

# **Socialization of Boys in African Societies: A literary Analysis of Jolobe's *Elundini loThukela***

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## **Abstract**

Nurturing individuals who embody the Ubuntu philosophy from childhood to adulthood is essential in raising good men. The virtues of Ubuntu should be instilled during their formative years, while they are still boys. This will ensure that they grow up understanding the expectations placed upon them as men. This article seeks to investigate the role of the society in shaping moral behavior of South African youth, especially men, as depicted in JJR Jolobe's novel, *Elundini Lothukela*. The findings suggest that possessing good virtues contribute to becoming a better man and an appreciated leader, regardless of one's birthright. Jolobe's novel stresses that moral integrity is not determined by one's entrenched social status, but rather by one's personality and conduct towards others. The paper concludes that achieving Ubuntu can be facilitated by deconstructing certain traditions, wherein individuals who benefit from their social standing seem to defy the essence of humanity. Comparative studies on Ubuntu need to be explored in different cultural contexts.

**Key words:** African societies; Elundini loThukela; initiation school; socialisation; Ubuntu

## **1. Introduction**

Indigenous knowledge has taught Africans that the child belongs not only to the biological parents, but to the entire family and the community at large. In this article, the term 'family' encompasses parents and relatives from both the maternal and paternal sides, including grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. A child cannot escape the watching eye of the community, hence, the saying, "it takes a village to raise a child" (Leonard, Ananias, & Sharley, 2022). Consequently, when a child engages in positive actions, the child not only enhances the reputation of the family but also contributes to the positive image of the community to which they belong. Similarly, when a child behaves immorally, it is the reputation of the entire community that becomes tarnished. It is through the entire family's teachings that a child is taught Ubuntu, "the social philosophy...which is centred around the capacity of individuals to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring" (Leonard et al., 2022, p. 240). The virtues of Ubuntu are instilled through the practice of these values, allowing children to witness

them in action and develop a strong moral foundation. In pursuit of understanding the socialisation of boys with the goal of achieving Ubuntu, the paper employs Jalobe's novel, *Elundini loThukela*. Literature is a mirror of reality and resembles the realities taking place in society (Gil-Curiel, 2016). Pamungkas et al. (2023) argue that a novel is a genre of literature where most social aspects of life are embedded. Spirchagova, Nikitina and Spirchagova (2021) note that, a novel, just like media reflects on the society's social, political, cultural and economic dimensions. Given that literature is a mirror of reality, it is therefore prudent to use Jalobe's novel to analyse the socialisation of boys in African societies as this work of art is centred on that theme. Examining the socialisation of boys through Jalobe's literary work is significant, as the novel effectively portrays the process of nurturing boys into men who uphold Ubuntu.

Individuals with a strong moral foundation serve as role models for many within their communities, and traditional African societies are no exception. Even young children aspire to become like such individuals when they grow up. A morally grounded person, fights to preserve, revitalise and retain only those aspects that are relevant and functional; and will make a positive contribution to the holistic development of families and communities (Goduka, 2005). They administer justice to others and strive to uphold harmony within the community. The principles of Ubuntu commence within oneself and extend to one's family; from there, individuals bring these principles to the community and eventually to society at large. It is a way that makes an individual a better member of society. It is about being human and humane towards other people (Mangaroo-Pillay & Coetzee, 2022). Mangaroo-Pillay and Coetzee (2002) enumerate eight principles of ubuntu, and these are compassion, forgiveness, responsibility, honesty, self-control, caring, love and perseverance. African parents impart these virtues to their children, aiming to nurture morally grounded citizens.

The objective of the paper, therefore, is to unpack the role that society plays on the socialisation of children particularly in the nurturing of boys into manhood amongst the Xhosa people of South Africa. In unpacking the nurturing of boys to men with the aim of achieving Ubuntu, the study is premised on Jolobe's novel entitled *Elundini LoThukela*. The set objective will be addressed through answering the following questions:

- Considering stereotypes in gender roles, how does society perceive situations where one gender is absent in a family or there are imbalances in numbers?
- Are society's traditions genuinely perceived as social constructions, and is society willing to deconstruct them in situations where the adherence to these traditions is compromised?

To explore these inquiries, Ubuntu philosophy is employed to examine the practice of nurturing boys into manhood in Jolobe's novel.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. The Ubuntu Philosophy**

In unpacking the socialisation of boys in African societies, through the analysis of Jolobe's *Elundini loThukela*, the paper uses Ubuntu as a theoretical framework. The quest to live in harmonious or communal relationships in which people exhibit solidarity with one

another calls for Ubuntu. The concept of Ubuntu is achieved through socialisation of members of the society from childhood to adulthood. Ubuntu is understood as humanness, and “encompasses a dimension of becoming human and being human” (Seehawer, 2017, p. 453). It is important to understand that “both dimensions are realised through lived community and respectful, caring relations with other living beings and the environment” (Seehawer, 2018, p. 453). Accordingly, “The concept of Ubuntu emphasises the value of collective existence within the community as opposed to individual value” (Nxumalo & Mncube, 2019, p. 104). Ubuntu is principally a common ethical system among the people of Southern Africa (Ewuso & Hall, 2019). Nyaumwe and Mkabela (2007) describe Ubuntu as a moral philosophy of African traditional societies. It is argued that “Ubuntu is borne out of the philosophy that community strength comes of community support, and that dignity and identity are achieved through mutualism, empathy, generosity and community commitment” (Swanson, 2007, pp. 53-54). Karsten and Illa (2005) view Ubuntu as an important approach for managing morality in African societies. The moral philosophy of Ubuntu is premised on the society’s mutually understood belief that an individual’s humanness is reflected through personal relationships with others and how the society regards the way an individual relates with others (Mkabela & Luthuli, 1997; Karsten & Illa, 2005; Askew, 2006; Nyaumwe & Mkabela, 2007; Swanson, 2007). Ewuso and Hall (2019) provide a comprehensive description of Ubuntu by saying that:

this ethical theory is an essentially relational ethics that prizes relationships of interdependence, fellowship, reconciliation, community friendliness, harmonious relationships and other-regarding actions, in which actions are morally right to the extent that they honour the capacity to relate communally, reduce discord or promote friendly relationships with others and in which the material world (horizontal line) and the spiritual world (the vertical line) are fundamentally united (p. 101).

Ubuntu has played a pivotal role in shaping the moral fabric of African societies. It is a significant approach in socialising of members of the society, instilling sense of responsibility not only for themselves but also for others. The upbringing of children in African societies extends beyond the family, as everyone is anticipated to adhere to the principles of Ubuntu and evolve into a responsible member of society in adulthood.

## **2.2. Contextualising the Socialisation of Boys**

The socialisation of children in African societies is modelled in such a way that they adopt Ubuntu from childhood. Bonn (2007) is of the view that socialisation of children is a process through which customary practices and traditional values in the family and the community are inculcated in them. According to Msila (2015), the basic philosophy of Ubuntu extends to child-rearing practices where children are not only brought up by their biological parents but rather by the entire community. It has also been observed that “Humanness/personhood is essentially developed through communal relationships: one does not accomplish personhood or humanness by oneself” (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 98). Padayachee, Maistry, Harris and Lortan (2023) argue that “it is the duty of the whole community to mould the child into a good member of that specific community, society, and the whole human race” (p. 6). The socialisation of children involves inculcating Ubuntu in them, fostering their development into responsible members of society.

In African societies, every adult is expected to assume distinct social responsibilities associated with, be it within the family or the community. It has been observed that “each person is never alone, but is constituted by webs of interconnection (through shared identity), interrelatedness, intersubjectivity (mainly by cognition, that is, thinking of oneself as ‘we’) and interdependence (whereby one develops personhood/humanness through others)” (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 99). According to Okot p’Bitek (1986, p. 19), man is born unfree and is never free as he is prepared to play a full role as a member of society through upbringing. This implies that every member of society undergoes socialisation to assume social responsibility based on the principles of Ubuntu. In African societies, at family level, all kinship addresses carry with them some form of responsibility as there are expected roles that are attached to kinship that one has to play. This means that all members of society have multiple social roles to play in society because of the multiple kinship addresses that are attached to everyone. An individual who is addressed with a specific kinship term, such as ‘uncle,’ assumes a distinct role compared to someone who addresses him as father, and likewise as a brother. This also implies that a role played by one individual towards another may be reciprocated by a different individual towards the first person. This is due to the fact that while one holds the position of uncle, he may also have an uncle himself. Therefore, one can conclude that African societies are structured in a systematic manner that upholds the principles of Ubuntu.

It needs to be understood that “the good of the individual and that of the community are interwoven such that the individual’s subjectivity is not solely determined by the community but co-substantively constituted with that of the community” (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 97). Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that despite efforts to shape children into desirable members of society, all of them will live up to expectations. Although Ubuntu philosophy “forms part of knowledge and wisdom of how African communities and families raise children” (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019, p. 28), there are some who would divert from the norm and not become what society desires them to be. It has to be noted that “One who fails to exhibit humanness/personhood is considered a non-person or an animal” (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 98). However, labelling someone as non-person or animal does not imply that they are disowned by the society, as such an action would contradict the principles of the Ubuntu concept. Rather, labelling the social deviants is a way of expressing displeasure by the society. Amongst the Nguni, there is a saying ‘*Akusilima sindlebende kwabo*’ (No disabled person is noticed to be having a long ear at his village of origin) meaning that even if one is a social deviant, he is accepted by his kin. Ewuso and Hall (2019, p. 98) says that labelling one as non-person or animal “does not mean that wicked or unjust individuals are literally no longer human, namely, no longer the subject of human rights; it means rather that they have failed to exhibit what is valuable about human nature to any significant degree”. Such individuals remain part of the society but they cannot be entrusted with social responsibilities that demand higher levels of morality to be executed.

The paper primarily focuses on the socialisation of boys as they are being prepared for adult responsibilities in their later years. Munarini and Kgadima (2023) identify the family as the most important institution in the socialisation of boys. The most salient role of the family is to provide a safe and conducive environment for relationship-building, which enables boys and girls to establish a positive sense of identity and accept increased responsibility (Pretorius, Mbokazi, Hlase & Kacklin, 2012; Munarini & Kgalima, 2023). The emphasis on and excessive

attention to gender roles in African societies have led to lack of transformation, even in situations where there is a cultural and economic shift in social order. Gender inequalities in the sharing of domestic work, that is taken on primarily by women, remain persistent despite the growing number of women entering the labour market (Couprie, Cudeville & Sofer, 2020). In the traditional African societies, there are roles that are still labelled as masculine and feminine, but the change from a communal to a capitalist society needs transformation in these gender stereotyped roles.

Gender stereotypes and roles are learned through socialisation which encourages “boys and girls to conform to social roles that are appropriate for males and females and to adopt gender appropriate behaviours” (Eksi, 2009, pp. 39-40). Eksi (2009, p. 40) goes on to say that “Men or women view themselves in the prescribed way and develop appropriate characteristics either consciously or unconsciously and thus, they end up acting in accord with the stereotypes”. This poses challenges within families, particularly where one gender dominates amongst children. In such cases, the dominated gender may find themselves overwhelmed with prescribed chores. For instance, in a family with six children, consisting of five boys and one girl, it implies that the only girl will be tasked with domestic chores like cooking, cleaning the house and doing laundry for the entire family. Those roles are traditionally considered feminine in many African cultures. In an ideal African setup, gender roles are complementary, but in modern society, these prescribed roles are ambiguous, placing women in a disadvantaged position. The various ways of socialising children are the ones that inculcate stereotypical ideas about gender roles. One common way of socialising children in African societies is taking them through the initiation schools.

Initiation schools are part of passage rites and were established as a secret practice, “which, in a symbolic sense, serves as teenager’s ‘transit education’ or ‘passport’ to adulthood” (Rooyen, Potgieter & Mtezuka, 2006, p. 31). The initiation schools in South Africa form the backbone of traditional education (Rooyen, et al., 2006). Initiation schools are important in that before a boy is initiated, he is considered as an unimportant member of the family and communal life and has not been united with his soul which makes him not really a human (Mtezuka, 1995; Rooyen et al., 2006). The practice of initiation is important in this paper since it reflects on how boys would behave after their graduation from these traditional schools. In his novel, *Jolobe* reflects on the boys’ behaviour after going through the initiation school and this will be discussed in detail in the next section.

In a study conducted by Rooyen et al. (2006), it was established that the initiation schools amongst the Southern Ndebele people is consistent with cultural values and serves to contribute to the inculcation of societal norms and values, caring for and affirmation of their cultural identity and the stabilisation and perpetuation of their cultural temporospatiality. However, Rooyen et al. (2006) and Mahlolo (2014) established that boys who go through initiation schools can either be moulded into good or bad behaviour. While traditional initiation inculcates good moral values in boys and builds society by producing responsible, law-abiding citizens (Ntombana, 2009, 2011; Mahlolo, 2014) so that they adhere to Ubuntu, it has been established that those who graduate from these traditional schools demonstrate deviant behaviour and cause disciplinary problems in formal schools (Ntombana, 2009; Mahlolo, 2014; Mahlolo, Jacobs & De Wet, 2016). Ntombana (2009) observes that in the recent years the initiation schools have been characterised by criminal activities, drug abuse and inhuman

behaviour involving the newly emerged men. In this paper, it is also demonstrated that the teachings received by the King's sons at the initiation school led them to reject roles considered feminine. Consequently, such behaviour angered their grandfather and prompted him to defy tradition by appointing a culturally undeserving prince to the throne.

Ntombana (2009) studied the moral behaviour that is inculcated into the initiates at the initiation schools by their teachers called the *amakhankatha* amongst the Xhosa. To avoid undesirable results from the initiation schools, there is need to redefine the practices in order to play a positive role in building the moral fibre of the Xhosa society (Ntombana, 2009). Ntombana (2009) concluded that while the initiation schools are expected to play a major role in equipping and guiding men in leading positive moral lifestyle, it has been observed that the practice is no longer fulfilling the teaching role effectively. Ntombana (2011) also observed that following the challenges associated with initiation schools, there has been calls by some sections of the society for abolishing of these schools. However, Ntombana (2011) suggests that instead of abolishing the initiation schools, there is need to redefine the practice in a manner that will counter the associated challenges. Although the initiation schools may have some associated challenges, their purpose remains important as they still play a pivotal role in the socialisation of boys and graduating them from boyhood into manhood. The initiation schools remain an important part of enacting Ubuntu amongst boys in African communities and amongst the Xhosa in particular. The paper is analysing the role that is played by society in grooming boys into men as reflected in Jolobe's novel, *Elundini LoThukela*.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Materials**

The study falls under the discipline of literary studies and draws its primary data from JJR Jolobe's novel entitled *Elundini loThukela*. Jolobe's novel was published in 1984 and its major theme is that of socialisation of boys, particularly the princes and the subsequent selection of one of them, to the throne.

#### **3.2. Procedure**

The study is a comprehensive analysis of a literary text with the idea of unpacking how the author portrays the socialisation of boys amongst the AmaXhosa people of South Africa. A close textual analysis of Jolobe's novel, *Elundini loThukela* was employed through adopting a qualitative research design in exploring the themes and characters. The paper uses a thematic approach with theme of socialisation of boys forming the core of the study. Williamson and Whittaker (2019) are of the view that thematic analysis is a method that identifies, analyses and reports patterns within data. They further note that thematic analysis is an important qualitative method as it is flexible and compatible with different epistemological approaches (Williamson & Whittaker, 2019). The paper contextualises the novel within the context of socialisation of boys with the goal of nurturing them so that they comply with Ubuntu in their adulthood. Through a rigorous examination of Jolobe's novel, supplemented by scholarly articles on socialisation of boys and the Ubuntu philosophy, the aim of the paper is to provide a nuanced understanding of the novel's significance in reflecting on the nurturing of boys in African societies with specific reference to the Xhosa people. The main interest in the novel is analysing themes with particular focus on the socialisation of boys, the behaviour of four of

the King's sons, society's view on stereotyping gender roles, the qualities of a good men and the concept of Ubuntu in general. Since the study is a textual analysis, the paper takes adopts a thematic narrative and descriptive approach in data presentation and analysis.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Introducing the Novel, *Elundini loThukela* by JJR Jolobe**

This is a novel about an eighty-year-old King Dlomo, whose son, Mashiyi, has died five years ago, leaving behind four princes. The princes from the three eligible wives are Ngwekazi, Manyaza and Jozi. There is also Ntsele from the lower house. Among the four princes, only the first three are eligible for the throne. The king is ready to retire and is faced with a mammoth task of electing his successor to the throne. The idea comes when the princes have gone to the initiation school so that they can become men. Instead of looking on the outer appearance and legitimacy of each of the candidate princes, King Dlomo uses his own intelligence to choose his successor instead of following the common tradition of putting an heir to the royal throne. According to tradition, the king would marry many wives and the sons from the first wife are the ones who are eligible for the throne. Over and above respect for customs and traditions, King Dlomo always stressed two important virtues which are respect and humility. He believed that a person who fails to uphold respect in life amounts to nothing. This respect is extended to everyone, including children and adults, and is not limited to those in authority (Jolobe, 1984).

#### **4.1.1. The Princes**

From the early age, the senior prince, Ngwekazi, is conscious of the fact that he was from a royal family. He demanded respect from his peers. Manyaza, the second in line, grew up diligent and always ready to do what he regards as 'men's' chores. Although his mother had no female children, Manyaza never touched what he called 'women's' chores. If he was sent to do one, he made it clear that he could not do 'girls' chores. There is nothing particular about Jozi, the third in the royal line, except that he is a party animal. The fourth prince, Ntsele, who is from the lower house, since his mother was the youngest of the wives, is raised by his mother who always ensures that her son has the virtues of meekness, bravery, being selective and the ability to prioritise. She does this by ensuring that she gives him the chores that are taken to belong to girls. And she makes sure that Ntsele does these chores in the presence of his peers, both boys and girls. That way, Ntsele got the value of indiscriminating between gender chores (Jolobe, 1984) and was able to endure *ukuhlekwa nokuhlaselwa ziintanga zakhe ngobufazi* (being laughed at by his peers). That made him develop a thick skin, especially when it comes to being mocked about doing something right.

#### **4.1.2. Jolobe's definition of a Man**

When the four princes come of age, they are bound to go to the initiation school. This is where they learn about their genealogy, amaHlubi traditions, bravery and endurance, use of appropriate register, amongst other things (Jolobe, 1984). As the princes are about to come back from the mountain, King Dlomo asks the royal healer, Dlikiza, for the definition of a man. Dlikiza responds thus:

*Amanyange wona athi indoda yingonyama, ibhubesi...sisiseko eso...Amanyange abuye athi indoda yingcongolo phezu koThukela...Ithambile kodwa yinkosi kuba yoyisa imisinga nezikhukula zoThukela ...* (Jolobe, 1984, p. 9) (The ancestors say a man is a lion...that is the foundation. The ancestors also say that a man is a reed growing on top of the Tugela valley...He is soft but is the king as he conquers the streams and torrents of the Tugela River.)

The above definition implies that a man needs to be brave and strong like a lion, but at the same time be soft and be able to stand the test of time. Bravery is one of the important virtues that are inculcated in men in most African societies. Unlike, the 'ladies first' from the West, Africans believe that a man should always go first, so that he is the one who faces danger, if they get attacked. A reed is a symbol of strength as it withstands flowing waters in a river, being able to endure the storms of life and come from them as strong as before. According to one common African mythology, "People are meant to have originated from a reed bed by 'breaking off', just as reeds propagate vegetatively by breaking off and re-establishing. Reeds, not surprisingly, symbolize virility" (Armstrong et al., 2008, p. 540). Virility is defined as one of positive characteristics of a manhood (Aresti, 2014).

Dlikiza's definition of a man as lion and a reed is analysed differently by Nobusi, the amaNgwe princess, and Ngwekazi, the prince. The narrator explains:

*Yahlala yona engqondweni kaNobusi intetho yegqirha wamana eyiguqu-guqula efuna into eyithethayo wada emva kweentsuku waqikelela ukuba mayibe ithetha ukukhalipha nentobeko ezalwa kukuzithoba kuba ingcongolo iyoyisa imisinga ngokusuka iyivumele ngokulala phantsi ithi yakudlula ibuye ime ithi nkqo* (Jolobe, 1984, p. 47). (Nobusi kept thinking about the traditional healer's speech trying to figure out what it meant until after some days she perceived it to mean bravery and humility from submission because the reed conquers the storms by letting them bend it [the reed] and then it would rise and stand up once the storms pass.)

Nobusi's perception befits Ntsele, as he has let his peers, especially Ngwekazi, mock him and make him a laughingstock because he followed his mother's wishes of helping her with all the chores, including fetching water from the river. The other boys would call him 'a girl' because he was doing what they termed '*umsebenzi wabafazi*' (women's chores). At the same time, he stood up for justice, making sure that no-one is treated in an unjust manner. He even stood up to Ngwekazi, when he was mocking Nobusi, as a young girl, who was unable to lift her own water calabash to the head, '*engakwazi ukuzithwalisa*' (unable to lift). Ntsele would always be there to help her. Although Ntsele could stand Ngwekazi's teasing of himself, he stood up for Nobusi's teasing and ended up fighting with Ngwekazi. Ntsele's standing up against Ngwekazi was bravery in Nobusi's eyes.

On the other hand, the same definition of a man, by Dlikiza, is perceived differently by Ngwekazi. The narrator puts it thus:

*Wathi naxa wayecacelwe yinto yokuba akakamkelwa wabona yena ukuba ezo mpawu zithetha yena kanye kuba ngokukhalipha usel' efana nengonyama kwaye ukuba itshawekazi elo alizange live ngokukhalipha kwakhe kwimihla yobukhwenkwe liya kuva ngaye ngoku ayindoda. Wacinga wathi ingcongolo ivelele kuzo zonke iintlobo zengca*



*yena ke uya kuvelela eluntwini lonke kuba uza kulawula, ngenxa yoko ke nalo olo phawu lwalatha yena* (Jolobe, 1984, p.50). (Although it was clear to him that his proposal has not yet been accepted, but he took those characteristics to refer to him because in terms of bravery he is already like a lion and if the princess has never heard about his bravery during his boyhood, she will hear about him now that he is a man. He thought that the reed is the most prestigious of all the grass types; and he will rise high from all the people because he will rule. Therefore, even this feature points at him.)

Ngwekazi is blinded by his greed for fame, as he is the main contender to the amaHlubi throne. His definition of the reed is shortsighted as he defines it according to his character.

#### **4.1.3. Teachings from the Initiation School**

The three competing princes have just come back from the mountain (initiation school), where they have been taught about norms and customs of the nation, as well as leadership skills, modesty and bravery (Jolobe, 1984). The initiation school is one of the indigenous formal educational institutions which, like an institution, is supposed to groom children physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Morality is one of the aspects of any educational institution. Respect is one of the main virtues emphasised by African traditional education ([Boaduo & Boaduo, 2012](#)). However, when the three competing princes come from the initiation school, they are unable to carry out their grandfather's wish of carrying him a calabash of water from the river. They label this as 'women's job'. This shows that the education from the initiation school has failed to groom them in humility, one of the main virtues of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is taught to children throughout their lives from childhood, and it gets affirmed at the initiation school.

The aim of the education young men and women get from the initiation school should be to ground them firmly in their roots ([Mosha, 2000](#)). Education should not just be about psychological and intellectual development. It should also help develop a better-mannered individual who will act according to acceptable moral standards ([Dewey, 1990](#)). If education does not fulfil the morality aspects in an individual, it has failed the individual and the society (Clarke, 2010). Hence the education inculcated at the initiation school is deemed to have failed in the three princes.

#### **4.1.4. The Task to the Throne**

When faced with the challenge of choosing the future king from amongst the three eligible princes, King Dlomo seeks answers from the indigenous knowledge systems, the nation's treasure, 'the neglected knowledge and teachings of the elders' which had always played an outstanding role in the unity and dignity of the societies (Battiste, 2013). Instead of looking at the outside appearance of each of the eligible princes, Dlomo looked for the inner self of the best candidate for the position. As a result, all the three eligible princes fail to meet King Dlomo's criteria, and a young lion, Ntsele, from the lower royal house, rises above the rest and becomes the heir to the throne. This is in line with Mosha's (2000) assertion that African teachings are more on the spirituality upon which strength and inspiration are drawn. Because Ntsele possesses the above spiritual way of life, he becomes the voice of the voiceless and defender of the weak. This helps him win the heart of Nobusi, a woman whom the main contender of the throne, Ngwekazi, has long been pursuing.

Ntsele, who is not even a contender for the throne reveals himself as a true African leader, who cares for and protects the weak, irrespective of the audience. He even, 'belittles' himself and his dignity by drawing water from the river, a task traditionally considered as a women's chore. Ntsele is an example of an educated African whose development encompasses the mind, body and soul.

Dlomo's request for his princes to fetch him water from the spring under the cliff, proves to be an assessment of whether his grandchildren have acquired the necessary life skills from the initiation school. Ntsele presents himself as a good student and the other three fail to meet the expectations. Even when Ngwekazi and Ntsele are competing for the heart of the amaNgwe princess, Nobusi, the most beautiful princess easily falls for Ntsele who has always been there for her since their early childhood.

#### **4.1.5. Jolobe's Message on Raising a Boy Child**

In his novel, Jolobe seems to be advocating for equal opportunities to be given to both girls and boys so that they can learn to be helpful around the household. Through his character, Ntsele, Jolobe seems to be expressing that responsible manhood is inculcated by parents, usually mothers, when a boychild is still growing up. This is confirmed by the narrator when describing MaMbambo, Ntsele's mother's disbelief when she sees her son being chosen for the throne:

*Wayelibele ukuba nguye owayebeke isiseko semini enjengale ngoluya qeqesho lwamhla-mnene. Wayakhe nangaphezu koko wayeqonda. Namhlanje yathi laa nto wayeyibumba yasuka yaqaqamba kuba ubuni abubo umntu bubetha budlule nakwinto ayizuze ngokuzalwa...* (Jolobe, 1984, p. 145). (She had already forgotten that it was her who had laid a foundation for a day like this through the training that she gave to the boy during his childhood. The role she had played was more than she anticipated. Today what she had moulded suddenly became brighter because the being of a person is beyond their birthright...)

The fact that Ntsele's mother taught him respect and humility above everything made him the best candidate for the throne, for which he was not even competing. At the same time, Jolobe seems to be emphasising that manhood has nothing to do with the material things, but the inner self. Ntsele's humility has won him two things, Nobusi's heart and his grandfather's [King Dlomo] respect, which made the King choose him to the throne.

## **5. Discussion**

Since the objective of the paper is to unpack the socialisation of boys into manhood, it is important to understand the concept of being a man in the African society particularly amongst Amahlubi who fall under the AmaXhosa ethnic group. In his novel, Jolobe emphasises one aspect when defining a man, drawing an analogy with a reed. In this analogy, a man is likened to a reed in the river. The fact that the reed remains in the centre of the riverbed, unaffected and unuprooted by the flowing water signifies that a man should not be too rigid. If he is rigid, he cannot survive the storms of life because he opposes what society requires him to do, a reed does not oppose the flowing water but it bends to the direction where the river is flowing. The likening of a man to a reed also implies that one should go out of his way to play

some roles that society considers as for women and should at times forget about social standing when there is a crisis that needs to be addressed. One can argue that “by advancing the good of the community, an individual concomitantly advances his own good” (Ewuso & Hall, 2019, p. 97). The reed is soft but can withstand the pressure of water that is flowing in the river. This implies that a man should be soft but should also be able to withstand the challenges that are faced in life.

In the Jolobe’s novel, one of the key issues being addressed is that of stereotyping gender roles. This issue is crucial in the novel as it leads to the deserving prince, who is destined for the throne, being denied, and an undeserving prince being appointed to the throne. Jolobe (1984) deconstructs the stereotyping of gender roles through the youngest and initially undeserving prince, Ntsele, who ascends to the throne by undertaking roles traditionally considered for girls. The socialisation of boys at home proves to be more effective than the initiation school, as Ntsele’s mother imparts Ubuntu to him at home. In contrast, his three brothers, having completed the initiation school, undergo a transformation and now refuse to engage in roles they perceive as ‘girls’ chores’. In way Jolobe (1984) is showing us that the initiation school alone cannot be trusted as inculcating societal morals to the boys but there is also need for strong intervention at home. While the initiation schools are important in inculcating societal values and morals amongst young men in the Xhosa society, it has been established that there are instances where they exhibit wayward behaviour when they return home (Rooyen et al., 2006; Ntombana, 2009, 2011; Mohlaoka, 2014; Mohlaloka et al., 2016). The king’s decision to appoint the undeserving Ntsila as the king, based on his behaviour influenced by his mother, highlights that not all practices in a society are ideal or reflective of Ubuntu. One can conclude that women play a pivotal role in the socialisation of both boys and girls in society. The intervention of Ntsele’s mother in inculcating values on his son that help him defy gender stereotypes attest to the fact that women, particularly mothers can contribute towards transforming society through proper socialisation of boys. Even after graduating from the initiation school, Ntsila defies the norm by fetching water, which is considered a ‘girls’ chore’. He also understands that although gender roles are complimentary, there are instances where a man must go out of his way to undertake tasks traditionally deemed specific to females, especially when a woman is compromised.

Jolobe’s deconstruction of certain societal practices demonstrates the necessity for societies to evolve with time. There are two major instances where Jolobe deconstructs some societal practices that have grown to be regarded as natural. Firstly, Jolobe, proves that men can perform roles that society regards as feminine specific chores. Gender roles are constructed by people, not by biology, and this construction is shaped by historical, cultural, and psychological processes (Basow, 1992; Eksi, 2009). There is nothing that physically inhibit men from fetching and carrying water in a calabash, except some beliefs that exist only in the mind. Secondly, Jolobe defies the odds by illustrating that ‘a king is not born but is made’. He demonstrates this by revealing that the princes born in the upper house, destined to assume the throne, were not chosen. Instead, the one born in the lower house is the one who ultimately ascends to the throne. In choosing the successor, the king did not look at the house in a polygamous marriage where the prince was born but he selected one who was well-groomed, well-mannered and resembled the qualities of Ubuntu. The King’s decision to deviate from tradition by choosing Ntsele to ascend to the throne was also influenced by the principle of

upholding Ubuntu over customary practices. Jolobe is demonstrating that these social constructs that hamper Ubuntu and harmonious existence in society can be deconstructed. Jolobe's novel shows how a good man conquers, irrespective of his status. The three princes boast about their eligibility for the throne, and yet they show no signs of good leadership. Ntsele, comes from the least qualified house, but wins the throne because of his virtues of Ubuntu. If moral behaviour is inculcated in boys as they grow up, they can become better men. At the same time, we need to ensure that the teachings given to the boys groom them to become humble, respectful and acceptable members of society. Whilst society may blame the social order, it is the same society that creates those unidealistic behaviours. The society is also capable of deconstructing some traditional practices especially those that contradict with the concept of Ubuntu. To attain Ubuntu, it is necessary to deconstruct certain practices that impede the exercise of humanness. Certain traditional practices are detrimental to the manifestation of behaviours that exemplify Ubuntu.

Exploring the Ubuntu philosophy, the context of socialisation of boys presents a rich area for further researcher not only in literary genres but in other areas such as the print and electronic media, popular culture and social media. There is need for researchers to also engage into a comparative analysis of the socialisation of boys in different cultural contexts. The study of socialisation of boys with the aim of achieving Ubuntu also needs to be taken beyond literary studies where its impact would be measured in real settings where the behaviour of boys is studied before and after they have graduated from the initiation schools. There is need also to explore how Ubuntu philosophy in the socialisation of boys promotes justice, equity and human dignity for those involved.

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