Chapter 3

‘The Undesirables’: Black Middle-Class Women Versus Unemployed Men

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Introduction

In patriarchal and capitalist societies, intimacy and economic transactions are intricately linked. When people decide to engage in romantic relationships, the issues of class and money are viewed as important because monetary transactions and intimacy are co-produced and mutually sustain each other. Men and women are socialised into thinking about and engaging in love from a heterosexual perspective from an early age. This heteronormativity is instilled in gender norms sanctioned by social institutions, including the family (Adichie 2017). These early-gendered processes of internalising societal norms that teach men and women what is acceptable in intimate relationships are influenced by capitalist and patriarchal principles.

From an early age, men are socialised into thinking about provision and dominance and into behaving in accordance with these ideas. On the other hand, women are taught about taking care of their partners and being submissive (Adichie 2017; Maharaj & Shangase 2020). This relationality as informed by the capitalist system’s view of exchange as the basis of intimate relationships. Constable (2009) aptly illustrates how the family and intimate relationships are not safe from capitalist principles of exchange. What is of concern in this chapter is how this exchange is gendered: men must provide and women must nurture.

Thus, in this patriarchal society, despite the class position they hold, some women find it difficult to provide for men financially (Gcabo 2003; Parry 2014). In the same vein as this study, when Black middle-class women were asked if they would be romantically involved with an unemployed man, most stated that they would not. Only one indicated that she would be able to date an unemployed man, stating that this would be considered only if the unemployment status was/were not permanent.

The economic position of single Black middle-class women influences how they experience and define intimacy. Most women in this study avoided romantic relationships with unemployed or underemployed men. The argument of this chapter is that the middle-class position of the women interviewed provides them with choices: they have the opportunity to become involved with someone who fits their standards and criteria when it comes to intimate relationships. Yet even though most of these women enjoy the agency provided by their social and class position, it is imperative to emphasise that their middle-class status restricts them in numerous ways, specifically as this concerns intimate relations.

To illustrate how this choice manifests, this chapter provides a brief review of the literature followed by an overview of the methodology of the study and then a discussion of two themes. The first theme concerns the Black middle-class women in the study not finding unemployed men desirable and that they would not consider being in a romantic relationship with them because they do not have aspirations or resources; These women emphasised the importances of their potential partners aligning with their own aspirations. The second theme involves the case of the one Black middle-class woman who would date an unemployed man and does not find unemployed men undesirable as they are human too.

The women discussed in relation to the first theme believe that, because of their class position, they deserve romantic involvement with someone who is either of a higher socio-economic status or at the same level as them (Marsh 2023; Plank 2018). As a result of previous romantic relationships with

unemployed men who cheated on them, these middle-class women fear a recurrence of their bad experiences. They believe they know how unemployed men behave in relationships in which the women are middle class and have more money than the men. For them, this is a clear indication of how a middle-class position does not accord women the same power as it does men. It is therefore the contention of this chapter that Black middle-class women are punished for their socio-economic status relative to men who are in the same position.

A Brief on Methodology

This chapter is drawn from a master's study which focused on the experiences and perceptions of single Black middle-class women in relation to intimate relationships. A qualitative research approach was used to engage with the participants. For the master's study, twenty single Black middle class women from Soweto were interviewed (see Table 3.1 for participant details), and thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic content analysis is often mistakenly thought simply to involve the identification of themes; however, in the study, as indicated by Bazaley (2013), it was used because of its ability to provide a nuanced review of the meaning participants attach to the events, situations, experiences, and actions in which they engage.

For this chapter, the experiences of six of those participants are used to shed light on how unemployed men are viewed as prospective partners in a relationship. Soweto was selected as the research site as it has a burgeoning Black middle-class population (Phadi & Ceruti 2011). Through my critical appraisal of Soweto, I became aware of these developments, confirming the growth of the Black middle class as articulated in Phadi and Ceruti (2011) and Krige (2015).

My observations during fieldwork indicated that several privately owned companies are housed at Orlando Industrial Park, which was near the famous Vilakazi Street in Orlando West. Even though Soweto has made great economic strides in the course of democracy in South Africa, many residential areas continue to be impoverished and unemployment rates remain elevated

(Mahlatsi 2022; Mushayanyama *et al* 2024). Studies have shown that important middle class-related structural transitions have occurred in Soweto during the thirty years following the end of apartheid (Crankshaw 2022; Mahlatsi 2022; Mushayanyama *et al* 2024; Steyn 2013). Some of the notable changes in Soweto that have been observed in the literature include the renovation of residences that have been protected with higher walls and gates and the presence of expensive cars and malls.

I developed an interest in single Black middle-class women after personally observing my single, middle-class aunt. As a result of these observations, I had formulated several assumptions about single Black middle-class women. When I sat down and thought about the research topic, I kept thinking about my aunt, who was single and faced considerable criticism despite her personal achievements. She was blamed for not 'having a man' and was often assumed to be at fault for the termination of her previous relationships.

In the course of the interviews with the participants, I felt I was in a conversation with my aunt, because some of the experiences the participants related resonated with what I had observed my aunt go through. Thus, I felt a closeness and familiarity with the participants. I could not downplay the moments of closeness with the respondents. The good rapport I established with the women interviewees allowed them to freely share their personal experiences.

Singles and Intimacy

Singlehood is a phenomenon that is gradually increasing in frequency both globally and, evidently, in South Africa. Society views being single as contrary to the conventions of romantic relationships, which has led to its stigmatisation (Lawton & Callister 2010; Marsh 2023; Plank & Khunou 2020). Singletons are perceived to be lonely, unhappy, and dissatisfied (Masinga 2023; Marsh 2023). This is because it is believed that intimate relationships provide purpose and satisfaction for human beings (Johnson, Kent & Yale 2012; Marsh 2023; Masinga 2023 Van der Watt 2015). What cannot be ignored is that several women spend

their lives single, especially ageing women. Since patriarchy relies on relationships between women and men flourishing, to sustain its practices and belief systems. In essence, there is nothing wrong with deciding to remain single (Marsh, 2023; Masinga, 2023; Plank & Khunou 2020). However, society makes women feel and believe that there is something wrong with them when they remain single.

Yet there is no fixed definition for what constitutes an intimate relationship. Various conceptions of intimacy emphasise different elements thereof. For example, Jamieson (2011:2) describes intimacy as a "close connection between two or more people", referring to those people are in a process of building a close quality connection. In relationships that involve love, emotions and attachment are essential for their maintenance. The formation of intimate relations is essential for the development of human beings. Johnson *et al* (2012) believe that intimate relationships provide a sense of purpose to human existence, the implication being that single people may be lonely because they do not engage in intimate activities (Johnson *et al* 2012). In as much as this may be true, it is difficult to imagine that single people *must be* lonely or that they do not have any purpose (Ademiluka 2021; Marsh 2023). Single people may be happy and fulfilled in their lives relative to people engaged in romantic relationships.

The Complexities of Intimacy for Black Middle-Class Women

In democratic South Africa, it has become evident that marriage and family formation have undergone significant transformations (Moore & Govender 2013). For example, divorce rates have increased, and women remaining single and childless have become a trend (Ademiluka 2021; Lesch & Van der Watt 2018; Maharaj & Shangase 2020). A plethora of economic, political-structural, and ideological concerns have been cited as reasons for the rising reluctance to marry and establish a nuclear family (Lesch & Van der Watt 2018; Maharaj & Shangase 2020; Moore & Govender 2013).

Considering the efforts made to retain Black women in the labour force and for them to attain educational qualifications, lobbying and affirmative action in this regard, and generally, in the post-apartheid era has influenced romantic relationships (Maharaj & Shangase 2020). Black women have been provided with the ability to negotiate, criticise, and reject their established gendered roles within institutions like the family. This is considered to have emerged as a response to various institutions that have promoted and governed the ideal of heterosexual, monogamous, intimate relationships (Ademiluka 2021; Maharaj & Shangase 2020; Mazibuko & Umejesi 2015).

The class position of single Black middle-class women restrains them as it takes away the ability for them to be genuinely loved. It has been contended that these women's middle-class status reduces their reliance on men, prompting them to choose more permissive ways of living, including being single (Mohlabane, Gumede & Mokomane 2019). Conversely, men feel scared by the financial status of single women, which hinders their ability to approach middle-class women with a romantic proposal. This is a significant disadvantage for some Black middle-class women who are, in fact, seeking romantic relationships (Ademiluka 2021).

Due to their education and economic success, when it comes to finding a partner, these Black middle-class women tend to be more discerning than poor women (Marsh 2023). They prefer men who are similarly ambitious, well-educated, and financially secure (Lesch & Van der Watt 2018; Marsh 2023; Moore & Govender 2013). As a result, these women often postpone being involved in a romantic relationship until they have discovered their ideal partner (Maharaj & Shangase 2020).

The Power to Choose, Breadwinning, and Gender-Role Definition

This section of the chapter focuses on a discussion of the findings of the study. First, how the class position of single Black middle-class women empowers them to choose the type of romantic partners they want is demonstrated. This power to choose

primarily relates to the financial status of the men they date. The findings show that middle-class women find it difficult to reconcile themselves with the notion of providing for men because they believe that men should be the main providers for the family (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2015). By adhering to the assumption that men are providers, they ironically nourish and preserve the capitalist and patriarchal gender-role expectation that men should be the only financial providers for their families.

This section is divided into two parts. The first discusses experiences of middle-classness and problems involved in dating unemployed men, who are perceived to be undesirable. This part of the discussion illustrates how dating unemployed men goes against the women's desires for a middle-class lifestyle. Whereas mainstream ideas about relationships suggest that woman stay with men because of the latter's financial position, the experiences discussed here take this idea further, confirming that when women have money, they do not remain involved with an unemployed man. This challenges the narrative of Black women as dependent, bitter, and hopeless victims.

The second part presents a view contrary to the overarching idea that unemployed men are romantically undesirable by showing the tension that plays out for Black middle-class women – between giving up their desire for improved material circumstances that a dual-income household may provide and the idea of love outside capitalist exchange. The choice presented here is useful for helping us to begin to think about whether decolonial love is possible and what types of things can make it possible or remove it as an option. Decolonial love is a type of love that can liberate people from the catastrophic effects of colonial violence (Butler 2023; Díaz, 2007). This would entail fully accepting and valuing people, such as unemployed men, who are typically considered undeserving of love (Butler 2023).

The Undesirables: Single Black Middle-class Women and Unemployed Men

The women in my study would not contemplate dating unemployed men. These women believe that a compatible partner

should occupy a high-paying position or at least have adequate financial resources. Their past experiences with unemployed partners influenced their decisions to stay away from unemployed men when it came to romantic partnering. This limits their options for finding a partner as they think unemployed men are unappealing. For instance, Dini, a 29-year-old single Black middle-class woman, who held a diploma from a tertiary institution at the time of the interview and worked as an executive receptionist, said she would never date an unemployed man. She explained her rationale for rejecting unemployed men as follows:

> I would not go out with a person who is unemployed again! He could not provide, and I had to support him.

Dini's issue with unemployed men stems from the fact that her previous partner was unable to either provide for her or to support himself. This meant that Dini was forced to bear all the weight of providing for both of them. She shared her frustration:

> The pressure of my work was just too much, and the relationship was demanding and financially draining – remember he was unemployed; but I loved him.

On the one hand, as men are supposed to be the providers, Dini's ex-boyfriend must have felt powerless and useless with Dini supporting him financially. Dini became financially exhausted from supporting her ex-boyfriend; though it would have not been a problem if they were to swap the roles (Khunou 2006). This is because the social expectation is that men support their partners, rather than the other way around. Dini's frustration arose not only because the ex-boyfriend was unemployed; it was also because he was "too much" – he relied on her finances, and he also experienced other challenges: he was demanding of her time and jealous of her accomplishments. For Dini, it did not seem as if there was going to be any progress in the relationship:

> I could not balance my life because he wanted my attention all the time. He got angry when I went to work and when I just did my work things.

When men are unemployed their ability to participate in exchange is reduced, and it becomes more difficult to deal with their demands. In Dini's experiences, we observe what Constable (2019) refers to as a reconstruction of historical conceptions of intimacy.

Tintswalo, a 43-year-old single woman who worked for the government and held a degree at the time of the interview also stated that she would not date an unemployed man. She reasoned that providing for a man is tantamount to giving him "pocket money", and pocket money, in her experience, is typically money parents give to children. For Tintswalo, a mother of two children, giving money to an adult was not an option. The notion of pocket money, when used in reference to money given men, is a derogatory way of conveying the idea that the man is not 'man enough'. A man who expects to receive pocket money or is forced by a lack of employment to receive pocket money is essentially reduced to the status of a child. This is why Tintswalo felt that an unemployed man would compete with her children for her attention. When asked if she would date an unemployed man, she stated the following:

> I don't think so; isn't it that he will want pocket money from me, want me to give him a car? During the day he will come stay here and eat the polony and cheese that is meant for my kids, hai no! A lot of women here give pocket money – it's even worse here at Glen. I would rather live alone than give pocket money to a man.

Tintswalo is a single mother, and her children are her responsibility. They depend on her alone for their well-being, their school fees, food, clothing, and general care as she does not receive maintenance payments from their father. Over and above her other responsibilities is ensuring that the needs of her children are met. Thus, she works to provide for them. The thought of an unemployed man who would romantically and financially depend on her seems a burden she would not be able to carry. In the quote, the statement, "during the day he will come stay here and eat polony and cheese that is meant for my kids", conveys a sentiment common in the township, where dating an

unemployed man is seen as inviting an adult child into your house to compete with your kids for your attention and resources.

The other popular idea relating to unemployed adults who receive pocket money is that they would then not look for a job. In an article titled, "Why being unemployed is worse for men", Van der Meer (2012) illustrates the dehumanisation and reduction in social approval that men experience when they are unemployed. This is yet another indicator of the stigma unemployed men face. They are ranked very low within the social hierarchy – to the extent that they are considered children, as less than men, because of their inability to provide for themselves and others.

For Tintswalo, an unemployed man is tantamount to a parasite. He would be in a relationship for financial gain. To her mind, unemployed men do not date for love; they date to improve their financial status. This is likely to be a sentiment shared by most successful women. It is likely that they assume that unemployed men who express romantic feelings towards them are being deceitful. As such, they become suspicious that such men want to be in their lives for the money and not for love (Lewis & Scott 2000; Zelizer 2005).

Tintswalo retained a firm belief that men should provide for women and not the other way around, even though it is almost a norm in Protea Glen, where she lives, for women to provide for their unemployed partners. She declared that it was possible that these women support their partners because they believed they should provide them with a helping hand. However, middle-class women who offer money to their partners are perceived as being desperate, hopeless women seeking love (Boshoff & Mlangeni 2021). Tintswalo vowed that she would never allow that to happen to her.

Mpho is a 42-year-old divorcee who worked as a personal assistant and lived in Tshiawelo at the time of the interview. Mpho claimed that her experience with her unemployed ex-husband influenced her decision to not date unemployed men. She expressed the following when asked about dating unemployed men:

> I do not think I would ever date a man who does not work. My ex-husband, at some point, was unemployed and he depended on me. I had to pay for everything. The bond, the school fees, the groceries. Worse, he would demand that I give him money as if I was obligated to do so. He acted like a child. He would just sit and watch TV and do nothing! Not even cook or clean the house. It is a problem when a man is unemployed; they are powerless.

The burden of daily household chores like cooking and cleaning the house rests with women irrespective of whether they are wage-earners or not. Although Mpho assumed the breadwinner role while her husband was unemployed, he expected her to perform domestic duties once she had finished work for the day. Given that most employed women expect unemployed men to assist with household duties, Mpho felt betrayed and encumbered by her husband's reluctance to 'assist' with domestic commitments. The problematic word 'assist' illustrates that the assumption is that it is not the man's responsibility to ensure that his family eats and that they live in a clean house. The sentiments expressed by Mpho reflect the findings of Van der Meer (2013) regarding the dehumanisation and reduction in social approval men in relationships face when they are unemployed.

His idleness at home and professionally made Mpho entertain the notion that her ex-husband was, like most unemployed men, reclaiming all the years he spent working and providing for the family (Rabe 2021; Van der Meer 2014; Zelizer 2005). Mpho's experience illustrates the way patriarchy benefits men – her ex-husband's propensity to demand money made Mpho feel as if she was "obligated" to take care of him while he was unemployed. Such feelings arise because this was not the norm in Mpho's community, nor in her relationships with men; men provided rather than it being the other way round.

Unemployed Men are Insecure and Lack Ambition

Lucy, a 47-year-old divorcee, worked as an assistant director and lived in Protea Glen at the time of the interview. Lucy had unhappy experiences with her ex-husband who was unemployed.

As a result, she also decided never to be involved with an unemployed man again. Part of the reason for her decision was what she referred to the insecurity her husband displayed. The following is what she said when asked about her views on dating an unemployed man:

> Uhm, no I wouldn't, because he would be insecure. He will end up being abusive, be it financially, verbally, physical, and whatever. They tend to be insecure. My husband for one would accuse me of many things. This is when he was doing all his things, running around with women. He was, like, kind of insecure when I came from work; he would say I was with men.

Lucy's husband was insecure and often made Lucy feel bad about her job. His insecurities made him abuse and threaten her. This included accusing her of cheating with her colleagues or other men. Men become insecure when they lack something in a relationship; in the case of Lucy's ex-husband, lack of employment made him controlling and abusive. Lucy's husband was insecure because he had no source of income and was failing to financially provide for his family.

It is clear from Lucy's experience with her ex-husband that, in patriarchal societies, men acquire authority and masculine status on the basis of their being able to financially provide for their families. Unemployed men are hence perceived as weak and effeminate. It also seems that they consider themselves weak without the status associated with being a wage-earner and provider; this is why, lacking this status, as in the case of Lucy's husband, unemployment was followed by overcontrolling and abusive behaviour. It is most likely that he resorted to violence, cheating, drinking alcohol, and being absent from home because he wanted to reaffirm and prove his manhood.

While insecurity was central to Lucy's aversion to unemployed men, Promise's distaste for them stemmed from her belief that they are lazy and lack ambition. At the time of the interview, Promise was a 28-year-old traffic police officer

and the owner of a small business in Soweto. She articulated her experience thus:

> I've been with a person who doesn't have a job! It was stressful because he wasn't goal-orientated and didn't know what he wants in life. I'd be like, "Okay, in two years' time, what do you see yourself doing, are you looking for a job?" And he is like "No, I am just seeing whatever comes"! I don't want a guy like that anymore .... It didn't work out. I would want to go on a vacation with bae and we could not, because with bae, I must pay for everything, and sometimes their pride is so big.

A reflection on Promise's response indicates that unemployed men lose hope and become less ambitious. Her ex-husband saying, "No, I am just seeing whatever comes", becomes disconcerting for someone who is ambitious, who wants to see her life moving forward. 'Waiting to see' makes it appear as if one is not planning and or anticipating the future and one's place in it. The ambition of the middle-class women interviewed for this project was to improve their access to life opportunities; this was one of the things that drove them. Being involved in a relationship with someone who is 'waiting to see' is understandably frustrating.

The idea of 'waiting to see' and not planning can be argued to be a symptom of unemployment: it strips men of their certainty when it comes to income and the possibilities this provides. Unemployment is disempowering, especially when there might not be other options. According to a labour-force survey, unemployment, using the expanded definition, was at 41.2% in the third quarter of 2023; for men it sat at 30% (StatsSA 2023). Masculinities research shows that unemployment influences how gender and love are constructed and are experienced (Khunou 2012; Malinga & Ratele 2016). Their experiences with unemployed men drive the aspiration of these middle-class women to be involved with men who are employed and are in a better position than them.

Men Must Be Loved for the Sake of Love Not Their Employment Status

Normative assumptions about love and heterosexual relationships include that men must provide financially for the partners and families (Boshoff & Mlangeni 2021; Masinga 2023); women can work, though this is not necessarily their primary role. Thus, in cases where the man is unemployed, we not only see frustrations from the women around them; we also see, as indicated in the previous section, that this frustration is a serious matter as men's unemployment is accompanied by a rigidity that involves them not wanting to contribute in other ways. This may contribute to the notion that living with or dating unemployed men is undesirable. However, interestingly, one of my research participants held the contrary view.

This is the case with Kamogelo, a 26-year-old single Black middle-class woman from Diepkloof Zone 5. At the time of the interview, Kamogelo was studying for a degree and was also working as a sales consultant. To her mind, unemployment should not be a determining factor in choosing who to love. As a result, her peers and cousins perceived her as being odd and boring. She was viewed as boring because she did things differently from the way her peers did them. For example, at her age, Kamogelo was childless and unmarried. Her cousins made her feel bad about her life choices and problematised her status as a single woman. She was often made to feel as if something was not quite right with her and was pressured to have a child as almost all her contemporaries had children. Unfortunately for them, they could not easily convince Kamogelo as her mind and energy have been devoted to her education and building her career.

Adichie (2017) argues that society needs odd and brave people whose characters enable others to question homogeneity. Kamogelo falls into the category of such women: she does not care what others think about her, only about what she thinks of herself. She does not allow societal norms to define who she is and what she believes in. For instance, contrary to the other Black middle-class women interviewed, Kamogelo stated that she would not mind dating an unemployed man. She believes in

unconditional love. For her, material love is secondary; true love is primary. This is how she reasoned when asked if she would date an unemployed man:

> You know I had this conversation yesterday with my cousin. She was saying I should not date an unemployed man. I was so angry! I think, with me, it's not about money and taking me out. With me it's time, I just need your time. I know how it feels to be unemployed, so downgrading someone, saying you not going to date them because they are unemployed, it is just downgrading a person. Because that person, even when they are unemployed, they could make a plan. I would date an unemployed person, I don't mind!

It is apparent in what Kamogelo says about her conversation with her cousin that she is a change agent. While she does this unconsciously because of her beliefs, there is a strong likelihood that her beliefs may positively impact on her life outcomes. Kamogelo's humanising energy is clear when she says, "I know how it feels to be unemployed, so downgrading someone, saying you not going to date them because they are unemployed, it is just downgrading a person" – she knows how it feels to be unemployed and does not want another person to be dehumanised because of their economic situation. This is an important observation as one's employment status is not permanent. This observation raises the following question for middle-class women: What happens if an individual with whom you initiated a romantic relationship based on their employment status is subsequently retrenched or otherwise becomes unemployed? One perspective would be to contemplate Kamogelo, who is receptive to dating an unemployed man and who may witness her companion gain employment in the course of their relationship.

Kamogelo's humanist perspective is sobering, particularly in a country like South Africa where unemployment is rife. To make matters worse, Black men, rather than White men, experience the worst of this unemployment (StatsSA 2023). Thus Kamogelo's considerations might be important for thinking about the limits of centring wage-earning in considerations about relationships. The most important question when thinking

about Kamogelo's position is as follows: Who would the majority of unemployed, heterosexual Black men date if employed and unemployed Black women find them unacceptable?

Kamogelo believes unemployment is not an inherent attribute. As such, she does not believe that it should stand in the way of love. She is aware that men have the capacity to procure sources of income which may ultimately alter their social standing. Her saying that the man "could make a plan" suggests that she is hopeful that he might become employed. Even though Kamogelo says that she would agree to dating an unemployed man, there is the implication that it would not necessarily be permanent. This problematic is a real one – there is a clear sense of the injustice of mistreating someone, deciding someone is not deserving of love merely because that person is unemployed.

While the other participants had valid reasons for their stances, the question remains as to whether Kamogelo would change her opinion about unemployed men should the realities of dating them diverge from her ideas thereof. What happens when she is the provider, and her partner does not take on the nurturing role, abuses alcohol, and is unfaithful? Would she be happy carrying the burden of providing for and nurturing a man who does not support her?

Kamogelo's view is important in that it helps us to reflect on an alternative possibility; it allows us to see that while colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism provide space for only a particular kind of exchange in relations to intimacy, there is a need to find another way. Thinking about gender, love, and intimacy in the context of unemployment, and especially in relation to Kamogelo's reflection on the idea of 'love for love's sake', has strong links with the notion of love that is accepting and radical (Makhubo 2019) – a romantic love that is liberated from the shackles of patriarchal and capitalist prescriptions about love (Ratele 2021). When all is said and done, the challenge is whether Kamogelo's idea would be practicable in a context in which not only do men themselves expect to be the provider but are also expected to do so by the women in their lives.

Table 3.1: Profile of participants interviewed

Participant's Pseudonym	Age	Marital status	Residential area	Highest level of education	Occupation
Dini	29	Single	Diepkloof Zone 6	Technical diploma	Receptionist
Kamogelo	26	Single	Diepkloof Zone 5	Grade 12 (furthering her education)	Sales consultant
Lucy	47	Divorced	Protea Glen Extension 12	Technical diploma	Assistant director
Mpho	42	Divorced	Tshiawelo	Technical diploma	Personal assistant
Promise	28	Single	Jabulani	Grade 12 (furthering higher education)	Traffic police officer and owner of a small company
Tintswalo	43	Single	Protea Glen Extension 11	University degree	Office clerk

Conclusion

The experiences discussed in the chapter illustrate the ways in which gendered norms have socialised men and women: it becomes clear that, in capitalist and patriarchal society, romantic love is largely transactional. Based on their personal experiences with unemployed men, most of these women have decided that it is not worth dating them as it leads to negative life experiences, including abuse, lack of alignment with societal norms and gender expectations, and, most importantly, not fulfilling the aspirations that success and middle-classness offers.

In this study, Kamogelo is the epitome of decolonial love. She was the only one of the six participants who is a proponent of unconditional love. While the other women found unemployed men intolerable due to their bad experiences with them – such as cheating, abuse, and not being helped with household chores – Kamogelo believes that unemployed men should be given a chance. Her independent thinking makes her a change agent. A middle-class society needs women who are capable of challenging and changing traditional gender norms that have made it difficult for others to be involved in intimate relationships because they lack resources. Kamogelo speaks of a new way of doing things. This new way requires us to think differently and do things differently.

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