics are often lurid and vulgar and each album comes up with more imaginative ways of describing the female anatomy as 'fresh fish' (succulent bodies), 'sweet banana' (breasts), 'bulldozers' (buttocks), 'caterpillar' (body contours), and many more (Adeyele-Fayemi 1994). Adeye-Fayemi (1994) mentions Nigerian Yoruba singers such as Sunny Ade who has used sex/sexuality as an entertainment gimmick. Sunny Ade popularised the slang *siki siki* (breasts) and once sang *omú siki siki siki siki ni iyi obinrin* (bouncy breasts are a woman's greatest asset).

Findings and Discussion

After analysing the sampled songs, seven themes emerged which outline how popular songs in Zimbabwe present and portray women in a [variety of] sexist and misogynistic ways. What is clear is that popular music is a medium through which hegemonic masculinities are being populated, cemented and passed to future generations. The emergent themes are explained below.

Presentation of the Female Body

Sexual references to women's bodies are part of pop culture especially music. Comedian cum singer Kapfupi in his song popularised the word '*mutumba*' (big drum) to describe big bodied women. The term

quickly became popular with people especially touts and conductors who harassed women with big backs by shouting the word at them. Nyamuda (2011) cites a case in which a heavily built woman made her way past a bus terminus in Harare and was subjected to whistles and lewd remarks '*Mutumba asekura*' (literally meaning a woman with a big body especially buttocks). According to the law such acts are classified as sexual harassment and two men were arrested and fined for harassing a woman whilst numerous protests were staged by women's organisations (Nyamuda 2011). Another popular way to describe women in songs across genres is using the word '*akabatana*' (she is well built). Such words objectify women's bodies and inscribe sexual meanings to these bodies. Women are presented as sexual objects for men's enjoyment. As such what is celebrated in popular music are women's looks. Their achievements in other spheres of business or arts are largely ignored. Dominant views of women as sexual items are rooted in hegemonic masculinities that promote certain objectification of women as the apt way of highlighting who they are.

Objectification of women is apparent in such urban groove hits as '*Excuse me Miss makadini, zvamakapfeka kamini, dai mauya kwandiri muzofadza inini*' (excuse me miss how are you doing? You are wearing a mini skirt. You should come to me so as to make me happy). We interpret this to mean that the purpose of beautiful women is to make men happy. The singers portray the notion of how men seek to sexually consume women and collect them as trophies. Urban music culture is more daring with its sexual presentation of the female body. In other songs they talk of women's bodies as a Coca-Cola bottle shape. The following lyrics in a Sani Makhallima song provide an example of the focus on women's bodies:

Ganda rako rakanaka (your skin is beautiful)

Inzwi rako rakanaka (your voice is beautiful)

Maziso ako akanaka (your eyes are beautiful)

Makumbo ako akanaka (your legs are beautiful)

Malips mahips akanaka (your lips and your hips are beautiful)

This fascination with women's beauty preoccupies much of popular music. Women's outward sexual appearance is expressed in this song that ultimately portrays how many males in Zimbabwe define women. Popular music as an arbiter of masculinities and femininities expresses certain kinds of masculinity/femininity which divorces and strips women of all substance whilst only concerning itself with their bodies and beauty.

Sexual depiction of the female body is linked to how women are viewed as sexual toys. The dominance of males in popular music explains why such ideas about women are highly visible. A majority of singers are male and most popular songs within the sample drawn for this paper were sung by men. Men's voices and ideas dominate the airways and thus masculinities are valorised and femininities are sidelined. This is part of a wider gender system in Zimbabwe in which women are objectified and seen as property (Mate 2012).

Portrayal of Women as Witches and Whores

The emergence of urban grooves as a popular music form amongst the youths has seen the rise in lyrics that paint women as witches and whores. Urban groove artist Stunner retorts in one of his songs, '*Mababe amuinawo kwandiri ama garinya*' (your girlfriends are all whores). Other songs denounce alleged promiscuity of girls and that they are after older rich men. For example, Stunner's '*Rudo rwemari*' narrates a girl who is only interested in money and is seen as a gold digger. Popular culture often contains and perpetrates negative perceptions of femininity. Most popular songs depict women as people who love the material and the fancy things. Male singers in love songs outline how they would buy women all they want in life. In his song Xtra Large notes how he will rent a plane for a woman if she falls in love with him. Alexio Kawara also highlights how he will buy her leather sofas, televisions and radios. Borrowing from Bjorck (2009), we can see how hegemonic masculinity discourses are produced and reproduced through meanings and symbols contained in popular music.

Celebration of Women's Reproductive and Domestic Roles in Popular Music

Portrayal of women as weak, meek and motherly is hugely evident in popular music. Winky D in one of his songs retorts that '*Ndomai mfana vangu ava*' (this is my baby's mother). This emphasis on the reproductive aspects of women concretises the idea of women's domesticity and their relegation to the domestic sphere. Simon Chimbetu in one of his songs says that '*Ndiwe chete mudzimai wangu, ndiwe chete watova mai vevana. Wochengeta hama zvakanaka*' (You are the only one my wife, the mother of children. Keep the relatives nicely). The idea of women as household keepers is prevalent in most songs where marrying a wife is celebrated as a way of ensuring order and happiness in a man's domestic space. Women are celebrated as wives and

domestic heroines and this view is cemented from one generation to the next through dominant ideas contained in popular culture.

Women are constructed as feminine, weak and victims who are only good for domestic labour. Xtra Large in the song ‘*Ndoda kushamula newe*’ (I want to go with you) paints a picture of men as providers who buy women all they need and require. The only thing women can do is to love a man who in turn will provide all their material needs. The idea of men being providers is based on patriarchal views of male breadwinners. As such, real men can provide for their wives and children. In a song entitled ‘*Musikana akanaka*’, Alexio Kawara talks about wanting a beautiful woman to be the mother of his children. Alick Macheso in another song called *Shedia* encourages a woman to be a good wife and keep her household in spite of problems from her mother-in-law. The idea of women as domesticated is thus continuously perpetrated and celebrated through popular music in Zimbabwe. Women’s places and spaces are thus defined in the domestic sphere. Hegemonic ideas on femininity revolve around women’s reproductive role. Many songs refer to women’s biological ability to be mothers. This portrayal of women is dependent on how women’s roles are constructed in patriarchal societies.

Portrayal and Celebration of Hegemonic Masculinity

Lewis (2004) argues that culture is the vehicle by which patriarchal values that valorise masculinity are transmitted from one generation to the next; and as such, music as an arbiter of culture is a transmitter of male supremacy. Many popular songs in Zimbabwe describe, celebrate and valorise certain types of masculinity, thereby institutionalising and solidifying hegemonic masculinities in Zimbabwe. Such a normative standard against which all other men position themselves, is based on the belief of male superiority, heterosexuality and multiple sexual partners, among other things. King Shady’s song, which is part of this paper’s topic and was important in framing the question of this paper, is an excellent example of how hegemonic masculinities are exulted. Below are various excerpts of lyrics from the song with the literal translation. They are not organised in any order but are quoted to show the nature of masculinities at play.

Ndezve varume izvi, simudza ruko kana uri murume (this is for me, raise your hands if you are a man)

Handina sini rebaccossi (I do not have small penis)

Ichi chipo handidye mugondorosi (my big penis is a gift, I do not eat any medicines)

Ndati ndikuudze kuti I am the big boss (I have to tell you that I am the big boss)

Choya chinenge ndebvu dzaRick Ross (pubic hair is as big as Rick Ross's beard)

Muhomwe handina mari asi mubhurugwa ndiri loaded (I do not have money in my pocket but I am loaded in my pants)

Ndopinda mupostori handitambise maseeds (I do not use condoms because it's a waste of sperms)

From the song, certain characteristics define a 'real' man: big penis, risky sexual behaviour, sexual strength and overpowering women.

Hegemonic masculinities are part and parcel of popular culture in Zimbabwe. Songs are important sources of meaning and as such hold much value in understanding how a people are organised. King Shady's song illuminates how young men need to prove their masculinity by showing their strength through sexual prowess. This is because of the masculine nature of music through assertive and aggressive performance. In a song, Sniper notes that he is a soldier; this portrays images of strength, control, violence and manliness. Other forms of sexualities are subordinated to this superior manliness. Female singers, listeners, radio disc jockeys and fans are part of the system that privileges and valorises hegemonic masculinities. These songs are played on radio by disc jockeys and made popular by listeners, which include many women who are complicit in promoting hegemonic masculinities.

Hegemonic Views on Sexuality

Homosexuality is socially and culturally unacceptable in Zimbabwe. In many Africa societies, any variation from heteronormativity is considered 'pathological', 'deviant' and 'unnatural', thus sustaining gendered hierarchies while limiting public debate on such issues (Urgent Action Fund Africa 2006). The president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, was quoted as saying:

(It) degrades human dignity. It's unnatural, and there is no question ever of allowing these people to behave worse than dogs and pigs. If dogs and pigs do not do it, why must human beings? We have our own culture, and we must rededicate ourselves to our traditional values that make us human beings...What we are being persuaded to accept is sub-animal behaviour and we will never allow it here. If you see people parading themselves as lesbians and gays, arrest them and hand them over to the police (<http://www.zbc.co.zw/news-categories/opinion/11653-is-homosexuality-african.html>).

In terms of sexuality, the dominant discourse is thus heterosexuality. Popular art forms are also authorities of venerating and buttressing heteronormality. Thus, pop songs in Zimbabwe in many ways highlight heterosexual love. For example, Winky D's *Love pafirst sight* narrates love between a man and a woman whilst Tongai Moyo in his song *Nemumvura Mese* focuses on heterosexual love. This is true of all the love songs we sampled and there is no reference to homosexual or queer relationships. Such relationships are shunned and dominance of heterosexuality is reinforced.

The framing of sexuality within popular music thus does not allow space for alternate forms of sexuality. In Zimbabwe, homosexuality is generally shunned, with the current president being at the forefront of denigrating gays and lesbians. There are no songs specifically demonising gay people in Zimbabwe; however, in underground tapes various singers, especially amongst urban grooves, are known to use sexuality as a way to denigrate opponents. It is considered an offence to accuse another man of being a *chichi* (derogatory name for gays); thus, there is a lot of such name calling in underground music. The music describes 'real men' as those who are strong, heterosexual and unemotional. Homosexuality is thus seen as something to be shunned as it is seen as a serious affront to be called one. The perceived 'abnormality' of homosexuality is thus reinforced whilst heteronormativity is valorised as 'normal'.

Ownership of Women as Property

In a gospel song, urban groove singer Toby claims that heaven is for the pure of heart and not the rich. The rich are described as those who *own* beautiful cars, houses and women. Women, especially those perceived as beautiful, are part of the accumulation that all rich men must have. Accumulating women is part of the culture promoted by the urban groove genre which is mainly dominated by urban youths. Borrowing from Western music, urban youths are expressing thoughts on women, sexuality and relationships in which women are depicted as the property of men. In one of his songs, Crystals notes '*...babe rangu, toy yangu*' (my girlfriend, my toy). Among young people (especially males), the propertisation of women becomes part of their worldview. Music in most instances expresses what people already believe and thus artists are simply conveyors of culture in which the idea of accumulation of women as pieces of property is part of accepted patriarchal culture and the prowess of men is measured by conquering women.

The treatment of women as property relates to how men in patriarchal societies actively control women's sexuality. Women's sexuality is controlled by patriarchal institutions: firstly by the father whose job is to keep her safe from 'sexual predators' to ensure she is a virgin when she gets married to 'fetch' a high price. After marriage, the husband becomes the protector and overseer of this sexuality. Winky D in the song *Musarova Bigman* (do not beat up Bigman) alludes to this aspect of fathers controlling their daughters' sexuality in the following lyrics:

Ndakasvikirwa ndakagara nemwana wevanhu pamubhedha (a father caught me with his daughter on the bed which insinuates a sexual encounter)

Baba vake ndokuti mfana rasta dakudhedha (the father wanted to kill me)

This boy is caught by the father being sexual with the daughter, which is enough for him to be seriously beaten. Policing female sexuality is part of patriarchal discourse on sexuality. Chiweshe (2012) outlines how a married woman through *lobola* (bride wealth) has her sexual and productive rights move from her father to her husband. Her sexuality first belongs to her father and then her husband. Music is one way used to promote chastity and sexual purity amongst women. Sexuality remains deeply rooted in the policing and surveillance of women's bodies by a patriarchal sexual discourse which muzzles women's sexual agency and promotes hegemonic ideas of heteronormality.

Women Artists and their Portrayal of Gender in Popular Music

In this section we discuss some of the popular songs by women artists analysing how they discuss issues of gender and sexuality. Women participating in popular music are often accused of engaging in a system that continuously demeans and portrays women in a negative way. Regarding sexuality and popular music, Shayne Lee (2010:8) argues that '...popular culture can function as a location for feminist politics by affording women access to subversive sexual scripts and new discourses of sexuality to renegotiate their sexual histories.' Popular music thus can afford women space to express often repressed sexual identities. Carrey (2011) argues that music is creating a new space for discourse on female sexual empowerment. Lee (2010:8) commenting on black female singers in America, adds that:

Rather than portraying sexy black divas of popular culture as victims or mere objects of the male gaze, I depict them as feminists who create new scripts and carve out new space for female sexual subjectivity by exerting distinctive brands of sexual empowerment.

Music thus can offer a space for women to protest and carve out space to create and perform their identities. In this perspective Zimbabwean female musicians have to be understood as actively creating meaning and space through popular music.

There is however a lack of female music that challenges the patriarchal status quo. Rather, the majority of music reinforces ideas of women in a domesticated role. Female singer Fungisai Zvakavapano, for example, has a song portraying the virtues of a 'good' wife. She says that women should be virtuous, hardworking and the pride of their families. Laziness among women has to be shunned. The depiction of a 'good wife' based on biblical and patriarchal ideologies, which celebrate virtue in women, is reinforced in this song and many other similar songs. Female singers at times cannot escape the context in which they are singing and writing music. They participate in the creation and popularisation of music that promotes patriarchal ideas. This is true with most youth female singers who sing about love and relationships in the same way as their male compatriots.

Conclusion

This study has established that popular music is an important carrier and transmitter of hegemonic cultural and social ideas about femininities and masculinities. Popular songs by male singers such as Winky D, Snipper and Alexio Kawara celebrate and valorise hegemonic masculinities whilst women are highly feminised, objectified and commoditised. The singers create and recreate meanings about sexuality and women's bodies and positions thereby promoting heterosexuality and justifying patriarchal ideas and practices. Using concepts of discourse and hegemonic masculinities, the paper has highlighted how meanings are created and re-created by the powerful within specific contexts to promote and justify certain ideas. It has shown that hegemonic masculinities and misogynistic ideas are part of popular culture in Zimbabwe. Female singers may offer an alternative discourse on female sexual freedom through their music but they are also constrained by the context within which they operate and, ultimately, they too reinforce male domination and female subordination through their songs.

Notes

1. Literally translated, it means 'this is only for men'. It is a chant made by popular urban groove musician King Shady at the start of his song which celebrates and venerates male sexual prowess.

2. This is a Zimbabwean genre of music loosely based on Congolese rumba and made popular by people such as the Chimbetus – Simon and Naison, Nicholas Zakaria, John Chibadura, Alick Macheso, the Ngwenya Brothers, Ephraim Joe and Tineyi Chikupo among many others.
3. Mandopop is a colloquial abbreviation for Mandarin popular music. Mandopop was the first variety of popular music in Chinese to establish itself as a viable industry.

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