



Chapter 4

Black Middle-Class Women and Challenges with Breadwinning

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Introduction

The Black middle class in South Africa has emerged and expanded significantly since the end of apartheid. Historically, due to the racist policies of apartheid, the majority of Black South Africans were denied access to education, economic opportunities, and social mobility. However, since the advent of democracy, many Black South Africans have been able to access education and employment opportunities that were previously unavailable to them. The growth of the Black middle class represents a significant step towards building a more inclusive and equitable society in post-apartheid South Africa. As it relates to social class, the term “middle-ness”, refers to individuals who occupy the middle strata of the income distribution in each country (Mattes 2014:2).

Economic transformation has also involved economic redistribution along racial lines, which, from the beginning, has meant – among other things – the creation of a new, Black middle class which has not only signalled access to economic power by Black South Africans but also acts as a patriotic bourgeoisie and helps drive the larger process of development. The middle class is characterised by a relatively high level of income, involvement in specific occupations (e.g. in entrepreneurship, management,

and teaching) and specific levels of education with an emphasis on post-matric qualifications (Mattes 2014:3). Receiving a regular income, accumulating savings and pension funds, and owning property give middle-class citizens a greater interest in the protection of private property and in gradual rather than radical social, economic, and political change. Beyond the hopes that Africa's new middle class will become an engine of economic growth as a result of shifting consumption and production patterns, some analysts expect this class to foster stability, progress, and democratic consolidation throughout the continent (Schotte 2017).

The notion that the Black middle class often supports democracy and progressive political platforms is grounded in the historical and socio-political contexts where the growth of the middle class was linked to the strengthening of democracy (Mattes 2014). A demographic that has historically faced systemic discrimination and barriers to economic and social advancement, many members of the Black middle class are keenly aware of the importance of democratic principles in fostering equality and opportunity (Mattes 2014). The influence of members of the Black middle class on economic development and political participation stems from their commitment to democratic values, social justice, and inclusive growth. By leveraging their collective voice and agency, the middle class contributes to building a more equitable society for all (Mattes 2014).

When examining the expansion of the Black middle class in South Africa, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of women in social, economic, and political progress. Women's economic empowerment is not only a fundamental human right but also a catalyst for sustainable development and societal progress. It encompasses the ability of women to participate fully in the economy, have control over their economic resources, and enjoy equal opportunities for economic advancement.

One of the reasons for undertaking this study is the dearth of Black middle-class studies that focus on women and how this class position empowers them. This is because, generally, studies of social class have been very generic, focusing on macro-

economic concerns such as unemployment and spending patterns. This is illustrated in the seminal work by Alexander, Ceruti, Motseke, Phadi and Wale (2013) on the middle class in Soweto. This study does not provide a sense of how gender is experienced and how it might influence our understanding of middle-classness in particular ways. This omission may be similarly observed with regard to studies of intimacy – they seldom provide a sense of how this is experienced from a class perspective.

It is therefore the intention of this chapter to focus on how a Black middle-class position empowers Black women to take on the role of breadwinner and to have a voice in decision-making in their relationships. Women's economic empowerment refers to a process whereby the lives of women and girls are transformed from a situation in which they have limited power and access to economic assets to one in which they experience economic advancement (Hunt & Samman 2016). Such power is usually contingent on increased access to money and educational and work opportunities. The Black middle-class position, as is shown in this chapter, provides access to money, a desire to advance one's educational achievements; and access to better work opportunities; it is thus of particular significance to the economic empowerment of women occupying this position.

Furthermore, women's economic empowerment allows equal access to and control over economic resources. This financial control then affords women control over other areas in their lives (Hunt & Samman 2016). The economic advancement of women has led to increased investments in the education and health of children and has reduced household poverty (Levin 2004; Tshoaedi 2008). It is important to recognise that the process of women's economic advancement is not a linear and uncontested one; rather, it is one of constant negotiation and compromise, and it often involves uncertain outcomes (Hunt & Samman 2016). The ability of women to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions, is crucial to understanding women's overall development (Levin 2004).

This chapter is drawn from an analysis of the findings of a study conducted in Sandton, Johannesburg, of twenty Black

middle-class women. The project received ethical clearance from the University of Johannesburg, employed a qualitative research methodology (for further information on the methodological considerations involved in this project, please see De Mendonca, 2019). The main argument of this chapter is that women use the financial resources made available by their middle-class position to gain power and control over their lives. This, however, comes with other challenges, including being subject to violence and power struggles in their intimate relationships. To illustrate this argument, the chapter first briefly reviews the literature on the economic advancement of Black women and breadwinning. Thereafter, an overview of the research methods used in the project is provided. Finally, the chapter examines the historical background of women's access to money and considers the ways in which gender norms and patriarchy manifest in their intimate relationships.

Women Empowerment

Africa has been celebrated as having “the fastest-growing middle class in the world” (Southall 2014). The rise of a growing, politically conscious middle class is evident in shopping malls, European-style coffee shops, movie theatres, and new housing complexes springing up in several African cities (Schotte 2017). Following the advent of democracy, Black women were finally acknowledged as ‘full citizens’ of South Africa; however, inequality still looms large as women's lived experiences continue to be only minimally recognised (Parry & Segalo 2017).

Women generally earn less than men and have limited access to economic opportunities. In addition, they experience discrimination in the workplace (Nwosu 2018). Due to continued workplace discrimination, many organisational structures continue to ignore the dual role women play. Women work longer hours to meet deadlines and must do household chores when they get home. However, the economic participation afforded by having jobs outside the home allows women the opportunity to access financial assets and control these and how they use their time. South Africa is a relevant context to study the economic empowerment of women as it has witnessed Black

women increasingly becoming economically active, even though women continue to face inequality and several other challenges. Nevertheless, the economic progression of women in the country allows them the opportunity to escape some aspects of patriarchy while also ensuring their personal autonomy and mobility (Parry & Segalo 2017).

Research illustrates that women become empowered when they have access to financial resources; such access increases their power to make decisions within both the domestic and public spheres (Tshoaedi 2008). This power within the home influences their public power. For instance, women who are financially empowered may choose to go out socialising alone or to attend public meetings (O'Neil & Domingo 2016). Moreover, education and employment outside the home can increase women's power and status within the family and community (Mokotso 2009). Decision-making power refers to the ability to influence decisions (McDermid 2014). This power includes access to decision-making as well as participation in and influence over the decision-making process (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016).

Gender and Women Breadwinners

In the South African context, women have overcome traditional gender norms by becoming primary breadwinners and providing primary financial support in their homes (Parry & Segalo 2017). Moreover, the patriarchal political policies of the apartheid era, such as the migrant labour system, meant that Black women were employed as domestic workers in distant urban areas away from their families, which transformed the dynamics of African households (Mokoene & Khunou 2019, 2022). Labour migration for women continues as they seek opportunities for economic empowerment in harsh socio-economic conditions (Mokoene & Khunou, 2019). Simultaneously, women in rural areas stayed at home, working in agriculture, while relying on male migrants to send money (Parry & Segalo 2017). Labour migration for men has, over the years, resulted in women remaining behind in rural areas and thus becoming the heads of households (Nwosu 2018). In cases where women are engaged in wage-based employment, sexism and discrimination in the workplace has ensured that

women remain in low-skilled and low-paying jobs (Winston 2005; Parry & Segalo 2017).

As a result of patriarchy and continuing workplace discrimination, women remain marginalised in society. Economic marginalisation is evident in how young, uneducated migrant women remain unable to provide for their children and extended families due to high levels of unemployment and underemployment (Mokoene & Khunou 2019, 2022). Interestingly though, this marginal position of low-pay and low-skilled work generally does not deter women from taking on the breadwinner role in families. In dual-earner marriages, women are less likely to rely solely on the man as the source of family income. As a result of this various types of female-breadwinner families have emerged (Drago, Black & Wooden 2004). First, temporary female-breadwinner families refer to cases where the woman earns more than the man at one point in time but not at others (Sewpaul & Pillay 2011). Temporary female-breadwinner families may emerge accidentally in cases when the woman experiences unusually high earnings or if the man is briefly unemployed or for other reasons temporarily receives low earnings (Drago, Black & Wooden 2004). Second, economic female-breadwinner families refer to cases in which the family may have a female breadwinner because of adverse events affecting the man, such as long-term unemployment or persistently low earnings (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado 2018). In such cases, when the man has fallen on hard economic times, the family is highly dependent on the woman's income, which affords the woman a sense of economic power within the family (Drago *et al* 2004).

With growing calls for equal opportunities for women in education, employment, and pay, marriages in which both the husband and the wife pursue careers are becoming more prevalent, and it is increasingly possible for each partner to earn equal amounts or for women to earn more than men (Coughlin & Wade 2012). Given these changes in the breadwinner role, it is imperative to better understand this actuality and its influence on the experience of marriage and on romantic relationships. Coughlin and Wade (2012) show that even in relationships in which the man does not fulfil his traditional role, he does not

recognise his wife as being the family's main provider and, hence, fulfilling such a role. This is because men and women usually view men as the provider, even in cases where they are not (Gwagwa 1998; Khunou 2006). Even in circumstances in which a woman is the sole household earner, as when the man is unemployed, husbands and wives may deny that the wife is the provider (Khunou 2006, 2012). The relationship between money and decision-making power exists only for husbands, as women are more likely to view themselves as being part of a team than being the main breadwinner. Women are rarely seen as providers; rather, they are seen as aiding the family (Sewpaul & Pillay 2011). This implies that gendered notions of breadwinning persist in instilling the expectation that this role is for males. This then results in a tug of war among the genders as to the source of breadwinning. Nonetheless, the updated version of the male-breadwinner/female-carer model entails various scenarios in which mothers work for pay but remain primary carers. This may have either positive or negative results. The next section explores narratives relating to this phenomenon.

Consequences for Women Breadwinners

In reality, the situation involving woman breadwinners is more complex than it is when the breadwinner is male, as women in this category face challenges in reassuring society, and their spouse, that the husband remains the logical and legitimate head of household (Muzvidziwa 2013). This is significant because women, particularly Black women, often have to be apologetic about their success and overall career progression, which is not the case when success and progression can be attributed to their spouse.

Although gender norms are transforming, the idea that breadwinning is the role of men alone has thus far been preserved (Holter 2007). This is true even in contexts where a succession of women has assumed the provider role for centuries (Gwagwa 1998; Khunou 2012). The decline of the male-breadwinner role has not meant a shift to more egalitarian (work-sharing) models in the household. Furthermore, gender equality, including women's equal participation in attaining education and in the

labour market, requires transformation in the behaviours and ideologies of men (Waite 1995).

Working men as breadwinners are often commended for providing for the needs of their families. However, when women assume the breadwinner role, they do not receive the same recognition (Folbre & Nelson 2000). Women are often condemned for neglecting their family's needs when they participate in paid work. Parry and Segalo (2017) suggest that the dominant position of being the primary breadwinner in the family does not necessarily secure the safety of women within their homes. In some cases, men who feel disempowered by women's increased earnings attempt to maintain their power through violence, sexual coercion, and marital infidelity (Gendenhuys 2011). According to Conner (2014), money and power influence male violence against women and have an impact on the economic challenges women experience.

Where men do not have the opportunity to validate their masculinity through income provision, they may resort to the use of violence to reinforce traditional ideas of what it means to be a man (Atkinson 2005). The resource and relative resource theories are two perspectives on social structure commonly used to explain wife abuse. According to these theories, married men who have few resources to offer (resource theory) or have fewer resources to offer than their wives do (relative resource theory) are more likely than their resource-rich counterparts to use violence (Atkinson 2005). In both cases, the primary predictor is resources, which are typically operationalised as education, income, and employment. Scholars who employ the relative resource theory argue that men who do not have status superior to that their wives use violence to regain power. Violence often serves as a compensation for men's shortage of resources (Atkinson 2005). Furthermore, violence or the threat of violence can be used to obtain obedience and compliance in the absence of material resources. Violence, or the threat thereof, serves as an alternative power base in cases in which material resources are absent or in short supply. Therefore, husbands of lower social status would be more likely to use violence than would husbands of higher social status (Atkinson 2005).

According to patriarchal perspectives, violence may occur as a man's response to a feeling of powerlessness and his being threatened by a loss of control over an independent spouse (Antai 2011). Key elements to consider when examining control within relationships is the unequal social distribution of power between men and women as well as the economic dependence that may be present. Women whose behaviour diverges from societal expectations of gender roles may be regarded as challenging their partner's masculinity as provider or breadwinner; these partners may then resort to using control tactics to curtail such 'deviant' behaviour, which may result in violence (Antai 2011). For example, women whose economic resources exceed those of their partners are more likely to report experiencing control and violence (Antai 2011).

A Brief Methodology

As indicated, the data informing this chapter was drawn from a study conducted in Sandton, Johannesburg. The purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Black middle-class women's experiences of work-life balance and intimacy. This interest was a result of the observation that even though there are numerous studies and research on the emerging Black middle class and work-life balance, yet very few studies analyse the relationship between class and intimacy. The study aimed to answer the following research question: How do issues of work-life balance create challenges in intimate relationships for Black middle-class women?

The study used a qualitative research approach as this was the most appropriate exploring women's perceptions and experiences. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was employed to select participants for the study. At the conclusion of the fieldwork a total of twenty Black middle-class women of 30 to 50 years of age had been selected and interviewed for the study. The informants were all married and had children; one was in the process of getting divorced. All twenty participants had obtained some form of tertiary education and occupied senior managerial positions at the time of the interviews.

The data was collected over a five-month period. Semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection. Such interviews allowed the researcher flexibility while presenting an opportunity for participants to express themselves to the fullest extent possible. The interviews were conducted in English, and a variety of themes were covered, such as age, gender, occupation, household expenses, class, work–life balance, and intimacy. Thematic content analysis was then used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative descriptive approach for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. It allowed for flexibility in analysing and interpreting meaningful data. Each participant was given the opportunity to select their own pseudonym, which allowed for anonymity and creativity in the research process.

Research ethics play a crucial role in protecting the research participants and the researcher from harm. Each of the participants were provided with a study information sheet to read prior to the interview. This contained details about the researcher's identity, the overall purpose of the study, and an invitation to participate in it. The information sheet also informed prospective participants that the interview would be recorded and that all their details and their identity would remain confidential, with only the researcher and study supervisor having access to such information. Once the prospective participants had agreed to partake in the research, they were provided with a consent form. Each of the informed consent forms was signed, dated accurately, and retained for record purposes.

To ensure the psychological well-being of the participants, all twenty female participants were provided with a referral letter to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group, which offers free counselling sessions, in the event that they experienced psychological distress as a result of participating in the research.

Gender-Based Violence and Women Breadwinners

In this section, two findings are discussed. The first one concerns women's resentment of breadwinning and provides a sense of how Black middle-class women in management positions

experience being positioned as breadwinners in their families. Many of the women found having to deal with unemployed or underemployed husbands challenging as it was beyond what they had been led expect based on their experience in their families of origin. Most importantly, these women revealed how living with an unemployed or underemployed man presented an obstacle to what they desired from a middle-class lifestyle. This then led to resentment of the husband and to a wish for a 'soft life' in which they were taken care of by the husband as this seemed to be the norm in their social circles.

The second part of this section focuses on telling the story of how Black middle-class women who are high-income earners experience gender-based violence from their spouses because their high-achiever positions make them 'act outside of the norm of what a woman should be'. What was also made visible here is that while a middle-class position gave these women a high income and status in the workplace, it tended to remove some of the comforts they expected in their intimate relationships.

The third section examines the significance of communication in curbing misunderstandings and addressing fears and challenges that might arise in a marriage due to the changes in gender roles that result from the benefits of women occupying a middle-class position. Finally, the story of one of the women, one whose high income had not led to gender-based violence, is discussed. This scenario suggests the possibilities for egalitarian relationships in a context in which Black middle-class women occupy high-level positions in the workplace and earn more than their husbands.

Women's Resentment of Breadwinning

Individuals view, appreciate, and manage money in different ways. According to Shapiro (2007), while money is regarded as a taboo topic, it is closely related to feelings of success, competence, safety, security, and acceptance in a community. Men and women also differ in their attitudes towards money. Men are often more concerned about power and performance, whereas women tend to become anxious about money; thus, they have a greater tendency

to save, whereas men are more inclined to make risky investment decisions (Weaver, Vandello & Bosson 2013). The participants in the study indicated that their husbands were self-employed. Jane indicated that she wanted to be financially taken care of by her husband and felt that her income being the main income in the household placed pressure on her:

Like I am saying, there is so many times when I feel like I have a lot of weight and I don't feel like ... you know, as a woman, there are times when you feel like you want to be a little girl to your husband ... because it's like I am a soldier in the army. You know, growing up I used to dream of a husband who takes care of you, who you look up to and feel is like my dad was to my mother. He was the hero, he was the main man, while with me it's totally opposite.

Jane's view that her husband should take care of her is based on her experiences of her own family of origin: her father took care of her mother, but the opposite is true for her. As a result, she felt pressure from all the responsibilities she has. The phrase she used to illustrate the extent to which she felt overwhelmed is telling: "it's like I am a soldier in the army". War is armed conflict; it is chaos, and soldiers go without sleep or food for days. War is a condition that is unsustainable; it crushes the soul. For Jane to use this metaphor to explain her experience of breadwinning is an indicator of how outside the norm it was for her. She expected to be taken care of by her husband because this was what she experienced in her home of origin. This metaphor of soldiering paints a disturbing picture of the resentment she feels: the context of operations for a soldier is one of very little autonomy and control. Hence, it may be said that Jane experiences her context as being one involving a lack of autonomy.

Like Jane, Tsholo expressed feelings of resentment towards her self-employed husband due to her having to take care of most of the household expenses:

I must say, I never felt it until two months ago ... not two months, no, I'm lying, until two years ago, and solely because I wanted to take sabbatical. I wanted to take off for

a year and I really wanted to take a break, but I cannot do that because I am now the anchor and the sole consistent breadwinner. I know things will happen, but I then felt some sense of resentment, that if all things were equal and he was working, then I would be able to take the sabbatical.

Tsholo explained that she was the sole breadwinner in her family as her husband had been unemployed at the time. She experienced feelings of resentment due to her being unable to fulfil her personal interest in taking a sabbatical. Feelings of resentment have been recorded in other studies of intimate relationships and are usually an indicator of a disproportionate division of labour in terms of income contribution and nurturing responsibilities (Goldberg, McCormick & Virginia 2021; Hatfield, Traupman & Sprecher 1984). Tsholo also indicated that her feelings of discontentment were influenced by her social circle:

And I look at my peers, some of them are stay-at-home mums, and I have that envy, I wish, I wish, just for once, that I could be a girl and be pampered ... look, he does pamper me, but I'm saying, just to stay at home and drive these big cars and not do anything.

Like Jane, Tsholo clearly expects in her marriage what has been mirrored to her by society. Specifically, Tsholo refers to her social circle – these are the people to whom she is comparing herself; they are stay at home moms who drive big cars because their husbands provide for them. Tsholo's expectations are based on normative values. According to Phadi and Ceruti (2011), class is defined not only by consumption but also relative to those in one's social circle. This is also true with regard to acceptable social norms: we compare what we are experiencing to what has been modelled to us in our social context. Thus, the idea that men should be the main provider abounds even in contexts in which women clearly are more empowered to do so.

It is, however, clear from the experience related by Tsholo that the challenge is also that her breadwinning means that she is unable to pursue her other interests, such as being able to take a sabbatical. This is serious inequality because, in cases

where men are the breadwinners, they are most likely to engage in their personal interests regardless of whether the family is taken care of (Williams 2012). This confirms that money and family responsibilities confer differential experiences on women and men.

The inability to operate at a level that one aspires, but not because one is unable to afford to do so, also contributes to discord in marriage, especially when the husband is the one who is unable to afford to take care of his family. Queen shared that she felt her husband was restricting her from achieving personal career and educational aspirations. From Queen's perspective, it appeared that her husband's anger and jealousy was obstructing her ability to achieve her personal goals, which consequently led to a sense of resentment.

So, my friends that I had gone to school with had done very well for themselves, they had got post-grad qualifications, got good jobs, bought cars, and lived in estates, and we would visit them. So, all of those things didn't sit well with him. They would make me uncomfortable in the sense that I would feel inspired that I need to move. I had just got my degree when they had already started working. And I think for him, it was a case of "I will never get there" ... and it caused so many problems for us and arguments and it started getting violent.

Like Tsholo and Jane, Queen also felt resentment because she was unable to live the lifestyle her income and social status should have allowed. She compared her ability to do so with her friends who she says had 'made it', because they had the cars and houses in estates. This middle-class desire contributed to the strife in her relationship because her husband could not afford to contribute to the attaining of this lifestyle. Even though the inability of their husbands to contribute to an improved lifestyle was a considerable challenge, based on the preceding extract, one may observe that a contributing factor to the resentment that Tsholo, Jane, and Queen experienced was that they engaged in a social comparison of what a middle-class lifestyle should comprise. These women used these ideas to judge their status as a family and, most

importantly, their husband's ability to provide for the family. This social comparison was based on the expectations mirrored in their families of origin and close social networks. Simultaneously though, their resentment was also a result of the disproportionate responsibility placed on them, a result of the gendered division of labour.

Gender-based Violence: Men's Resentment of their Wife's Breadwinning

Women who are perceived to act out of turn in public and private social settings usually meet with punishment (Faith 2011). This is the case in contexts where women earn more than their respective husbands and also have a higher social status (in terms of their occupation, education, and economic status). The experiences of the women interviewed for this project illustrate that hegemonic notions of masculinity and tradition and jealousy on the part of their husbands may result in violence and, in some cases, in a complete breakdown of the relationship. For Jane, the issue was that when she addressed the matter of feeling herself being under considerable pressure with her husband, she did not receive the response she expected:

And he said that, no, I must just be patient, he's going to be "that man". In his mind, he's going to be "that man". He always says, "Chill, I'm going to be that man."

The pressure felt and expressed by Jane is the reality of most women who earn more than their husbands or have unemployed spouses. This pressure is not only a result of the actual everyday pressures of supporting a family with one income but also a result of their misalignment in relation to societal gender-role expectations. Gender roles are socially constructed, which implies that each society allocates roles to girls and boys, men and women according to what the society considers appropriate (Thobejane & Khoza, 2014). These gender roles are differentiated and allocated according to what is considered suitable for men and women. Moreover, men are allocated roles that are considered to be masculine, such as providing for, and protecting the family.

Furthermore, the system of patriarchy was conceptualised as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Thobejane & Khoza 2014). This is what Janes' husband is referring to when he says "I'm going to be that man" it suggests that he will provide, protect, and be the dominant one in the family. It is also clear that Jane experienced dissatisfaction in her marriage resulting from the role mismatch, which did not align with her expectations. Based on the evidence presented here, one may observe that two of the most common reasons that couples experience problems in their marriages are a lack of money and not enough money (Gottman 2012).

The mismatch between what was expected from each spouse, as this relates to gender roles, proved to create challenges in Jane's relationship. When she was asked about how her husband felt about her being the main income-earner and breadwinner in the home, Jane stated that there was a power struggle within her marriage due to her husband attempting to control her:

I think it's also the personalities. My personality ... I was raised in a way that meant I learned to stand up for myself and do things, and also I can say it's career driven. As I said, I want to be hopeful, I don't want to end up looking at myself and saying I did not do that much. I think I still have a lot to offer, and I think it's too much for my husband to take. I think he needs to work extra hard to be able to control that kind of woman. When we fight all the time, I say to him, you are trying to dim my light [giggling].

Jane expresses here how she feels like her husband is trying to "dim [her] light". Considering what was said here, the couple does not appear to have the same values; Jane seems to be goal-oriented and wants to achieve all that is possible for her to achieve. Her saying, "I don't want to end up looking at myself and saying I did not do that much. I think I still have a lot to offer, and I think it's too much for my husband to take", illustrates that the husband does not have the same drive and needs to achieve more. This might mean that Jane feels she is doing too much in the relationship; hence the notion of him trying to dim her light. This is a recipe for unhappiness in a relationship. Historically,

in order to keep the peace, women also often handed financial management over to their husbands or fathers. Such a move might not be useful for women of this generation as the power that managing their own money affords is important for their success and safety. Research on intimate partner violence shows that access to economic power allows women to leave violent partners (Vyas & Jansen 2018).

Tsholo also indicated that she was aware that her husband was frustrated because she earned more than him; and sometimes she too became frustrated because they could afford fewer luxuries:

Look, it has come through ... we haven't talked about it, but I think it does bother him, uh, that he is not doing it quick enough; his business is not taking off fast enough, and I see that level of impatience. But what matters to me is he does what he loves, he loves it the most. But he can see when I get frustrated. Uhm, we don't travel as much as we would have wanted to ... but I have the maturity to understand that we are building wealth, and he is in a good space.

Tsholo rationalised her negative experiences by explaining that she is happy that her husband does what he enjoys doing to generate income. However, his business had not progressed as quickly as they had hoped, thus setting their family back – they could afford fewer luxury holiday trips. Intimate relationship studies show that the presence of negative feelings does not mean that there is an absence of positive feelings (Hatfield *et al* 1984). This explains Tsholo's experience of understanding her husbands' position while also reporting her negative feelings about his financial position. The disproportionality reported in the experiences of Jane, Queen, and Tsholo may also be understood in terms of a context in which women are forced to make sacrifices for their families by participating in employment for the sake of generating a stable wage as opposed to seeking a job that is fulfilling and aligned with their interests.

In the experiences of these women, we see how their husbands chose to engage in 'risky' business opportunities

without consideration for their families' well-being. African countries are increasingly recognising entrepreneurship as a vehicle their citizen can use to create jobs, foster economic development and growth while reducing poverty (Nyakudya, Simba & Herrington 2018). However, there is a disproportion of engagement between men and women in both developed and developing countries. Existing evidence indicates that, in 2015, 22.7% of men and 17% of women in Africa were actively engaged in early-stage entrepreneurial activity, one of the highest rates in the world (Nyakudya, Simba & Herrington 2018). This confirms that there is an increase of individuals who transition into entrepreneurship as an alternative to paid employment offered by the labour market. Moreover, attitudes towards entrepreneurship are shaped by the expected risks and rewards of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Research further suggests that men are risk-tolerant while women display higher levels of risk-avoidance across various contexts (Nyakudya *et al* 2018). Women with high incomes from the labour market may choose not to become entrepreneurs if entrepreneurship leads to reduced income compared to the income from their current occupations. This relates to an individual's level of fear of losing a constant flow of income from current employment and the possibility of no return on investments (Nyakudya *et al* 2018). Gender plays an important role in terms of risk attitudes where women are more risk averse than men.

This may explain the case of Tsholo's husband pursuing a business interest that is not bringing in money, doing so because it is what he loves, while Tsholo is unable to pursue her interests, in this case, taking a sabbatical. This further confirms that men and women manage and view money and family responsibility differently.

While Tsholo and Jane did not straightforwardly articulate how their higher incomes had a negative impact on their marriages, Xoli stated expressly that her earning a higher income than her spouse destroyed her marriage. She maintained that this was especially true because her husband was a very traditional man:

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It actually killed our relationship, I must confess. Because men, especially Zulu men – it has a huge impact on their self-esteem, their egos, and what made it worse in our environment is that he is a qualified chartered accountant. And he kept on thinking his going to catch up, his going to catch up... and later on, I started serving in different boards as a non-executive, I served, uh ... in listed companies, I served in NGOs as a non-executive, and currently where I'm serving, I get paid for my board, uh ... uh ... seating – that's why I mentioned it; then I was also getting lots of bonuses, then I started also buying lots of properties, so my net worth was just sky rocketing and he couldn't ... it didn't make sense ... “Why is this woman getting it right? Why am I battling so much?”

Xoli said she felt that her husband's Zulu culture played a role in his attitude towards her and that it impacted their marriage. In South Africa, there is a common view that traditional Zulu masculinity is rooted in ideas of deep gender inequality, that the man should be the main breadwinner and provider for his wife and children and that this should be the basis of their relationship. Research, however, shows that hegemonic masculinity is something many men aspire to (Connell 1995; Jewkes *et al* 2015; Khunou 2012). Hegemonic masculinity presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative ‘real men’ do behave, as the cultural ideal. The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though several masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity is dominant and bestows power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own (Jewkes *et al* 2015).

The idea of masculine traditional power also played a role in Queen's experiences of violence in her relationship. In Queen's experience, her educational attainment and ability to clearly express what she wants and what she thinks contributed to the physical abuse in her marriage:

I mean, we would have silly arguments, he would say something, and I would respond, and he would say “You respond that way because you are the man of this house”,

you know, and I would wonder where that comes from. He would make comments like “Oh, you are educated, and I am not”. He dropped out of tertiary, and he never completed his chemical engineering course. There was always that complexity issue.

This extract indicates that Queen’s education was a problem for her husband. The reference to her being educated and him not being educated during their arguments is clear example of how jealousy can manifest in intimate relationships when the women have a higher status and income. When someone says this, it is also a way of gaining some power over one, a way to silence one. Queen further expressed how her education and status created further challenges for her:

Because of me and my big mouth – and I would just go on and on because I am a very logical person. But I would be like, “As long as I do not disrespect you, let’s talk, let’s have this conversation”. But then obviously his logic gets to a certain stage where he can’t continue anymore, and then the one time, he threw a slap, and I was like “Ha! Did you just?” ... it happened the first time. We separated for a while and then months later, we got back together, and we were kind of okay, and then it happens again, and it’s in front of the kids and I’m like “No no no no... something has got to give”.

It is evident that Queen’s husband used violence to obtain obedience from his wife. Queen earned more than him, had a higher qualification, and was ambitious; this created problems for her relationship that lead to violent outbursts and physical abuse from her husband. Research argues that intimate partner violence is about power (Vyas *et al* 2018); this is evident in Queen’s experience: her husband slapped her to take away from her the power her education, status, and financial ability gives her. Yet, in this context, her middle-classness gives more than it takes away – she can leave her husband due to his abusive ways. The breaking point for Queen was when these violent acts were committed in front of her children – she could not allow that to continue.

Queen referred to her speaking up during arguments as her having a big mouth; this suggests that she also saw herself from the perspective of the societal norm that women need to be submissive and passive. Women who have assertive personalities or who express their views are often considered to have a 'big mouth', which is an indication that Black women find themselves in a patriarchal society. In many Black cultures, violence is often justified with the statement that the woman should have not spoken back to her husband and that he used violence to 'put her in her place' (Thomas 2011). It is clear from the above extract that, as Queen grapples with her experiences of violence from her husband, she blames herself to some extent.

It is evident that, in terms of academic qualifications and employment, Queen's husband had fewer resources than she did and thus used violence to maintain his masculinity within the marriage, which led to Queen feeling angry most of the time. Feelings of resentment, unexpressed anger, and hurt can result in some women withholding sexual intimacy from their partners. Women often experience violence in their intimate relationships because of the social status their middle-class position confers on them and because of the higher income they receive because of their education and level of employment, such as being in management. Thus, in addition to the benefits it provides, being middle class also removes the element of feeling 'safe' within one's marriage as women who earn more than their spouse are more likely than those who do not to experience emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, especially in the South African context where cultural norms support the abuse of masculine power.

Women's Monetary Power and Decision-Making

Money talks, and research on money and social relations illustrates that it provides power to those who have it (Khunou 2006, 2012). This has been true for men as traditional wage-earners; the same is uncomfortably true for women too. It is uncomfortable because it challenges the gendered belief that men are the natural breadwinners and wage-earners. For example, Jane indicated that, due to her earning a higher income than

her self-employed husband, he viewed her as being 'bossy' for making all the decisions related to their household:

Uhm sometimes it becomes a bit of a weight, you know, as a woman to, like, run the household. There are so many decisions that you take, that you get viewed totally wrongly because you appear to be bossy, you appear to be that person who thinks that 'they are all that'. And it also becomes a weight on my husband when he looks at me and he says that "I cannot do that to you, you can't do it all by yourself". I wish that he could earn more than me because I think it would be so much easier to do things my own way, because ... uhm ... I always have to prove to him that I am not being bossy.

It is evident that Jane felt uncomfortable earning more than her spouse as she ultimately had to make decisions which resulted in her being perceived in an unfavourable manner by him. Being defined as bossy because you are a woman who earns more is one way of someone trying to control and minimise one's sense of self and achievement. As a result of being perceived as bossy, Jane is then put into a position in which she must constantly question herself, thus undermining her power. Jane indicated that she made all the decisions in her marriage because she believed that her husband did not make decisions that help their marriage and family life progress:

Honestly, I make most of the decisions, because ... uhm ... I feel that there are more decisions that my husband makes, and they are dragging us back or down.

Jane's perception was that her husband made decisions that were bad for the family and negatively impacted on her marriage. This is especially so because her husband he earned less than she did. As argued above, women have a greater tendency to save, whereas men are more inclined to take risky investment decisions. It is evident that Jane did not trust her husband's decisions as she believed that they did not help the family progress.

Similarly, Xoli indicated that she noticed that her financial power provided her with an opportunity to make all the decisions in the marriage; however, this caused conflict within the marriage:

Unfortunately, I ... it happens, and I'm not saying it's right, but the one who has money has the power to decide. It's very difficult for a Zulu man! They are born with that control ... kind of mentality, and now you want to make all the final decisions... obviously it is difficult but, unfortunately, if I'm earning more ... somehow ... I need to define what is affordable for me, and I will have to decide what is doable and what is not doable; you can't decide for me, that's the dynamic.

Xoli made an important observation in articulating how what is affordable should be defined by the person who brings in the money. This is especially important when values concerning what to spend money on are not the same. Xoli also mentioned an interesting view to the effect that due to her earning a higher income than her spouse, she needed to define what is or not affordable based on her income. This view illustrates how Xoli used her earning power to claim back the power to make important decisions in her marriage.

Mary, on the other hand, indicated that, even though her husband earned more than she does, he did not confront issues and did not communicate much; therefore, she ended up making all the decisions:

So, you know, we have a store in Cape Town, to relocate to Cape Town, so my husband is that kind of person who ... he ... I don't know.... I think he has some issues when it comes to that ... he's not that person who wants to confront things. We were planning a holiday: "Oh, okay, babe, so what countries are we going to go to?"... "Let's talk about it later". It's frustrating ... later is later, then you end up making the decision: "Oh, okay, guys, in February we are taking a holiday; we are going to Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina" ... you know? That type of thing....

Mary indicated that she did not feel supported where decision-making was concerned. Reading between the lines, it may be that Mary was not supported in decisions she made because she was not the main breadwinner in the family, and her husband's lack of commitment to her decisions resulted from their not having the same idea of what is worth spending on. It may also be that she and her spouse lacked effective communication skills. Communication is a central part of intimate relationships and is reflected in both communication skills and communication behaviours. Communication behaviours are verbal actions by the speaker that are perceived by others.

In contrast to Mary, Tsholo and Mohau indicated that considerable communication takes place in their marriages and, therefore, decision-making is balanced, regardless of who earns more:

Most ... No, we do actually balance out, uhm, like I say, we communicate quite a lot ... uh, I do make the decisions, but his not a very passive man, he is quite vocal; he is firm, he doesn't take things lightly, so there is a lot of persuasion that needs to happen. By the time we make a decision, whoever it is, you are not going to take the other for granted, trust me.

Tsholo stated that she made decisions by herself in the marriage. However, she justified this by indicating that her husband was not passive; rather, he was outspoken. Irrespective of this, she maintained that effective communication took place and that they could conclude the decision-making without one feeling as though they had been taken for granted, thereby creating a win-win situation. Tsholo confirmed her husband's masculinity by stating that he was vocal and firm.

Mohau expressed sentiments similar to those of Tsholo's:

He's not a ... he doesn't have macho issues, like, and you would have thought that because I earned more than him, he will be too much on that, because a lot of husbands, they want to show. So, I will go to him, and I will say "Papa,

what do you think we should do about this and this?” He will say, “What do you want to do about it?” His not big on ... so he does make decisions right ... But he’s not too much, he’s liberal. If I say, “I am uncomfortable with that”, he will say, “okay”; he will go along with certain things.

Mohau implied that her husband did not have a tendency towards hegemonic masculinity that led to treating women as if they were incompetent in relation to money. It is evident that effective communication took place within her marriage and that fair negotiation occurred. When there is a strife about how each gender should behave, there will be conflict about spending, which is linked to gendered normative ideas. However, what is clear is that when women make the money, they have more power to make decisions about how that money should be spent; earning power provides power to women.

Is an Egalitarian Relationship Possible When Women Earn More?

As has been observed in the preceding sections, when women earn more, power struggles occur in intimate relationships; this reflects challenges with normative ideas concerning breadwinning and the position that each gender should occupy. It was therefore interesting to hear Mohau talk about her experiences as the high-income earner in her relationship. In contrast to Tsholo, Jane, and Queen, while Mohau indicated that she earned more than her husband, they never experienced problems relating to this; rather, she and her husband managed to come to an equitable resolution:

We sit down and we see, what do you pay for and what do I pay for ... based on the income, taking into consideration that there are months where his payment will be delayed, and this is one of those months. He’s only going to get paid on Friday, so if there is an expense that is urgent, like, let’s say it’s electricity in this case – I paid it already but he is only going to get paid on Friday, so what he does is that he will refund me when he gets money.

It is evident from the above example that where there is mutual respect, there is a partnership. Mohau was clear that, due to mutual respect and the alignment of priorities, the fact that she earned more is not an issue in her relationship. Mohau and her husband could negotiate money matters among themselves, and they provided support to each other regardless of who earned more.

Mohau indicated that her husband did not obtain a consistent income; this compelled them to implement money-management measures and to plan their finances effectively. In this context, the financial contribution of women to the household was a positive one as they were able to assist their families with urgent matters concerning their home. It is evident that Mohau's middle-class position did in fact allow her to effectively contribute to her household. There was a sense of trust that Mohau would be able to take care of the family financially should anything happen to her spouse.

Conclusion

The economic empowerment of women allows for equal access to and control over resources. This financial access then allows women control over other areas in their lives. However, it has been argued here that this does not provide protection from violence in intimate relationships. The stories shared above illustrate that when women are high-income earners in their relationships, this generally leads to resentment on the part of their husband's inability to provide. The reasons for this resentment are linked to societal expectations that men should provide, as well as societal comparisons relating to what it means to be middle class,. Societal gender norms and role expectations create challenges for high-earning women as they understandably struggle with their positions relative to others in their social circle (Alexander 2013) when their partners do not meet their expectations of being a provider or protector of the family.

This chapter has illustrated that there is often resentment on the part of the husband which, in some cases, leads to gender-based violence and which might eventually lead to divorce. Men

being unable to meet the expectation that they be the higher earner and the main breadwinner creates challenges for them and leads to their inability to interact with their wives in a positive manner. In such cases, the only way they can show their power and frustration is through violence. This finding echoes those of other studies (Antai 2011; Conner 2014; Thomas 2011) which have shown that one of the primary causes of gender-based violence is women earning more than the men with whom they are in a relationship.

It is also clear from the interviews above that communication challenges contributed to some of the strife that these women experienced in their relationships. Communication challenges were a result of the gendered misalignment of expectations about who should be the breadwinner. The couples having to grapple with this non-normative reality made it difficult for them to deal with everyday relational issues, thus leading to communication problems in relation to decision-making.

In this chapter, one case has been discussed in which the high income of the woman did not lead to strife in her relationship. On the basis of this story the question arises as to whether there is the possibility for egalitarian relationships in which the earning status of one spouse does necessarily confer on them more power than it does on the other. In conclusion, the Black middle-class position provides women with access to much-needed resources for their empowerment. However, their access to such power is usually not well received by their intimate partners – and it also seems to require much from the women in terms of accepting the full extent of the changes in their relationships that comes with such power; that is, that they might have to take on the full breadwinning role, which involves not only providing for their children but for their unemployed and or underemployed husbands. The complexity of these cases is that while their middle-class position provides these women with status and financial power, it also precludes the apparent simplicity of conforming to the norm.

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