Lobola in Eswatini: Exploring Male Vulnerabilities through Kinship Making

by

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I declare that this study is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university or institution. Each contribution to the study that has been quoted or used, has been cited and referenced in the works cited section of the research study.

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ABSTRACT

The costly performances and displays of *emalobolo* and marriage by emaSwati aged 25 years to 35 years, during a time where 47% of the youth in Eswatini is unemployed has increased over the last two decades, while the legal marriage rates have decreased in the same period. The ethnographic study conducted predominantly online, in the Kingdom of Eswatini over eight months, during the COVID-19 pandemic uses qualitative methods to investigate the relationship between marriage and *lobola* practice, the performances of masculinity and how these performances influence and shape kinship making and the creation of family. The processes and procedures ascribed to *emalobolo* and marriage are not necessarily followed by the participants, as they make decisions and take actions that give the best possible outcomes for those involved. Family and kin relations produced during *emalobolo* magnify the tensions between consanguineal relatives and often friends take on the responsibilities of family members thus becoming family. The process of lobola also reveals the performative nature of class and social mobility, and places pressure on men to provide even when they cannot. The financial pressures and expectations placed on men to provide financially for members of their families, expose vulnerabilities in men, in ways that hegemonic masculinity neglects and erases. The embodiment of *kuhlonipha* and how it is practised by men and women help them strive for happiness and do what is right in the contexts they encounter as they navigate *emalobolo,* marriage and the afterlife of it all. My analysis shows that the creation of new family and kinship bonds through *kulobola* and marriage and the financial implications of them, expose male vulnerabilities that exist among Swazi men.

Key Words: *Lobola*, Marriage, Masculinity, Male vulnerabilities, Kinship, *Kuhlonipha*

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CHAPTER 1 - An Introduction

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2017, two of my male friends proposed to their significant others and started planning their journeys to becoming married couples. For the one friend, whom I'll call Thabo, everything seemed to come easy. Very soon after he went to his future in-laws *kuyocela lukhalo* (to ask for his fiancee's hand in marriage and finding out how many cattle he has to exchange as *emalobolo*). He completed all his *lobola* obligations, and started planning for the church wedding. My other friend, whom I will call Gcina, seemed to struggle from the time he went to *kuyocela lukhalo* from his future in-laws. Gcina could not meet any of his *lobola* obligations but went ahead and married his fiancée the following year. Thabo's church wedding went off without a hitch, however Gcina's bride almost never walked down the church aisle as her family threatened to stop the church wedding proceedings because he had not fulfilled even one of his *lobola* obligations. I watched the way Thabo seemed proud and excited to have met all these obligations, while Gcina shrank into the background of every conversation about *emalobolo* and weddings. Watching these two friends, coupled with the weekly trending topic of *lobola* on Twitter, led me to wonder about the nature of contemporary *lobola* practices. Seeing young people all over social media post their opinions about the practice and pictures (posts such as the Twitter posts below), led me to think of the costs as well as the sacrifices one would have to make to fulfil all *lobola* obligations, purchase an engagement ring, and have a church wedding, in Eswatini's current political economy.

Lobola Twitter thread: Questions on who should carry the financial burden of *emalobolo*

Twiiter Post 1: A selection of Tweets and conversations which took place amongst emaSwati.

Twitter Post 2: Let's rather not do it

Twitter Post 3: If there's no money there's no use forcing matters. If you do not have money for lobola, how will you pay for the wedding??? Just gradually save up then things can be done in order

Twitter Post 4: Among emaSwati lobola is given for a wife not a girlfriend. You can make your own decisions from there.

Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, is a landlocked country, located in Southern Africa sandwiched between South Africa and Mozambique. The 17 364 square kilometre (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020) Kingdom is home to an estimated 1.2 million people. The Kingdom of Eswatini is categorised as an absolute monarchy, ruled by King Mswati III and his mother, Queen Mother Ntfombi Tfwala. The small country is technically a diarchy or dual monarchy, however the king holds much more political sway than his mother (Golomski, 2017). Eswatini has two official languages, siSwati and English. SiSwati is mutually intelligible with isiZulu, one of the most widely spoken languages in South Africa, along with isiXhosa and isiNdebele (Golomski, 2017). The World Bank estimated Eswatini's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to be USD 3 962 billion in 2020 (World Bank, 2022) with relatively slow economic growth (Golomski, 2017), 63% of the population lives below the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). This brings to question, if the economic situation is dire for the majority of *emaSwati* , how are young people, stepping into the marriage institution, able to afford costly *lobola* exchanges, engagement rings and weddings all within the space of 18 months? How are young people perceiving the financial obligations that come with marriage in Eswatini? How are young people affording *lobola* with the high unemployment rates, as 46% of the youth are unemployed according to the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020),in the country? Has the precarity of the political economy had an impact on the cultural aspects of *lobola*? If so, in what ways? And are these changes affecting how young people perceive the *lobola* ritual and how young people think about the institution of marriage as a whole?

MARRIAGE

This study in its essence captures the journeys that the participants take to create kinship and family. As well as looks into how the types of families and kinship ties that already exist in their lives are shaped and how they create new family and kinship ties. *Emalobolo* and marriage allow us a view into how families are formed. Pauli and van Dijk (2017:258) argue that "marriage still seems to be the "norm" in terms of aspiring to — or acknowledging — a relationship". The two authors however noted that although marriage had been a widespread practice, rates in Southern African had declined substantially as the institution had changed from a "rite of passage into a conspicuous celebration of middle class lifestyles" (Pauli & van Dijk, 2017:257). Marriage is one of the most widely spread social institutions, which are present in most societies in different shapes and forms. Each society has its own cultural norms and ideals informing their marriage practices. In most African societies, marriage is not the union of two individuals but is a union of two families and lineages (Mills, 1995; Pauli & van Dijk, 2017)**.** As a result, marriages in most African societies involve the extended families of both bride and groom.

Whilst I focus on monogamous marriages in the thesis, there are four types of marriages or five types of unions within Swazi society, and these are:

1. Monogamy where a man marries one woman. Usually a monogamous marriage is a civil marriage, governed by Roman-Dutch Law and the Christian Bible. Civil marriages are therefore a coming together of religion as an institution and the legal institution.
2. Polygamy or polygyny (*sitsembu*), where a man has more than one wife at the same time (Malangwane, 2004; Zeitzen, 2018).

In a polygamous marriage, the husband is expected to love and provide for all of his wives equally, while the first wife is given preferential treatment. The reason behind polygamy being a common form of marriage in traditional Swazi society was the chances of having more children born out of the relationships. *Sitsembu* is legal under the Kingdom's constitution and a customary law marriage certificate is issued by the District Commissioner's upon registration of the marriage.

3. Levirate marriage (*kungenwa*) which occurred when a woman's husband died and his brother was requested to take care of the widow and her children. In this marriage, the brother to the deceased is permitted to have more children with the widow, and continue the bloodline of the deceased, keeping the family's resources and wealth within the lineage.
4. Sororate marriage (*inhlanti*) which occurs when a woman was infertile, and she requested her sister to marry her husband and have his children on her behalf. This was done to protect the woman's family name from shame, as well as to avoid a situation where they had to return the *lobola.* (Wanjohi, 1999; Letseli, 2007; van Dijk, 2017; Thwala, 2019). In cases where the man was infertile, the families asked a male relative of the husband to father his children on his behalf. However, the infertile man was never told of this decision. This was done in order to protect his masculinity.
5. As of November 2019, cohabitation has been recognised as a union that many people are partaking in.

The Marriages Act of 2019 stated that an unmarried man and unmarried woman who were living together as if they were husband and wife for three years or more, would be afforded the same legal protections as couples who were married (Government of Eswatini, 2019).

The marriage process in the Swazi context is not linear, but instead ”resembles a continuous mix of movements, exchanges and temporalities during which relationships can be deepened, dissolved or renegotiated” (Pauli & van Dijk, 2017:259). While I was open to exploring *lobola* within the other kinds of unions, the only *lobola* negotiations that I encountered were in the context of monogamous unions.

Ngundu (2011) argues that African couples who identify as Christian such as the couples I interviewed, are stuck between three different worlds, the world of the traditional; the world of the civil or legal system; and the world of the predominantly westernised culture that prevails in the church, in which the couple worship (Ngundu, 2011). The Christian missions that formed churches in Eswatini, came with their own sacraments and rites of passage that their congregations (and converts), which according to Curle (2012), had already been infused with European cultures and traditions. These rites included marriage, with wedding ceremonies taking place within the church. Mission organisations imposed this tradition on African Christians in the name of Christianity (Ngundu, 2011), whereas these were European traditions. It was through marriage that congregants gained status within the church, as unmarried congregants could not and cannot hold certain offices within the church. With the spread of Christianity in Eswatini, wedding and marriage practices changed.

Christian missionaries condemned *kuteka* (the traditional Swazi marriage ritual) and *emalobolo* as they saw these practices as promoting polygamy and the acknowledgement (and worship) of ancestors. Whereas, ancestors in the context of Eswatini are not worshipped but are respected as intermediaries between the living and *Mvelincanti* (The One who came before everything). A large percentage of *emaSwati* held both sets of beliefs and used them interchangeably. This syncretism of religions continues to exist in the lives of *emaSwati* in contemporary Eswatini and permeates marital and *lobola* practices.

MORALS AND ETHICS

Hector Castaneda's 1954 definition of morals as what a good life entails or simply put - happiness and aspects of Rawls (1971), Gert (2004) and Fluehr – Lobban's (2009, 2012) definitions of morality as "governing behaviour that affects others which aims to have the effect of lessening of evil or harm, including rules prohibiting killing, the causing of pain, deception, and the breaking of promises" were chosen as the grounding definitions for this study as a theme that runs through the experiences and narratives of my research participants is that of the fulfilment of promises. These promises are made as a sense of unspoken, yet expected duty and responsibility. These expectations differ according to what each of the participants deemed to be important during the time of the interviews or leading up to their wedding. These expectations are also deeply linked to notions of *kuhlonipha* or respect.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 introduces the ethnography and gives a run down of the research design, methods, participants, the context the study was undertaken in and my positionality as a Swazi middle class woman studying the country she was born and raised in. The ethnographic nature of the study allowed for conversations to turn into relationships and friendships that continued even after the data collection period ended. The friendships that already existed were deepened through the interview process and the sharing of experiences and advice.

Chapter 2 traces the historical trajectory of *emalobolo* and how they have changed over the years. The Chapter on *lobola* accounts discusses how traditions have been created and are constantly being reinvented. The processes and procedures that have been ascribed to the custom of *kulobola* are being understood, and practised in a variety of ways by the participants of the study.

Chapter 3 looks at the different family and kinship relationships that exist in the lives of the participants. The narratives and stories shared disrupt the romantic and euphoric discourses that are attributed to the nature of family. The family chapter profiles blended families, fosterage, and friends that become family. As consanguineal relatives feel alienated, and subsequently, threaten to destroy the building of the new family, friends take on responsibilities of those members.

Chapter 4 is on masculinities. The chapter argues that the creation of family through *emalobolo* and marriage and the financial implications of the two, expose male vulnerabilities. This chapter looks into masculinities and how they are described and performed by historically marginalised, erased and dehumanised men.

Chapter 5 delves into the popular culture concept of black tax. The chapter gives a layout of how ploughing back to families and the community further exposes male vulnerabilities through financial expectations. Chapter 5 brings forth the environmental, social and political factors that influence what men can afford to build their new families and take care of their extended families.

Chapter 6 outlines that *emalobolo* have faced criticism from the different feminist schools of thought. This chapter speaks back to these critiques, showing that the lived experiences of men and women who practice *kulobola* are different from older *lobola* views and the critiques that followed. The gender relations chapter shows the partnerships that exist in the relationships of the participants who seek to honour and respect each other. The chapter unpacks *kuhlonipha* and how the couples understand, interpret and practise *kuhlonipha* in ways that help them strive for happiness and to help them do what is right in the contexts they encounter as they navigate *emalobolo*, marriage and the afterlife of it all.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion chapter, which somewhat wraps up the study as best as it can. The study is not finished. It is far from finished as the stories are still continuing. The couples are still living their lives and figuring out how to navigate the challenges that arose and will arise in their marriages. I recommend a follow up study, a continuation of sorts that will delve deeper into how masculinities are defined and created in Eswatini, using Sakhumzi Mfecane's 2016 study of masculinities among Xhosa men as a framework of researching Swazi masculinities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This ethnographic study looked into the negotiation of *emalobolo* between a couple but also with their family members. *Emalobolo* in the context of the family and the multiplicity of fortunes within the family and across generations were a site where family tensions unravelled and friends shouldered the responsibilities of consanguineal family members. This was important as it shattered the idealistic notion that families were spaces of unconditional love and support. This ethnography sought to examine how *emaSwati* between the ages of 25 years and 35 years were creating family and kinship through their performance of *emalobolo* and marriage in Eswatini. I investigated what practices and behaviours couples, their families and friends were engaging in, how those practices influenced the different performances of masculinity and subsequently how the performances of masculinity shaped how these emaSwati viewed money, especially in the current context of Eswatini where 46% of the youth is unemployed (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020).

The objectives of the study were to find out how emaSwati between the specified age range were making new kinship and family ties through marriage and *emalobolo* and to trace the link between masculinities and finances within the *lobola* context as well. Tracing the link between masculinities and finances was an important aspect of the study as it allowed me to better understand the social factors that affected how much money couples spent on *emalobolo* and weddings.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of this project were middle-class Swati people between the ages of 25 and 35 years as they were deemed to be at the age range within which young people were assumed to start thinking about marriage and weddings in a more serious manner. ‘Young’' in the context of the study is defined as individuals between the ages of 25 years and 35 years, which falls within the “youth” definition of the African Union used in the Eswatini National Youth Policy of 2020 (Ministry of Sports,Culture and Youth Affairs, 2020). The scope was based on inherent biases I have and how I have been socialised as *liSwati* as well as most ethnographic studies focus on impoverished rather than educated, middle class Africans. This is the age range for both sexes in Swazi social norms, where youth should be thinking about getting married and indeed settling down and starting families. A woman who after the age of 35 years is still unmarried is called “*ingcugce*” which is a word that holds connotations of wilting, and therefore used to discourage women from reaching this age without being wed. Bachelors on the other hand, do not have a word that holds the same connotations as they get older.

From the four married couples, four couples going through the process of thinking about getting married, and eight individuals who were either in serious relationships, single or divorced, the following people were chosen as the core participants for this study. These participants responded to the call asking for research participants that I posted on my social media platforms. From there, people I interact with on social media conveyed the message to people they knew who fit the criteria (Image 1).

With the married couples I sought to learn more about their journeys to getting wed and *emalobolo*, and whether their journey to getting married affected the marriage after the wedding at all. Hearing about their *lobola* practices was essential to this study, and reasons behind why they chose to do certain things the way they did them.

Image 1 : Post shared on my social media platforms

Through talking to the couples in the process or thinking of getting married, I sought to learn about the role *emalobolo* plays in their thinking about getting married, the roles of their families, friends and neighbours in influencing the practices, and how they planned for *emalobolo*.

After the first round of interviews with all the participants who signed up for the study, these were the participants who ended up being my core participants:

1. Bongiwe Mamba is a twenty-nine year old woman from Siphofaneni and is a marketing graduate who works as a freelancer and had just landed a well-paying job during the course of the data collection period. She is the last born in her family, having three older siblings – two girls and one boy. Bongiwe is married to Bongani Fakudze.

   Bongani Fakudze is a thirty-three year old man from Malindza who has been living in Manzini for most of his life. He is the last born in a family of two boys and 4 girls. Bongani works for an insurance broker in Manzini.

The two have been married for four years and they had a new born child during the time of the data collection period.

2. Thulani Mamba is Bongiwe's older brother**.** He lives at his parental home in Siphofaneni. Thulani is not married and he does not have any children. When I first met Thulani, he was unemployed and had been for two years.
3. Sibahle Mathenjwa is a thirty-one year old fitness trainer from Thembelihle, Mbabane. She is the first born girl in a family of three girls and four older brothers. Sibahle is married to Sithembiso.

   Sithembiso Kunene is a thirty-one year old financial management consultant working for one of the largest financial firms in the Kingdom of Eswatini. He was born and raised in Big Bend.

Sithembiso and Sibahle were engaged when we started this project and got married during the course of it. They now both live in Ngwane Park, Manzini.

4. Ben Dlamini is Sibahle's former boyfriend **w**ith whom she shares a child. Ben lives at his parental home in Eveni, Mbabane, which is a few minutes' drive from Sibahle's parental home in Thembelihle, Mbabane.
5. Alex Dlamini is Sibahle and Ben's three year old child. She lived with her mother at her maternal grandparents' home in Thembelihle, Mbabane and would visit her father at Eveni as often as she wished and as often as Ben and his family wanted to see her.
6. Wenzile Maziya is a thirty-two year old accountant at one of the country's educational institutions and Mfanasibili Sithole is a thirty-three year old events manager.

The two live in Ezulwini with their seven year old son, and are in the process of getting married.

7. Zinhle Matsebula is a thirty year old woman from the Lubombo region of Eswatini, who is married to Zama Matsebula, a thirty-one year old man from the Lubombo region of Eswatini as well. The two live and work in Mbabane and they are the only couple within the participants who chose the route of *kuteka* and decided not to do a church wedding.
8. Nontobeko Malindzisa is a twenty seven year old, recently divorced mother of one. Nontobeko works as an office administrator in Mbabane.
9. Linda Shongwe is a twenty-eight year old man who grew up in the outskirts of Piggs Peak, in an area classified as rural. Through university he moved to Manzini and has been living and working there since. He is in a serious relationship although he does not think he will be getting married anytime soon due to the financial implications of the wedding and *emalobolo*.

10. Simile Sikhondze and Jabulile Nxumalo are two women aged twenty seven and twenty eight years respectively. While explaining to them what my research was on, we got into a conversation about the ownership of the female body and I could not help but ask to use snippets of the discussion in this study.
11. Menzi Dlamini is a thirty three year old ecologist of royal descent. Dlamini is unmarried and refers to himself as a culture enthusiast.
12. Delisile Simelane is a combination of the employees of the Eswatini National Archives that I spoke to throughout the duration of the study. The decision to combine the employees in the production of the thesis was primarily due to potential safety concerns should I single out employees who assisted me.

The stories, narratives and experiences this group of people shared, shed light on the research questions and sought to meet the objectives of this research study.

SAMPLING

To attract the participant group above, I used purposive sampling where the participants sought out for the study had the specific characteristics I had listed on the post (Image 1). The post was shared on all my social media platforms using relevant hashtags to draw in the required pool of people, one such hashtag was #TiniTwitter which narrowed down the participant pool to only *emaSwati*. #TiniTwitter is the hashtag used by Twitter users in Eswatini to differentiate themselves from South Africans on the platform. The point of #TiniTwitter is to isolate tweets sent in Eswatini and direct messages to people interested in conversations, events, and services offered in Eswatini. The couples and individuals that were chosen as the core participants were people I knew in different capacities, either through church, the institutions I attended school and worked in, as well as through social interactions and playing sports. They are friends, and acquaintances. The stories and narratives of the participants are an insight into the middle class in Eswatini.

Although the poverty and youth unemployment rates are high in Eswatini, speaking to middle class participants helps us think about class and opulence in the face of poverty. Just like Congolese immigrants in Paris, France who designate most of their salaries to buying clothes and dressing well in order to subvert and push back on the social class they have been assigned by Parisian society (Coppens, 2017). According to Coppens (2017), the outward and visible embodiment of the social and economic class Congolese Sapeurs aspired to be in, created a reality that distinguished them from other Congolese immigrants. Dinzey-Flores (2017:247) finds that in Brazil the focus on "luxury masks economic crises" and all symbols of poor

economic status. The opulent and lavish displays of lobola in the face of poverty, class and debt become the embodiment of class aspirations, while simultaneously differentiating and distancing themselves from poverty.

The participants grew up in different areas of Eswatini and were raised in very different and diverse ways, they are all now located in cities within the country. Namely Mbabane - the capital city and Manzini - the largest city in Eswatini. Ezulwini lies halfway between the two cities and therefore all the participants live within this Mbabane - Manzini corridor (Image 2).

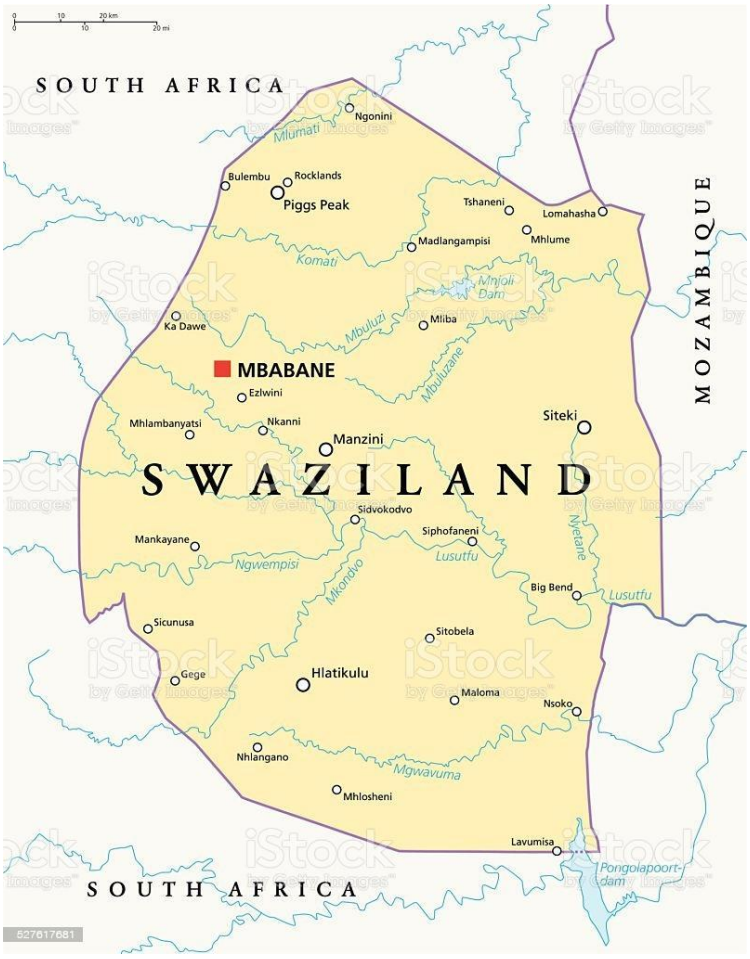


Image 2: Swaziland Political Map

The core participants all have a minimum of a University diploma, and are thus all educated. The highest level of educational attainment is a Masters degree. Attaining this level of education from local and international institutions has exposed this group of participants to a world physically outside of the Kingdom and ideas outside of the communities they grew up in. This group of participants can thus be categorised as being in the middle class of Eswatini. However, they are not middle class in the same way. The Mamba family has ties to a chiefdom in the Shiselweni region, but they do not have access to the 'royal' funds that many families who are chiefdom royalty have access to since Mr Mamba passed on twenty years ago. Bongani's family, on the other hand, grew up living below the poverty line. Due to academic merit and excellence both Bongani and his brother earned scholarships to universities in Eswatini and South Africa, to pursue their education, which has placed their earnings at the aspiring middle class level. Which subsequently affords Bongani credit and debt. Sithembiso and Sibahle both come from learned families and grew up living comfortably. Although having grown up in the Lubombo region of the country which is considered to be predominantly rural, the Matsebulas attended the best government schools and were a few of the people who enrolled at the University of Eswatini. Within the Lubombo rural context, these two come from well off families, however in the context of the big towns and cities of Eswatini, the two are middle class. All the couples and individuals who participated in the study have afforded themselves a middle class existence regardless of the socio-economic background they come from.

METHODS

The study took the form of a Para-ethnography, which is an ethnography where the ethnographic authority is not centered in the researcher, but is distributed in diverse ways between researcher and the participants (Islam, 2015). The participants of an ethnographic study, according to Islam, "are increasingly exposed to academic research and methods, influencing their self- and cultural understandings" (Islam, 2015:6) which means that they are collaborators not only in data collection but also in the interpretation process. This took place often with the participants of this study where they would state something and follow it up by interpreting what they think it meant - in hindsight. The process of data collection truly felt collaborative and I hope to apply and experience this style of ethnography more in future works.

Due to the COVID-19 world we are currently living in and I am writing and thinking in, the research methods have been informed by the pandemic. These methods of course changed with the environment, especially as the world and Eswatini learn more and manage the spread of the virus. For the first few months of data collection, I conducted a digital ethnography as the Kingdom of Eswatini was under a complete lockdown. Digital ethnography, according to Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis, & Tacchi (2016) and Hine (2000) is the adaptation of conventional ethnographic research principles to study a phenomenon using digital or computer technology as a way of gathering information. The biggest disadvantage to using online research methods is that it limits diversity within the participants, meaning that only people with access to smartphones, laptops, computers and internet were able to take part in the study.

I conducted the first half of my interviews on Zoom and WhatsApp video calls. Video call interviews encouraged participants who had "time and place limitations for face-to-face interviews to participate in research. Consequently, the interviews occurred in more convenient conditions for the participants" (Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour, 2014:1). Throughout the Zoom calls, both the participants and myself were initially very aware of the issues that arise with bandwidth and connectivity, however as the interviews took shape these worries disappeared for us both. I did however attend one *lobola* ceremony during the data collection period, and due to the pandemic, the celebration was more of a lunch with both families, family friends and friends of the bride and groom. The negotiations had started before the lockdown had been instituted, and the celebration was just to bring the two families and their friends together to see the cattle and to meet each other.

As the lockdown was lifted and the COVID-19 regulations became more relaxed, I was able to have conversations over coffee with the core participants who wanted to finally have a face-to-face, physically and socially distanced interaction. I must say the presence of masks in the face-to-face interactions really changed how I communicated with the core participants I met with. It was almost impossible to read their facial expressions due to the face masks, but at least, their body language was significantly easier to decipher as compared to the virtual sessions. On the video calls, I could see their facial expressions, but I felt as though I was not really a part of the conversation. The distance created by the computer screen made it feel as though I was eavesdropping at times, as the couples would turn to each other and talk.

The initial plan was to use semi structured interviews, where there were predetermined questions, themes or topics surrounding *emalobolo,* however after my first virtual interview I realised that that was not what I wanted. What occurred in the first round of interviews were storytelling sessions. Rooney, Lawlor, and Rohan (2016:147) argue that stories "seek to discover the meaning of human existence and consider our own purpose within it," thus conveying information in a way that allows the narrator to feel while "giving new perspectives and clarity to understanding their experiences" (Nelson, McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Shawver & Thompson, 2008:128). I asked each of the couples and individuals to tell me their stories; how they met their significant other, and how they got to the point they were in at the time of our conversations in their relationships. I asked the couples to share their love stories including their *lobola* and wedding stories. This helped to get all the participants comfortable and had each and every one of them reminiscing and remembering details about their journeys together.

I found that whenever I discussed what my research project was with friends and family, the conversations that would stem from there were very useful in thinking about, writing about and understanding masculinities in the context of *emalobolo*, marriage and the creation of family. These were unplanned conversations and discussions, some of which have been included in the thesis and analysed. Initially these conversations were "based on common understanding…had balanced turn taking and expressed interest," as Christina Stage and Marifran Mattson (2012:99) described. However, they would then turn into contextual conversations which had "the goal of answering the research questions" (Stage & Mattson, 2012:103).

I followed the *lobola* topic on Twitter for nine months. I chose the Twitter social media platform as it has a wider range of publicly posted content that does not require one to enter private groups or create groups. Bonnie Stewart and Anabel Quan-Haase (2017:251) argue that Twitter "offers a rich environment for the examination of social and material practices within the digital sphere", and that is exactly the type of content I viewed and examined on the social media platform. *Lobola* is on the list of trending topics on Twitter in Eswatini at least once a week, and the posts that are under this topic opened up new areas of discussion and thinking as the project continued. One such avenue of exploration was the #*indoda*must (a man must) tag which together with the *lobola* discussions on #TiniTwitter opened up a whole new way of seeking young people in Eswatini's insights around *lobola*. Solis (2011) in Postill and Pink (2012:10) states that "hashtags surfaced as a method to the madness" of Twitter. Hashtags gave the social media platform "the ability to group conversations into an organised timeline". I used the *lobola* trends on #TiniTwitter to specifically look at *lobola* in terms of financial expenditure and how the custom is performed in contemporary times. It is through this intersection of finances and *lobola*, that the themes around masculinities, respectability and the ability to provide for one's family came out. A completely different study could come out solely through looking at social media, and tracking these topics and hashtags over the course of the research. This may be something to tap into and unpack in future research endeavours as being a "social media ethnographer involves living part of one's life on the internet, keeping up-to-date with and participating and collaborating in social media discussions" (Postill & Pink, 2012:7).

The biggest obstacle I faced with the tracking of social media discussions came during the weeks following the democratisation protests in Eswatini (a more detailed outline of the protests is provided below in the context section), where the internet was either completely switched off or working using VPNs or virtual private networks which allow users to connect to websites as though they were located in other areas of the world. During this time - June to July 2021, I could not track any #TiniTwitter related content as people were logging in from 'around the globe' and not using the #hashtag for safety and security reasons.

The relaxation of COVID-19 regulations and restrictions created an opportunity for me to attend a friend's *lobola* ceremony. This allowed for me to see the presentation of the *lugege* and *insulamnyembeti* cattle to her family and the celebration of the new family ties that had been formed. I do however wish the ceremony had happened before the pandemic as that would have allowed an immersion into the preparations months before this day. With circumstances being completely out of my control, taking in the festivities of the day gave me an insight into themes discussed by scholars such as van Dijk (2017).

Being a member of Swazi society meant I already had prior knowledge of emalobolo as I have observed varying aspects of it over the years. To a very large extent, this study is an insider ethnography (Baskin, n.d). The differences in observation as a member of the society gave me the opportunity to immerse myself into relationships and pick up on the nuances of the lives of my participants in a way that would have been different if I had come into the field for a short period of time.

Parachuting into this fieldwork would have meant as an ethnographer, I would have focused more on the *lobola* custom and understanding it as opposed to the themes that came out from having closer relationships with my participants.

LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION

The official languages of Eswatini are siSwati and English and these are the two languages that my research was conducted in. I have written and will continue to write (and think) interchangeably in the two languages. This is due to the difficulties that arise in translating between Nguni languages and European languages such as English. During the translation process, nuances that exist within siSwati are lost. The superficial meaning may be captured in the translation, but the inferences, subtleties and cultural connotations and meanings nested in the interactions, words and phrases are lost. As philosopher, Quine noted in his studies around translation, meanings should be collected from obvious, unconcealed behaviour in observable circumstances (Quine, 1987) meaning that in the translation process meanings should not only be sourced from the direct, on the surface, perceived understandings but meanings of words and phrases should be extracted from the context and cultural meanings that the people put onto them. Although, in this case, Quine was talking about outsider researchers who do not know the language of the community they were going into, it still holds even for insider researchers who may know the language, as there may be words and expressions in the local language that do not have counterparts in English.

Quine further states that if synonymy, or sameness of meaning, is the criterion of correct translation; he argues whether translation is possible at all. For Quine, the criterion of successful communication, whether or not it involves translation, is fluent interaction, verbal and nonverbal (Khani, 2018).

“Success in communication is judged by smoothness of conversation, by frequent predictability of verbal and nonverbal reactions, and by coherence and plausibility of native testimony” (Quine, 1990a:43; Hylton & Kemp, 2020). This is a situation that I have seen and experienced growing up and living as a native speaker of both siSwati and English. To adequately capture a siSwati expression in English, I have had to explain it not in terms of the sameness of the words, but by trying to retain the nuanced meaning behind it. Unfortunately, as Quine states, it is impossible to translate from siSwati to English as some of the cultural experiences which shape the language do not exist in English.

An interesting idea for me as a native speaker of two unrelated languages stems from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in linguistics which is the notion that the language a person speaks influences the way they think about reality and therefore how they see the world around them (Holmes, 2001; Leavitt, 2014). Edward Sapir (1929) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1940) developed the hypothesis that language influences thought and from that hypothesis came the claims that people from different cultures think differently because of differences in their languages (Kay & Kempton, 1984). Neuroscientists John F. Kihlstrom and Lillian Park (2018), state that although there is no empirical evidence to prove that a person is not capable of understanding a concept that does not exist in their language as per the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, there is considerable evidence that thought can exist without language. The reason this hypothesis and the critiques of it were striking to me is that I was conducting interviews and collecting data in English and siSwati, and writing the siSwati thoughts of my participants down in English.

Firstly, I think it is essential to illuminate that there are power dynamics always involved in the act of translation. As Maranhao (2003:64) says, "there are always power related reasons justifying why something needs to be spoken or written in another language," and the reasons justifying the translation of the siSwati used in the interviews to English is rooted in colonial and imperial power relations. Using the claim that people think differently because of language differences, what does that mean for the production of this study? Although Anthropologist John Leavitte (2014:193) states that "anthropologists are particularly well placed to carry out translations that take context seriously into account", have I managed to capture the essence of the thoughts of my participants adequately enough to attribute the thoughts that have now been translated to English to them? Have my participants felt as though that's 'essentially' what they were saying or thinking? Will the readers be forced "to work to reorient themselves, to cross a boundary into what is potentially another world, initially another language-world" (Leavitt, 2014:193)? I strove to do my best to translate in ways that were as true as possible. While there is information that was slightly altered because of translation, there was some information that was deliberately excluded.

Eighty percent (80%) of the conversation I had with the Eswatini National Archives staff was off the record. It was information to help put the larger concept of *emalobolo* in Eswatini in context. It traced the history of emalobolo as they were practised by the Kings from the time Ngwane I settled in the South East of Africa. For the most part, the National Archives have captured and recorded the history of emaSwati through the royal gaze, meaning that the history of emaSwati as citizens of the country is the history of the royal family.

The archivists explained that as a Swazi they could give me some information and not other information, however as a researcher who was attached to a university outside of the country, they would be able to at least contextualise the information they were sharing with me.

Ethically, producing this study means I have not shared any of the stories spoken of off the record. I ensured that no notes were taken and no audio was taken of the contextualisation information. However, this means that the same narrative already captured in the Archives will be reproduced while the more sensitive oral history will continue to be shared with researchers attached to institutions outside of Eswatini. The sharing of sensitive oral histories with non-Swazi researchers and institutions stems from the colonial and civilising missions, which "made claims about the intellectual inferiority of certain races in order to relegate their knowledge systems to the realm of pseudo-knowledge" (Mitova, 2020:4). In allowing international institutions and their researchers access to the oral histories of Eswatini, and granting permission that those histories be captured in ink, acts to reverse the effects of the relegation of knowledge passed down orally. In some ways this can be seen as an example of decolonising knowledge. Yet at the same time, by refusing emaSwati permission to write about oral histories of emaSwati, the notion that knowledge can only be produced by Western institutions is replicated. Stories concerning what the participants are doing now and how their different relationships are going, have not been included in the data for this study.

However they have given me more to think about as I wrote the final product of this research study and my own connections with my maternal and paternal ancestors. The benefits of having a continued relationship with research participants means that as the relationship between us grew, they became more comfortable with sharing stories of their day to day lives and all the changes that were occurring along the way. This is still happening months after I concluded (officially) the data collection part of the research project. This was a great constant reminder that people have lives that continue even after the study they participate in ends. Which in some ways is an added responsibility for the researcher to ensure that whatever takes place with their research, they do not put their participants in danger, or leave a negative impact on the lives of the participants they work with.

All the participants of the study signed a consent form. I informed the participants who were being recorded (video and audio) that at any point when they wanted me to stop recording they could do that. As well as if they wanted to strike things off the record, they could let me know and those aspects of the conversations already recorded would not be transcribed nor mentioned in the thesis. The participants were also informed that even after the data collection stage had finished, they could still revoke their consent. Signing the informed consent form creates an ethical dilemma in itself as it is a formal written record with the participants' names, and contact information. This means that there is a paper trail showing that the participants participated in the study. To mitigate this dilemma, the consent forms have been and will continue to be kept under careful guard.

In an active attempt to remove from the research any elements that might indicate the participants' identities, pseudonyms have been used in exchange for the names of people (Godina, 2003). I changed the cities and towns that the participants live in or grew up in. With the small population of Eswatini and small numbers of organisations operating in each sector of the country's economy, it was imperative that not only the cities and names were changed, but the sectors in which they worked were replaced with pseudonyms as well.

CONTEXT I AM WRITING IN

When I started working on the proposal for this study, the plan was to watch and participate in *emalobolo* celebrations and see what was unfolding within them. I wanted to understand and find out the choices the couples made when it came to celebrating *emalobolo* as I had noticed how exciting and big the celebrations had gotten. I wanted to hear the stories behind why *emalobolo* were becoming more and more like wedding receptions in themselves, however COVID-19 hit and everything changed.

GLOBAL PANDEMIC

With the government and World Health Organisation approved COVID infection prevention protocols, movement was restricted in Eswatini (as in many countries around the world), events and gatherings were banned and for the most part, life moved onto virtual platforms. As did my research data collection. Data collection and processing the interview data for analysis during a pandemic has been difficult to say the least.

Not only have I been trying to ensure that my own mental health tank was full in order to be able to focus on the work in front of me, to connect with my research participants and to put words on paper, but I was having to ensure that my participants were also in a good mental space to have certain conversations and check whether they felt comfortable to have interviews in their homes, while their whole families were around.

POLITICAL UNREST

The current context I am writing in is rooted in the historical, social, political and economic context of the Kingdom of Eswatini. As I am analysing and writing about emalobolo and how emaSwati are thinking about the making of kinship, how male vulnerabilities are being exposed and more, the country has turned into a heavily militarised state. As I was typing this, a military helicopter flew right above where I live. The country has been experiencing political unrest, where the people of Eswatini want the power to choose their own government and for the Monarch to abdicate the throne. The protests were catalysed by the brutal murder of a University of Eswatini (UNESWA) Law student, Thabani Nkomonye, who was killed by officers under the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS). Thabani's body was discovered on the 14th of May 2021. University students called for a peaceful march to the police station which was handling the case, demanding answers and calling for an end to police brutality. The Royal Eswatini Police Service has a very colourful history with excessive force and brutality especially towards student leaders and those who "dared" to speak against the existing political regime.

The call for an end to police brutality was the catalyst to the youth calling for reform of the whole political system and systems of governance in the country. On the 28th of June, the nation was shut down. There were protests country wide. The people demanded to elect their own Prime Minister as opposed to the king appointing one. The days that followed will forever be etched into my psyche. The government unleashed Umbutfo Defence Forces (the army), Operations Support Services Unit (OSSU – the tactical military wing of the police) and the Royal Eswatini Police Service on its people, killing over 70 people and injuring more.

The COVID-19 curfew became a political curfew and restricted movement from 6pm to 5am, not that this meant that there was any silence throughout those nights. Gunshots rang all day every day for what felt like forever. The internet was disconnected, and social media channels only accessible using VPNs when it was finally connected (but restricted).

The king called *Sibaya* or the traditional parliament referred to in the historical political context above, and appointed the current Prime Minister Cleopas Sipho Dlamini. During the *Sibaya,* the king called the educated youth "*tibhema nsangu*" or marijuana smokers, and essentially said he was not going to listen to the cries of people who are high on marijuana. Nothing has changed months later. The SADC Troika unit has visited twice and called for restraint on "both sides" and for dialogue. The people of Eswatini are not backing down. They have nothing left to lose, other than their lives. There are no jobs. No scholarship loans. Corruption at every state run entity. No protective equipment for health care workers in the government hospitals. No contraceptives in any of the government health care facilities. No medications.

Thabani Nkomonye's fighting spirit truly lives on. I do hope that justice is served and the police officers that had a hand in his death are prosecuted. I sit at my work station today on the 26th of October 2021, and there are high school students, teenagers, children as young as 11 years old who have been detained by the state and are being charged with terrorism. A charge that will end these children's lives, as they are being detained in an adult maximum prison and my heart is breaking.

The mental, physical and sexual violence these children will be subjected to behind those walls is something I am even struggling to process. There are women, children, the youth, the elderly, nurses, a man who was due to walk down the aisle in a week, the ordinary citizen, who have been killed and maimed by Umbutfo Defense Forces (the army), Operations Support Services Unit (OSSU – the tactical military wing of the police) and the Royal Eswatini Police Service.

Half the time I find myself thinking of how trivial my research seems to be at such a point in the history of the country. As selfish as it may sound, this study has become a coping mechanism. I distract myself with the happy stories that were shared with me by my research participants. I do not know what shape the traditions, and customs of emaSwati will be in by the time we are in the New Swaziland…In the Promised Land. But that is a study I look forward to one day undertaking. Culture after all is shaped and influenced by the social, political and economic context in which it is practised.

RESEARCHER BACKGROUND

"so, here you are

too foreign for home

too foreign for here.

Never enough for both."

Ijeoma Umebinyuo, *diaspora blues,*

I was born and raised in the Kingdom of Swaziland, before the name was changed by King Mswati III to the Kingdom of Eswatini. I attended international schools from the age of six. At nineteen years of age, I moved to the United States of America to pursue my undergraduate education. After which, I returned to Eswatini to live and work. I identify as a cisgendered woman *loliSwati* born of parents *lamaSwati.* Growing up I witnessed and attended several *lobola* ceremonies and these were always exciting for me to attend. Why? Mainly because I was there to eat meat and drink *emahewu*, "a nonalcoholic beverage which is consumed by all members of the family, including infants"(Simatende, Gadaga, Nkambule & Siwela, 2015:122), made "by mixing maize meal with water [and leaving it to ferment for] 2 - 3 days in the summer and up to 5 days in winter"(Simatende et al., 2015:122). As I grew older, this was a ceremony I wanted to actively take part in, as the *makoti.* My mother and I over the years have had conversations about my *lobola*; how many cattle she would ask for because I was her first born daughter and of course, I had gone to the best schools. The older I grew, the higher my *lobola* grew as well. These were and continue to be conversations I have with my mother around *lobola*, getting married and starting married life debt free.

This is the context I am coming into this research project with. The suitcase I have entered this journey carrying, that I will unpack in a reflexive manner and one that I will be conscious about as I undertake this research project. Being a researcher from Eswatini, researching *lobola* in Eswatini would have classified me as a "native anthropologist" if there were such a thing. And this is a label I have always disputed and continue to dispute. As Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad (2001 :411) state, "age, gender, social class, and education, rendered [so-called insider anthropologists as] less of an insider than they had anticipated. This intersectionality of identities (Crenshaw, 1991) is something that shapes the interactions that the anthropologist – insider or not – has with their participants. 'Native' works on the assumption that the anthropologist - me - has never interacted with the world outside of their society. As Arjun Appadurai argues, "natives are somehow assumed to represent themselves and their history, without distortion or residue" (Appadurai, 1988:37). It assumes that colonisation never happened, erasing that the traditions, rituals, customs, food, art, language and values of the British and other colonial powers were imposed on countries such as Eswatini - to a point where the country was named 'Swaziland'. The term 'native' assumes that the anthropologist themself feels as though they belong in the society that they are studying, which is not the case to an extent when it comes to me. Kirin Narayan (1993:671) takes Appadurai's argument further and states that rather than viewing the relationship that anthropologists have with the culture they are studying in a paradigm that polarises and dichotomises it in a 'insider/outsider', 'native/foreign' manner, we ought to view each anthropologist "in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations."

Narayan (1993:679) further states, “to acknowledge particular and personal locations is to admit the limits of one’s purview from these positions. It is also to undermine the notion of objectivity, because from particular locations all understanding becomes subjectively based and forged through interactions within fields of power relations”. This means that each anthropologist is a layer of different identities, interacting and interchanging to suit the context that the individual is in and that this intersectional nature of individuals is a better way in which to understand the researcher, rather than in the ‘native/foreign’ paradigm.

In the case of Nosisa Nolwazi Ngwenyama as an anthropologist looking to understand *lobola* within a society she grew up in, “it has commonly been assumed that being an insider means easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly, be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study” (Merriam et al., 2001:411). However, it is important to note that although I am from Eswatini, there are spaces culturally that I am an outsider to and in such spaces “my outsider status [became] an asset with regard to eliciting fuller explanations than would have been given to… [an] insider, who [is] assumed to ‘already know’”(Merriam et al., 2001:410). As well as getting contextual information from the Archives which I would not have received if I did not have the educational background that I have. Scholars (Merton, 1972; Naples, 1996; Banks, 1998; Baskin, n.d) have argued that “the outsider-insider distinction is a false dichotomy since outsiders and insiders have to contend with similar methodological issues around positionality, a researcher’s sense of self, and the situated knowledge she/he possesses as a result of her/his location in the social order” (Chavez, 2008:474).

The complex space I exist in as someone who is an insider yet an outsider, interviewing and having conversations with people who were also insiders yet outsiders, was an interesting space to be in. It made me wonder how even in the process of talking about *emalobolo* and marriage among 25 -35 year olds in Eswatini, we were changing, influencing and shaping how we would practice the customs we were discussing.

REFLEXIVITY

This research study has been an exciting journey for me. Learning more about practices I grew up witnessing and hearing about, highlighted the fact that there is no such thing as a native anthropologist. That, in as much as I am Swazi, who grew up in Eswatini, there are different ways in which individuals and families interpret and practice *emalobolo* and marriage.

During the course of the study, I got the opportunity to interrogate how my family has practised and practises *lobola* and how 'doing what is right' changed according to what each side of the family had to gain from leveraging the discourse around the intentions of *lobola*. My father passed away as I was wrapping up the data collection part of this study and this created a window through which I would see, process and interrogate *lobola* practices within my own family. My father's mother was the granddaughter of the late King Sobhuza II, and when she married my father's father his family fulfilled all their *lobola* obligations as they had a Princess marrying into the family. With this, all five of the children that came out of that marriage belonged to my father's paternal lineage. Of the five children, my father was the only boy so according to the family's practices, linked to the "intended" role of lobola, the only boy was to be buried amongst his ancestors. The disagreements that arose when it came to announcing where my father would be buried, threatened to tear the four families apart. The family my mother and father had built, my mother's family, and my father's maternal and paternal families, as each party wanted to follow a different course of action.

We wanted to listen to my father's wishes and lay him to rest where he and his wife (mom) had built their small family a home. My father's maternal family wanted him to be buried at his maternal grandmother's home and finally my father's paternal family wanted him to be laid with his ancestors at their ancestral burial plot.

What was interesting to hear and process once everything had passed, was how *emalobolo* were used as a way to exert the right of ownership over my father and subsequently his male children by the families. His paternal family stated that they had fulfilled all obligations therefore his maternal family had absolutely no say over what would happen. And because my father had fulfilled his *lobola* obligations for my mother, and they built a home together, my mother was to be the one to make the decision. This whole situation raised questions of what would then happen in the future if this was the route and decision that had been taken when it came to my father's burial. What would happen to my brother, being the only boy just as my father was? Would his future wife be subjected to the events my mother was subjected to? Would we as his siblings have a say in the matter, seeing as we were women and in transit out of the family? It was definitely an insight into some of the themes that had come up in my interviews with my participants and highlighted how *emalobolo* transcend space, time and the physical realm. My insider status has created an avenue for this to be a further research project.

Further, as I am wrapping up the writing part of the research journey, I have also started on my own *lobola* journey. It will be very different to the ones outlined in this research study as the women in my family will be the ones spearheading it with dad's passing. My partner and I

have started the talks on where to go next. All the stories, narratives and advice I have received from my participants are shaping how we think about our journey. What this currently looks like is we have both spoken about where we are financially, what our families expectations are for us, and how our families practise *emalobolo* and marriage. I am very grateful for the advice and narratives that my participants have shared with me throughout this research journey as it is in itself shaping how *emalobolo* will look when it comes to me marrying, and how my new family will be formed. After all, research is not just about parsing information but also about mutual learning.

In the next chapter, I will be tracing the history of *emalobolo* in Eswatini.

CHAPTER 2: A Reinvention of Traditions

LOBOLA ACCOUNTS

Chapter 2 traces *emalobolo* by looking at the history of the custom and how it has changed over the years. The chapter unpacks the creation of traditions and how traditions are constantly being reinvented by the people who practice them. The processes and procedures that have been ascribed to the custom of *kulobola* are being understood, and practised in a variety of ways by the participants of the study, and this shapes *emalobolo* for the future.

To better understand *emalobolo* in contemporary Eswatini and how young people practice it, it is important to hear the histories, changes and accounts of *emalobolo* in Eswatini. The reason I say "hear" is because very little is documented on *emalobolo* in Eswatini by emaSwati. The information sourced from literature from anthropologists such as Hilda Kuper (1944, 1946), who spent two decades in Swaziland during the reign of King Sobhuza II, her nephew Adam Kuper (1978), is the main and most easily accessible trove of documentation on emaSwati, their customs and practices. My difficulties in finding written sources of information on *emalobolo* is not a new one, as articulated by a historian at the National Archives. She stated that all the documented cases of *emalobolo* had superficial information which would not be enough for Masters level research. The accounts of *emalobolo* that are shared below are from conversations with historian named Delisile Simelane* and Menzi Dlamini*[1], a thirty-three year old man of royal descent.

[1] * Pseudonyms

From the onset the conversations with the two individuals show a difference in what *emalobolo* were deemed to be in 'Swazi culture', showing that what people thought emalobolo signified and how they enacted it on the ground was different. The differences still exist today. Although there are processes and procedures ascribed to customs and rituals, people do not necessarily follow those procedures, but make decisions and take actions that give the best possible outcomes for those involved.

"*NgesiSwati ulobola ngalonako, kungaba tindziwo, titja.... Emalobolo ngesiSwati vele tipho* (In the Swazi context you give *lobola* with whatever you have. It could be dishes, it could be calabash containers... *Lobola* is essentially a gift)", says Menzi Dlamini during a Zoom call. Menzi, an ecologist, born of a Swazi prince, and also a culture enthusiast continues, "*bekwakhiwa buhlobo, ubona ngalokuphana titja netindziwo.* (A relationship was being formed, you can tell by how they were gifting each other dishes and calabash containers)". *Emalobolo* as a gift given as a form of gratitude to the bride's family is a different way to frame the custom. A way that moves away from merely viewing *emalobolo* as an exchange of women for cattle or hard currency. E*malobolo* were described by Steyn and Rip (1968:505) as an exchange of "reciprocal rights and duties and prescribed relationships between the two groups of relatives which continue past the death of the individual marriage partners", meaning that *emalobolo* are rooted in the concept of reciprocity. Reciprocity is defined as a "relationship constructed out of exchanging something for something else; it is a mutual obligation people have towards each other following an exchange" (Levi-Strauss, 1966:204).

Kolm (2006:25) expanded on this definition to state that reciprocity is a "gift or favour motivated by another gift" where the "give and take of gifts creates, maintains and strengthens social bonds" (Yan, 2012:246). Reciprocity is therefore a binding mechanism in that its continuance helps to hold friends and families together (O'Neil, 2008). Kolm (2006) argued that reciprocity has three motives;

1. to give a gift because the initial receiver likes the initial giver thus creating a social bond;
2. to maintain balance, show gratitude, and avoid moral indebtedness;
3. to create a continuous giving loop thus maintaining social bonds.

It is important to note that when it comes to *emalobolo*, those who give and those who receive may have different capacities to reciprocate, and this affects how families conduct, and practice the custom.

It was particularly interesting that Menzi spoke in the present tense when he made the above statement. Although he understood that *emalobolo* have changed over time, he was romanticising a particular pre-colonial context and manner in which *emalobolo* were taking place among the Swazi. The social, political and economic context in which the exchange using calabashes and dishes took place, is a different one to the one which gave birth to the use of cattle and cash. One can also attribute the speaking in present tense when telling the story of this historical narrative to the royal upbringing of Menzi.

As scholars (Mzizi, 2003; Abhari & Tropp, 2015; Ainslie & Kepe, 2016; Koenane, 2018; Simelane & Sihlongonyane, 2021) have argued, royalty or monarchs are considered custodians of culture, customs, practices and values of the people they rule over. Which means that not only does the Swazi Royal family seek to "involve the nation in practising their customs and to pass them on to the next generation" (Masango, 2008:8), but the Royal family seeks to regulate these practices, while keeping them 'authentic' and free from 'modern' influences (Rosen, 2014).

Keeping practices free from 'modern' influences and therefore authentic we know is not possible. Swazi people have been interacting with other groups of people, such as British imperialists, apartheid South African forces, Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele people since the time of the *imfecane* (a series of wars and forced migration in Southern Africa). Swazi customs deemed to be authentic have been influenced by or borrowed from the groups emaSwati interacted with during this period in history and continues into the present. Not to mention with globalisation, there is no way to ensure that practices, customs and the actors who partake in them are not influenced by the world around them. Especially with Eswatini (as with many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the world) looking to the "geographic, economic West for capital, credibility and consumption of goods and services [...] while travelling for pleasure, trade and developmental models (Cook & Hardin, 2013:228).

King Mswati III has insisted over the years that "modernisation is the corruption of the Swazi way of life" (Abhari & Tropp, 2015:2), those utterances have been in direct conflict with the lifestyle that he and his family portray to the world and the popular culture dances his first born daughter Inkhosatana Sikhanyiso incorporated into the *kugiya* dance during the Reed Dances[2].

However, Menzi quickly dispels my sense that his view of culture is connected to outdated notions of culture as static, and homogenous (Wright, 1998). "As we have this discussion Ngwenyama, I want you to have it at the back of your mind that culture is dynamic. It evolves due to both good and bad influences," he states. Menzi prefacing our discussion with this statement was important as Menzi now enters the conversation as a para-ethnographer. Para-ethnography explores how research participants "can often represent their own cultures to outsiders in ways that are self-conscious, analytical, and strategic" (Holmes & Marcus in Islam, 2014:2). Menzi is not an ethnographer, but analysis and self-reflexivity about *emalobolo*, is distinctly different from mine as a researcher (Beech, MacIntosh & MacLean, 2010; Islam, 2014). Menzi is however self-reflexive and analytical about the topic at hand, as he shares what he has learnt, experienced and seen over the years. Aspects of his analysis come from his lived experience as a member of the royal family, yet show a contemporary anthropological view of culture that most people do not have.

[2] *Umhlanga* or the Reed Dance is one the biggest events in Eswatini. It is when maidens (historically virgins) cut and present the Queen Mother with reeds. It is also a celebration of chastity and purity, where after the maidens have delivered the reeds to the Queen Mother, they spend the day dancing and showcasing their dancing talents in front of the royal household, emaSwati and tourists.

> "From the research I have done, cattle were only introduced into the lives of emaSwati in the early 19th Century. *Tinkhomo betibekelwe bantfwabenkhosi nebantfwabetikhulu*. (Cattle as a lobola medium was previously only reserved for the King's children or Chiefs' children) and the change was of course due to the influence of other cultures and nations on emaSwati," he states.

The other cultures and nations which influenced and introduced changes to the Swazis were the Ndwandwe people, who shared their rites of passage such as circumcision in the mountains, *Umhlanga* - the Reed Dance and *Incwala*- the celebration of the first fruits or more accurately, a ceremony of renewal and strengthening of the monarchy and the nation (Government of Eswatini, 2021). According to Ngwenyama (2015) the aim of the *Incwala* ceremony in contemporary times where the Kingdom is under internal and external pressure to democratise, is to bring together Swazis within and outside of the arbitrary boundaries in support of the Monarch.

In contrast, Delisile states that it was King Ndvungunye who reigned as the king of emaSwati between 1780 and 1815 who changed the practice of *lobola*.

> "iNkhosi Ndvungunye reigned during a time where iron tools - more specifically a hoe- were exchanged as *emalobolo*. However, when he led the people who would become emaSwati, through what we now know as the Mozambique / Eswatini border, he settled in Zikhotheni an area inhabited by the Ndwandwe people under Zwide kaLanga," she outlines. "The area of land which Ndvungunye was given by Zwide, was fertile which meant livestock and crops were plentiful. When

> Ndvungunye wanted to marry Zwide's daughter, Zwide refused and sent him to the Simelanes who gave the young King, Lojiba Simelane and her younger sister Somnjalose *kutsi abe yinhlanti* (to be a second wife). It is with this marriage that cattle were first used in what would become the Swazi nation."

This is a significant and important distinction in the accounts of the two. One highlights the changes to customs, rituals and practices made the Monarch in power adapting to shifts in the socio-economic, political and environmental factors during their reign. While the other highlights the differences that exist in how the Royal family practice *emalobolo* as compared to the rest of the population.

Menzi and Delisile illuminate the complexities of *emalobolo* in how their accounts complement and fill in the gaps that are there. In knowing the secrecy that exists in Eswatini when it comes to matters concerning the Royal family, I understood why there was information Menzi chose not to share. He himself may not know the information in question, but it is also possible that it is information reserved for the royal elite to preserve a certain notion of what culture is and how it operates. The late King Sobhuza II emphasised the importance of keeping tradition for the Swazi people; he stated that without tradition the nation disappears (Sobhuza II, 1969). This can be further interpreted as that the Monarchy ceases to exist if traditions that legitimise the royal family's rule are disposed of or altered. The statement by the late King can also be read as a manner through which the Monarchy sought to maintain political power or preserve culture in the face of the "massive destruction of the ways of knowing that do not fit the colonial epistemological canon" (de Sousa Santos, 2015:258).

In sharing a specific narrative of how the rituals and customs of emaSwati came to be, the Royal family's secrets are kept safe, their rule remains intact and preserve Swazi customs from the epistemicide of colonial rule.

"NgesiSwati kulotjolwa umfati hhayi intfombi, loku kusho kutsi emalobolo eta ngemuva kwekutsi intfombi itsatfwe (in Swazi culture, *lobola* is exchanged for a wife, not a girlfriend. What this means is *lobola* comes after a young woman is married)," Menzi stresses. While Delisile says, "*umfati ngumfati ngemalobolo* (a wife is only considered a wife once emalobolo have been exchanged) due to the covenant and vows made with the blood *lelugege* (the cow brought by the groom's family to be slaughtered, eaten and shared by both families)". Menzi's elaboration of his statement begins by giving step by step procedures that young people were to undertake as they created new family ties. As once the man had made his intentions to marry his girlfriend to his family, his family would send a letter to the woman's family requesting a date for the families to meet. Although the couple did not live together before marriage, the young woman was allowed to spend three nights at her boyfriend's parental home. According to Delisile, the three visits that the young woman was allowed are as follows:

1. The first visit was to gauge how the animals of the household reacted to the young woman's presence. For example, if the first thing she encountered was a rooster chasing a hen, it was said to mean that the men of the lineage *bebangengciwa siketi* (had a weakness for women).

2. On her second visit, the young woman would visit while on her menstrual cycle and this would frustrate the man as it would be a reminder that he could not have sexual intercourse with her until he had asked for her hand in marriage and exchanged emalobolo for her. The morning after, as the man took his bath the young woman would take the opportunity to 'size up' the man's genitalia. Helping her to visualise whether she would be able to get sexual satisfaction from her marital bed. The second visit is important to note as it shows that emaSwati historically acknowledged that mutual sexual satisfaction was essential for a healthy marital relationship. Here women are not only portrayed as objects for men's sexual satisfaction as the woman was given an opportunity to assess her soon to be sexual partner.
3. On the third visit, the man's grandmother would request the help of the young woman in the kitchen in the early hours of the morning. It was believed that the virginity of the young woman could be tested and determined by how she stood when she opened the pot, which side she placed the lid on, as well as how she stirred the contents. If her whole body moved while she stirred, it was believed that she was no longer a virgin. Ideals arounf sexual purity can be seen throughout the rituals and customs outlined in this study.

It was towards the end of the third visit that the process of *kucela* would take place. Once the young woman had passed the test, the man's grandfather would be alerted to send out an entourage to the young woman's parental home to ask for her hand in marriage.

Marriage *ngesiSwati* begins with *kucela,* or asking for a woman's hand in marriage. This very important ceremony kicks off the journey of bringing two families and the two individuals together. The potential groom's delegation brings one cow with them to the meeting, as Menzi puts it "*yinkhomo yekutincengela*. It is to appease your girlfriend and her family". It is not necessary for the future groom to be there, as his delegation is briefed before they embark on the journey to the soon-to-be bride's home. The talks between the groom and bride's delegations begin with the groom's delegation making their intentions known, thereafter the bride to be is brought into the room and she is asked whether she knows of the groom, his family and their intentions. The bride's family then leaves the room to discuss *lukhalo lwamakoti* or the number of cattle that would be expected from the groom and his family. The bride's family returns to the room carrying a rod or stick with notches carved into it. The notches symbolise the number of cattle that the family was asking for. The number itself is never said out loud during the talks. The number of cattle that the family requests was culturally regulated, if the bride was a King's child or that of a Chief or if she was the first born girl, the cattle requested by the family would be slightly higher. However during the reign of Sobhuza II, ten to fifteen cattle was the socially accepted norm for many families.

"Bese babe wentfombi ukhipha umtsimba. Kuhamba intfombi ivunule sidvwaba sakhayakubo ngoba phela usengasuye umfati, *lesidvwaba lesi ke sijika nemtsimba nase ajika sebamtekile makoti (*the father of the bride then releases the wedding party, the bride is given a cowhide skirt to wear by her father, because she is not yet a wife and she is no longer a child. this cowhide skirt returns to the bride's paternal home with the wedding party because now she will

have been married officially)," concludes Dlamini. *Umtsimba* is the time in the whole wedding process where the bride *ucela inkhonto* (asks to become a part of the family) from her soon-to-be in-laws. Here the bride's wedding party and her in-laws dance, sing and eat from mid-morning until the early evening.

Before dawn the morning after umtsimba, the new bride is taken into the cattle kraal by the female members of the groom's family with her own female relatives. Together with her own female relatives, the bride would cry or *amekeze* to symbolise her death to her own family and rebirth into her husband's family. Delisile referred to this as an introduction to the ancestors of the man's family. Before the union is sealed with the smearing of red ochre on the bride's face, she is presented with a goat which she is to hold if and only if she really consents to the marriage. Once the bride holds the goat, she is then smeared with red ochre to finalise the union between the two individuals and two families. What was very interesting for me to learn about *kuteka* was, as Menzi put it, "*umntfwana webantfu akatekwa. Intfombi itekwa bakubo ngesiSwati* (you do not put another person's child in the cattle kraal. A new bride is taken into the kraal led by her own relatives ". Growing up there was a trend where young women were surprised by their in-laws who would take her into the kraal and *teka* her without her consent, nor knowledge nor presence of her own family (which was kidnapping and led to sexual assault and violence against the woman as she was being forced to wed someone, and eventually have sexual relations with someone she had not consented to marry). It was something I took to be the norm, until it was outlawed in the Constitution of 2005 making it illegal to *teka* a woman without her consent.

After it was outlawed, *teka* certificates (marriage certificates) were introduced for couples to sign before the woman was *teka*'ed, to ensure that she fully consented to the marriage. It is at this point that *ngesiSwati lobola* was exchanged. It was after she had become a full wife of the family that the *lobola* ceremony could become a reality. The *lobola* negotiations begin when the groom's entourage, called *bayeni,* come to the bride's family homestead (Kasenene, 1993). Before reaching the homestead the *bayeni* shout loudly, *'Siyalobola Gogo (*we have come to exchange *lobola)*' (Kasenene, 1993; Thwala, 2019). The bride's family welcomes them and sends an unmarried maiden to accompany them to the room which has been prepared for them. The groom's entourage is given a goat to slaughter and eat. It is only in the morning that the head negotiator or *umyeni* presents the *lobola* cattle to the bride's family.

In what has become the norm among the Swazi, *lobola* is paid in the form of cattle (Nhlapo, 1992:23). These cattle must be female cattle, heifer or cows, and they must be very young, about two to three years old. Swazi custom distinguishes between the bulk of the *lobola* payment (*emabheka*) which ranges on average from ten head of cattle to fifty or more depending on the rank of the bride, the two special cows, the *lugege* (slaughtered by the bride's family as a symbol of its acceptance of the union and shared by the two lineages), and the *insulanyembeti* - the "wiper away the tears", given to the mother of the bride as a special expression of thanks for all the sacrifices she made in raising her daughter (Thwala, 2019). I*nsulanyembeti* is also called '*inkhomo yenina wamakoti'* meaning the bride's mother's cow. The *insulamnyembeti* is not slaughtered and is not given to anyone else other than the bride's biological mother.

Given that *emalobolo* were traditionally not intended to be exchanged in one standing, the groom and his family would bring *lugege*, *insula nyembeti* and one or two *emabheka* as their initial exchange. In some cases, once the *lugege* and *insulamnyembeti* are accepted, *emabheka* can be brought later. Although the amount of *emalobolo* depends on social rank and power, the final amount is left to the discretion of the girl's father (Ferraro, 1983; Thwala, 2019)

Once the cattle have been presented to the family, both parties retire to a room where the negotiations are to take place. In that room, there are two reed mats placed on the floor; one is for the groom's entourage and the other one is for the bride's family to sit on during discussions (Thwala, 2019). It is during these discussions that the groom's family explains which cattle they have brought, and how many they have brought. At the end of discussions, the bride's family would give the groom's family a cow called *inhlabisabayeni* for them to enjoy. *Emalobolo* are said to not be complete until *lugege* and *inhlabisa bayeni* have been slaughtered, shared and eaten by the families.

The two families swap and share half of each of their respective cattle therefore both families end up eating both cows, symbolising that the two families are now one. To share in each other's happy times and sad times. The families exchanging beef is another place within the lobola process where gifting, exchange and reciprocity are brought to the forefront. According to Kolm (2006:398) gifts are "goods, services and actions that intend to benefit someone else and are in some way costly for the other actor…unless it is a part of an exchange which is bound by external moral obligations such as moral conduct and promise keeping".

By exchanging different parts of the cow, the two families are therefore displaying their ability and willingness "to conform to duty and custom, and to display generosity" (Kolm, 2006:399) therefore building trust between them.

The soft, meaty femur (with the bone removed) called *umsasane* of *lugege* is given to be eaten only by the grandmother and young unmarried women in the bride's family. *Umsasane* is a symbol for the official opening of the father's kraal or that the woman may now have sexual relations with her husband. This is also seen where the bride *bamuteka bangekho bakubo* - the bride is taken into the kraal without her family being present. The groom's family would send a young man to deliver *umsasan*e to the bride's family to notify them that their daughter has been wed, and therefore can now have sexual relations. The young man would stand at a distance from the parents of the bride, throw the meat (in a bag) and say "*z'bani sesimutekile*" meaning we have taken your daughter as our wife. If the young man did not toss *lomsasane,* the woman's family would physically assault him because they had not been consulted in the decision to wed their child.

In cases where the groom did not have cattle, he entered into an agreement with the bride's family where the payment of lobola was deferred indefinitely. It may also happen that the children born out of the marriage will pay the lobola on behalf of their father. The daughter's lobola can be used to pay their mother's lobola (Marwick, 1940).

"*NgesiSwati lesidzala*, you do not set up a young couple for failure," says Dlamini, this means that *lukhalo lwamakoti* should not be set at a rate where the new couple is left in debt and unable to start their own family. "It was frowned upon for families to set up their children for failure as this showed that the families were full of greed and this was very shameful," he continues, "if a young man who was not established wanted to take a wife, his family - uncles, brothers, cousins - would all help him. And not just in the way we hear of *kakhulu, kutsi bayamulobolela,* but what the young man's family would be is *bebamsisela tinkhomo* (they would lend him cattle). They would lend the young man a few cattle, for him to raise and care for. The calves that come from those cattle would belong to the young man. And from here, he would now have a herd to breed from."

Not only would the young man have enough cattle to take to his soon-to-be bride's family, but he would also have cattle to help him start his new family off well. The above account of the process and marriage journey given by Menzi and the historians at the National Archives, differs from the experiences shared by couples that chose the traditional route and the syncretism between a church wedding and traditional aspects such as *emalobolo*. Tradition usually refers to: "a belief, custom or way of doing what has existed for a long time amongst a particular group of people and not necessarily inborn or aboriginal" (Adamo, 2011:3). Although "tradition is a powerful and enduring endogenous process, it is far from being timeless" (Spear, 2003:7), as couples are interpreting the traditions in ways that make the most sense to them. The Matsebulas, a couple that chose *kuteka,* not for any particular reason other than that it was significantly less expensive than having a church wedding.

Zama Matsebula states that after they discussed getting married and sharing a future together with Zinhle – his wife – they had no strong feelings about whether to have a church wedding or *kuteka*. "After *kungicela* we agreed to go the Swazi route, *angiteke"*, says Zinhle Matsebula, "so we went on with that. *Bangicela, bangiteka* (they asked for my hand in marriage and they *teka*'ed me)". When I asked the couple whether *emalobolo* had been exchanged yet, Zama laughed and said not yet and further elaborated that "*ngekwati kwami, ngekwati kwetfu kulotjolwa umfati and not intfombi* (in my knowledge, in our knowledge lobola is exchanged for a wife and not a girlfriend)". From this narrative by the Matsebulas, we get to see that even when couples choose to go the "traditional" way of getting married there is room to follow other scripts for young emaSwati couples. Most people are interpreting the different aspects of marriage and the journey to getting married in ways that fit their lifestyles and understandings of what marriage means to them as a couple.

TRADITIONS

Thomas Spear reminds us that what we have come to see as 'traditional' African institutions are "inventions of colonial authorities and missionaries colluding with African elders to establish colonial hegemony" (Spear, 2003:3). These inventions had to be perceived as legitimate by the people they were ruling over for them to be effective mediums through which the colonial state could collect tax, raise labour and regulate agriculture. In as much as the 'traditional' African institutions were an invention, local discourse played an essential role in legitimising them through reinterpreting, reforming and reconstructing the traditions in the context of broader socio-economic changes (Spear, 2003). An aspect of Giddens' (1990:90) work on tradition that is relevant twenty-two years later in thinking about tradition is that "tradition means handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future". In the ways that we tend to think about tradition, we neglect that customs and practices are reinvented by each new generation as it takes over its inheritance from those who came before them. We think about tradition as though activities and experiences transcend time and exist in a vacuum outside of time untouched by social, political and economic changes.

Spear further states that the term "invention" is problematic in itself as it implies "a conscious construction of tradition" (Spear, 2003:5), paints Africans as gullible subjects without agency and erases the historical processes which have reformed and reshaped customs and rituals into what we practice and see today. Every ritual including emalobolo, "is a complex unique occasion created by a specific individual action in specific social circumstances and interpreted and reinterpreted by all the actors directly or indirectly involved" (Comaroff, 2013:20).

As people take part in customs and rituals, they influence, shape and change them in a way that creates or invents new traditions which are adaptable despite their repetitive nature (Abhari & Tropp, 2015)

In Eswatini, the historical processes which have reformed and reshaped customs are deeply rooted and connected to the institution of the Monarchy. Rituals such as *Incwala* are for the "ritualisation of the kingship", which Mzizi (2004:115) argues is the "centre and axis of Swazi socio-political and religious life". Swazi Monarchs are sacred as opposed to merely being political figures because they were the bridge between the living and the 'true' custodians of Swazi customs - the ancestors or Kings who had passed (Koenane, 2018). Lomagugu Masango (2008) argued that Swazi traditions and customs were said to be God-given and would continue to be practised as long as the Swazi Monarchy as an institution existed as the King in power would continue to be the link between the ancestors who are a link between the living and God. MacMillan (1985) argued that the idea of traditions being at the centre of Swazi socio-political and religious life, was an ideological project of the Monarchy which is used even today as "an instrument of peace" (Scutt,1987 in Sihlongonyane, 2003:161), "stability and prosperity" (Kasenene, 1993, 2000 in Sihlongonyane, 2003:161). This ideological project continues to manifest itself in how the reigning king is referred to by sections of emaSwati as "*umlomo longacali emanga*" or the mouth that tells no lies. Since he is the bridge through which God and the ancestors work and speak to the Swazi nation, he therefore cannot be plagued by mortal Achilles heels such as lying.

The king is therefore considered to be the centre and well of truth and the statements he makes have credibility and authority, however this ideological sway no longer holds as seen by the protests which have been on-going in Eswatini since May 2021.

Spear (2003) states that traditions exist in the mind and in the institutions, scriptures (most of which were captured and written down by colonial authorities when they attempted to codify the practices they were seeing) and concepts that the community ascribes to. With codifying the practices that the colonial authorities were seeing on the ground, they dismissed customs they "found to be 'repugnant' to civilised standards and added their own laws, administrative rules and mission practices to the colonial code" (Spear, 2003:15). Dismissing customs found not to meet the "civilised" standards of the colonial authorities imposed colonial or foreign ideas of social reproduction and it helped reproduce the colonial legacies in those countries. Practices having to do with the marriage institution are an example of practices the colonial authorities codified and turned into laws. The colonial governance made *emalobolo* officially valid so that they would not destabilise colonial authority by wiping out all customs. Once colonial powers left the countries, local authorities were "left responsible for a hodgepodge of indigenous, colonial and common law, administrative regulations and Christian injunctions that came to comprise customary law "(Spear, 2003:15). Young emaSwati are practising and negotiating between the different marriage customs they have come to know as traditional, as well as those that have become a way of life through practising Christianity. The differences in the accounts, histories and experiences of emalobolo take us away from the romanticised notion of the custom.

RELIGION

Religion has played a huge role in how the participants of this study practised *lobola* and thought about marriage as an institution. All the individuals who participated in the study identified as Christians and stated that this was a big part of their identities. Bongani and Bongiwe attributed their initial meeting to being Christian and going to church; “if it was not for us attending the morning services at each of our churches, we would have never met,” says Bongiwe. While Sibahle’s father is a practising member of the clergy. Ember, Ember, and Peregrine (2019: 300) define the social construct of religion as “any set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices pertaining to supernatural power, whether that power be forces, gods, spirits, ghosts, or demons" which helps people make choices (Beyers, 2010). Victor and Treschuk (2020:107) concur, defining religion as a “personal set or institutionalised system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices” which are guided by tradition, rules and culture. What the various definitions of religion have in common is that it is a system or set of motivations and moods which shape how people experience the world, tell them how to live or how they ought to live (Geertz & Banton, 1966). Most emaSwati practice both Christian and indigenous marriage customs such as *emalobolo* and making Christian Bible based vows which are rooted in Christian and indigenous beliefs.

Karl Marx (1844) acknowledged that religion like tradition was not and is not static; that the social, political and economic environment affects how religion functions at a given point in time. Hamilton (2002) and Aldridge (2007) use Marx’s approach, based on the premise that religion was a construction of those in power to divert the masses’ attention from the miseries of their lives; misery caused by living in an inequitable society in which the masses are exploited by

the few in power. Karl Marx argued that religion was a means of making people go along with the culture that is not beneficial to them as" religion teaches people to be obedient to authority as a condition for achieving future happiness through salvation"(Stein & Stein, 2011:21). This could be said of Eswatini as well (as seen earlier in the chapter in King Sobhuza II's utterances about maintaining the rule of the royal family through strengthening traditions), where a large majority of the population lives below the poverty line, however on the other end of the spectrum the King lives a lavish lifestyle, together with hundreds of members of the Royal family.

"*Lelisontfo lengisotsa kulo litsi mangabe sesikhetse kulobola, kumele aphelele emalobolo singakashadi ekhatsi esontfweni* (the church I go to says we should fulfil all our lobola obligations as young men -if we have chosen to practice the custom - before we have a church wedding)", says Linda Shongwe. Linda is a twenty-eight (28) year old man I interviewed in the initial stages of the research project. What Linda said was articulated by both the Kunenes and Fakudzes during their interviews. Sithembiso stated that he and his wife chose to go to the District Commissioner's (DC) Office as their churches had asked that they get married only after all *lobola* obligations had been fulfilled. Bongani and Bongiwe said that they ran across the very same challenges with their individual churches, which asked the couple whether they had fulfilled the obligations, as this was used as a marker that Bongani had planned ahead, budgeted and was financially ready to get married. Bongiwe's church felt that the couple was not ready to get married as the lobola obligations had not been fulfilled. This led to Bongiwe's church shunning the wedding and all activities associated with it. The churches want a public display or assurance that the couples they are marrying would not come into challenges in the future;

challenges that their families cannot help them through due to the unfulfilled *lobola* obligations. Van Dijk (2017:34) states that the "contemporary display of wealth and luxury, and its significance in terms of signalling to the community the status and prestige of the couple and its families, can be perceived as a significant break with the past". Young men are experiencing pressure from their families, friends and the Christian churches they attend, to ensure that they fulfil their lobola obligations in full, before having a 'church' or 'white wedding' to signify to the congregation that they can afford to provide for their new wives and families. The incorporation of *emalobolo* into Christianity, the church elders and priests ensure the continuity of the traditions and customs their congregants (and themselves) practice. The church, State and Monarchy work together to regulate the formation of new family and kin relations.

The participants of this research study chose different ways of getting married, and for different reasons. The one constant and similarity between the couples was *emalobolo*. After *kucela*, the Fakudzes took the church route, which included a church proposal, a 'white' wedding, and a reception for a few of their close friends and family members. A white wedding according to Mupotsa (2014:71) is "a public marriage ritual, elaborately decorated and featuring catering, florists, photographers and a beautiful white dress". This is a wedding practice that was introduced into Eswatini by the British missionaries and has become associated with being 'western' or 'modern'. Carter and Duncan (2017) found that in the British twenty-first century context, weddings were becoming more prominent as social aspiration and popular culture, not necessarily because couples felt pressured to conform to societal and religious norms around marriage. Those who got married and had weddings chose to do so as a social display of success

and emphasising distinction between themselves and their peers. Carter and Duncan (2017), argued that couples adapted from and reserved tradition in a process of using all the things about marriage and wedding customs they knew and had been socialised into, and combining that knowledge to create a new way of practising marriage.

The bricolage that Carter and Duncan (2017) witnessed in their study is seen through the Kunenes, who had a church proposal, then signed their marriage certificate at the DC offices and had a reception for a few of their close friends and family members. During their interview, Sithembiso Kunene stated that in a few years' time, he would give his wife a fairy tale wedding. The notion of the fairy tale wedding is one that is also linked to the 'white wedding', which visually represents the princess/ball gown shaped wedding gown but also refers to the bride having the wedding of her dreams – no expenses spared. Deborah James (2017) found that in Soweto, competition was a big motivation for couples to have big white or church weddings with the white wedding gown, dark suit, three tier wedding cake, and honeymoon (Erlank, 2014) together with emalobolo and other customary practices.

"Site ipressure tsine Lwazi (we do not have any pressure)", Sithembiso repeated.

The pressures and financial sacrifices associated with the white wedding mean that "couples are faced with considerable expenses in order to meet the 'traditional' expectations of a bride-price exchange and those for a romantic wedding marked by a nicely decorated wedding tent. Many take up a bank loan to meet all these expenses" (van Dijk, 2017:33). A bulk, if not all of the financial burden falls squarely on the men in the relationships, as a "real man" is expected to be

able to give his bride all her heart desires. The man experiences the pressure of showing the community at large that he can do what is right for his family as he can provide for them financially, to the extent of falling into debt. Van Dijk (2017) brings a silver lining to the wedding planning process. The author found that in Botswana, although weddings had become crucial in marking the class, status and prestige of the families and couples, new intimacies and bonds were formed by the couple. Bonds formed out of having to secure the resources to fund their wedding together, which is what I hope to see from Sibahle and Sithembiso when they start planning for their white wedding.

COMMODIFICATION OF *LOBOLA*

The accounts from the research participants showed a change in the 'process' as described by Menzi and the National Archives' historian. Missing from the historical accounts was the link between lobola and the cash economy, which has influenced whether men can fulfil their *lobola* obligations. It is within these sites where *lobola* and marriage meet the cash economy that male vulnerabilities are exposed. Since the introduction of the cash economy into Southern African societies through colonialism, the campaign to convert these societies to Christianity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006) and the subsequent commodification of the practice, participants of the study stated that *lobola* has become less about the bringing together of two lineages and families and has become more about the actual exchange of cattle and cash. According to Comaroff and Comaroff livestock is the medium for making the social connections among "kin and affines, patrons and clients, sovereigns and supporters, men and their ancestors" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006: 132). However, through colonialism and the mission to convert Southern African societies to Christianity, cattle and other livestock were commensurated. Commensuration is the social process through which is the comparison of different entities according to a common metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998), therefore standardising the value of the entities. Currently, as van Dijk (2017) states the responsibilities for the resources required to fulfil lobola obligation and to make the "wedding happen have increasingly come to be placed with the young couples themselves, the overall distribution of responsibilities in the formation of these relationships have also changed" (van Dijk, 2017:32).

Lobola, like all cultural practices, is not static and timeless nor does it exist in a vacuum. It changes, and is influenced by socio-political changes that occur in the different regions that practice it. Due to the commodification of the marriage custom, *lobola* has become vulnerable to the effects of the global economy. The fluctuations, knocks, and hits that the global economy experiences has direct implications on contemporary *lobola* practices and how young emaSwati understand them. With the youth unemployment rate of Eswatini at 46.22% (World Bank, 2022), many young emaSwati cannot afford the number of cattle that families are asking for. The recent political unrest in Eswatini – catalysed by police brutality which led to the death of fourth year Law student at the University of Eswatini, Thabani Nkomonye and accelerated by the high levels of youth unemployment – will definitely have a direct impact on customs such as *lobola.* Keeping up with changes in lobola and marriage practices and customs and the dawn of social media has placed an additional burden on couples to publicly "have it all", with an additional pressure on the men to do the right thing and show that world that he is a "real man" and therefore can provide a life of luxury for his wife and new family, while taking care of his own family.

Lobola is not only subject to global economic fluctuations, but it is also at the mercy of environmental variations as well. Natural disasters such as droughts are examples of environmental factors that affect the price of cattle, thus influencing how lobola is practised by different families. The Southern African region in 2016 was experiencing the worst drought in 50 years according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (National Disaster Management Agency, 2017) due to the El Nino weather phenomenon and has since been

experiencing long spells of time without rain. What this has meant for Eswatini, and *emalobolo* is livestock dying due to the lack of water and food which has the possibility of significantly decreasing the price of cattle as seen in 2016, or increasing the price due to scarcity of healthy live cattle for *emalobolo*. The environmental changes which have a direct impact on the price of cattle in Eswatini directly influences whether couples (or men) are able to afford to go through *emalobolo* and have a white church wedding with a big reception.

In conclusion, it is through the different accounts, practices and understandings of marriage and *lobola*, that sites for the reproduction and reinvention of tradition are presented. The Church, Monarchy and State all work together to reinvent tradition and govern the creation of new kinship relationships. The creative scripts employed by young emaSwati as they navigate and negotiate creating new families, have the possibility of changing the course and tradition of emalobolo in its entirety. The context in which King Ndvungunye lived influenced the movement away from exchanging tools to cattle. With more and more young people taking a hybrid path, the romanticisation of *emalobolo* fades and the pressures faced by the couples emerge. Due to the environment of the pandemic and the political unrests, coupled with the expected increase in youth unemployment rates, young emaSwati looking to start new families and get married will have to continue to write their own creative scripts pertaining to *emalobolo*. Couples will continue to make new families according to their personal beliefs, wants, and likes while negotiating religion and the wishes of their parents and extended families.

In the following chapter I explore some of the tensions couples experience as they attempt to negotiate lobola obligations amidst the pressures of family and their other obligations.

CHAPTER 3: Doing What is Right

FAMILY

Doing what is right in the formation of new kinship relations is governed by the keeping of promises. Keeping promises made to people you love is influenced not only by social norms and pressures, but also by the emotions and feelings that take place between the participants, either bringing communities together or tearing them apart. I examine the different family and kinship relationships that exist in the lives of the participants and how the narratives and stories shared disrupt the romantic and euphoric discourses that are attributed to the nature of family as a source of unconditional support and love. Assumed family support, the relationships that are present in coparenting partnerships, fosterage, blended families and friends who become family are investigated.

A running theme concerning emalobolo for the research participants was “doing what is right ". Doing what is right for themselves, for their families and for the new families that they are creating. For my participants, doing right by the people they loved sometimes meant that they found themselves in tense situations where they seemed to be going against societal norms. The making of kinship and family becomes an area through which couples are choosing what is right for them as a new family, regardless of whether extended family members and the community as a whole agree. Inasmuch as emalobolo are about creating family and bringing families closer together, they also expose the cracks within existing family structures.

Family, in its different forms, is at the centre of all discourses of *lobola*. The family is the most widespread and central social institution and because of this, family or kinship has been studied by anthropologists for decades and has been described as the smallest system or unit of societal organisation. Adam Kuper (2018:6) describes kinship as a "universal, vital principle of social life". Sociologists go to the extent of describing kinship and family as a group of interdependent people who are tied by blood, marriage or adoption, with Galvin, Brommel, and Bylund (2004:6) defining family as "a network of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who share a significant history". This group of interdependent people is the "focus point for nearly all relational encounters. It is, truly, a master- piece of the human experience" (Braithwaite, Wackernagel Bach, Baxter, DiVerniero, Hammonds, Hosek, Willer, & Wolf, 2010:389). In reality kinship and family are more complex than is captured by media and scholars such as Radcliffe-Brown (1950), Hilda Kuper (1946) and Adam Kuper (1978). Marshall Sahlins (2011:2) contends that "kinship is the 'mutuality of being': people who are intrinsic to one another's existence" whether by blood relation or by affinity. Which means that kinship relationships are formed through "shared life conditions and shared memories" (Sahlins, 2011:8). Families therefore exist in different shapes and forms outside of the heterosexual, monogamous bonds of marriage such as adoptive families, families where parents are queer, single parent families (Braithwaite et al., 2010) and child headed families due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The participants of this study are constantly creating kinship and families through marriage, adoption, and choice, and these kinship ties are strengthened or tested by the *lobola* and marriage process. It is through this strengthening and tests that the families in this study face, that we see how family is created in contemporary Eswatini. This chapter argues that consanguineal kin who can feel excluded or financially threatened when there is an addition, threaten to tear down the foundations of the new families that are being created through marriage ties.

ASSUMED FAMILY SUPPORT

The first and most basic manner in which kinship and family are constructed is through blood relation or consanguinity which means that people are descended from the same ancestor (Morgan, 1871; Bouchard, 1981; Bouchard, 2010; Marshall, 2011; Shawky, El-Awady, Elsayed, & Hamadan, 2011). In Eswatini context, descent is patrilineal meaning that the shared ancestor is on the paternal side. Blood family is thought of as being the foundational support system that a person can have, however as seen through the stories shared by the couples in this study some members of their families were less than supportive of them and their decisions. Members of couples' families proved to be obstacles to the union of the couples rather than supporting them in every way possible, which confronted the romantic and euphoric view of the family. Families, as the experiences of some of the couples attest, are spaces which can be violent and unsupportive.

The area in which the couples experienced challenges at the hands of their family members was when it came to *emalobolo.* In Bongani's family, his older siblings (except for one) were not supportive of his union with Bongiwe to the point of not being present at the wedding itself. According to Bongani, the reasons behind his siblings lack of support and boycott of his nuptials was that they felt he should have finished building their mother a house before he himself got married.

> "*Bekusolo kwakha mine ekhaya* (I was the one building the family home). *Bahle bangisita* (They would help here and there) but for the most part I was putting in the

bulk of the funds for *indlu yamake* (mother's house)," he says, giving background to the building issue.

The existing tensions were intensified when they heard how many cattle the Mamba family were asking for their daughter's hand in marriage. Members of Bongani's family shunned him from the moment he announced to them that he wanted to take a wife and notified them that he wanted to start a family of his own by marrying his long term girlfriend. Bongani and I are sitting at an empty coffee shop as he tells me,

> *"Bangijikela. Bangasabambi tincingo kani phela konkhe bekumele ngikukhulume nabo, bangibonise kutsi indlela ihamba kuphi. Bekuba ngumake lobese uyabashayela abatjele kutsi ngidzinga lusito, kepha hawu kute nje labangisita ngako.* Instead *nje babange tinkinga.* (They turned their backs on me. They stopped answering my calls whereas I had a lot of things to discuss with them. I had a lot of things to ask them as well, pertaining to the journey I was starting. Mother was having to play the middleman and call them to tell them that I needed their help. But they did not help me with anything. Instead they created more problems.*"*

I can see a mix of emotions running through his face. His eyes are tearing up as he remembers this ordeal with his siblings, while they also show a lot of anger. His jaw is also visibly clenched. After he says this, he takes a sip from his tea and sighs.

> "*Ngamangala ngoba mine mabadzinga lusito kimi bengita ngigijima* (I was shocked because whenever they needed help from me, I would come running) and I thought as my siblings they would always do the same for me," he continues with a laugh that connotes disappointment.

Disappointment that seems to stem from the assumption that his siblings would repay his good deeds. However, it seems his siblings chose to mourn the loss of the person they relied on financially instead. As Kuper (2018:6) asserts, “kinship matters” as “it provides the only social security system that most people in the world can rely on. It delivers the daily bread, emotional support,” from people who are expected to love one another, with hopes “that they can call on more distant relatives to help them out”(Kuper, 2018:6) whenever they are in need. His siblings’ inability and reluctance to assist Bongani with the preparations towards taking a wife, including giving him advice on how to start the journey, highlights that families are not the super supportive and safe spaces we want to believe they are, but that families can be spaces where a person can feel isolated, rejected and alone.

It was not all negative stories that the couples shared about their relationships with their blood families, some of the stories that were shared showed that although the couple were experiencing hardships, relationships with some of their family members were strengthened. The family members that chose to support the couples in whatever challenges they were experiencing, cemented and strengthened their relationships with the couple. “*Kitsi sobabili bekubo make betfu* (With us both, our mothers are the ones) who were there for us throughout,” says Bongiwe. Bongani adds, “yes, that's true.” Looking directly at his wife with a huge smile on his face, continues to say, “my brother pulled through for us too, baby.” He then turns back to me as she nods. “I think my brother and I are closer now because of that. He was the only one of my siblings who even bothered to call just to check on me. Bongiwe and I spend a lot of time with him. He is a part of our little family.”

Bongani's brother and mother were the only people in his family to stand by him and support his decision to take a wife. The two further 'held his hand' through the whole process even when they could not assist him financially, they were there for him emotionally and physically. Bongani's brother and mother walked him down the aisle. Other than his uncles (his mother's brothers), these two were the only other blood family that Bongani had present on his wedding day. His sisters shunned the wedding as they were reliant on him. The context of economic deprivation produced the tensions between the members of Bongani's family, as it may have been shameful to admit that they could not afford to help him financially. The family members that recognised the vulnerabilities of the couples during this time and helped them in the different ways that they needed assistance, helped to strengthen their kinship ties, as seen in how Bongani describes his new little family including his brother.

Bongani's narrative gives an insight into the workings of gender as male children become providers to all the women in their lives; from their wives to mothers and sisters. Women in the family remain reliant on the men to care for their most basic needs and more. The burden on men is heightened when the other men in the family are earning very little or absent in the lives of their families. Unfortunately for Bongani, his father passed away when he was in high school. Caring for the family became the responsibility of the son who was present and had received a higher level of education.

COPARENTING

Coparenting is described as a "unique construct in family life that is distinct from both couple relationship quality and parenting behaviour, and its importance for family life is underscored by its description in a classic family text as "the family's executive subsystem" (Goldberg & Carlson, 2013:6). Coparenting occurs when the parents of a child are no longer in a romantic relationship with each other, however they continue to work as a team, coordinating their parental duties in order to raise the child. Coparenting is different from parallel parenting where "each parent maintains a relationship with their child separate and distinct from that of the other parent" (Goldberg & Carlson, 2013:6). In this section we learn more about the family Sithembiso and Sibahle have created with Sibahle's daughter - Alex, and the complexities and challenges that arose as the couple was starting their journey towards creating a new family.

During the initial conversation I had with Sibahle and Sithembiso Kunene, they were engaged and due to get married in the following weeks. The first time I was actively stimulated to think deeply about the complexities of family and kinship as a whole, was when Sibahle talked about her daughter. "I have a daughter. She is my world. Her father and I thought we were soulmates and meant to be together forever. But as you know these things never turn out as planned." Sibahle has a three year old child – Alex – with her ex-boyfriend Ben. Ben and Sibahle had been together for over four years before they decided to have a child together. After the birth of Alex, the pair broke up. Ben and Sibahle coparented well, with baby Alex living with her mother but seeing her father as often as she needed to as he lived five minutes away from Sibahle's house.

Goldberg & Carlson (2013) found that in the United States of America, childbearing between people who were not married had increased dramatically over the past decades, and that the majority of unmarried couples split up while their child was still young. This is true of Eswatini as well, which led to the removal of the 'illegitimacy' label in the 2005 Constitution and the subsequent introduction of the Marriages Act of 2019. Illegitimate was a legal label given to children who were born to parents who were not married. The rise in childbearing between people who were not married catalysed women and Non-Governmental Organisations to lobby for the removal of this legal label and to seek for children born to unmarried parents to have the same rights as children born within the confines of a marriage.

> "So everything was ok with Ben and I after the breakup. We were cordial. Actually we really did our best to be friends to an extent for the sake of Alex. From the outside I'm sure we looked like the co-parenting dream team. After Ben and I separated, I took comfort in work and my friends. One of my best friends climbed out of the friendzone to become my fiancé."

She laughs, staring towards the left of the computer screen to what I later found out to be a picture of her fiancé, daughter and herself. Her expression changes suddenly, and she now looks distressed and close to tears.

> "My main priority is Alex. Doing what is right for her is all I care about. Yes, I know that may sound weird with me getting married soon and all but regardless of my marital status, my Alex comes first. Doing what is right for my daughter, especially in this new transition of getting married to a man who is not her biological father,

means ensuring that my daughter is protected. That she has all the things I never had growing up. That she knows she is loved."

Her voice trails off and she goes silent for two minutes. She then takes a deep breath and resumes her story.

"Everything was fine until things started getting serious with Sithembiso. At first Ben turned mutual friends against me in telling them all the issues we were having privately. And of course, for some reason our friends were choosing his side even though they were not explicitly saying it. They seemed to disapprove of my relationship with Sithembiso and even asked me not to bring him to hang out sessions out of respect for Ben."

The narrative Sibahle shares brings to the forefront that women are trapped in previous relationships, and are expected to constantly respect relationships they are no longer in. Mona LaFosse (2013:33) writes that "women were expected to embody family honour by their modest, chaste, and submissive behaviour," as prescribed by the Bible. This implies that by Sibahle (a priest's daughter) moving on with her life - regardless of whether Ben was doing the same or not and regardless of the circumstances that led to the break up - Sibahle was expected (by the people she thought were her friends) to remain faithful to Ben. For those looking in on the relationship between Sibahle and her daughter's father, they felt that Sibahle should either try to fix the broken relationship or remain single, as those were the right things to do. However, Sibahle's family, knowing exactly what had transpired to cause the break up, supported her decision to move on with her life and find happiness elsewhere.

At this point, Sibahle is sitting upright and no longer staring at the picture of her new family. She is looking at the computer camera directly, and subsequently looking directly at me. Her eyes are glossy, and I can see this part of the story is hurting her. I ask her whether she would like to take a breather and she says no and continues with the story.

> "As I was going through all of this – honestly I thank God for my sisters who had my back through it all – my relationship got even more serious to a point where the Kunene family came to ask my family for my hand in marriage. And this is where things took a turn for the worse. Both Ben and I always put the needs of our daughter first, until this point. Sithembiso and myself now live in Manzini, a mere thirty minutes away from Ben and my parental home, and I made the decision that my daughter would come to live with us as opposed to living with her paternal grandparents. Unfortunately, this didn't sit well with Ben and his family. *Lokwenteka wenaLwazi* (you see what happened Lwazi) was that Ben's family paid damages to my family for us having a child out of wedlock and wow, *awati* (you don't know) this turned our worlds upside down."

Damages or *inhlawulo* is a fine paid by a man to a woman's family if she falls pregnant before the man takes her to be his wife or exchanges emalobolo for her. *Inhlawulo* gives the father rights over the child and allows for the child to use their father's surname, however it does not grant the father the right to live with the child (Posel & Rudwick, 2014). *Inhlawulo* and its subsequent commensuration, turns kinship into a transactional exchange, and suggests that kin can be property of the family that has either fulfilled their *lobola* obligations or paid damages.

NgesiSwati, when a young woman falls pregnant out of wedlock, she is led by the elder women in her family to declare the pregnancy to her lover's family. It is at this point where most young men would take responsibility for the pregnancy or deny it. Whatever decision they made here and going forward shaped how the community viewed the young man and his family. Should the young man deny the pregnancy and after birth the child was proven to be his, he would bring shame, not only to himself but to his kin. Doing the right thing as a man in this context would be taking full responsibility for impregnating someone's child out of wedlock. Regardless of anything else the young man did for the community, he would always be viewed and spoken of as the man who "broke into another man's kraal" and denied his own blood. He would not be perceived nor treated as a ‘real man’.

Just as bad, if not worse, is the man who impregnates a woman out of wedlock, acknowledges that the child is his and proceeds not to take emotional or financial responsibility for his child. Over the last two years, social media in Eswatini has played a better role than the courts in holding men accountable for not paying maintenance nor providing for their children in any way. In late 2020, a young single mother used her Twitter account to vent about a text message she had received from her baby's father. She had told him that their daughter needed new clothes and a few other necessities and the father responded by saying the mother was using monies meant for the child to fund her own lifestyle. This man was called to task by hundreds of Twitter users, showing that even in contemporary Eswatini, a man who refused to provide for his own blood or denied it would face the consequences from the collective.

As Sibahle continues with the narrative of her experiences, she lets out a laugh. Not a forced laugh or a laugh connoting happiness, but a laugh of disbelief.

> "*Kwaphela konkhe ku coparent-a* (coparenting went out the window) and Ben said no child of his would be moving to Manzini especially since he was taking care of her financially and his family had paid damages meaning that Alex fully belonged to them. I really don't understand why he is now failing to do what is best for his daughter. Why is he fighting that she needs to live with her mother? This is what we agreed on when she came into the world, that the best place for her was with me. *Wangijikela umuntfu* (he turned on me)."

This is not out of the ordinary, as Goldberg & Carlson (2013:6) state, "children typically live with mothers after parental separation; the child born outside of marriage will be living apart from their father at a very young age and over a large number of years." Children born outside of marriage will live with their mothers or maternal families (Shabalala, De Lannoy, Moyer & Reis, 2016), which initially was not a problem for Ben as he could see his daughter often but changed when Sibahle's relationship became more serious. The relationship between the biological parents of a child is likely to change once either one of the two moves on and gets into a serious relationship. Jealousy and distrust of the new partners in their children's lives tends to pose formidable obstacles to parents' cooperation in raising their child (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). It has been noted that the relationship that nonresident fathers such as Ben, have with their children is directly influenced by the state of the relationship with the mother of the child. This essentially colours and shapes the choices and decisions mothers who are no longer with their children's fathers make.

From Sibahle's narration of her experiences with Alex, her daughter, we hear how for Sibahle ensuring that her child's wellbeing was catered for once she was married was her main priority. Doing what is right meant for her is doing what is right for her child. As a mother, she feels her moral duty is to protect, raise, and ensure her child was safe and had all their needs catered for. Doing what is right for Sibahle as with many women often reflects an experience that celebrates selflessness as a morally high feminine virtue (Gilligan, 1989). Sibahle felt that what was right for her child was to be with her full time, but what the father Ben felt was that it was right for Alex to be with him and his family. People are never simply passively registering a predetermined world of experience, but the way in which they experience the world is shaped by how they engage with it (Fluehr - Lobban, 2012) and this is seen through the changes in actions being deemed to be of good moral standing or not. Doing what was right or being of good moral standing for Sibahle and her daughter's father was shaped by how they were experiencing the world around them. Initially for Ben, he felt he was doing what was right by his daughter by letting her live with her mother, however this all changed when Sibahle decided to move thirty minutes away. This shows that doing what is right and morally good is not static but is as dynamic as the actors engaging with the world. An action that may be perceived as moral one day, may not be considered to be such the next, however, that morality is still based on fulfilling promises, duties, expectations and responsibilities towards others. However, practices that are highly valued in one context, such as those involving children, can be set aside in another context where a person is aiming for a more highly valued moral goal (Robbins, 2012). Ben's duty and responsibility is towards his child, and in the child moving 30 minutes away he felt he could not fulfil his responsibilities as a father to the best of his abilities.

Therefore, fighting for her to remain with him so that he could better provide for her is considered a higher valued moral goal by him and his family than having his daughter live with her mother. These shifts are not generally thought of as "courting contradiction or moral failure by the actors involved" (Robbins, 2012:121). Although on the other hand, one could argue that Ben's decision was less about his moral obligations but convenience and wanting to retain control over Sibahle. Control he had assumed he would have indefinitely as they were tied to each other by Alex. Ben's bid to gain full custody of Alex affected Sibahle and Sithembiso's *lobola* process as Sibahle's family asked for more cattle so they could repay Ben's family for the damages they had paid for Alex.

Shifts, changes and differences in what 'doing what is right' creates tension between individuals who are involved in the family making and *lobola* processes and threatens to tear families apart as opposed to bringing lineages together as dictated by the ideal role of *lobola* within *emaSwati.* These shifts in what is morally good for one person may be seen as breaking one's promise and not honouring their word or commitment to others, highlighting the tension that exists between the different moral codes that each individual, or each family ascribes to. What Ben, SIbahle and Alex's story tells us is that families are constituted in ways that believe in the idea of a virgin bride. Sibahle shows that women have attachments to previous relationships which provide tensions with their new relationships. Damages seek to stabilise the relationship between children born out of wedlock and their paternal lineage should the mother marry someone else. *Emalobolo* or damages in the absence of emalobolo or marriage aims to keep the

kinship ties between the child and paternal family together and assert the rights of the paternal family to have a relationship with the child.

Scholars such as Joel Robbins argue that “the most important values in a culture tend to organise not only single actions,” but also strings of linked actions which aim to reach a singular goal (Robbins, 2012:121) and one such value is morality. According to Fluehr – Lobban, Gert and Rawls morality is defined as “an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behaviour that affects others which aims to have the effect of lessening of evil or harm, including rules prohibiting killing, the causing of pain, deception, and the breaking of promises" (Gert in Fluehr - Lobban, 2012:103). Morals and morality differ within and between societies and cultures, as the actions taken seek to “conform to cultural expectations and meet the demands of cultural norms" (Robbins, 2012:118) and individuals who deviate from the cultural expectations and norms risk being judged and subsequently shamed by others. This can be further taken from Teroni and Bruun’s summary of Fluehr – Lobban, Gert and Rawls’ definition of morality, that morality is bound with notions of responsibility, blame, atonement and punishment (Teroni & Bruun, 2011). Morality seeks to govern the actions of individuals in relation to the people they live and interact with (Robbins, 2012:123) as morality deals with intentional actions taken by individuals who are not only pursuing their own self-interested motives, but who are also concerned with the well-being of others (Tomasello, 2018:661). These intentional actions are seen as an individual’s responsibility to pursue and are associated with the “ability to distinguish right from wrong and the ability to act in accordance with that knowledge” (Tomasello, 2018:661). Should an individual choose to act against what is culturally

expected to be in accordance with what is right, the individual risks being punished by the society.

By the act of going against what they had initially agreed upon, Ben is not honouring his word and although he is seeking to do what is morally right for him and his family, he is breaking promises he had made to the mother of his child – Sibahle and her family. The shifts, changes and differences in what people deem to be morally right for them and the people around them, will always be a challenge to maintain. With each individual and each family wanting to do what is right for themselves or those they consider to be family, leaves space for disappointment and heartache for those who are coming together to form new families. On the other hand, individuals are making active choices to pick families outside of blood relations and choosing who they want to be in their lives. It is through these challenges that new kin configurations are made.

FOSTERING

Floyd and Morman (2006:xii) defined fictive family as "family-like relationships that are neither genetically nor legally bound," and this is one category where fostering in the Eswatini context would lie. Legal adoption is not available in the small country, legal fostering has only become available in the last six months. Fostering has been a part of the Eswatini societal fibre for decades but not regulated nor legally bound. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles would take in their family members' children and "put them in the belly," or " *kufaka esiswini,* (Golomski, 2015:87) for various reasons. From taking children in because their parents had passed on, the fostering family member lived closer to the child's school, the children would have a better life financially living with a different extended family member and more. Golomski states that "children have long been fostered or entrusted across households for affection, surrogacy, and labour or because of the inability to support them" (Golomski, 2015:83). Rates of fosterage in Eswatini increased exponentially due to the HIV/AIDS crisis that left many children without parents. For many years Eswatini has had the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, standing at 27% of the population of 1.4million (The Global Fund, 2020). This has left over six hundred thousand children without both parents (SOS Children's Village, n.d) and has changed the structure of families as Patricia Henderson (2011) found in her study in KwaZulu Natal, the existence and prevalence of child headed households has increased. Where older siblings become guardians tasked with the care of their younger siblings.

In this study, fostering speaks to and describes the relationship that exists between the spouse of someone who has a child outside of the union, and that child. It describes the relationship between Sithembiso and Alex as Sithembiso cannot legally adopt Alex. This highlights the multiple worlds that young emaSwati couples creating families are navigating and negotiating. The legal world which governs and regulates the relationship Sithembiso can have with his wife's daughter, and the 'traditional' where fostering children within the family where "children were "put into" or "inserted," *kufaka,* connoting enclosure, security, and envelopment" (Golomski, 2015:88)

Historically, for emaSwati, fosterage was seen as 'doing what is right' as ascribed by the social expectations to look out for family members. However, important to highlight and note is the difference between which children could be brought into a marital relationship. Women were and continue to be expected to put children their husbands' had out of the union in their 'belly'. They are expected to treat their husbands' children as their own, love them as their own, and show no difference between the children born out of the marriage and those born outside of it (Golomski, 2015). Mainly this is because descent is traced through the bloodline of the man as the Swazi are patrilineal, meaning that the child belongs to the family because it was fathered by a man belonging to the family as well. Whereas, the children women have which are not a product of the union historically were given to their maternal or paternal grandmothers to raise. The grandmothers fostered their daughters' children as they could not take them into the marital home; especially if the children were boys.

Male children were seen as a threat to the inheritance of the children coming out of the marriage, while the girl child was seen (and continues to be seen) as an asset to the marriage as she was "in transition" – to be married and move away to another household. And to an extent, many families which have fostered and raised the girl child, have laid claim to her *lobola* cattle once the time came. If a couple could not have children – usually blamed on the woman – "the husband's family could ask for and negotiate a surrogacy plan with the wife's family. Sometimes, the wife's sister would bear a child on her married sister's behalf," (Golomski, 2015:89) and the child would be "put into the womb" of the married sister. Fostering in the many ways observed above has been a part of the fabric of emaSwati for decades and also has changed how it functions and looks over the years. All of these diverse ways of creating kinship and family, what the couples aimed to do was do whatever was right for themselves, their partners and the children that were brought into the relationship or were a result of the union.

Fostering children has been a part of the lives of emaSwati for centuries. From sisters bearing children for each other to ensure the continuance of the husband's bloodline, to orphaned children being taken in by relatives, and finally to children who were born out of wedlock being raised by their maternal family, emaSwati have put fosterage into practice. Fosterage in the way that it existed then and exists now, has given life to blended families.

BLENDED FAMILY

Marriages and fosterage have blended families as a part of the Swazi family context for many centuries. The children that come from polygamous, levirate and sororate marriages, together with children who were born out of wedlock, and the manner in which the families raised those children as a unit in some cases, means that blended families have been a part of the Swazi notion of family creation. Braithwaite, Olson, Golish, Soukup & Turman (2001:5) stated that ”blended family members must negotiate many complex issues” which are challenging to members of these families, such as defining and redefining communication boundaries between the various blended family subsystems (Whitsett & Land, 1992; Bray & Berger, 1993) and negotiating new roles within the blended family (Anderson & White, 1986; Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996).

Although in the context that Braithwaite et al. (2001) write in, blended families are seen to face challenges with regard to closeness and connection, due to the “loss of a previous parent-child bond” (Braithwaite et al., 2001:6), however this does not seem to be the case in the initial foundations of the blended family relationship between Sithembiso and his wife’s daughter, Alex. At least not from the stories shared by Sibahle and Sithembiso. The new blended family does not seem to be expecting instant love (Visher & Visher, 1988) where “step- parents join their blended family expecting it to be similar to a nuclear family”(Braithwaite et al., 2001:5). A challenge that Sibahle noted was created by *inhlawulo* or the fine that Ben’s family paid for impregnating Sibahle out of wedlock. Due to Ben’s family fulfilling all their cultural

expectations they had joint customary custody of Alex, and have an equal say about the wellbeing of the child.

The blending of families and the subsequent creation of a new one is something couples in contemporary Eswatini continue to tackle and face as they proceed through the lobola or marriage processes. *Emalobolo* become a space through which parents who are no longer in a relationship, and their families have to consider decisions concerning the renegotiation of their relationships and whether the children in question will be able to maintain a close relationship with their non-residential parent while forming a new one with the step parent.

FRIENDS WHO BECOME FAMILY

A type of kinship or family of choice that runs through the life experiences and narratives shared by the couples who participated in this study is that of friendship. These are relationships that are not formed through descent, marriage nor adoption - which in itself creates a family that differs from the traditional biologically related structure (March & Miall, 2000) - but in many cases can run deeper than relationships formed through descent, marriage and adoption. Braithwaite et al. (2010) write about voluntary kin, which they state suggests mutual selection and choice in the framing of the relationships. Voluntary kin can act as a substitute to a consanguineal family due to estrangement. In the case of substitute voluntary kin, a person makes the choice not to enact a familial relationship and have no contact with their blood or legal family members, but finds a mutual relationship where the non-consanguineal person becomes a substitute for blood or legal family members.

Braithwaite et al. (2010) state that voluntary kin can also supplement blood and legal family. In this supplementary role, voluntary kin fulfil the unmet needs of a person. Needs which are not met, or underperformed by their blood or legal family members. This supplementary role played by friends was especially seen in Bongani Fakudze's experiences, where his whole journey to marrying his wife was paved by friends as his blood and legal family either did not have the financial capacity to do it or they were not willing to meet the needs he had. These needs were performed and met by both his work friends and friends he had made throughout his life.cBongani's experiences leading up to the wedding and during the wedding showed that if it

was not for a small group of friends who played a more significant role that most of his blood and legal family members (Pahl & Spencer, 2010:11) Bongani would have not gotten married.

Which brings us to the third category of voluntary kin that Braithwaite et al. (2010:400-401) speak about which is presented as "forming around a specific context (e.g., the workplace), time period (e.g., a support group during a 12-step program), or stage of life (e.g., undergraduate college years)." Although this type of relationship is characterised by being significant for a fixed period of time, with Bongani these were the relationships and friendship that ensured that he could give his wife the wedding of her dreams. Supplementary voluntary kinship is one that seems most common with the couples. For Bongani and Bongiwe Fakudze, Sibahle and Sithembiso Kunene and Wenzile and Mfanasibili Maziya, their friends played a huge role in their *kucela*, *emalobolo* and church weddings. The couples speak in different ways about how their friends stepped into roles that their families either did not want to perform, or could not perform.

"*Lukhalo lwamakoti belinganani* (how many cattle did your bride's family ask for?)" I asked Sibahle Mathenjwa and her then fiancé, Sithembiso Kunene a question I had asked all the couples that participated in this research study. Not knowing that this was not as simple an answer to give for this particular couple. Sibahle gazed lovingly at her fiancé, squeezed his arm and gave me an uneasy smile. "It's a sore subject…you can tell just by looking at him." At this point Sithembiso's body language had changed. He was visibly tense, with a furrowed brow and he no longer had a huge grin on his face. "There was a bit of a complication there" continues

Sibahle, forcing a laugh to try and ease the visible tension,"I think a mistake that we made kaMathenjwa (at the Mathenjwa's), was listening to my maternal family members as my father is not Swazi by birth. This means that there are a lot of things that he doesn't know *naye kahle*(as well)". Sithembiso interjects to share his side of the story saying,"here is what I initially told Bahle (as he affectionately calls his soon to be wife) And it frustrated her when we had this conversation, so I don't know if she'll deny it or not." (Sibahle says, "I will" jokingly). "After we were engaged, and we were talking about setting a date for when my family would come to speak to her family, I asked her…I told her that 'it's always good for you as my person to talk to your family on my behalf'. That's where the negotiations actually start. That's where you are the one who sets the pace for the family and direction they will take. *Nguwe lochazela* the family *kutsi lelijaha lingakhona lifikephi* (you explain to the family how far the gentleman can go), describing what kind of a guy I was."

As Sithembiso is telling his story, he speaks in a low voice, visibly sad and no longer looking at his fiancée nor making jokes and laughing with her. At this point, he avoids making any eye contact with her and myself, and looks directly above the computer camera, looking past me.

> "The negotiations don't start when the families meet. *Acala* (they start) between me and my person. And for me and Bahle that's when they started when I kept asking her to talk to her family *kutsi phela bangangibulali* (that they shouldn't kill me). We started even talking about the price of the cow and I said this is how far I can go. I was very honest with her. *Kutsi* this is how far I can go. And she said "if *batsi nayi*

imali nayi (they say this is the price of a cow) does that mean you are not going to marry me?"

She grabs him quickly, as if to silence him. "It's so true. I'm sorry to expose you," Sithembiso says, putting his hand on Sibahle's arm with a smile.

"You know what, I had told Sithembiso that I didn't know. I was talking to my parents …well I was talking to mom, coz you don't just talk to dad. You talk to mom and mom mediates. I talked to mom and she said '*akukufaki wena* (it doesn't concern you). *Batotikhulumela bakaKunene* (the Kunene family can speak for themselves).' I don't think he understood but I kept talking to mom. But I don't think he trusted me. It hurts."

Sibahle says jokingly clutching her chest and pretending to shed tears.

Sibahle shares the unseen parts of the *lobola* negotiations, where mothers and their children discuss the negotiations with hopes to help shape the outcome. While men negotiate publicly, there are informal unseen processes that influence the men's public negotiations. When the informal negotiations between daughters and their mothers fail to influence the discussions between the men, the betrayal is not only felt by the daughters but by their future husbands as well. As both parties rely on the conversations between mother and daughter to have a favourable outcome of the negotiations.

"To be honest…I mean, uh, I guess to a certain extent I thought her mom would let her in on what was happening and I thought the way I saw things would be the way they as the Mathenjwa family saw things. *Kutsi nangita ngitocela ngiphatse malini* (in terms of how much

to budget as I came to ask for her hand in marriage). An approximate figure not the exact thing. From here to there, that's the type of stuff I was looking for. To get an idea of what they were thinking. I think if I didn't have a good first eleven team negotiating for me, it would have turned out differently. You really learn that it's all about what you say there and what you do there otherwise *ungatikhandza ukhiphe* (you will find that you have agreed to) ten thousand a cow *ngiyabekisa* (for example) and *lelukhalo nalihlala entsanyeni ungatikhandza ufikile* (and if the number of cattle they ask for is high, you can find yourself reaching) ku two hundred thousand. Yeah, I would like to believe *kutsi ngimcela ngenkomo lengumalini* (the cost of each cow) all the credit goes to my team . A very young team in comparison to what we were against."

Sithembiso's team consisted of his older brother and four friends that he had known since he was 14 years old. Although the first eleven were younger than the Matsenjwa family that they were negotiating with, the eleven were respected by the Matsenjwas as they represented the Kunene elders. The Mathenjwas trusted that the Kunene entourage would not do anything to disgrace the elders that they represented. Sithembiso's team did not disappoint him nor bring shame to his family name, through their conduct. Sithembiso highlights the kinship that exists and forms between friends, or simply put friends turn into family. The role that his friends played, was a role that is generally reserved for family, and this role made his friends privy to his financial standing and what was financially possible for him. Pahl & Spencer (2010:11) described a range of friendship types, from "simple relationships based on shared activities, fun or favours, to more complex and intimate ties involving emotional support and trust – from associates and what some referred to as

champagne friends, to confidants and soul-mates". On the journey to getting married many of the couples' friends took on the responsibilities that were traditionally thought of to belong to family members. From being there at the *kucela* ceremony, to being a part of the negotiations and the big day itself, their friends went above and beyond expectations by taking on roles set aside for the blood family. Through Sithembiso and Bongani's stories, were see how in some friendships, "friends were perceived to play 'family-like' roles… where was a strong sense of obligation and utter dependability" (Pahl & Spencer, 2010:11) and the friends loved each other as though they were family; family they choose.

Within friendships there is an unspoken understanding that the friends will be dependable, and always be there for each other. Yet there is "still recognition that some of their friends could potentially fail to live up to their expectations" (Pahl & Spencer, 2010:11), however social norms and the social contract between friends agrees that there are unacceptable types of behaviour which include betrayal. Betrayal may not be as simple in friendships as one party may think they are doing what is right for themselves, their friends and their friendship, but it may be received as not living up to expectations of the other party. The idea of differences in what "doing what is right" means and how it may be seen as breaking promises and not honouring commitments made to others, and friends being there to save the day, is seen through the Kunene's narration of the *kumcela* (asking for her hand in marriage) process. Sithembiso uses football analogies to paint a picture of how the meeting of the families unfolded.

> "Her team midfielder, he was just set *ngekutsi nyalo nje* the next step *kuphuma tinkhomo beseke niyotsatsana* (that the next step is for the cattle to be brought to the family and then we could get married). *Kani besikhulumile nala*Mathenjwa (whereas we had already spoken with LaMathenjwa) and *bengitsemba* that *umengcisile lomlayeto* (I trusted that the message was relayed) to her parents as well *kutsi* this is how we wanted to do things. There were those surprises that day, even my family was shocked because I had told them about what Bahle and I had discussed. So the team I had was shocked a little bit but I think they were mature enough. They didn't change their faces nor change their tone. They just kept quiet actually. Til this day none of them have said anything. I think they assumed *ngaphindze ngajika* (that I changed my mind about what I could afford)."

The use of the football analogy seeks to emphasise the strategy behind the talks between the two families, including the unseen negotiations that occurred as well as the competitive nature of *lobola* discussions where both parties are trying to walk away with the best. Sithembiso refers to the Mathenjwa representative that had been appointed the family mouthpiece, as the team midfielder. A midfielder in football is the individual that sets the pace for the game, creates plays and can make or break a game for the team. The Mathenjwa representative had the power to make or break the discussions that were taking place between the two families, and in the eyes of Sithembiso, he chose to not honour the agreements that had been made off the record. The shifts in what each party regarded as "doing what is right", highlight the tension that exists between the morality of reproduction and morality of freedom and tensions that arise during the making of family. Morality of

freedom is when an individual needs to make a moral choice between competing ideals, ranking the ideals and subsequently choosing what the individual considers to be a higher valued moral goal (Robbins, 2012:119).

In conclusion, the chapter on the making of kinship and family highlights the different ways in which *emalobolo* expose the different types of family that exist within even one familial structure. We see families formed through marriage (Sithembiso and Sibahle/Bongani and Bongiwe), families formed through fosterage as legal adoption is not an option in Eswatini and thus become blended (Sithembiso and Alex), and families of choice otherwise known as friendships. The role that friends took in many of the stories shared by the Kunenes and Fakudzes show that doing what is right is not only limited to people you share a bloodline with but the people who choose to be in your life daily will do what is right by you. Inasmuch as *emalobolo* are about creating family and bringing families closer together, they also expose the cracks within the existing family structures. Exposing consanguineal kin who feel excluded or threatened , who in turn threaten to tear away at the foundations of the new kinship structures that are forming through marriage. However, some families provide support for each other as in the case of Sibahle, where her sisters and parents supported her through what could have been a big custody battle with the father of her daughter, Ben. The relationship between Sibahle, Sithembiso, Alex and Sibahle's family was able to withstand the challenges exposed by the journey to getting married. The following chapter looks into masculinities and how they are performed by historically marginalised and erased men.

CHAPTER 4: Masculinities in Action

In Chapter 4 we see masculinities in action which sheds light on the pressures faced by men under the guise of socially constructed and reproduced notions of masculinity. From the expectations placed on men to provide financially for members of their families, to the pressures that arise when the men cannot afford to provide, exposing vulnerabilities in men, that hegemonic masculinity neglects and erases.

MASCULINITY

"*NgesiSwati kunendvodza nemuntfu lomdvuna*".

These words were uttered by five different research participants, in various contexts and from entirely different backgrounds and they are loosely translated as, "among the Swazi, there are men who are men solely due to having a penis and men who are men because of their actions". Actions such as taking care of their loved ones, humility, logical thinking and more. Actions and characteristics that define hegemonic masculinity as well. Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (1995), refers to the socially constructed dominant form of masculinity, which is culturally exalted over other forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Kane, 2006). European ideals of masculinity shared the stereotype that women are more emotional than men, whilst men are viewed as rational and logical thinking (Fischer & Manstead, 2000). Emotions were seen as an extension of gender roles and gender role ideologies. The issue with labelling men and associating being a 'real man' with notions of rational and logical thinking is that it justifies patriarchy and the violence women and subordinate masculinities suffer at the hands of men seeking to legitimise their own masculinities. Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett (2001)

argued that masculine power is maintained through discourses of power, which refers to the "everyday language which maintains binary oppositions such as men are strong, women are weak, or that men are rational and women are emotional" (Nadar, 2009:555).

The different forms of nonhegemonic masculinities are important as well as their existence allows hegemonic masculinity to legitimate male dominance, race, class and sexual orientation based privileges (Connell, 1987; Kane, 2006:153). The idea of hegemonic masculinity has received criticism from many scholars (Demetriou, 2001; Mfecane, 2016) who have argued that the theory neglects to explain how male dominance is maintained throughout history as for Connell, "masculine dominance was maintained by clearly demarcating hegemonic masculinity from subordinate masculinities, which were removed from the 'circle of legitimacy'" (Mdedetyana, 2018:17). Demetriou (2001) argued that hegemonic masculinity does not remove subordinate masculinities from the circle of legitimacy but "appropriates some of their elements to strengthen itself" (Mdedetyana, 2018:17), combining different and diverse practices to construct the best way to reproduce patriarchy (Demetriou, 2001).

According to Sakhumzi Mfecane (2016) for Xhosa men, cultural and physical rituals on the body such as circumcision are the most important markers of manhood, "and not sexuality as the concept of hegemonic masculinity posits" (Mdedetyana, 2018:19). A man who undergoes traditional circumcision is regarded as "*indoda*, a real man, irrespective of his sexual orientation or class, and this affords him certain rights and privileges" (Mfecane, 2016:1).

Inkwenkwe (an uncircumcised man) and medically circumcised men exemplify "subordinate" forms of masculinity (Mfecane, 2016:1). Initiates go through training on how to conduct themselves as *amadoda* (plural of *indoda*), however when the behaviour of the initiate who has re-integrated into the community as an *indoda* after weeks of separation, is contradicting his manhood status [*ubudoda*] he does not lose his status as an *indoda* (Mfecane, 2016:6). For Mfecane (2018), the multitudes and pluralities of masculinities compete with one another which shows that manhood and masculinity is a contested issue, not only for Xhosa men but for men in other Southern African societies, such as Swazi men. Despite the critiques of hegemonic masculinity, the insights offered by the theory are helpful in thinking about masculinities and their construction.

Masculinity refers to practices associated with being a real man (Mfecane, 2016) and is based on the belief that "men are not born; they are made" (Ouzgane, 2003:2). The idea of masculinity is not a given that comes with "male genes or hormones, or possession of a penis" (Ratele, 2013:145), but is socially constructed influenced by unseen elements of personhood (Mfecane, 2018) and therefore differs from community to community. Masculinity is something that people achieve through established and socially accepted "manhood acts" which are read socially as representing manliness in a particular historical period (Schrock & Schwalbe in Mfecane, 2016:3). Scholars such as Jane Hood (1993:2) have argued that "traditional discourses of masculinity construct the male as the member of the household who goes out and makes a living", which means that men are viewed and view themselves as real men if they are earning an income within their households.

These traditional discourses of masculinity stand out as hegemonic masculinities, are also referred to as the 'breadwinner' ideal. The 'breadwinner' ideal loosely defines men who can provide economically for their female partners and families and who earn their male authority through this practice (Silberschmidt, 2001; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2003; Hunter, 2005; Luyt, 2012). Having a job was therefore perceived and is still largely perceived as being an important aspect of masculinity and what being a man means.

INDODA MUST: MASCULINITY AND FINANCES

Social media has played a huge role in exposing male vulnerabilities as it has raised the bar for what "real men" are expected to be providing for the women in their lives and families. The idea of men being expected to be providers was a topic of interest for over 8 months on Twitter among Tweeps from the general Southern African region, using the phrase "*Indoda* Must". I first noted the hashtag trending in November 2020, I used screenshots of Tweets under the tag in April and May 2021, and while I was writing up many months later, the hashtag continued to have social relevance. Women have been at the forefront of this trend. Showing the world what their men can provide for them; showcasing that they are in relationships with "real men". Below are a few images of Tweets from emaSwati interacting with the "Indoda Must" hashtag.

Twitter Post 5

Twitter Post 6

Now imagine being a Thulani, who already feels disenfranchised because he is unemployed and his family no longer listens to his opinions and advice when it comes to the important decisions being made by the family. You log onto Twitter to destress and distract yourself with memes and Twars (Twitter Wars) only to find that the trending topic daily has to do with the phrase "Indoda Must". A phrase that constantly raises and emphasises that a man should provide, a man should always be able to make a plan, a man should have money, a man should have a beautiful wife whom he has fulfilled all *lobola* obligations for, a man should…a man should… Although women experience constant pressures from social media as well, I am focusing on masculinity because the pressures men face are often overlooked. Social media and the hashtags that trend, are a window through which one can gauge public perception on a topic, and in this case, what a man should and should not do. Public perception of men's ability to provide for their families is however a double edged sword as illuminated by the stories and experiences shared by Sithembiso, Bongani and Nontobeko.

Bongani looks back at his four years with his now wife Bongiwe, and says "I give her everything she wants and needs. There was a time she walked past a new Egyptian restaurant in town and the first person she thought of was me. She called me and told me how she thought it would be nice for us to try it out. I told her to get the menu so we could plan accordingly.
I took her there the very next Friday and spent about two thousand Emalangeni[3] on that date. I would do anything and everything to make my wife happy." A few moments after sharing this story, Bongani highlights that things are not always easy.

[3] US$ 1 = SZL 15.34 (SZL - Emalangeni)

He mentions that the first time he told his bride that he was in debt was during the last module of couples' counselling offered by their church. "She did not know. I was making a plan to get her those shoes she wanted. The perfume she wanted. I was borrowing money from my colleagues. My mother's ill health left me with a lot of debt that I am still clearing even today." As David Graeber stated, "the first effect of debt is to create isolation, shame, humiliation, a fear of even talking about it" (Graeber in Appel, 2014:165). Bongani was living in isolation for a long time as he could not tell anyone, including his fiancée about his debt. He was inevitably forced to risk shame and humiliation during the couples' counselling module and in order to be honest with Bongiwe before they got married. Public perception of what men should be able to provide for their partners and the pressures from social media, the church and society as a whole mean men find themselves isolated from those around them in order to hide how vulnerable they were. Vulnerable in how they cannot afford to provide for their families, and how the inability to provide makes them feel and be perceived as 'less than'.

To a very large extent, both Thulani and his brother in law were experiencing and would experience the same thing, with Bongani's situation however being viewed as significantly better, because he was employed – even though he himself was struggling financially during this time. This ranking of being in debt and employed versus being unemployed highlights a hierarchy of respect that (Ichou, 2008) speaks to when it comes to work. At the top of the pyramid are the doctors and people who swing in office chairs which means they are in positions that do not do manual, heavy work. Next on the rankings are taxi drivers, security guards and construction workers, followed by gardeners and street traders.

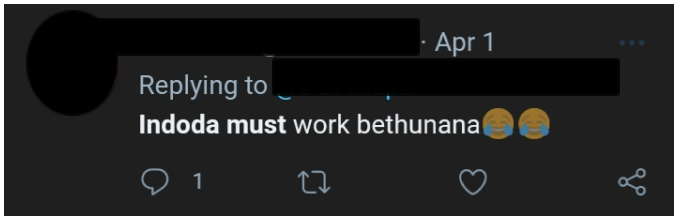
Men who are in these occupations all hold the same level of respect. And at the bottom of the hierarchy are the unemployed and those who earn money from illegal activities such as criminals and drug dealers (Ichou, 2008). Unemployed men are in this category because they are seen not to contribute anything positive to their families and society since they have no money, therefore do not fit the hegemonic masculinity stereotype. The fact that Bongani was and still is in debt, is a little known fact as his public appearance is one of abundance. Highlighting that unemployed men are on the lowest rung of the ladder because they do not have the ability to even take out loans from formal and informal financial institutions, friends and colleagues as they cannot be trusted to repay the loans.

Twitter Post 7

In contrast to Bongiwe and Bongani, Sithembiso and Sibahle discussed all their finances while they were dating, before they got engaged, "I was personally working on clearing all my debt before we got married", said Sibahle. The couple however came up against challenges with Sibahle's family who felt that Sithembiso could afford to give more as he had a well paying job and had recently purchased a German car.

> "I think if I didn't have a good first eleven team negotiating for me, it would have turned out differently," says Sithembiso. "You really learn that it's all about what you say there and what you do there otherwise *ungatikhandza ukhiphe* (you can find yourself parting with) ten thousand emalangeni a cow *ngiyabekisa* (for example) *and lelukhalo nalihlala entsanyeni ungatikhandza ufikile ku* (and you can find that the actual number of cows requested has its foot on your neck and gets up to) two hundred thousand emalangeni."

Interesting to note in these narratives and experiences is that the financial burden is placed on the men because of the existing gender expectations for men to be the financial providers within a relationship. Even if in reality, the women are the financial muscle.



Twitter Post 8

PROTECTING MEN'S REPUTATIONS

These narratives highlight that the socialisation of men to be providers, not only puts pressure on the men themselves to be financially stable but it also exerts pressure on women who are breadwinners to protect their husband's reputations. This is particularly seen through the story shared by Nontobeko. Nontobeko Malindzisa, married her now ex-husband right out of high school. They had a child a few years after that and at this point she had to find a job to help with the rising expenses. It was not long after starting her first job as a waitress that she realised it was not helping to sustain her small family. She then found an office job that paid her five times the salary she was earning as a waitress, and this position now came with benefits. This now meant that she was now earning more than her then husband. A year after Nontobeko started her new job, her ex-husband's employer filed for bankruptcy and they were all retrenched. He has not worked since.

> "*Ngazama fana kumfihla* (I tried to shelter him). I handled all the bills, bought groceries and even paid our son's school fees. I never told anyone because I knew they would look at him differently," Nontobeko says. "As far as anyone knew, he was still providing even though he was not formally employed. Which I guess is true. He was hustling shame, to at least bring something home. Hustling to spoil me and our little one. But as hustles go, they are not constant nor a reliable source of income."

Nontobeko touches on an important aspect of how masculinity is perceived and reproduced in the above statement, and this statement highlights what Musariri and Moyer (2021) argued in their study of masculinity in post-migrant contexts.

Musariri and Moyer (2021:902) state that "men reinvent themselves in the face of everyday realities, crafting localised and spatialised scripts to live by". As the economic and social landscape changes men like Nontobeko's ex husband are forced to reinvent themselves and find new ways to perform the dominant form of masculinity in Eswatini - provider masculinity. The negotiated scripts serve to help men "promote a sense of being in control or respectable in the face of the ever changing political, economic and social landscapes" (Musariri & Moyer, 2021:902) they come into contact with. Nontobeko's ex husband's hustling, is an example of him reinventing himself from being seen as an unemployed man and feeling as though he cannot provide for his family, and using that new script to gain the respect of his wife, while trying to maintain control of the financial situation he was in.

Nontobeko continues to narrate how she covered for her ex-husband to ensure that he was still respected by her family, his family and the community, because she thought she was doing what was right.

> "It's weird now that I look back. I used to come into work with new items of clothing or a new purse or handbag, and I always felt the need to tell my colleagues that he had purchased the items for me. I'd even say 'my husband provides'. Looking back, I really think I was just overcompensating because I knew what the truth was and how we would be judged if anyone else knew," continues Nontobeko.

Nontobeko's lived experience further highlights how the socialisation of men to be the breadwinners and providers within a family puts additional pressure on women to provide and shelter their spouses, and ensure that they are still seen as respectable, contributing members of

society. With her ex-husband, however, the story also highlights the self and societal expectations of masculinities to be stable even when the economy or the politics of the country are not. The notion that even when the whole economic and political environment is changing daily in Eswatini, there is a pressure on men (both self imposed and imposed by society) to remain the beacon or lighthouse to steer the ship in the right direction.

In conclusion, the ability for men to be perceived as financially stable and capable of providing for their families is a double edged sword as seen through the lived experiences of Bongani, Thulani, Sithembiso and Nontobeko. For Bongani, looking as though he could afford to give his now wife (who was his girlfriend at the time) anything and everything she asked for meant that when it came to the *kumcela* (asking for her hand in marriage) and *lobola* ceremonies, her mother and her uncles were willing to "waive" the initial presentation of *insulamnyembeti* cattle for the bride's mother as they assumed he would be able to fulfil his *lobola* obligations as soon as the couple had gotten married in front of the church and God. For Thulani, being unemployed showed the world that he cannot provide for his loved ones and therefore affected how he viewed himself with respect to his family and friends. Publicly being known to be unable to provide, placed his masculinity at risk as he was not being treated as 'the man of the house' nor was he included in any of the decision making processes concerning his sister's marriage. For Sithembiso, on the other hand having a well-paying job, budgeting and being able to purchase a German vehicle gave the impression to his in-laws that he could afford more than he and his fiancée (now wife) had budgeted for.

And finally, for Nontobeko and her ex-husband, she knew how her husband would be perceived and subsequently treated by the society and their families if anyone knew that she was the breadwinner in their small family. Nontobeko therefore sheltered and protected her now ex-husband's image and masculinity by shouldering most of the financial burden of raising a child as well as starting a new family on a minimum wage. The extent that the participants go through to do right by and protect the reputations of the men reproduces patriarchy in their lives.

SUBORDINATE MASCULINITIES

Moral cultural expectations, responsibilities and duties are gendered in their nature. The responsibilities and expectations that women are to fulfil to have positive moral reputations tend to be centred around their child bearing and rearing abilities. *Lobola* sought to act as compensation to the bride's family for the loss of her labour, future labour in the form of her reproductive capabilities amongst other things. Historically, *lobola* served to redistribute productive rights over resources such as land, cattle and labour (Ansell, 2001). Marriage and producing children are considered to be morally inter connected; one cannot have the one without the other. *Lobola* is therefore often seen as the compensation for children or the reproductive abilities of a woman, for a lineage, as it "brings about the absolute transfer of rights in a woman's procreative capacity from the woman's family to her husband's family" (Ansell, 2001:8). Whereas with men, their responsibilities and doing what is right tends to be about providing for the family. *Lobola* was intended to demonstrate to the society and the bride's family that the man getting married is capable of taking care of a family (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Heeren, Jemmott, Tyler, Tshabe & Ngwane, 2011; Ratele, 2013; Rutoro, 2015). *Lobola* therefore was also intended to be an indicator that the man is capable of supporting his wife both financially and emotionally (Ngwenyama, 2016), which may or may not be the accurate representation of the groom's financial capabilities. *Lobola* demonstrated that the "man getting married is capable of taking care of a family" (Ansell, 2001). These reproductive and providing abilities are also intricately linked to *kuhlonishwa* of those involved, hegemonic masculinities and the reproduction of patriarchal ideals.

Historically, patriarchal ideals have defined the 'public' spheres of politics and economics as the realms of men, and across cultures these spheres were reserved for men thus creating the image of a 'powerful man' as one that held political and economic power. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that political and economic power were central in the social construction of hegemonic masculinity. "Ideals of dominance and power over both women and men are deeply embedded within hegemonic masculinities" (Connell, 1987:3). Over time, one of the most dominant characteristics of being a 'real man' was the ability to be a breadwinner and provide financially for his family, "consequently, associating 'real men' with carrying out of paid work and financially supporting their household" (Mehta & Dementieva, 2017:11). In reality however, some women are the breadwinners in their households, earning more than their partners or running single parent households. Even with large gaps in gender pay scales, and women's work going unpaid or underpaid, the women in this study were either earning more than their partners - as in the case of Nontobeko, or earning less than their partners but contributing to the running of the household and wedding related finances - as in the case of Sibahle. Showing that although *emalobolo* were an indicator that a man could take care of his new bride financially and economically, in reality women are bringing financial stability to their relationships as well.

The gendered cultural expectations for men to do the right thing by providing for their families and themselves, can be gauged through the actions and words of Bongiwe's brother from the time *yekumcela* (of asking for her hand in marriage) to the wedding and after. Bongiwe, who is the youngest of three sisters and is the only one of the three to have gotten married, narrates the following:

> "*Wangivisa buhlungu kakhulu* Thulani (hurt me) with his behaviour. Leading up to my wedding he wanted nothing to do with the whole thing. His argument was that we were not doing things the correct way. That if we were doing things the right way, my then fiancé would have fulfilled his *lobola* obligations before the wedding ceremony. That my fiancé would have at the very least brought my mother her *nsulanyembeti* to show his appreciation and respect to mom."

While the women in the Mamba family and her friends considered her to be more respectable because she had gotten married, she feels as though her brother did not. As her brother did not seem to respect the marriage itself as the *lobola* obligations had not been fulfilled. As she talks about her brother, Bongiwe adjusts her weight on the chair and sits up straight. This was a visual representation of the tension that existed in that moment between her and her only brother. Thulani, standing in for his late father, felt as though his family and more specifically, his mother was being disrespected by Bongiwe's husband – Bongani.

From the account above, it becomes evident that Thulani felt that the disrespect by not offering *insulamnyembeti* was intentional and therefore lowering his mother's status in the community. Robert Morrell (1998:608) argued that "in addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, [or appropriates certain aspects of those masculinities (Demetriou, 2001)] positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy." Which means that hegemonic masculinities define how "real men" or forms of "successful masculinities" should act and behave and further inscribes these actions and behaviours as the cultural ideal which are often culturally informed and bestows power and privilege on men who claim the ideal (Teroni & Bruun, 2011). Masculinity in African settings, Mfecane (2018) argues that is accomplished in front of other men (Kimmel, 1994) by "having multiple sexual partners, being breadwinners, and their homophobia, violence, dress code, and alcohol consumption" (Mfecane, 2018:300). Thulani, from Bongiwe's account, felt as though Bongani was not behaving like a real man. If Bongani could not do the bare minimum to thank and show appreciation to his mother-in-law, would he be able to provide for Bongiwe and their children in the future.

MARRYING DOWN

The day of the wedding came and Thulani showed up to the ceremony with a flask of alcohol. By the time the reception started he was already visibly intoxicated. He got to the reception venue before the couple did as they had the photoshoot, and the people who were helping them with the big day said he refused to sit in his assigned seat but wanted to join the table his mother and uncles had been assigned. This is what seemed to have sparked some of his outbursts throughout the reception as he stated that the wedding should not have taken place with Bongani not fulfilling his *lobola* obligations. He was even heard saying multiple times that if their father was alive, things would be different as Bongani would have been forced to respect tradition and the social status of their family as being of a chiefdom. The social status and class associated with being from a chiefdom, coupled with the status of men within the chiefdoms in Eswatini illustrates how hegemonic masculinities function as they are often linked to a privileged social class (Groes-Green, 2009). Thulani grew up being of a higher social class and relished in the privilege that came from being from a chiefdom. With Bongani's inability to fulfil even what was seen as the bare minimum of lobola obligations and therefore being perceived by Thulani as disrespectful of the family's social class, Bongani was lowering the status of the Mamba family. This inability displayed to the community that Bongiwe was marrying into a family of a lower social class and subsequently, a family that did not have the financial and social capital to be able to provide for a chiefdom princess.

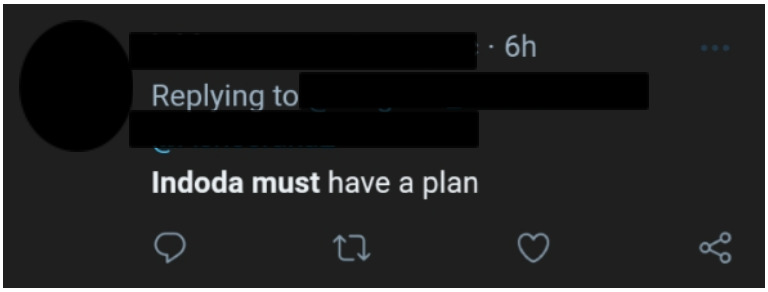
‘Marrying down’ financially and socially has the implication that the man Bongiwe was marrying was not a “real man” as prescribed by the socially prevalent hegemonic masculinities. This explains the added pressure that Bongani felt to prove himself to the community and his in-laws, seen through the wedding and reception he wanted and the lengths he was willing to go to, to hide the shame of not fulfilling his *lobola* obligations. Bongiwe shared her wedding wish list with me during the first interview. She stated that she wanted :

- A four tier vanilla and carrot cake with hand drawn detailing.
- A ball gown / princess cut wedding gown.
- Fresh flowers for the church and reception venue.
- Decorated church and reception venue.
- Wedding favours for all 300 guests.

The lavish expectations that Bongiwe had of her wedding ceremony indicate that the wedding was a chance for her to indulge herself in the grandeur and opulence that was a marker of her status as a chiefdom princess. The bride could finally be a princess with her status and perception of wealth converging.

The fantasy of the perfect wedding is an example of conspicuous consumption. Thorstein Veblen (1899) defined conspicuous consumption as the buying of goods and services for the purpose of showcasing one’s wealth. It is a means to show social status especially when the goods displayed are too expensive for other people in the same economic class as the person to afford.

The fantasy of a fairytale wedding is expensive, as van Dijk (2017) found in the Botswana study a large part of the responsibility to put together resources to fund the wedding falls on the couples, Family members, friends and church members can pledge to assist where they can - as with Bongani and Bongiwe - but the biggest burden falls on the couple. Natasha Erlank (2014:10) argues that church "weddings reflected and helped to constitute a …representational economy". Relational economies are the interplay between intimate (interpersonal and social) and economic relations (Harrison-Buck, 2021:569), drawing in ideas of reciprocity, people-joining, and affective economies. All ideas which are important to *emalobolo* and the creation of new kin relations. In lavish church weddings relational and affective economies play a role in ensuring that the fairytale wedding is brought to life. Sara Ahmed states that emotions act "a form of capital" (Ahmed, 2004:120) where couples, families, friends and their communities come together to make the dreams of the bride come true. Sara Ahmed (2004:119) states that "emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities", which means that the love that the grooms have for their brides, as well as the friends, families and the communities have for the couples do their best to meet and surpass the opulent expectations of the bride.



Twitter Post 9

In a separate discussion with Bongani he stated that he did not have the budget for all the things his wife wanted. But he made a plan, as he was already accustomed to. And make a plan he did, as a "real man" should. Bongani details that he is still paying off the debt he found himself in after the wedding.

> "This was a very difficult time for me. Only my close friends know how much I was going through leading up to the wedding. I didn't know where most of the things that were on our wish list would come from, how I would pay for them. Initially, I thought everything was sorted as our churches had volunteered services and funds, some members of our families had also volunteered to help with aspects of the wedding but everything changed two weeks leading up to the big day. Everyone backed out, and we were left to figure it out. And this led to additions to the budget that we had not planned for. That I had not planned for but a plan was made and it turned out beautifully thanks to all the friends who pulled through for me," says Bongani.

This story shared by Bongani shows the troubles mentally and emotionally that he was going through leading up to his big day and these are troubles he never shared with his family and his bride until after the wedding. Struggling to cope mentally and financially, is a 'weakness' prescribed to subordinate masculinities which stands in contrast to hegemonic masculinities which are rooted in having financial resources and the social capacity to be able to weather any storm.

By acknowledging that he was struggling to cope mentally and financially with me as a researcher, Bongani found the opportunity to be vulnerable and go against notions that the "culturally exalted masculinity will tend to silence, marginalise and oppress other ways of being a man or boy "(Ratele, 2013:144), especially those that show weakness or emotion. However, Reihling (2020) argues that overcoming difficulties is seen as ways of being a man, so in the moment with me, Bongani was facing and overcoming vulnerability producing masculinity.

The disrespect that Bongiwe's brother Thulani was feeling and articulating was further compounded by the fact that he was unemployed at the time, and his opinions were disregarded when it came to some of the decisions made by his family regarding the lobola (or lack thereof) and the wedding. By not taking into consideration his opinions and then being seated with strangers and not at the 'first table' at the reception. Not being listened to nor seated at the most important table during the wedding reception may have been perceived by Thulani as though he was being stripped of the social status that he – being a chiefdom prince – had. This is an example of protest masculinity (Connell, 1995), a compensatory hypermasculinity that is formed in reaction to social positions lacking economic and political power (Messerschmidt, 2019). A masculinity which stems from unemployed young men, who have lost their patriarchal standing due to their class status. Connell (1995:116) argues that young unemployed men have missed out on the economic power in society that "accrues to men in employment", which points to how unemployment and the social class marginalisation that comes from being unemployed tends to lead to an increase in the use of substances such as alcohol and violence.

Although Bongani could not afford to fulfil the minimum lobola obligations sought by Thulani who was standing in for his late father, Bongani felt he could get away with not fulfilling the obligations (and subsequently disrespecting his in-laws) because he was ranking himself against the unemployed Thulani. As Ratele states "men learn about masculinity by being addressed by others, by comparing themselves with others, and by comparing themselves with an image of themselves at an earlier point in their lives" (Ratele, 2013:145). This is implied by Bongani during his one-on-one interview, where he says,

> "Thulani *bekangasebenti* (was unemployed), so he kept pushing *lendzaba yensulamnyembeti nemalobolo* (the *insulamnyembeti* and *lobola* issue). *Ngicabanga kutsi bekatitjele kutsi konkhe kutoba kwakhe ngoba nguye yedvwa umfana* (I think he had convinced himself that everything would be given to him as the only boy). *Kutsi make wabo utotinika yena letinkhomo nalemali, manje mine bengingativa nje lentfo* (That their mother would give him the cows and the money, but I was not onboard with all of that)."

Bongani in his account to me makes the assumption that Thulani was only vocal about not supporting the marriage and disruptive at the wedding reception because he wanted to benefit financially from the *lobola*. Scholars such as Ratele (2014) and Donaldson (1993) state that although dominant masculinities often exclude black men, men from the working class and unemployed men, the exclusion creates an opening for the creation of hierarchies of masculinities within subordination. Within the historically powerless groups and classes, some masculinities are dominant and subordinate simultaneously.

Ratele (2021) further argues that the comparisons and hierarchies are rooted in black men having been enslaved and turned into property. Black men were considered not to be men and non-human and this means that in contemporary times they have to contend with that their humanity and manhood were not recognised (Ratele, 2021). He states that it is important to reflect on the ways in which colonialism shaped how men, particularly black men continue to experience dehumanisation and therefore tend to reproduce forms of manhood that were deemed human manly because they were colonial masculinities which included being employed and providing for one's family. As Bongani gave the above account, he was smiling proudly to himself, which further implied that in that moment of recollection, he felt superior to his brother-in-law. Superiority stemming from that he was employed while his brother-in-law was at the bottom of the subordination hierarchy, illustrating that men who are not of the privileged social class or subordinate masculinities often express themselves through dominance towards other subordinate masculinities (Groes-Green, 2009).

In conclusion, in the accounts shared by Bongiwe and her husband Bongani about their interactions with Bongiwe's only brother, Thulani, we see how hierarchies of dominance exist within subordinate masculinities. And it is within the ways in which the subordinate masculinities interact with each other and express themselves through dominance, that they expose the vulnerabilities that they experience within their own lives. Bongani's inability to fulfil his *lobola* obligations cemented the perception that he could not provide for a woman who came from a social class higher than his own, and he risked suffering damage to his public reputation.

However through being employed Bongani exerts his dominance and feels superior to his unemployed brother-in-law Thulani. Bongani relishes the shame (although it is a performance) that he presumes Thulani feels due to not having a job, as it elevates him in his relations with his in-laws. While Bongani sought to feel respected by his in-laws at the expense of Thulani, Thulani was dealing with respect related insecurities himself. Insecurities that had to do with the Mamba family dynamics and the role he hoped he could play within his family as the only son.

KUHLONIPHA AND MASCULINITY

The manner in which Thulani seems to have been thinking through respect or *kuhlonipha* was rooted in hegemonic masculinity. With his father being deceased, he felt that Bongani was not showing their family *kuhlonipha* by choosing to not fulfil his *lobola* obligations because if Bongani truly respected the memory of their father, their mother and him as the only male heir he would have waited to marry his sister until Bongani could afford to. In Thulani's processing of the events leading up to the wedding, Bongani would have brought at least 5 cattle to his wife's family as a token of appreciation and respect if Thulani's father were still alive as he was the man of the house or the head of the home. In his father's absence, Thulani is expected to take on the responsibilities of the man of the house within the community especially when it comes to making decisions pertaining to his family. Bongani therefore not acknowledging any of these things (and knowingly or unknowingly does small things to disrespect his wife's family), and Thulani's opinions not being acted upon by his own family left him feeling as though he was not seen as a man. And of course, his unemployment compounded how he himself perceived himself as a man. Ichou (2008) concludes that should men fail to provide, they would feel undermined by their wives and children as they felt their families did not listen to them when the men talked, and this is what Thulani was said to be feeling.

Work being the source of money, and money being considered one of the most important attributes of what defines patriarchal masculinity, means that employment and money become a tool for men to assert their masculinity (Ichou, 2008). Being a man has been associated with the act of going off to find paid employment away from the household, through the introduction of

migrant labour in Eswatini and most of the Southern Africa region in the late 1800s, early 1900s. And this is mainly because the British colonisers who imposed taxation in Eswatini required men specifically to work to pay the Hut Tax. Officers of the colonial government claimed that the Swazi needed incentives in order to take part in productive labour and be able to pay their taxes, thus advocated for provisions to be made for emaSwati to work in the mines of the Transvaal in South Africa. British officials stationed in Eswatini viewed taxation as a device to spur the men to work (Crush, 1985). With the mines being a male only space during that time; men who were solely there to earn an income in order to be able to pay their taxes and provide for their families, the idea of men and masculinity being rooted in paid employment and the ability to provide was solidified among the Swazi. It is thus that "male employment was associated with the discourse of the breadwinner thesis where men were seen as providers for their families" (Page, 1999:75). Other than providing income to enable men to pay taxes and to provide for their families, working in South African mines gave men respect from the community when he returned home. Some men who worked in mines saved enough to be able to purchase cattle, as cattle was and is still seen in some contexts in Eswatini to be a signifier of wealth. Being able to pay taxes, put food on the table, clothe the children and in some cases have savings in the form of cattle, made the community view him as someone who was worthy of their respect. Employment allows you to accumulate property which makes you different from the rest of the community (Ichou, 2008).

The romanticisation of men working in South African mines to provide for their families, neglects the illnesses and diseases that men came home with due to the living and working conditions, one of which is HIV/AIDS. Sanjay Basu, David Stuckler, Gregg Gonsalves, and Mark Lurie (2009) in their study addressing the impact of mineral mining on tuberculosis in Southern Africa, found that migration to and from mineral mines in South Africa contributed to illnesses such as tuberculosis (TB), silicosis and HIV. The close and usually crowded quarters that the miners were accommodated in made the spread of TB easy and widespread (Basu, Stuckler, Gonsalves, & Lurie, 2009). Unfortunately, as the workers moved between their homes and the mines they did not have continuous treatment, which meant many of these men developed and transmitted drug-resistant forms of TB to their families and communities. Lucia Corno and Damien De Walque argued that the high HIV prevalence rates that were observed in Eswatini were linked to and influenced by migrant work in the mines of neighbouring South Africa. Corno and De Walque (2012:2) argued that working in South African mines for emaSwati was temporary yet long term migration, which increased "the probability of engaging in multiple concurrent sexual partners" as well as taking advantage of the active commercial sex industry as miners lived in single-sex hostels, which let to a higher transmission rate of HIV.

The two scholars also argued that while the women waited for their husbands to come back from the mines for the holiday season, they were "more likely to engage in sexual relationships with other partners as well "(Corno and De Walque, 2012:2). A study done by DeLoitte in 2006, found that "nearly one-third of new mineworkers without HIV will become infected within the first eighteen months of employment" (Deloitte, 2006:n.d; Basu, Stuckler, Gonsalves, and Lurie,

2009) which increase the likelihood that a person will be infected in TB due to their compromised immune system.

The realities of the lived experiences of the men who had migrated from Eswatini to work in South African mines help to shed further light on male vulnerabilities. Miners came home and shared the stories that would make their families and societies respect them and see them as "real men" and shied away from sharing stories about the difficulties they experienced as migrants and upon returning home. As one can assume, the women who were left behind became the heads of households, making ends meet and providing for the family. These women took on the roles that their husbands played in the family while they were away. What did this change in roles affect the relationships between men, their wives and their children when they returned from the mines? The relationship between children and the women would be stronger as they lived with their mother, caring for them, providing for them and ensuring their day to day needs were met. This shows that in pursuing to be seen as a 'real man' who provided for the family by going away to work and earn money, men were alienated from their families.

Most societies are organised on the principle that the person who possesses certain desirable social characteristics has a moral right to expect a level of treatment that matches those characteristics and that others will value and treat him in a correspondingly appropriate way. It is this show of being a certain type of man, a desirable type of man, a provider, that men automatically exerted "a moral demand upon others, obliging them to value and treat them in the manner that persons of their kind have a right to expect" (Goffman, 1959:6) which is to be

treated with respect. In the context of the home, it is through providing for their families that men are said to have gained the respect of their wives, children and the community at large. In not being able to provide for himself, Thulani felt as though he was not being viewed as a man nor respected as such by his family in how they did not act upon the suggestions he gave them with regards to *emalobolo* and Bongani fulfilling all his obligations before the wedding. In a time where the global and local economies are in a recession, and unemployment is high, the societal pressure for men to provide and hegemonic masculinity being defined in terms of the ability to provide, male vulnerabilities are exposed. With the exposure of these vulnerabilities in seemingly public ways, some of the men in this research study (namely Bongani and Thulani) are having to publically portray the role that they can provide for their families.

Bongani in everything he purchases for his wife, from the time that they were dating, shows the lengths he was willing to go to to publicly portray the role of a provider. Bongani shared that he fell into a deep slump when he was preparing for the wedding. A slump that had been a long time as he had started creating debt as a boyfriend trying to please his future wife. "*Kuke kwabhedza Lwazi. Ngike ngaba* depressed*, ngekutsi bengingati kutsi imali ngitoyitsatsa kuphi.* But *bekumele iphume iplan ngoba bengimtsandza*" (It was tough at some point Lwazi. I was in a slump, almost depressed because I did not know where I would get money. But I had to make a plan because I love her), he says. The reason he was willing to make sacrifices to give Bongiwe all she wanted and needed was to prove to himself and others that he was steps ahead in life. That he was no longer the impoverished young boy he had been. Hearing Bongani's narrative about how 'far' he has come from his upbringing (from being able to afford luxuries to

having a wife from a different class), you understand that there is a constant comparison between how he grew up and where he is in life now. Important to highlight is the difference in the information Bongani shared when he was with his wife versus when he was having his individual interview. Bongani openly spoke about how he felt even though he had come a long way from how he grew up, he understood that the way he was living and financing his life was not sustainable. He openly spoke about looking for additional income streams, “creating generational wealth” and furthering his education to earn more and be able to live sustainably.

Thulani's anger over Bongani not fulfilling all his *lobola* obligations before the wedding can be attributed to the outward impression that Bongani gives off. Bongani presents himself as a man who can "do it all" ; support his wife, support his own family and his in-laws, while having the ability to treat his wife to all she wants, when she wants it. From Thulani's perspective, not knowing how Bongani came about the money he used to take care of all his responsibilities and still have money left over for luxuries, meant that Bongani looked and acted as though he could have easily afforded to fulfil his *lobola* obligations. That Bongani simply chose not to. Which would have been a great sign of disrespect towards the Mamba family. Without employment and these carved out spaces where male identities are given meaning and shaped, men feel a sense of displacement and not belonging (Page, 1999). Employment reinforces the norms of masculinity and therefore a man who is unemployed has to bear societal and peer pressure of not being able to provide (Ichou, 2008). This inability to provide not only strips the man of the community’s and his family’s respect but also paints him as a disrespectful person for not conforming to gender norms.

What about those who are employed and in serious debt? Where men are living beyond their means to make society, their social media followers and even their families believe that they can afford the life they are living? Connell argues that relatively few men are able to practice hegemonic masculinity and it is unlikely to mirror the lived reality of even the most powerful (Connell 1995; 2002). It exists as a cultural ideal and is therefore only partially represented in the social practices of individual men (Connell, 2002) which is proving to be accurate and present in the context of Eswatini. The current economic climate in the country is one which has 66% of the country living below the poverty line. More than 66% of emaSwati live on US$1 a day or less when you look at the lived experiences of many people of Eswatini. EmaSwati are struggling to make a living. Those who are employed are earning wages that are not compatible with the actual cost of living. During the protests over the last few months, this has been a loud call by the youth who are in possession of university degrees and are unemployed. Civil servants who have been calling for a Cost of Living Adjustment for almost 5 years and small to medium business enterprises (SMEs) calling for legislators to look into the taxation processes. To boost government coffers, legislators moved to increase taxes leaving SMEs unable to continue working in the economy competitively. Many people have also called for the King to remove himself from businesses as he has an unfair competitive advantage as the constitution of Eswatini states that the king, his wives and his heirs cannot be taxed.

The image of the King himself as a man who can provide for many wives a standard of luxury living is one that Linda jokingly said, "*ifakelana ipressure*(puts pressure on us), as our partners see the nice things his wives have and expect them from us *kani tsine asisiyo inkhosi* (whereas we are not the king)." Linda is the twenty-eight year old man who is in a serious relationship but does not think he will be getting married anytime soon due to the financial implications of the wedding and *emalobolo*. I was struggling to analyse and unpack this quotation from Linda, and when I took a step back to understand why I was struggling, I realised that it was because the way the King and his family live has become so normalised to me and to many Swazis. So much that it took a few days to realise that this was not a norm in other places. The reigning king of Eswatini, King Mswati III has been in the media for the extravagant lifestyle that he and his family live. In 2019, the King purchased nineteen customised Rolls Royce cars for his wives, not to mention the Jacob and Co. jewellery that each wife is usually seen spotting. On the one hand, emaSwati are angered by the blatant show of wealth when a vast majority of the people of Eswatini live in poverty, however, on the other hand these displays are the King's way of showing affection and providing for his wives, children and mother. The King's conspicuous consumption has proven to be his downfall as a leader of Emaswati, as it has emphasised and put under the spotlight the economic inequalities that exist in the country.

The high youth and general unemployment rates in Eswatini bring up the question of whether the perception of being a provider – even if the man is borrowing money from *bomashonisa* (unlicensed money lenders) to make ends meet – is more important than financial security of the family. In this case meaning that the man sets aside a practice or expectation that

is highly valued and associated with what a man must do to be regarded as a man, and aims for a more highly valued moral goal (Robbins, 2012) such as prioritising financial security in the event of his untimely death. Bongiwe shared that at some point before her and Bongani got engaged, she called him to tell him she had seen a pair of beautiful shoes at a boutique in town. He responded asking how much they were and that he would get them for her. And he did. When I brought this story up with Bongani during his solo interview, he laughed saying,"*bekumele ngakhe iplan* (I had to make a plan). I think *ngaboleka imali* (I borrowed money) from a colleague in order to get her those shoes. But ke, anything for my wife". Here we see that Bongani would rather expose his financial status to colleagues so that he could maintain his status with Bongiwe, than to risk her knowing he could not afford the shoes. To a certain extent, the moral duty for men to have money plays a significant role in creating and increasing tensions between families. Men being providers and protectors is closely tied to the concept of fatherhood. Men who are present fathers are given another level of respect by society, their families and in-laws.

FATHERHOOD AND MASCULINITY

"My in-laws have treated me differently ever since my daughter was born. They acknowledge me" says Bongani during the individual conversation I had with him. Fatherhood made him desirable to his in-laws. Fatherhood is understood and exercised in different ways. As seen in the stories and experiences of the participants, one does not need to be the biological father of a child to accept the fatherhood role and act as a father towards one or more children. Fatherhood is an integral element in the construction of masculinities, but it is interpreted in different ways (Morrell, 2006). Fatherhood is associated with manhood. Doing what is right and being a "real man" means the man is expected to take on the fatherhood role, supporting his child financially and emotionally. “Fatherhood may be understood as conferring a responsibility to provide and protect” (Morrell, 2006:23). Over the years men have accepted this view and sought paid work far from their children so as to provide for them (Morrell, 2006). Although fatherhood gives men power over women and children, giving them the authority to be tyrants within their households, it also gives meaning to the lives of men and opens up unexplored channels of emotional engagement. “Fatherhood should be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men” (Morrell, 2006:23), but of course the reality is that many men run away from this responsibility and it may be a site where their vulnerability is exposed as well.

In conclusion, masculinities come in all shapes,and sizes and are performed in different and creative ways. Social media and how it affects the lived experiences of men and women on the journey to form new families is highlighted. Social media expectations exacerbated by men's need to be respected by the community forced Nontobeko to lie about her ex husband's financial standing in order to protect his reputation. The ways in which subordinate masculinities , when threatened with the exposure of their vulnerabilities , navigate and negotiate their way out of the situation without the public and their loved one recognising those vulnerabilities is a difficult burden to carry. From Bongani being made to feel as though he was not worthy of his wife, to him going the extra mile to ensure his wife had everything she wished for even if that meant getting into debt, To unemployed Thulani who felt as though because he could not provide for this family as the "man of the house", he was no longer being respected as such. And finally, to understand the shifts that fatherhood makes in the social creation and reproduction of notions of hegemonic masculinities. The stories and experiences of the two men highlight the kinds of financial and social pressures men face brought to the surface by *emalobolo*. The participants of this study not only face financial and social pressures as associated with *emalobolo*, they also face immense pressure to provide for their siblings and parents while forging new families.

In the next chapter, I will be unpacking the concepts of black tax, class, social mobility and affect.

CHAPTER 5: The Love of Giving Back

BLACK TAX

The hierarchy within subordinate masculinities discussed in the previous chapter is rooted in a man's ability to provide for his family. Providing financially for family has become somewhat of a burden for many people including one of the couples in the study. This financial burden faced by young black people is referred to as black tax in popular culture. In popular culture, the concept of black tax is described as the experiences of disadvantaged black Africans who have to share their salaries with family members (Ngwadla, 2018) and there is a burden placed upon these individuals to give support to their immediate and extended families because of cultural obligations (Migheli, 2017). The support is both social and economic as these individuals provide their families with money, shelter, food, clothing, school fees and more (Magubane, 2017). An important point to note for Magubane in the definition of black tax is that the economic and social support comes from individuals who have 'made it' meaning that they are earning an income (Magubane, 2017). Mhlongo (2019) further argues that because black people become breadwinners at an early age, they are expected to be deputy parents (a popular culture term which means that the sibling who has made it stands in for their parents and takes on some of the responsibilities of their parents) and the siblings who happen to be breadwinners are viewed as the resources and assets that can improve the social and economic situations for their families.

"*Make wondliwa ngimi. Ngenta konkhe* (I take care of our mother. I do it all)", says Bongani, sighing deeply. Bongani's statement illustrates the double burden he has been under, of having ensured he provided their mother with food, clothing, health care and shelter. Here black tax can be seen as the biggest enemy of marriage and a huge source of sibling rivalry (Montle, 2020), as Bongani was still the primary financial carer for his mother, essentially meaning because he was planning on getting married soon, he would enter marriage carrying large financial responsibilities. How all the responsibility to do this was placed on his shoulders as the sibling that was perceived to have a better paying job than the rest. Although he is the youngest of his siblings he has responsibilities in relation to their mother and their late sister's child. Bongani's experiences highlight that black tax is a form of social security especially in a state like Eswatini where the social security net is virtually non-existent. With black tax functioning as the predominant form of social security, as the individual who has made it in the family, you first have to take care of your home (Montle, 2020) – which may include building a family home as seen with Bongani. In this case, to a very large extent black tax is not about money but about reciprocating the sacrifices the family had had to make in order to get the individual to succeed in life. It is an unspoken debt as Montle (2020) puts it but one where people fall into financial debt to keep up with and meet family expectations.

Anthropologists for years have been engrossed with the relationship between reciprocity and love (Povinelli, 2011). Venkatesan, Edwards, Willerslev, Povinelli & Mody (2011) outline the debates that exist within the scholarship stating that reciprocity does not leave space for love as reciprocity relies on the obligation to give, to receive and to give again (Mauss, 1950) and love should not rely on these obligations. However, reciprocity in the obligatory manner Mauss spoke of neglected the other factors which drive people to give back. Factors such as moral obligation and affect influence why people choose to practice reciprocity. Silvan Tomkins (1984) argues that affect can be understood as a motivation system, and aspects that motivate people to make decisions and take actions are: interest or excitement, joy and enjoyment, fear or terror and shame or humiliation. Recognising the role that affect plays with regard to black tax, outlines that not all decisions and actions are taken because of thoughts, but senses, feelings and emotions. Affect (Tomkins, 1984:164) "is the primary motivational system" without which nothing else matters. Therefore conceptualising the collective giving that exists within societies in Southern Africa as "tax", erases the affect that drives actions and decisions related to helping family members.

Scholars who study the effects of black tax noted that these included the reduced capacity to have savings, reduced disposable income (Fengu, 2017; Coetzee, 2018; Sibiya, 2019) and an increase in interpersonal problems between the provider and those provided for. The providers are likened by Sibiya (2019) to the ‘sandwich generation’ which is the term that “describes people who are squeezed between the simultaneous demands of caring for their ageing parents and supporting their dependent children”(Msibi, 2019:6). Making matters significantly worse in

the case of Eswatini is the carnage that HIV/AIDS has had on the family structures. The HIV prevalence rate of the small country is 27% and is the highest in the world. According to the SOS Children's Villages (n.d), approximately one hundred thousand children have been orphaned by the virus. What this has meant for many of the siblings who are within the sandwich generation and are part of the black tax system, is that they are not only supporting their own parents and children, but they are supporting the children of deceased members of their families. Bongani is an example of someone who is considered by his family as having 'made it' and therefore is obliged to 'plough back' (Montle, 2020) while taking care of his mother, wife, child and the child of his deceased sister. Bongani continues to experience the mental and emotional turmoil he was going through leading up to the wedding day. The mental and emotional strain is amplified by the added financial duty placed on him as the sibling who happens to be the breadwinner. The moral duty to cater for the needs of the family as well as for himself and his new family which puts him under added financial pressure (Montle, 2020:236). Magubane further argues that black tax is similar to social capital that exists in family relationships (Prandini, 2014; Sibiya, 2019), as it provides support by family members. Support that is governed by reciprocity between generations, mutual help, and interpersonal trust.

Giving without wanting anything in return helps the giver to feel pride, superiority, and to be perceived as generous thus generating trust. Kolm (2006) argues that one of the moral reasons behind why people give is because they like the receiver of the gift. Black tax is a form of liking reciprocity, where the initial gifter (the parent) gives their child the gift in most cases expecting nothing in return (while in some cases expecting a return gift of being taken care of by their child

once they are earning an income). The return gifter reciprocates that gift not because they feel compelled by social norms and pressures, but because they love the person they are gifting. The act of affording to or making sacrifices in order to afford to reciprocate the gift, becomes a sense of pride for the return gifter as they are acknowledged by the community as trustworthy individuals.

In conclusion, complying with black tax is a representation of being a responsible member of society and that Bongani can provide for his family although in most times it is through accessing debt. The moral responsibility to plough back to his family now that he has made it keeps him giving even when he cannot afford to give: emotionally, mentally and financially. Giving back to his family is a source of pride for Bongani and although he states that it is a burden at times, the pride he feels and the public perception of him as a responsible member of society outweighs most of the pressures he feels.

UBUNTU

Doing what is right in the spirit if ubuntu is an area where male vulnerabilities arise. Ubuntu is popularly acknowledged as "I am because we are" or "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" meaning that one cannot achieve success without their family and community achieving success first or simultaneously.

EmaSwati use '*buntfu'* to describe virtues such as mutual respect and supporting family and friends, as seen where Sibahle spoke about Ben, saying "*utjengisa kubabete buntfu* (does not have *buntfu*)". She said this when talking about the manner in which he wanted to fight for custody of their daughter Alex, while disrupting the process of her creating a new family with Sithembiso. The government of South Africa's White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) defined ubuntu as "the principle of caring for each other's well being … and a spirit of mutual support … Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being"(Stauffer, 2009:97). Nkonko Kamwangamalu (1999), argued that although *ubuntu* advocates for communalism as opposed to individualism, it does not negate individualism. He stated that communalism is the "recognition of the limited character of the possibilities of the individual", (Kamwangamalu 1999:29). The collectivist nature of the philosophy of ubuntu leaves space for young people to help their families and give back, while advocating for their individual upward mobility as seen with Bongani.

> "I take care of our sick and elderly mother. I am not the only one of my siblings who is employed. But out of all of them, I earn a better salary, so I take care of the needs *make* (mom) has. As well as help take care of my nieces and nephews, who tend to come to me for things like casual shoes", says Bongani, outlining some of the responsibilities on his plate.

Zigira (2000) argued that among the Swazi, acquiring social values, learning social norms, codes, knowledge and beliefs, is a process that takes a lifetime. Buntfu or ubuntu is learnt and not inherent to a person's being. Mabovula (2011) argues that it can be said that any member of a society who ascribes to and whose actions are guided by Ubuntu, practises the core attributes of humanness. *Buntfu* (humanness/wholeness) is "granted to an individual by others because of demonstrated attributes and behaviour towards others," (Simelane, 1990:2) meaning that a person can only be considered to be whole if the person demonstrates attributes of *buntfu.* These attributes are:"being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous, and blessed" (Mabovula, 2011:38). With black tax being linked to the philosophy of Ubuntu, the simple notion of wanting to help, or wanting to see your loved ones succeed and be happy is neglected. The arguments surrounding black tax (and even naming the process of helping your family as 'tax') strip the actors of autonomy. The arguments do not shine a light on the simple humanistic qualities of caring about your family members and not wanting to see them struggle when you are in a position to help. This raises a critique of hegemonic masculinity as a whole, there is no place for exhibiting humanistic characteristics such as caring, humility, generosity and social sensitivity.

‘Being a real man’ as defined by hegemonic masculinity is centred around the characteristics of emotional restraint, being an economic provider, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence and independence (Donaldson, 1993). The description of what a ‘real man’ is perceived to be does not leave room for men to show emotions, and vulnerabilities. Looking at the naming of the concept of giving back, calling it a tax can be offensive (Cupido, 2019) and makes it seem mandatory and coercive. That the people who are helping their communities and families are doing it strictly out of obligation and not because of love or reciprocity or just wanting to feel good by making others feel good.

In conclusion, ploughing back to the communities and people that helped an individual move from one economic or social ranking is an integral part of the philosophy of ubuntu. The communal nature of the philosophy and the attributes associated with it, are at opposite sides from the attributes that hegemonic masculinities elevate as characteristics of ‘real men’. ‘Real men’ are not given space to embrace their humanness thus isolating them from the wider society and their loved ones when they themselves are in need of assistance and support. The different and competing expectations of *emalobolo* and giving back to families, place pressure on the practice and people are juggling different moral imperatives but doing so with limited financial resources

NEOLIBERALISM

The characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and a 'real man' are not only guided in some ways by the philosophy of Ubuntu, but neoliberalism as well. Neoliberalism has been a buzzword for decades now, however there is no single definition of the term that scholars can agree with. Saad-Filho and Johnston (2004 in Venugopal, 2015:4) define it as "a hegemonic system of enhanced exploitation of the majority". Neoliberalism exerts a real influence over how people and institutions function and relate to the world, as it rests on the belief that wealth can be produced almost by magic (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003). The problem with the perception that wealth can be produced almost by magic, as long as individuals worked hard they could be wealthy, is that those who live in poverty are made to seem lazy. Lower social and economic classes are blamed for their circumstances and therefore those who are seen as not affording under neo-liberal ideologies fear being shamed for it (Wacquant , 2010).

Emalobolo and marriage practices as well as masculinities are directly impacted and influenced by neoliberal policies and changes. The ability for people to afford to live a basic lifestyle with basic necessities is getting increasingly more difficult. In Eswatini, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) intervened and recommended that the country reduce its spending and cut government jobs (The New Humanitarian, 2012). As with most countries in Africa and across the globe, the government is the biggest employer of people. The repercussions of the government hiring freeze have been the elevated and increasing annually, youth unemployment rates. There are thousands of graduates coming out of the country's Universities annually, to a job market that is not looking to hire, anchored in the historical legacy of colonial

economies. Aldridge (2001) illuminates that because there are men whose definition of manhood and masculinity is informed by their ability to climb the economic ladder through educational qualifications, the professions they go into or other routes, changes in political and economic policies have created widespread joblessness, lack of training or education, and changes in industry directly impact their ability to achieve 'real manhood'. In many African countries, the realities of having weak economies, high levels of unemployment, and large income inequalities mean that criminal activity, and corruption have become part of the lived experiences and realities of men who feel powerless to achieve 'real man' status due to their lack of good employment prospects. (Aldridge, 2001).

With the youth unemployment rate almost at 50%, many young people cannot afford a lot of the items, activities and events they take part in. Many young people like Bongani are in debt. Others are like Thulani, and have spent years without a job. Others are like Sibahle, and have University degrees in one trade but work in completely different fields because they need the job. Others are like Nontobeko, and are breadwinners in their marriages and it does not work out well as their husbands feel like less of men because they are not the main provider in the relationship. It is out of these inequalities, created by neoliberal policies and capitalist ideologies that gave life to the class hierarchies that we see and live within today.

CLASS

Social class in the Marxist sense was defined in relation to the means of production. According to Marx people either owned the means of production and were of upper class status (the capitalists), or they were workers who owned nothing but sold their labour power to the capitalists. However, in contemporary discourses of class, a person's occupation is often perceived as a marker of their class position (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2016) due to the level of pay and distribution of economic resources associated with those occupations. Someone who works in an office in Eswatini (regardless of their position) is perceived to be of a higher social and economic class than someone who drives a minibus. Although in some cases the minibus drivers earn more daily and monthly than some people working in office buildings. Social class is driven by the movement of people, and it shapes the identities of individuals, the level at which they interact with society, where they live, what they consume, and how they perceive other's social classes (Paulson, 2018). At its core, social class is performative, especially for those who are "aspiring to to climb the status ladder and those who are well on their way up it," (James, 2017:2).

For couples to show their economic success or create a perception of it, the ability to exchange *emalobolo* in full, have a *lobola* reception – which is a party to celebrate the fulfilment of *lobola* obligations by the groom, and then proceed to have a church wedding in a short period of time. Lubisi (2002) states that in recent years, some Swazi families have not been permitting their daughters to get married unless the husband-to-be had fulfilled his *lobola* obligations.

Therefore a hierarchy is formed when some people - in the same class - can afford to fulfil *lobola* obligations, and a church wedding, when others cannot. Affording lavish wedding celebrations becomes a symbol of status and honour. Status is derived from the judgements that other members of society make of the individual's position in society and for this position to be established, there must be a display of wealth through extensive leisure activities and through lavish expenditure on consumption and services (Trigg, 2001). According to Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, people model the consumption patterns of people who sit above them in the social class hierarchy (Veblen, 1899; Trigg, 2001). This emulation is governed by social norms that "change as the economy and its social fabric evolve over time" (Trigg, 2001:99).

Due to the introduction and adoption of civil or church marriages, marriage itself has changed from being a rite of passage to becoming a prominent and noticeable celebration of lifestyles and upward social mobility aspirations (Mupotsa, 2014; Pauli & van Dijk, 2017; van Dijk, 2017). The 'white wedding' is a consumptive practice that needs cultural and economic capital to consume it correctly (Louw, van Der Berg & Yu, 2006). These researchers found trends in their studies which showed that marriage was becoming a means through which people could achieve and signal their class distinctions and economic success (Mupotsa, 2014; Pauli & van Dijk, 2017; van Dijk, 2017). The class distinctions and economic success usually linked to the syncretism of having the dream wedding including paying for the wedding dress, bridal veil, having bridesmaids, groomsmen and suits for the groom and his groomsmen (Louw, van Der Berg & Yu, 2006) as well as *emalobolo*.

Veblen (1899) argued that consumers from all social classes are not necessarily consciously trying to conspicuously consume but that they believe that there was a "competition" which involves a very real sense of pressure from friends and acquaintances (Pauli & van Dijk, 2017) as key to the transformation of wealth into social and class status is social performance. Between Sithembiso and Bongani, the different sides of the pressure and competition can be seen. Bongani, in his first individual interview with me said, "I felt a bit of pressure. Some of it was coming from watching all the people I had attended high school with getting married, buying new cars, building homes. But I think most of the pressure I felt came from my place of employment. I felt as though everyone around me *bekatfutfuka* (was improving). Even those who had come in behind me were doing better than me." He said this very quickly and I could tell he was uncomfortable with saying that out loud. As he said it, he was no longer the laughing, smiling man I had started the interview with. He was now sounding angry. James (2017:8) stated that 'competition' is "condemned by many as a major flaw in contemporary South African life. In encouraging over-spending, it is seen as going against the logic of marriage as a long-term exchange". This can be seen in the statement made by Bongani, who was feeling pressure to level up to those he was seeing succeeding around him. He was left feeling as though he was less than, merely because he had not achieved all the things he had set out to at that point in his life, while others were. Sithembiso on the other hand, you could say was the type of young man whose life's trajectory was putting pressure on others who looked at him from afar.

"*Bengine* plan *mine* Lwazi (I had a plan). Finish school, get a Masters degree, get a good paying job, buy a car and settle down. And I think that's how I've done it," Sithembiso said. Sithembiso articulates that the reason why he could share his finances with his fiancee was because he had been working towards settling down. Which meant he had to clear any and all debt he had, save for the new family and save for the marriage and *lobola* related costs. Therefore he did not feel the pressure to 'compete' with his peers as he felt he was right on track. Sithembiso felt no competition nor envy towards those around him, Nor was he feeling insecure, he could wait and budget for the type of wedding he could afford at that time, allowing him a more measured way of building wealth. As James (2017) writes, the competition to have what someone else has encourages indebtedness as people seek to find ways of financing the things they want now, with money they have not earned yet. Sithembiso does not need to overcompensate for his economic class by being lavish.

Critics of Veblen's theory state that consumers no longer display their wealth conspicuously but convey their statuses in more subtle ways (Mason, 1998; Canterbery, 1999). In the narratives Bongani and Bongiwe shared about the type of wedding she wanted and the costs associated with those choices, he wanted to show the world that he could afford Bongiwe's fairytale wedding regardless of the costs - as we saw in the Masculinity chapter. For Bongani, "the quest for things can be an expression of care and support for [his wife]", "as much as a crass self-absorption" (Posel, 2010:162) and wanting to show to the family members on both sides, that he could afford to give his wife, their daughter a life of luxury. To prove that he was worthy of a chiefdom princess and that his wife had not married down. The ability to give his wife a

fairytale wedding during a time where Eswatini was experiencing a fiscal crisis speaks to a category of goods in economics, named after Veblen himself. Veblen Goods are expensive luxury goods whose demand increases as the price increases (Currid-Halkett, Lee & Painter, 2019). The ability to afford items, and activities that are low in supply, exclusive and therefore super pricey gives off the impression that a person is in a higher social class than they may be in reality.

In conclusion, Veblen's arguments and theories may have been published in 1899, however they provide a framework to think about the spending habits of the middle class and how social class is performed by people. The Veblen Goods theory in economics speaks directly to the competition that marital rituals induce - real or perceived, the quest to be and to look successful and express upward social mobility.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Kinship and family ties are argued to be a crucial form of social capital that provides access to resources, and are most often based on the principle of reciprocity and trust (Sibiya, 2019:15). Social capital refers to the value added by networks; networks through which people can benefit collectively and individually (Stauffer, 2009). Deepa Narayan and Lant Pritchett stated that social capital was the quantity, quality and benefits of being personally associated with someone (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). These kinship networks are used to satisfy a want or need, with the breadwinner or provider becoming a source of resources and access for their family members (Sibiya, 2019). Magubane (2017) found that black people growing up in an environment where kinship and family ties are leveraged to help other members of the family achieve social mobility, had a "strong sense of family bonds and the value of Ubuntu, thus they shoulder this burden of supporting their families" (Sibiya, 2019:7). This is seen through Bongani's different accounts of how his financial status weighs heavily on his mental health, especially when it comes to balancing providing for his kin and his new family. Bongani stated that he felt pressure but he understood that he had to plough back to his family to make sure that they are also sorted.

> "*Kungadli mine nemkami kuphela* Lwazi (My wife and I cannot be the only ones eating).

Social mobility is the movement between different social and economic classes, which comes with "advantages in terms of income, security of employment, and opportunities for advancement" (Aldridge, 2001:2). It alludes to the upward movement in social and economic standings when a breadwinner rises to revamp the financial situation of the family.

Which takes us back to the above discussion of black tax, where the first person in the family to make it up and out of the socio-economic history of the family feels the societal pressure to share their salary with their financially struggling families, (Oliver, 2019), making it difficult to create sustainable wealth (Montle, 2020). During the last conversation Bongani and I had, he said, “it's up to me *wena* Lwazi to find multiple streams of income, so that I can continue with school. *Uyabona lapho* (once that is done), I will have my pick of jobs and be the one to create generational wealth for my children and grandchildren.” Here the new father brings to the forefront the perceived importance of education in the quest for upward social mobility, especially for emaSwati. People with higher levels of education were thought to be able to find work more easily, to command higher salaries within a given occupation, and also to improve their chances of upward occupational mobility (Louw, van Der Berg & Yu, 2006). Although writing about the American context, authors Michael Greenstone, Adam Looney, Jeremy Patashnik, and Muxin Yu (2013:14) argued that “the earnings of college graduates are much higher than for nongraduates, and that is especially true among people born into low-income families” and this is also true for the Eswatini context.

Individuals coming from low-income families who had the opportunity to enrol in institutions of higher education, earned more after graduation than those who did not attend institutions of higher learning. When it comes to the creation of generational wealth that Bongani spoke of, Louw, van Der Berg and Yu (2006) argued that rich and well educated parents, with prestigious social networks could assist their children in getting employment after completing school, regardless of whether the child has a tertiary qualification or not. Unfortunately as a

whole, a university certificate no longer guarantees employment for graduates. Bongani obtaining a graduate degree would boost his income, either because he would be able to apply for jobs in higher paying companies or because the degree would move him from one place on the salary scale to another.

Upward social mobility is aspirational in its essence and very few people attain it. In the pursuit to attain upward economic and social mobility many people spend money that they do not have, either through borrowing from institutions such as banks or from smaller legal and illegal moneylenders (James, 2012). The reason social mobility in most cases is seen as unattainable is because of the debt cycle it produces. Bongani shared how he was caught in a cycle of debt trying to ensure that the medical needs of his mother and the needs of his relationship with his fiancee were met. He said,*"kukhona lapho bese nginetikweledi letiningi ngingasati kutsi ngiboleka kubani ngitombhadala ngani nakhona* (There was a time when I was owing people and did not know who I could borrow money from and how I would then repay them).

Servet and Saiag (2013) argued that the rapid growth of the middle class is facilitated by the creation of credit relationships, which means as people were employed and received access to credit , they used this credit to finance their aspirations of being in the class above them or to merely make ends meet in the class they are in currently. A class founded upon exploitation and inequalities caused by neoliberal policies. Although access to credit means that a person can get what they want immediately, they are "working backwards instead of progressing" (James

2017:8). It is important to note that there are aspirations which have positive social consequences as well, such as hopes to send children to institutions of higher education or private schools in order to set them up for a better chance at earning a better income and living a better life.

In conclusion, moving up the social class ladder is an aspiration that very few people achieve. Between supporting extended family members and becoming breadwinners at a young age, there is very little room for young men (and women) to save and create generational wealth. Male vulnerabilities are fully exposed in instances where the man's kin and new family all require financial support and the man cannot afford it. This gives rise to debt and mental health issues associated with the stress of making ends meet. The performative nature of class and social mobility, places additional pressure on men to provide even when they cannot. These pressures do not exist in a vacuum, but are created and influenced by global markets and neo-liberal policies imposed on countries seeking aid from international funding organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The next chapter traces the feminist critiques of *emalobolo* and examines the partnerships that exist between some emaSwati couples.

CHAPTER 6: Women and *Emalobolo*

GENDER RELATIONS

> "*NgesiSwati kute idivorce. Niyahlukana kepha kute idivorce. Indvodza beyivumelekile kutsi imushiye umfati nangbe uyatsakatsa noma uphingile. Umfati yena bekavumelekile kushiya indvodza yakhe nayimushaya. Kushaya umfati akusiso siSwati, kudlova nje (*there is no divorce. married couples could separate but there is no divorce. A man could send his wife back to her parental home if she was practicing witchcraft or if she committed adultery. A woman could leave her marital home if her husband laid a hand on her. Laying a hand on a woman is not a part of the culture, it is just brutality)"

Delisile explained to me during the three hour long conversation in her office. I noted two very important things in this one comment she made. Firstly, the reason why a woman could leave her husband, and secondly how she spoke about divorce not being an option in Swazi culture. Both of which will illustrate the space that women occupy ngesiSwati in the physical world and the world of the ancestors. In delving into the literature that exists on emalobolo, it was clear to see that there was a gap in how the custom was spoken about and written about historically and by feminist scholars who critiqued the custom, and how the young people of Eswatini were living and experiencing it. For many scholars who have written about the gendered aspects of the custom, they have outlined the inequality that is vested within emalobolo , however the inequality has been painted as inherent to the custom and not shaped and influenced by the people practising it. In this chapter, I argue how individuals relate to their partners, influence and shape how they practice *kulobola,* and what happens after *emalobolo* and the wedding. I look at

the feminist critiques of *lobola* over the years and how emaSwati are thinking about, talking about and experiencing the afterlife of *emalobolo.*

Radical, socialist, and Marxist feminist critiques of *lobola* (Eisenstein, 1981, Ehrenhein, 1997, Tong, 1998, Nkosi, 2011) argued that women are oppressed by *emalobolo* as it enforces patriarchy and subsequently women's oppression, through promoting men's authority over women. Which is seen through a groom's gain of sexual rights through *lobola* where "the woman relinquishes (or rather the woman‟s family does so on her behalf) any power over her body," (Nkosi, 2011:32). Moreover, feminists critique the institution of marriage as a whole, as in the contemporary society where many women are formally employed and assist with financial provision in the household and the provider role is not longer necessarily reserved for men , women are further exploited as they do not get remunerated for the household work that they do.

These feminist views analyse the *lobola* practice from a Eurocentric perspective, which distorts and disfigures the African cultures they are writing about. Whilst some African feminists (Aina, 1998) have argued that the gender role conflict in African marriages could be attributed to the influence of Western standards on African, more recent African feminist scholarship argues (Ebunoluwa, 2009; Parker, 2015) that the entry of women into the workforce is a form of empowerment in itself. The earlier African feminist views romanticise pre-capitalist African societies. The gap that this research seeks to fill aims to share the experiences and narratives of emaSwati, actively seeking to eliminate the romanticisation of historical *lobola* practices and at

the same time, capturing the lived experiences of *lobola* in contemporary Eswatini, while not disfiguring black lives.

LaShawnda Lindsay-Dennis gives us a more suitable way to write about and think about black women's lives and these are the Black Feminist Thought and Womanist thoeries which she defines as "philosophies that consider Black female cultural perspectives"(2015:509) which "contextualise black women's stories, cultural backgrounds, class, race and gender as well as other forms of oppression," (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015:509). Lindsay- Dennis (2015:509) further states that Black Feminist Thought and Womanism theories "strive to empower black women via an ability to express their lived realities within their specific context". The Black Feminist Thought theory helps to think about women involved in the *lobola* process as actors with agency. *Emalobolo* do not merely happen to women but women live through, experience and may influence *emalobolo.*

LOBOLA AND GENDER BASED ABUSE

Janet Shope argued that most women suffer abuse in marriage as a result of lobola, as some men felt that they paid a lot of money so they had a right to treat the wife the way they saw fit (Shope, 2005). Nogget Matope, Nyevero Maruzani, Efiritha Chauraya, and Beatrice Bondai (2013) expanded on this idea and argued that lobola exacerbated gender based violence in marriages where the exchange had taken place for the bride. They argued that although gender based violence is rooted in socio economic inequality, it was compounded by the lobola cultural practices as the power, importance and strength of this religious and cultural practices and beliefs make it difficult to change the status of women within the community (Matope et. al, 2013). This meant that women continue to be vulnerable to gender based violence because of their differential status from birth to death which is further cemented They argued that although gender based violence is rooted in socio economic inequality, it was compounded by the lobola cultural practices as the power, importance and strength of this religious and cultural practices and beliefs make it difficult to change the status of women within the community (Matope et. al, 2013). Women continue to be vulnerable to gender based violence because of their differential status from birth to death which is further cemented by lobola (Matope et. al, 2013).

In Eswatini, Gender Based Violence (GBV[4]) continues to be frowned upon, although cases continue to rise at staggering rates.

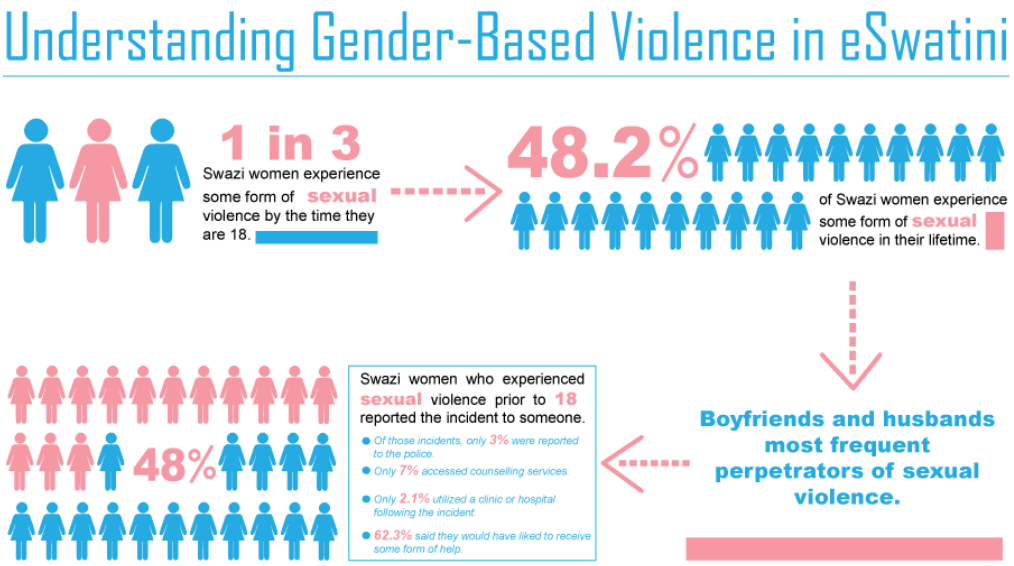


Image 3: Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (2021)

The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) found that one in three women in Eswatini will experience sexual violence before they reach the age of eighteen (SWAGAA, 2021).

[4] GBV, domestic violence, and emotional abuse is defined as behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated or dating.

Examples of abuse include:
■ name calling or put downs
■ keeping a partner from contacting their family or friends
■ withholding money
■ stopping a partner from getting or keeping a job
■ actual or threatened physical harm
■ sexual assault
■ stalking
■ intimidation
Violence can be criminal and includes physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking. Although emotional, psychological and financial abuse are not criminal behaviours, they are forms of abuse and can lead to criminal violence.
(http://www.domesticviolence.org/definition/)

Historically, as shared by Delisile, a man who beat his wife would lose the respect of the community he lived in, the respect of his in-laws and could be fined by the chief in the area. The disdain for abuse is communicated through songs that the woman's family sings as they accompany her to her in-laws on the day of *umtsimba* - the wedding reception or celebration. The bride's family sings:

"Yesibali…Yesibali…Siyakucela,

Mbuy'sel'ekhaya

Usiz'ungamushayi. Ungambulali. Nakakwehlula

Mbuy'sel'ekhaya"

Which is a plea to the groom to not hit her, not kill her, and to send her back to her parental home should there be irreconcilable differences. This song is still sung today and it holds greater weight in contemporary times where we have seen perpetrators of GBV in Eswatini suffer no legal nor social consequences for their actions. An example of this took place on the 22nd of August 2021, when Sikhumbuzo Shongwe, a pastor, shot his wife several times landing her in hospital. Ten days later, Shongwe was granted one hundred thousand Emalangeni (SZL100 000) bail - ten thousand Emalangeni (SZL10 000) upfront and the balance as surety. This was not the first time the married couple was in the newspapers for abuse related news, however the law was always lenient towards Shongwe, like elsewhere in the world, and the society seems to forgive and forget easily (Dlamini, 2021). Although cases of abuse of women at the hands of their husbands continue to occur, *emalobolo* historically were considered to be a way out for women.

By not selling nor slaughtering the cattle exchanged as *emalobolo*, the bride's family ensured that if ever their daughter needed to get out of the relationship, they would be able to send back the cattle they had already received. In some cases, the processes and procedures that governed *emalobolo* helped to protect women and leave them a way out of the relationship should they encounter abuse.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMERCIALISATION OF *LOBOLA*

Zimbabwean scholar, Flexon Mizinga (2000 in Chiweshe, 2016:230) stated that *lobola* has a "history of being misrepresented by Western scholars who have criticised it as an economic transaction that implies a purchase of the bride". As Chireshe and Chireshe found in their 2010 study, many of their respondents stated that *lobola* should be abolished as they saw the custom as a "facilitator of the oppression and abuse of women in marriages" (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010:217). The respondents perceived the custom as a "dehumanising practice that equates women to property" (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010:217) due to its commercialised and commodified manner. *Lobola* is a complicated exchange which historically did not embody a sense of personal enrichment, but with changes in the political economy of the countries that practice the custom, the custom became commodified and commercialised. Commodification describes the process by which something without an economic value gains economic value that can replace other social values, which has been exacerbated by social media, as it has created societies that thrive on spectacle and appearance.

"*Ngikhule ngati kutsi emalobolo akabhadalwa, ayakhishwa* (I grew up knowing that *lobola* is not paid, it is given)". These words were uttered by Linda Shongwe, the 28 year old man mentioned earlier in the study. The translation does not capture the nuances and depth of the statement, as the word "*ayakhishwa*" is a continuous verb derived from the verb "*kukhipha*" has notions of "giving". Connoting a continuous relationship between those giving and those receiving. The words said by Linda, show the differences even in the language used to describe *emalobolo* by some emaSwati themselves.

This difference in language can also be seen used by scholars who wrote from a perspective that argued that women were bought and sold through *lobola*. It is this language that came from observing how the custom was practised, that distorted how *emalobolo* were spoken about and thought about. Due to *lobola* being associated with a financial, commercial value, the language of "payment" became a part of the documented and oral discourses around *lobola,* and that (if we use the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) influenced how some people thought about the custom. Takunda Chabata (2012) argues that *lobola* is a double edged sword for women where the husbands feel entitled to control marital relations as the men insist that because they have paid large amounts of money for the bride, they have the right to make all the decisions within the marriage including sexual intercourse. It is the thinking of *emalobolo* as a monetary transaction, a payment that gives rise to the issues feminists have raised with relation to *emalobolo* such as the increased risk of HIV transmissions and the notion that women are stripped of their agency.

Feminist scholar, Nicola Ansell argued that through *lobola*, control over young women is vested in their elders and also their husbands. *Lobola* was thus related to women's lack of control over their own bodies, either sexually or in terms of their labour (Ansell, 2001; Shope, 2006). This also implies that women have no control as to when or if they want to have sexual intercourse, when or if they want to have children as well as the number of children they want to have. Shope (2006) states that women have had no say in the *lobola* exchange as it takes place using men's property (cattle), men do the 'paying' and the 'charging'.

These activities - undertaken by men - serve to show the difficult positions that women find themselves in. Men determine women's 'price' for *lobola* factoring in costs like education, clothing, food, medication and other expenses that parents would have spent on their daughter (Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013). While men can exercise control over their lives through exchange of emalobolo, women have fewer options in the construction of their sexual and gender identities (Shope, 2006). However, this was not the case amongst the participants of this study, as the couples gave the impression through their actions, that they were partners. When I asked Sibahle and Sithembiso about children, Sibahle laughed and Sithembiso said, "we are still discussing it. It'll all depend on how many more we can afford to have", laughing as he said this. While Bongani and Bongiwe were already expecting their first child during the data collection stage of the study. With Zama and Zinhle on the other hand, Zama said, "*ngisa negotiate-a* (I'm still negotiating)," and further explained that he wanted more children than Zinhle did, saying, "*ngifuna iteam yami yebhola lengitoyi coach-a* (I want my own soccer team to coach). "*Kuyobakuhle utobatfwala bonkhe lalabang eight Mkholo* (I hope you know you'll have to carry all eight extra ones) ", Zinhle said laughing and using the Matsebula praise name 'Mkholo' as a term of endearment.

The couples illustrated that the idea that *emalobolo* strip women of their agency and power to decide whether to have children and how many to have, was not a factor in their relationships. Rather whether they would be able to financially provide for the children was the biggest area of discussion. These narratives and experiences shared by the three couples highlight Elizabeth Prevost's statement that for every activist who argued against lobola as a

violation of women's rights, another has defended it as safeguarding women's autonomy and virtue (Prevost, 2017).

Authors Janet M. Wojcicki, Ariane van der Straten, and Nancy Padian (2010) consider emalobolo to directly influence decisions concerning family planning and safer sex practices. They argued that due to the fact that *emalobolo* are linked with reproduction, it can create a situation where men believe they should have control over reproductive decisions after fulfilling their *lobola* obligations and may refuse to use any contraceptives or practice safer sex (Wojcicki et al., 2010). Wojcicki et al.'s (2010:2) claims are based on a study conducted in Zimbabwe in order to explore "the relationship between the practice of bridewealth and known risk factors for HIV infection including barrier contraceptive use, age of first sex, and number of lifetime sexual partners". Meel Banwari (2011) further claimed that since the wife is considered to be a purchased object, the husband often feels free to acquire mistresses and this increases the possibility of HIV infection, which in turn can be transmitted to the wife. For a country like Eswatini, which has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates (World Health Organisation, 2019), it is important to interrogate whether there is a link between *emalobolo,* and HIV incidence and prevalence rates. Although this study gives us something to investigate and think about in terms of the implications of the commodification of *lobola*, and the feminist critiques around the ownership of women's bodies, it is important to highlight the different historical contexts including that of HIV and circular migration, under which *lobola* as a custom operates. The traditions and rituals that emaSwati have inscribed into how they practice *lobola,* and how it

changes depending on the relationship the couple have with each other and their families. All of this shapes how young emaSwati couples think about and practice the ever changing custom.

The perception that in countries where *lobola* is still common, women are seen as property owned by their husbands (Kambarami, 2006) breeds inequality and widens the gap between men and women thereby placing women in a subordinate position (Wagner, 1999; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010:217) study revealed that due to *lobola* some men see their wives as objects who are always reminded "I paid *lobola* for you" or "*ndakakutenga* (I bought you)". It was also noted that some husbands insist that their wives should obey their commandments because they paid *lobola*. This finding is consistent with Tsanga's (2003) view that *lobola* gives men unfettered rights and control over women, thus the conclusion that the two authors came to which was - *lobola* renders women vulnerable to abuse by their husbands (Tsanga, 2003; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). These representations of what happens after the negotiations end, shone a spotlight on issues of abuse in marriages where *lobola* was exchanged, as men felt that they owned their wives.

However, this was not necessarily the views that came out of the stories, experiences and journeys of the participants of this study. Sithembiso and Sibahle exhibited partnership. One did not own the other, but they discussed and came to agreements about most things, especially concerning *emalobolo.*"Sibahle and I discussed what we would be able to put forward towards *lobola*. We did this because we both knew that our lives still need to continue after the wedding so we cannot put everything towards *emalobolo* and the wedding then find ourselves unable to

make ends meet after," said Sithembiso, explaining that Sibahle knew the amount that they as a couple would be able to spend towards *emalobolo*. I do however acknowledge that the participants of the study would possibly not tell me about the presence of coercive elements in their relationships. I have heard of men and their families using *lobola* as a way to control women. Women who were deemed not to be respectable especially if the women spoke up for themselves whenever they felt their in-laws were oppressing them. *Lobola* as an oppressive practice therefore does occur but it is not the only way in which *lobola* creates relatedness between couples.

Zinhle and Zama Matsebula - the couple that chose to wed through *kuteka* and not have a church wedding shared that they too were in the process of discussing how much they could spend towards the first exchange of emalobolo."*Useng'kawakhiphi emalobolo. Ngatekwa kuphela. Kepha nyalo* (He has not taken *lobola* cattle to my family. I have only been through kutekwa. But now), we are sorting out the logistics around how many cattle we can realistically afford to give to my family at the moment," said Zinhle. This statement by Zinhle illustrates the partnerships that the couples have formed. That they see each other as equals when it comes to making financial decisions within their new households. Although this may not be the case with everyone, the experiences of those that participated in this study, as well as their perceptions, showed that some people between 25 years and 35 years in Eswatini are viewing *lobola* and marriage as a partnership. Regardless of the manner they chose to marry through, these young couples viewed the creation of their new families as a partnership.

Historically, the bride's family left a ticket out of the marriage for their daughter in the case that she ever encountered abuse at the hands of her husband, the societal pressure to not bring shame to your family acted as a form of control over the actions of the couples. Knowing that GBV would bring dishonour to the family name policed the relationship between the couple, such that whenever issues arose, the couple would take it to the elders to help find solutions. What we are seeing in contemporary Eswatini is that abuse- sexual, physical or otherwise - does not have hefty moral and legal consequences attached to it. People - cisgendered heterosexual men in particular - bounce back from abuse charges and are accepted back into society as though nothing happened. Patriarchal violence is normalised and excused globally and *lobola* as a practice gets singled out as a cause but GBV also operates where *lobola* is not practised. Patriarchal violence is attached to diverse cultural practices and the issue is the ways in which men have been prohibited to show their vulnerabilities through violence, as it is viewed as one of the few ways men are allowed and sanctioned to show emotion. This is where the mutual respect between couples and doing what is right for your partner and relationship come into play, as that moral and ethical code of wanting to have a good life seems to be the main thing that influences whether or not the woman experiences abuse at the hands of her husband.

KUHLONIPHA

Kuhlonipha is defined as any practice of respect, which can be linguistic or performative (Dlamini, 2005). *Kuhlonipha* is structured according to an age and sex hierarchy, where male and female youths and married women avoid male elders as a means of respect and homage (Carton, 2000; Ntsimane, 2007). *Kuhlonipha* involves both action and speech as a form of respect and respectability. In terms of action, a married woman must act respectfully, by practicing avoidance in the presence of her elder in-laws such as limiting how long she is in the presence of her father in law, and not looking at her in-laws directly in the eyes. In terms of speaking, she must not use the name of her in-laws, her husband, nor a word that contains the stem of those names. In a traditional Nguni setting, *kuhlonipha* requires Nguni women to refrain from directly and publicly voicing her opinion ((Mathonsi & Gumede, 2006:484)). While men observe *kuhlonipha* under certain circumstances, for example with his wife's mother, in communication with the elderly, superiors and ancestors (Hammond-Tooke, 2004; Huffman, 2004). Respect of what was deemed to be proper procedure, respect towards their families, respect towards Higher Beings, and respect towards their spouses and newly created families. If one respects the procedures and the people they are accountable to, they will fulfil all promises, duties and responsibilities given to them. *Kuhlonipha* for *emaSwati* men who are seeking to start their own family is embedded in *emalobolo*.

"*Emalobolo* are a blood covenant Ngwenyama and as the blood from the cattle spills it reinforces the vows made when the woman is introduced to her in-laws' ancestors with the smearing of the red ochre," explains Delisile, "the moment the woman has her face smeared with the red ochre after *kutekwa*, her ties with her paternal ancestors are cut, and the ancestors of her husband are now the ones she is in touch with." Men who choose not to exchange *emalobolo* for their wives, according to Delisile, trap their wives in a liminal space, where they neither belong fully to her husband's family nor her own. For couples such as the Fakudzes and Kunenes, who did not go through the process of *kuteka* but intend on exchanging *emalobolo* this means that Bongiwe and Sibahle will be straddling the line between their own ancestors and those of their husbands. "Which is dangerous", says Delisile, "should they pass on where will their spirit go?". Delisile emphasises that the manner in which links are severed and created with ancestors is very important as it secures the woman's place in the physical and spiritual realms, and this rests in the man's hands to introduce his wife to his own ancestors as the biggest showcase of his respect for his wife and his ancestors.

In reality, at least for Bongani, doing what was respectful to his wife and in-laws, and subsequently what he felt was right, was asking for her hand in marriage, having a church wedding and exchanging vows in front of their families, friends and before God and ideally fulfilling all his *lobola* requirements before the church wedding. As Sanelisiwe Nkonyane (2020) shares she sometimes has "to negotiate between what is and what is not considered to be respectable behaviour," (Nkonyane, 2020:13) in the different facets of her life. The same applies to Bongani, although not fulfilling his *lobola* obligations may have been perceived as

disrespectful to others, he chose to do what would make him and his new wife happy. He chose to do what was right for them as a new family.

Kuhlonipha encompasses every aspect of the lives of *emaSwati*, from birth until the day they die, as it is the embodiment and showcase of how well the individual has been raised (Rudwick & Shange, 2009). A person *longahloniphi* (who does not practice *kuhlonipha*) brings public shame to their family, as they are viewed as an extension of their families and showcase how well they were raised. Subsequently, that individual is then viewed as the responsible representative of their family, and with each performance of self the individual gives, the reputation of the family as a whole is tested and put at stake. No family wants to be viewed as one without morals, as this comes with a level of public shaming. Bongiwe states that,

> "before *bangicele, bangihlalisa phansi labadzala bangitjela kutsi loku sengitoba ngumfati ngitiphatsa kanjani* (Bongani's family came to ask for my hand in marriage, my family elders sat me down and told me how I should conduct myself now that I am about to be a wife)" and laughs nervously after that statement.

Bongiwe says her biggest take away from that conversation was;

> "*mawuya emtini* (when you go to someone else's home) you respect. *Uhloniphe* (You must respect). *Ukhumbule kutsi* (remember that) we are just Christians and we have raised you like that. *Hamba netifundziso letinhle* (Take with you the good lessons you have been taught). *Ungafiki lembili bese uyasihlaza* (Do not embarrass us nor bring shame to the family by not respecting your in-laws)."

The embodiment of *kuhlonipha* and its performative nature leaves the meaning of the act open to the interpretation of the person viewing it. Viewing it through a lens coloured by their own understanding of morality, shaping how the whole family is viewed. This highlights what Izugbara and Undie (2008) argue, that the body transcends its biological, anatomical and physiological nature. The body is a medium of culture and the locus of the construction of sociality. The body is a canvas on which the community etches and imprints norms, beliefs, rights and statuses (Izugbara and Undie, 2008). *Kutihlonipha, nekuhlonipha bakini* is expressed through the body. Respect is embodied and as such the body carries the honour of your whole community, as it is a visual representation of the norms, beliefs and values imparted onto it by the community. As Butler (1999) stated, "embodiment is the space where gender identity and materiality of the body are displayed. It is a performed act, influenced by external factors which are generated to create the essence of who one is" (Butler in Nkonyane, 2020:64). Respectability reflects on families and is a collective judgement. People - women in particular - act as reflections of their families and lineages, so the family is always present in someone's behaviour even if they are not physically present.

The testing of the reputation of an individual and of their family is also seen through Bongani's family's response to him announcing that he intended to ask for Bongiwe's hand in marriage."*Utawukhona* (will you manage)? Was the first thing my mother and siblings said to me when I told them my plans" says Bongani, laughing as he recalls this moment.

"They applauded me for taking the step to do things the right way," he continued, "Uhm, although they said *sengikhulile* (I am now a man), they had some reservations like *usesemcance mosi* (I was still young). Why *ufune kutsatsa usesemncane* (why would you want to marry at such a young age?)."Bongiwe interjects here and adds "*somitsi yini* (is she pregnant?)" as one of the questions that they were both being asked. Bongani nods and adds that the general worry from both the families was that "*somonile*", he had ruined her whereas that was not the case. He was then told that he may as well continue with doing things the right way and marrying his long term girlfriend, before he brought shame to his family and disrespected her family by impregnating her out of wedlock. This interaction highlights the risk to a good, moral reputation and the role that shaming plays in reproducing and enforcing *kuhlonipha,* as one of the things that Bongani's family was afraid of was that he had broken into the Mamba kraal.

Kuhlonipha and seeking not to bring shame to the family name plays a role in the policing of women's behaviors and bodies that comes with the politics of respectability according to feminist scholars. These politics of respectability are based on a narrow notion of what constitutes a respectable woman (Chiweshe, 2016). Respectability politics are defined as a "continuum of behaviors and attitudes that reproduce dominant norms, and strategies for producing a counter-narrative to negative stereotypes placed upon subordinated groups" (Harris in Pitcan, Marwick & Boyd, 2018:164) . The concept of the "politics of respectability" was coined by Evelyn Higginbotham in 1993, to describe how "early 20th century Black women presented themselves as polite, sexually pure, and thrifty to reject stereotypes of them as immoral, childlike, and unworthy of respect and protection" (Harris in Pitcan et. al, 2018:164).

Kambarami (2006:3) argues that "marriage is sacred and a married woman is treated with respect, in fact the desired destination of most…women is marriage," to be treated with respect in society the women had to be married. Marriage is considered to be an achievement by society. The exchange of *lobola*, whilst not a purchase, is an appreciation of the value placed in female bodies for productive and reproductive duties (Chiweshe, 2016). Nketiah (2016) laments this view by Chiweshe, Kambarami and other scholars, stating that the constant pressure that young women and girls are under to prioritise marriage as a life goal and the idea that you are a failed woman if you have not married limits women and girls and keeps them from realising their dreams.

Despite critique, respectability politics maintain cultural currency. For women to be considered respectable, their bodies are under constant surveillance and control, and this "surveillance and control of female bodies leads to the definition of good and bad bodies (Chiweshe, 2016:240). Maisha Johnson (2015) argues that respectability politics often culminate in the self-policing of "our appearance, speech and sexuality with pressure to be an upstanding Black woman – not the kind who makes the rest of us 'look bad'" (Nketiah, 2016:n.d). Good and respectable bodies are narrowly defined within the realm of chastity, submissiveness and their reproductive capabilities. Bad girls are seen as rebellious, loose, unrespectful and independent. Marriage – signified and validated by the exchange of *lobola*, is one measure of respectability (Chiweshe, 2016).

In thinking about masculinities and how dominant masculinities differentiate themselves from subordinate masculinities, respectability politics and policing of the body plays a role as well. Among Xhosa men, Mfecane (2016), articulated that men who had not been traditionally circumcised experienced policing in that other men wanted proof that they had indeed been circumcised and were no longer *inkwenkwe.* *Kuhlonipha* works to reproduce patriarchal norms and ideals with the threat of bringing shame to oneself and one's family.

SHAMING TO REPRODUCE HISTORICAL GENDER PATTERNS

Shaming, to keep members of a society from deviating from cultural expectations, plays a role in reproducing existing patterns of behaviour within the society (Robbins, 2012). The reproduction of existing patterns of morality and adhering to routine expectations is referred to by (Fluehr - Lobban, 2012) as morality of reproduction. Shame is a form of pro-social behaviour, or "behaviour that promotes and fosters cooperative interactions between members of a group" (Teroni & Bruun, 2011:225) and helps to restore endangered bonds of trust amongst the members of the group. The attempt to use shame pro-socially can be seen in what Bongiwe's mother said to her when she told her mother that she was seeing Bongani. Mrs Mamba, Bongiwe's mother, told her daughter to ensure that "that man marries you, *akulobole sisi* before *umitse*. (fulfill his *lobola* obligations before you fall pregnant)" According to Bongiwe, Mrs Mamba went on to say, "*nami asengibe ngumuntfu nje* (I also want to be viewed with respect). *Kukekufike tinkhomo , sishadise lakhaya* (for once, can we have cattle arrive, have a wedding in this home). *Kube nje nemtukulu lotalelwa emendvweni* (Can there be a grandchild of mine born within wedlock)*"*. Bongiwe laughs as she recalls this order from her mother – when I described it as advice, she was quick to say, "*cha* it was an order" still laughing. Bongiwe however notes that this order from her mother was never intended to be malicious, but it was a caution and reminder to her about her older sisters who had brought shame to the Mamba family as they had fallen pregnant before marriage, raised their children in the Mamba home, and are still not married.

“My eldest sister always says I am mom’s favourite not because I am the last born but because I am the one mom uses as an example of how not to embarrass your family. I am the one mom can brag about to people. Even though Bongani *akaloboli* (has not fulfilled his lobola obligations) yet but at least *ngishadile* (I am married) and having a baby within the bounds of marriage,” Bongiwe says with a proud smile on her face. Family histories and individuals' different choices have an impact on what is considered acceptable although shame is still used as a tool to regulate social behaviour and ensure people keep their promises. Shame plays a positive role in regulating social behaviour and in the reproduction of social behaviour that is deemed to have a constructive outcome for the collective. Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek (2007), argue that shame is morally bad as it motivates hiding and leads to running away from responsibilities and expectations. The authors additionally state that shame encourages anger at others and aggressive behaviour, and can further be associated with mental health issues such as depression; feelings and symptoms which impedes on pro-social behaviour. Shame encouraging anger and aggression towards others can be seen in the decisions Bongiwe’s sisters were making in the months leading up to the wedding. After years of being reminded that they had brought shame to their family by having children out of wedlock and even worse, not getting married at all thus straying from doing what is right, the tension between the sisters was palpable. Bongiwe’s sisters initially wanted to help the soon-to-be bride plan her big day and of course, pitch in financially to ensure she has the wedding of her dreams.

However, things changed three months before the big day and the two sisters started dragging their feet whenever their help was sought by Bongiwe.

> "*Ye*Lwazi I started feeling like *bebangi sabotage-a* (they were sabotaging me). All of a sudden everything was going wrong. All of the things they had to do they didn't do. If it wasn't for our friends and wedding planner, we really would not have ended up married."

Bongani backs her up and says,

> "*hheyi*, it got to a point where it was just easier to blame every decision they didn't agree with on our planner. 'Til this day, I'm sure Bongiwe's sisters hate the planner for taking over and making our dream wedding a reality while they had done their best to ensure it failed."

With the wedding getting closer, Mrs Mamba was beaming with happiness and pride, which unfortunately for the two older sisters meant that the comparisons between them increased. By shaming her older daughters for not doing things the right way, Mrs Mamba created tension and underlying resentment between her daughters.

Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek (2007), argue that shame is morally bad, it is seen to lessen the effects of evil or harm, deterring and prohibiting the breaking of promises, walking away from responsibilities and not fulfilling cultural expectations, by threatening one's social status. Shame may be seen to aid pro-social behaviour as it leads people to act morally because "the reputation one perceives as threatened is one's moral reputation" (Teroni & Bruun, 2011:240) and it is through this moral reputation that people's social status is determined. The

threat to reputation and social status acts as a deterrent for people, to help them avoid wrongdoing in the first place. Shame is seen as an effective deterrent of wrongdoing based on the assumption that people are motivated to improve themselves, their lives and their social standing within a society. Teroni & Bruun (2011) therefore insist that shame should not be reduced to being a reaction to public judgement and attitudes but rather that the judgements and attitudes of the public are relevant to individuals as these judgements can aide in the upward social mobility of individuals (Teroni & Bruun, 2011).

Shame provokes feelings of humiliation; usually through public humiliation (public shaming) but in some cases, through self-shaming (feeling ashamed of oneself). These feelings are shame, associated with the deviation from cultural expectations, and responsibilities, elicit wishful thoughts (If I can…If I were) from those experiencing it and these are thoughts that are usually can move an individual to reforming the qualities that caused the deviation from the cultural norm (Teroni & Bruun, 2011). Shame provoking feelings of shame associated with the deviation from expectation and responsibilities is seen through Bongiwe, who as the last born in her family felt the pressure of carrying her family's hopes and dreams in the sense that she was still unmarried and without children, whereas her older sisters had children and were all still not married. For her "if I could just get married so I will not have to experience everything my sisters' experience" was the wishful thought she had, which was laden with the expectations of her family, and community.

DISHONOURING A WOMAN'S BODY

A man publicly practices *kuhlonipha* by ensuring that the woman does not get pregnant before marriage (Lukhele, 2017) thus bringing shame to the families and dishonouring the woman. Having children out of wedlock was not the ideal amongst emaSwati as discretion and restraint in matters of sex showed that the man *uhlonipha* the woman's father in particular. Wenzile's father wanted *lobola* to be exchanged because his future son-in-law had proven that he did not respect the family by first impregnating their daughter out of wedlock and then not paying damages for that. Not paying damages meant that Mfanasibili did not acknowledge that he had done anything wrong, and thus further disrespected his father in law. *EmaSwati ayanyanyekisa* or vilify the act of having penetrative sex before marriage or *emalobolo*, to the point of describing the act as *kuphula sibaya* or 'breaking into her father's kraal'. 'Breaking into or opening a man's kraal' is a euphemism for rupturing the woman's hymen through penetrative sex (Lukhele, 2017) and further getting the woman pregnant. A woman's genitals are equated with her father's cattle kraal for the simple reason that it is because of their sexual and reproductive nature that the father receives cows from his son-in-law and his family in the form of *emalobolo* (Lukhele, 2017). Respect is forged with history meaning that how the groom acted towards his bride and her family before they became a married couple follows the groom and determines the level of trust that the bride's family has for him. How he acts towards the bride, how he fulfils his responsibilities and meets expectations shows her family whether he values and respects their daughter and by extension them.

Nolwazi Mkhwanazi (2014:108) states that *kuhlonipha* "is the most emphasised character trait" that has to be accepted and adhered to without questions. This character trait is demonstrated by women in the way they present themselves and their bodies in public; an attribute that is taught to girls at a young age, where they are expected to fear and be ashamed of the female body, thus limiting how they express themselves publicly (Rudwick & Shange, 2009:63). This limitation may be expressed by the restriction to wear tight clothing, items of clothing that fall above the knee, wearing pants, wearing low cut tops, jewellery and make-up, to mention a few. Sibahle outlined that when she was younger, herself and her sisters were not allowed to wear pants, short clothing and jewellery because of the church their family was affiliated with. The church ensured that the status of the men in the church was protected at all times by enforcing these limitations on the women and girls within the establishment. This is due to the perception that the manner in which a young girl or woman presents herself reflects directly on her father's and husband's status. Respecting yourself and subsequently respecting your family and community is expressed through *kutiphatsa kahle* or being of good moral standing.

Mkhwanazi (2014), creates a link between the performance of *kuhlonipha* and the issues around who owns a woman's body highlighted by Lukhele (2017). The notion of the autonomy of women's bodies (or lack thereof) can be enforced and made worse by legal institutions within Eswatini, where these women are socially perceived to be owned by the men in their lives. Sanelisiwe Nkonyane (2020:28) calls attention to the concept of cultural disobedience, which writer Phionah Kyokusiima (2016:n.d) defines as "bravely subverting dominant cultural norms".

Kyokusiima asserts that in some places, "cultural taboos are so strong that they become entrenched as law, while in other places, cultural taboos function as de facto law" (Kyokusiima, 2016:n.d). Aspects of the Eswatini Constitution (2005) and Penal Codes are rooted in Swazi traditional customs which have been accepted and adopted as law. Nkonyane (2020:28) warns that it is important to be able to discern when "*kuhlonipha* is merely a cultural practice or a structure that has become law". "We are born female, but everyone owns our bodies but us" stated Simile during a discussion about the ownership of the female body. Simile Sikhondze, a twenty-seven year old woman from Lobamba, which is the legislative capital of Eswatini located between Mbabane the administrative capital and Manzini the largest city in the country. Simile recalled from a young age that she was raised knowing that her family owns her body and that anything she did to dishonour her body brought shame and dishonour to her family and the community as a whole. As she grew older she realised that it was not her family as such that owned her body, but her father, and in his absence her uncles, brothers and male cousins had a say about what she does with her body. Betty Sibongile Dlamini (2008:62) points out that "girls are culturally socialised to fear their own bodies because they belong not to them but to their future husbands". Therefore, "women encourage girls to safeguard their father's kraal; this emphasises that they do not own their bodies, as they represent economic value for their fathers" (Dlamini, 2008 in Nkonyane, 2020:16). Patriarchy subjugates women's sexuality to the control of a man, first the father, then the husband, women's sexuality therefore becomes a matter between men.

> "Which is why when it comes to *tindzaba tekumitsa, kumele kuyohlawulwa kubabe wakho, hhayi kuwe* and I think that's why *kukhokhwa emalobolo kubabe wakho* to compensate him and the community as a whole for the loss of your body and the labour that comes with it" articulated Jabulile, who quickly added, "it's funny that I say this to you because this is kinda what was said to me when I fell pregnant out of wedlock."

Jabulile shines a spotlight on the ideals that exist in Eswatini and the lived realities of emaSwati, especially women in this case. Jabulile shares that she chose to carry the pregnancy to term, although when she fell pregnant she was in a country where terminations are legal.

> "I knew I would get a lot of backlash. People would be gossiping about me in the community, in church and within my own family. But I thought to myself 'what's the worst that could happen?' *Angeke bangishaye. Angeke bangibulale*,(No one will beat me. No one will kill me)" she says in a very matter of fact way.

Jabulile demonstrates the agency that women in Eswatini have, although feminist scholars have argued that traditions and customs rooted in patriarchy strip women of their agency and further subordinate them. Saba Mahmood (2011:8) wrote that agency is the "capacity to realise one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective)". Although women are agents in their own rights, they are agentive but within the specified boundaries and rules, and they face consequences when they transgress from those rules.

In conclusion, feminist scholars from the Marxist, socialist feminism, radical feminism and African feminism schools of thought have critiqued *emalobolo*, citing that the custom further subordinates women and reproduces patriarchy. However, in using Black Feminist Thought and Womanist schools of thought to understand how *kuhlonipha* as it relates to emalobolo is practiced by Swazi men and women, paints a picture of the lived experiences of emaSwati, while moving away from the pre-colonial romanticisation of *kuhlonipha*. We hear stories of Swazi women making choices about their bodies, and trusting that the relationships they have with their partners will ensure their transition into the afterlife is seamless. While we also see the pressures that men are under at an existential level to ensure that they practice *kuhlonipha* by fulfilling their *lobola* obligations to secure their wives' transition into the realm of the ancestors once they passed on. Although the lived experiences and agency of women are examined, there are strong prohibitions against what women are able to do and how. Prohibitions, rules and boundaries enforced through the concept of the ownership of women's bodies laying in the hands of men - fathers, husbands and attempts made by former partners as seen through Ben's attempt to control Sibahle.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As I draw to the end of the 'final' product of this research study, it is hard to call it a conclusion and even harder to write the conclusion. This last chapter of the thesis will be divided into two sections; the first will summarise the arguments and the second will speak to 'what next?'.

In Chapter One, I introduced the participants who were a part of the study and gave an outline of what the study entailed. The couples were Bongani and Bongiwe Fakudze, Sibahle and Sithembiso Kunene, Zama and Zinhle Matsebula and Mfanasibili Sithole and Wenzile Maziya. The individuals who were spoken about by the core couples, and play a huge role in the lives of those couples are: Thulani Mamba - Bongiwe's brother and Ben Dlamini - the father of Sibahle's daughter Alex. Finally the individuals who shared their experiences with and perceptions of marriage were Linda Shongwe, Nontobeko Malindzisa, Simile Sikhondze and Jabulile Nxumalo.

Chapter Two set the groundwork in explaining what *emalobolo* were and how they had been romanticised by historians. The chapter starts off by tracing the royal history of how emalobolo came to be exchanged using cattle as opposed to calabashes, dishes and hoes. The change occurred during the reign of King Ndvunganye who wanted to marry a woman from a neighbouring kingdom under the rule of King Zwide. This change was paramount in the thinking about what is regarded as tradition and indigenous to emaSwati has changed over the years due to influences by the movement of people and information, political, economic, social and

environmental factors, and continues to change each day as people make the customs and practices their own. The creative scripts played by emaSwati as they navigate and negotiate forming new families, have the possibility of changing the course and tradition of emalobolo in its entirety. The COVID-19 pandemic is a major factor that I am eager to see shape how *emalobolo* look in the next five to ten years.

Chapter Three illustrates the foundational reason behind emalobolo is the creation of family, however not in the romanticised manner that we tend to think about family. We see different types of family bonds being formed through marriage and friendship. The challenge we see the couples facing is that of consanguineal family members choosing to alienate and isolate themselves from the couples, and then threatening to tear the new family bonds apart when friends or partners step in and take over the responsibilities that the consanguineal member could not or would not fulfil.

Chapter Four on masculinities was the longest chapter in this study. *Emalobolo* are associated with the performance of traits and characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. The Chapter begins with a breakdown of hegemonic masculinity, the criticism the concept has received and a way to think about African masculinities in a decolonial manner as suggested by Kopano Ratele (2021). How dominant masculinities are defined and who receives the privileges that come with being perceived as a 'real man', differ from society to society. Sakhumzi Mfecane (2016) writes about Xhosa masculinity and how being considered a 'real man' is based on traditional circumcision. Men who are not circumcised or who were medically

circumcised are considered *inkwenkwe* or boys regardless of whether they embody the behavioural traits of a 'real man'.

The Chapter then captures the views on masculinity and finances which were shared by Twitter users in Eswatini using the #hashtag '*Indoda* Must'. The social media users brought to the forefront the intricate link between how masculinities are perceived and defined by the ability for a man to provide for his family. This was further articulated by Bongani who stated that he was in debt because he wanted to provide for his mother, his wife and child, while also being able to help out his in-laws where needed. Bongani's experiences were a window into seeing how finances or the lack thereof, expose male vulnerabilities that they are socialised to hide. Which isolates them from their support systems and communities, out of fear that they will be shamed. Leading to mental health problems such as depression, which again men are encouraged not to discuss.

Non-dominant or subordinate masculinities were also highlighted in the study by looking at Thulani Mamba's actions leading up to his sister's wedding. Bongani having not fulfilled his *lobola* obligations was seen as disrespectful to Thulani, who was unemployed at the time. Here we saw the link between finances and the embodiment and performance of masculinity rise again. Although both Bongani and Thulani were 'categorised' as exhibiting non-dominant masculinities, Bongani further subordinated (and to an extent disrespected) Thulani as he was unemployed and had no financial means to provide for this family in the same way Bongani was.

Chapter Five tapped into the provider or breadwinner ideal that was constantly coming up in the discussions about masculinity, but under the umbrella of black tax. Black tax is a term coined to describe the act of a young black person who has aspirations of upward social and economic mobility, taking on the financial responsibilities of his family. In this Chapter, a deeper conversation about debt as a means of achieving the upward mobility aspirations and how pressure from peers to have big white weddings are other areas where male vulnerabilities are exposed. Sithembiso and Sibahle chose to sign their marriage certificates at the District Commissioner's offices as opposed to having a church or white wedding because they could not afford all the aspects that came with a big wedding. Bongani and Bongiwe on the other hand chose a white or church wedding, with Bongani stating that he wanted his bride to have the wedding she had always dreamt of , regardless of the financial implications of it. The Chapter captures the pride that Bongani feels in being able to take care of his mother, even though it has caused him large amounts of debt. This pride stems from being the sibling that earns the most, compared to the other siblings, and by earning more than others, he also has access to higher lines of credit.

Chapter Six looks at feminist critiques of *emalobolo* and *kuhlonipha* as embodied and performed by both men and women. The Chapter stated the criticism that the custom has received from Marxist, Radical, Socialist and African feminist scholars, who argued that *emalobolo* further subordinated women and reproduced patriarchy as the exchange transferred the reproductive and productive rights of women from their fathers to their husbands. The commodification and commensuration of *emalobolo* were also linked to increased incidents of

Gender Based Violence by critics of the custom. However, from the stories shared by the Fakudzes and Kunenes, we saw that the partnerships that were formed by the couples as they planned for their futures highlighted that the men did not see themselves as owners of the women. The men sought to ensure that their wives were happy in everything that they did. We hear stories of Swazi women making choices about their bodies, and trusting that the relationships they have with their partners will ensure their transition into the afterlife is seamless. While we also see the pressures that men are under at an existential level to ensure that they practice *kuhlonipha* by fulfilling their *lobola* obligations to secure their wives' transition into the realm of the ancestors once they passed on. The creation of new family and kinship bonds through *kulobola* and marriage and the financial implications of them, expose male vulnerabilities that exist among Swazi men.

WHAT NEXT?

As I reflect on the journey now that it is at this point, I realise that it has not ended. The relationships I created and deepened with the participants of this study have meant that I am still privy to the changes taking place in their lives. Ethnography truly is an ongoing process that does not stop once you are done with the interviews. The stories continued and I feel like I became a part of some of their families myself.

What now? What next if the project is not complete? The couples are still living their lives and figuring out how to navigate the challenges that arose and will arise in their marriages. I recommend a follow up study, a continuation of sorts that will delve deeper into how masculinities are defined and created in Eswatini, using Sakhumzi Mfecane's 2016 study of masculinities among the Xhosa as a framework of researching Swazi masculinities. A study on lobola and masculinity that takes into account the aftermath of the political strife speaking to uncles, friends, etc who negotiate on behalf of the groom. As this study was particularly looking at *emalobolo* and marriage and not specifically at Swazi masculinities, I think that would be a great project to undertake that comes from the masculinities discussion. Do emaSwati define being a 'real man' in terms of the physical body's attributes such as in the Xhosa case, where being a man is defined by the removal of the foreskin using traditional methods. Or do emaSwati define it by their many customs such as attending *Lusekwane* - *Lusekwane* is a national event leading up to the *Incwala*, where young men are commissioned by the King to cut the *lusekwane* shrub. *Lusekwane* is only cut by young warriors.

The unexplored questions *lobola* after death, femininity and *lobola*, impoverished men and *lobola*, what negotiations happen there, Gender Based Violence and *lobola*, the absence of fathers and *lobola* are all avenues for exploration in further studies. These would introduce new entries into the scholarship on *emalobolo*, and I look forward to seeing scholars one day take on this exciting research.

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