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# Imagining Intimacy Beyond Boundaries: 'Born-Frees' Conceptions of Race and Relationships in South Africa

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**IMAGINING INTIMACY BEYOND BOUNDARIES: 'BORN-FREES'  
CONCEPTIONS OF RACE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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Spring 2018

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### **Abstract**

Though South Africans are no longer legislatively governed by the color of their skin, race remains salient in the way individuals make meaning of themselves and the world around them. Previous scholarship suggests that citizens of the ‘Rainbow Nation’ still see race as a fixed category of difference, making socialization between races fraught and relatively rare (Finchilescu et al. 2007). This study seeks to explore how born-frees understand race in South Africa’s shifting socio-political terrain through the lens of intimate interracial relationships—a form of cross-racial contact complicated by histories of sexual stigma and constraint. Conversations with 17 ‘born-frees’ across the racial spectrum centered on how youth’s sexual and romantic desires extend past the boundaries of their own race and how youth envisage interracial intimacy. From focus groups and interviews, the author produces an interrogation of the discursive links between race and sexuality in contemporary South Africa. The study explores apartheid’s legacies, current discourses of race, attraction and desire, and hopes for the future, as well as the connections these topics present to gender, class, and space. Linking historical forces to youth’s intimate worlds, the author argues that apartheid still holds powerful influence over the way youth conceptualize, desire, and enact intimacy. Attention has to be paid, however, to the growing belief in interracial intimacy as a method of achieving a more open and accepting world, as this view suggests fissures in existing notions of race and sexuality.

## Introduction

The apartheid state blurred the personal and political by ingraining race into political and economic structures, as well as into people's minds. Race became an intrinsic aspect of identity and social relations and the idea could not be escaped when forming one's self-conception and relationship to the surrounding world. This mode of thinking was achieved by constraining individuals' physical and emotional geographies, by dictating where one lived and whom one loved. In the fourth decade of democracy, however, opportunities exist for youth to negotiate new ways of being and of relating to each other. Yet previous scholarship shows that race still drives how young people view themselves, causing interracial contact in social spaces to remain rare (Finchilescu et al. 2007).

This study delves into arguably the most personal aspect of young people's social worlds and one which has played an important role in racial stratification—intimate relationships. The aim of this paper is to explore youth's conceptions of interracial intimacy in South Africa as related to broader discourses of race, sexuality, and identity. Intimate interracial relationships, with their histories of sexual stigma and constraint, serve as an interesting site for studying the intersection of the personal and the political of race relations. A relatively small body of literature exists on interracial intimacy, especially in South Africa, and it focuses on the lived experiences of interracial couples, the cultural taboos of interracial relationships, and the racialised discourses surrounding the topic. This study expands on existing scholarship, but is less concerned with the difficulties interracial couples face. Instead, I seek to understand how youth grapple with race when imagining their own ideals of intimacy, when giving meaning to sexuality, and when understanding the social circumstances around them. Are youth preoccupied with race in a way which constrains their intimate thoughts or are the boundaries of desire expanding to include those of other races? How and why do young people understand race to affect relationships? What does one's conceptions of intimacy and race reveal about how they view themselves in the context of South Africa? What are the possibilities and limitations interracial love holds for them? Answering these questions may yield rich perspectives on how youth navigate the shifting socio-political terrain and form self-conceptions in South Africa.

I landed on this research topic after several months of living in Durban and never seeing two people of different races holding hands. I and many of the people closest to me grew up in the U.S. as the product of an interracial couple; relationships across racial lines, and the love, joys,

conflicts, and pain that came along, are a reality which, in many ways, has been central to my life. Thus, I became intrigued by my observations that love has remained one of the spheres relatively unaffected by the demise of apartheid. I aimed to interrogate whether these initial observations rang true upon further investigation and what factors proved salient for youth in conceptualising interracial intimacy. I hypothesized that discussing interracial relationships would naturally lead people to reflect on their understandings of race as important to themselves and South Africa. The conversations did, indeed, move through numerous topics which had racism, oppression, and apartheid's legacies at their core. One participant reflected on the surfacing of these discourses:

It makes me so sad and happy at the same time that we're having these chats. But the fact that as the majority black people have been triggered so much about, by race that like even like conversations that are more about like relationships tend to steer their way to this. It makes me sad because unfortunately that's, yeah. It's intense.

Participants faced different racial realities and held various ideologies, but when it came to interracial intimacy, they espoused two main discourses: 1) 'I'm attracted but practically' and 2) 'racial barriers can be overcome.' These discourses rarely remained discrete; instead, participants utilized both, continually qualifying and shifting their thoughts. Nor did the discourses remain uniform. Participants subscribed to them to varying degrees and the justifications, desires, and lived experiences underpinning both discourses was unique to each individual. These inconsistencies reveal the unstable landscape young people traverse daily, where race remains salient but is consistently being cracked, buttressed, and re-colored by themselves and the world around them. The central argument of this paper is that apartheid, while not directly experienced by born-frees, still holds powerful influence over the way youth conceptualize, imagine, and desire intimacy. However, an increasing understanding of interracial intimacy as a positive possibility suggests fissures, however small, in existing notions of race and sexuality in South Africa.

This paper begins by briefly tracing the history of interracial relationships in South Africa, followed by a review of existing literature on relevant theory, youth identity in post-apartheid society, and interracial relationships. The theoretical underpinnings provide a foundational lens of race and sexuality through which this project was conducted. Further, the history of race in South Africa, as well as the contemporary landscape of identity illuminates the context in which youth's intimate thoughts operate. The following section presents the findings of my primary research, including a discussion on methodology and limitations. Data analysis constitutes the main chunk of the paper, with four themes explored: apartheid's legacy, current discourses of race, attraction

and desire, and possibilities of interracial intimacy and the future. These themes may seem broad and disparate, but they remain grounded in the topic of interracial intimacy. Next, I present my conclusions, bound by the small size and scope of this study, and return to the two discourses I introduced above. Finally, I give recommendations for further ways interracial intimacy can be explored in South Africa—a land of paradox where great social inequalities and a painful history of racism are rivaled by hope for a united future.



## Historiography

To understand the discourses around interracial intimacy in contemporary South Africa, one must first look to the past. This nation has a long and fraught history of intimate interracial relationships beginning when the first Dutch colonists stepped foot onto the Cape. In the 15th century, sexual relations between races were common, as stratification was predicated on religion instead of race. Consequently, some marriages formed across racial lines, primarily between European men and African or Asian women who had been baptised. Most interracial relations, however, occurred through force between powerful European masters and female slaves, reflecting power inequalities (Sherman and Steyn, 2009).

As the population of ‘mixed race’ offspring grew, however, colonial leaders became increasingly insecure. Religion and culture were too easily transferable and were no longer sufficient justifications for the colonial regime, so race—what colonists perceived to be a discrete biologically determined entity—prevailed as the mode of domination (MacDonald). Maintaining clear and stable racial boundaries was a necessity, and therefore intimate racial relations became strictly prohibited. British missionaries briefly threatened this convention by attempting to use interracial marriages to civilize ‘heathens,’ but Dutch settlers quickly squashed this trend. Resistance to interracial intimacy ultimately triumphed, cementing these relations as deviant (Sherman and Steyn 2009). Miscegenation became incontestably unacceptable because of its power to blur racial boundaries and, consequently, threaten the political, economic, and social power of whiteness (Stoler 1989).

Despite widespread social stigma, miscegenation continued to be a concern for colonists. Young (1995) attributes this to the paradigm of attraction and repulsion characterizing the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, asserting that colonists held an intense desire for interracial sex and an equally intense disgust toward this desire. Young roots this analysis in hybridity theory, arguing that “culture never stands alone but always participate in a conflictual economy acting out the tensions between sameness and difference.” Since culture was, constructed around racial boundaries starting in this period, transgression of cultural boundaries occurred through interracial intimacy. This paradigm defined and destabilized colonial culture. The desire to engage in interracial sex always lurked and at once motivated both intensified buttressing of and attempts to collapse racial constructs.

Legislation in the early 1900s did little to tame the desire of white men. Laws only prohibited relations between European women and African men, linked to notions of black sexuality and masculinity as dangerous and white sexuality and femininity as pure (Sherman and Steyn 2009; Young 1995). Only with the passing of the Immorality Act (No. 5 of 1927) were all illicit relations between whites and natives criminalised. Existing marriages remained valid and coloured people, who were not considered ‘pure stock’, could still engage in relationships outside of their race.

Sherman and Steyn (2009) argue that the Immorality Act had little material effect on an already racially divided population, but that it paved the way for more intense antagonism against interracial coupling. Political contest between the Purified National Party (GNP) and the United Party (UP) in the 1930s resurfaced the issue of mixed marriages. According to Hyslop (1993), the 1938 election revolved around “which party was most opposed to mixed marriage, and which policy was best equipped to prevent it” (p. 2). The UP won despite denying the need for anti-miscegenation laws, but the issue took center stage again in the 1948 election. Fears of sexually potent black men corrupting vulnerable white women, especially young poor working girls, increasingly circulated. Similar myths also existed about Indian men who were painted as conniving businessmen aiming to seduce white women in order to acquire property (Hyslop 1995). Hyslop argues that this idea stemmed from Afrikaner resentment toward Indian shopkeepers for both their economic success and the fact that many Afrikaner women worked under them—situations which destabilized racial and gender hierarchies. The GNP appealed to these anxieties through their segregationist platform called apartheid which promised to exterminate interracial intimacy, as well as most other forms of cross-racial contact. Capitalising on discourses of deviant interracial mixing, the GNP came to power in 1948 (Hyslop 1993).

Legislation against intimate interracial relations materialized soon after. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (No. 55 of 1949) barred the solemnization unions between a European and a non-European and the Immorality Act was amended in 1957 to prohibit illicit relations between whites and non-whites. These acts erected a firm barrier against the coloured population for the first time. The Nationalist Party (NP) justified this bill through eugenic sentiments which JH Abraham espoused on the floor of the House of Parliament: ‘It is scientific to hold yourself aloof from a race with a lower civilization and less education and more limited intellectual power’ (Sherman and Steyn 2009, p. 65 as cited in Furlong 1983). This act, however, did nothing to ban

marriages between non-white individuals of different races or to invalidate existing interracial marriages (though this only comprised 0.23% of marriages in South Africa at the time), but following legislation complicated such relationships.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 mandated the entire population be classified into four racial groups—white, Indian, coloured, and black—which would soon become the foundation of separate development. Racial classification was based not on biology but on superficial measures such as complexion, hair texture, or even relationship status. Sherman and Steyn (2009) note that a non-white woman married to or consorting with a non-white man of a different race could be reclassified as his race and could revert to her ‘original’ group if the relationship ended. Movement into the exclusive white club was strictly forbidden, however, so a white man already married to a non-white woman would become a member of her group instead. The Group Areas Act of 1950 further constrained racial mixing. The primary objective of the Act was to establish residential and business areas for each racial group. Again, where a woman in an interracial marriage lived often depended on her husband’s classification. Bowker (1999) highlights the absurdity of these legislative acts, which had the power to classify a single person in multiple ways and require various behaviors to conform to apartheid law. He writes:

*[A woman] might be of Indian national origin classified as Asian, married to a man classified as Coloured, and live in a Coloured zone but only be able to work or go to school in an Asian zone... In one infamous example, a Jazz musician, Vic Wilkinson of Cape Town was born to a Coloured man and a White woman, and originally classified White. After apartheid he was reclassified as Coloured, and then twice more reclassified as he married women of different races and moved to different neighborhoods. (Note that the remarriages took place outside of South Africa for legal reasons.) Finally, both he and his Asian wife Farina were reclassified Coloured, allowing them and their children to live together. At the age of fifty, Vic actually received a new birth certificate — and crossed the race lines for the fifth time (p. 45).*

These examples exhibit the unstable nature of both race and the apartheid system; even as the state constructed race as a biological difference which justified separation, the laws they used to enforce this ideology allowed a woman to be white one day and then coloured or black the next.

Anti-mixing laws were strictly enforced when regarding white and non-white couples. Sherman and Steyn (2009) write:

*Many suffered humiliation, lack of privacy, and degradation by the police. Authorities frequently followed people suspected of interracial sex. Police raided homes in the early hours of the morning to examine identity documents to ensure that sleeping partners were of the same race. Sometimes bed sheets and genitals were inspected. For a white and non-white pair of the opposite-sex, even travelling in the same car exposed them to the danger*

*of being followed by the police and arrested on suspicion of contravening the Immorality Act. (p. 66)*

Ratele and Duncan (2003) report that 929 people were arrested, 829 charged, 733 brought to trial, 221 acquitted, and 527 found guilty under the Immorality Act. The punishment was up to seven years in jail and black individuals typically received harsher sentences (Ratele and Dunca, 2003). Many interracial couples went into exile or fled to neighboring countries, such as Namibia, Swaziland, and Lesotho in order to live and love freely (Sherman and Steyn 2009).

As anti-apartheid activism made gains in the 1980s and international criticism fell on South Africa, the apartheid government began to roll back petty legislation. In 1985, both the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and section 16 of the Immorality Act were repealed, decriminalising interracial relationships. The Group Areas Act stayed intact, however, preventing black and white couples from cohabiting. Additionally, social stigma against interracial relationships held steady. Still, dissolving regulations against interracial intimacy was the first step toward dismantling the apartheid tower. The transition to democracy in 1994 marked the biggest shift in the social landscape of South Africa, as all forms of cross-racial contact suddenly were protected and people of all races became equal citizens under one flag.

Over twenty-years post-apartheid, a discourse of non-racialism circulates throughout the nation, but this is challenged by the enduring legacy of apartheid. ‘The Apartheid Mindset,’ understands races as inherently different and incompatible. It did not die with the structures which created it. Along with lasting impacts of economic disparity and political instability, notions of racial separatism in the social sphere have remained somewhat normative—and not just among older generations. Finchilescu et al. (2007) indicates several reasons for the lack of interracial friendships among youth: differing understandings of race issues; the idea that racial mixing represents a dissociation from one’s race and culture; socio-economic obstacles; language barriers; fear of racism from another group, and subtle racism aimed at culture and traditional values. Though interracial friendships are not prevalent in South Africa, interracial relationships are rarer still, perhaps because of the addition of sexuality, marriage, and families into the equation. Moving through South Africa, one can see that homogenous coupling is still overwhelmingly the norm in South Africa, and this study seeks to understand how apartheid’s legacies linger in the minds, imaginations, and hearts of youth.

## Literature Review

To adequately examine interracial intimacy, one first must understand why this is a compelling site of study. Intimate interracial relations only exist as a phenomenon within a society which both values race as a category of difference and views the regulation of sexuality as important in maintaining that difference (Childs, 2005). South Africa is such a society, as race historically functioned as the primary method of stratifying the nation's political, economic, and social structures. For many years, the apartheid government regulated sexual relations, forbidding all types of interracial intimacy, in order to prevent the blurring of racial hierarchies and, consequently, the collapse of a society that had white supremacy as its core (Sherman and Steyn, 2009). Today, legal strictures regarding interracial intimacy have dissolved, but ideologies of race and sexuality remain. Lingering beliefs of how race and sexuality function still shape current understandings of interracial intimacy, which, I argue, is a site where the profoundly personal meets the extremely political. Intimacy involves deeply personal aspects of desire and identity, but the addition of race brings this sphere into conflict with racism and sexual regulation. Some scholars go as far as positing the acceptance of interracial relationships in a racialised society "is one of the most accurate indices for measuring the extent to which a group is achieving social, economic, and political equality," (Ross, 1990, p.166) while others take a more modest approach, believing that "the ways that interracial couples are socially constructed within society mirrors the social construction of race and racial groups" (Childs, 2005, p. 6).

Therefore, the study of interracial intimacy is necessarily an intersectional endeavor, weaving together race and sexuality, along with the multiple discourses embedded within these two fields. This section first explores the theoretical frameworks which inform understandings of interracial intimacy, linking race, sexuality, and identity together under the postmodern notion of discourse. Next, it examines literature related to the changing constructions of race and identity among youth in post-apartheid South Africa. Finally, it evaluates existing scholarship on interracial relationships in relation to these themes, highlighting relevant findings as well as gaps to be filled. The combination of literature on critical theory, post-apartheid identity, and interracial relationships demonstrates the racialised context in which deeply personal desires, imaginations, and conceptions of interracial intimacy operate in South Africa.

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

### *Race*

Childs (2005) warns of a persistent problem in researching interracial relationships: the tendency to reify race and reproduce it as a natural, essential, and very real category of difference. This paper, instead, subscribes to the wave of scholarship which identifies race as a social construction. This theory posits that “from its inception, race was a folk idea, a culturally invented conception about human differences” (Smedley and Smedley, 2005, p. 22). Unlike the popular school of thought which links physical features to inherent behaviors, social rankings, and cultural traits, the social constructionist theory rejects these notions often used to justify racial discrimination (Smedley and Smedley, 2005). It is different, still, from the rising understanding of race dubbed the “color-blind discourse” which reduces the concept to meaningless phenotypical variation (Childs, 2005). While acknowledging that race holds no inherent value, the social constructionist approach also recognizes the way race is made real through power and discourse.

Smedley and Smedley (2005) advance this theory, arguing race as a category of human difference only acquires meaning when society structures inequalities around it. The authors insist there is no inherent biological value or cultural link to race, but the ways in which society has utilized it as an “important mechanism for limiting and restricting access to privilege, power, and wealth” have constituted race a social reality (Smedley and Smedley, 2005, p. 22). Guillaumin (1999) agrees, asserting that the process of categorizing humans rests on systems of domination. Race, as one of the leading modes of organization, has acquired significant material effects, shaping the political, economic, and social landscape of nearly every society. The construct, Guillaumin argues, has determined in various societies throughout history who has access to resources, who is considered human beings and citizens, and who lives and who dies. In short, race is contingent on asymmetrical relations of power. Guillaumin cogently summarizes, “No, race does not exist. And yet it does. Not in the way that people think; but it remains the most tangible, real and brutal of realities” (p. 107).

### *Race and Discourse*

Race does not just function at a structural level. Many scholars have followed the Foucauldian notion of discourse to analyze how race is created and sustained through social interactions (Bhana, 2016; Childs, 2005; Jaynes, 2007; McKinney, 2007; Soudien, 2001; Walker,

2006). Succinctly, these authors understand discourse as the beliefs, ideas, and language which circulate between individuals and through institutions and which reveal, reproduce, and challenge power structures. They contend that discourse and power are inextricably linked, as discourses construct and reflect the knowledge through which power operates and is legitimated. Race is one such discourse; the ideology of race as replete with inherent meaning circulates throughout society via the language used to discuss it and the power inequalities organized around it (Hall, 2002). However, discursive formations, such as race, and the related power relations are plural and fluid. Like all discourse, it rests on particular sociocultural contexts and hierarchies of power and, therefore, is subject to change. People have the agency to shift, transform, and create entirely new discourses and, thus, actively negotiate racial constructions (Bhana, 2015; McKinney, 2007). Thus, individuals give meaning to race and racial identities through the way they support, dispute, or complicate existing racial discourses, which necessarily links their everyday social life to broader institutional environments (Bhana 2015; McKinney, 2007; Soudien, 2001).

### *Sexuality*

Sexuality functions as another discourse embedded in broader structures of power. Parker (2008) delivers a thorough overview of sexuality as a socially constructed phenomenon, highlighting the idea that sexuality is shaped within social contexts laden with particular power dynamics. Political, cultural, historical, and economic settings, Parker argues, produce “sexual cultures” which inform how people behave and think sexually. These cultures socialize individuals to:

*learn the sexual desires, feelings, roles and practices typical of their cohorts or statuses within society — as well as the sexual alternatives that their culture opens up to them...Such possibilities are defined through the implicit and explicit rules and regulations imposed by the sexual cultures of specific communities as well as the economic and political power relations which underpin these sexual cultures — and they can never be fully understood without examining the importance of issues such as ‘class,’ ‘race,’ or ‘ethnicity’ and the other multiple forms through which different societies organize systems of social inequality and structure the possibilities for social interaction along or across lines of social difference. (Parker, 2008).*

Parker cites numerous scholars who have followed this framework to explore sexual socialization, and I join their ranks as I examine how post-apartheid society constructs interracial intimacy within or outside the scripts of appropriate sexuality provided to youth.

While most narratives of young African sexuality revolve solely around HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, and teenage pregnancy, Bhana (2017) unearths the discourses surrounding youth sexuality in South Africa with an emphasis on pleasure, desire, and love. She takes the circumstances of poverty, unstable families, and gender inequalities which darken many young people's realities and explores how love and desire re-color their worlds. Teenage sexuality, Bhana argues, is shaped as both young boys and girls imagine and sometimes experience love as emotional comfort while simultaneously navigating turbulent socio-economic terrains. Therefore, historically produced power dynamics, particularly those of gender, race, and class, influence how youth make meaning of sexuality and relationships.

Bhana (2017) is sure to stress, however, that teenagers do not simply reproduce power relations like cogs in a machine of inequality, but that they are active agents in constructing their sexual worlds. Bhana writes, "For the teenagers in the book, having the capacity to contest, shape, reject, accommodate and negotiate the parameters of their lives is vital. These capacities are embedded in hope, agency and the power to imagine different lives rather than the deterministic accounts based on culture, biology and socialisation" (p. 3) Put differently, youth's thoughts, actions, and yearnings shape sexuality even as they are mediated by external contexts. For example, Bhana finds that girls in realities of poverty and gendered economic resources actively engage in sex in exchange for money. Boys, meanwhile, desire virgins within a context which idealizes feminine purity and suffers from high rates of HIV/AIDS. Bhana terms this "lite agency," as she recognizes that youth who struggle to survive in their material realities cannot reverse oppression in South Africa through fortitude and hope alone. Thus, the agency youth exhibit in their affective desires exists in tension with their tumultuous realities; hope for fulfilling lives and pleasurable relationships "can be expressed or thwarted depending on the circumstances and conditions as teenagers navigate their sexual worlds" (p. 19)

### *Weaving the threads*

Of concern is how youth in post-apartheid South Africa engage in discourses of race and sexuality following the country's history of intense regulation of interracial intimacy. As shown, these constructions are actively produced on an individual and institutional level and are encoded in all social relations through discourse. Jaynes (2007) explains the advantage of discursive analysis, "Discourse work resists the traditional distinction between individual and society, the



personal and political... the purpose, then, of discursive methodologies, is to attend to how institutional power relations are both reproduced and challenged within everyday contexts of talk and action” (p. 398). Analyzing the discourse surrounding interracial relationships reveals the relationship between the micro and macro level workings of race and sexuality in South Africa. While Bhana’s (2017) work focuses on how discourses of sexuality are classed and gendered, I examine how they are racialised. Conceptions of what constitutes acceptable intimacy between people of certain races supply insight into how youth construct racial and sexual identities which inform and are informed by broader webs of power. Further, discourses of desire, I argue, may intersect with race in such a way that suggest possibilities which may not yet be enacted. Conversely, discourses against interracial intimacy may reveal how desire and sexuality are constrained by race. As Childs (2005) summarizes, “[It] is necessary to question what it is the meaning or significance of the discourse against sexuality—in this case, interracial sexuality... if interracial sexuality is constructed as deviant, or viewed as undesirable, it is important to consider why, what purpose it serves, and whom it benefits” (p. 12).

### **Youth’s changing constructions of race and identity in post-apartheid South Africa**

South Africa underwent a massive transformation after the end of apartheid. Suddenly, legal organization by race ceased and the “Rainbow Nation,” a mix of colors and cultures, formed. A wealth of literature exists on how youth in the new South Africa navigate the shifting terrain and form self-concepts within it. How individuals construct racialised selves within a tense nation informs how they engage in intimacy.

Soudien (2001) produced one of the first extensive ethnographic studies of youth and identity in post-apartheid South Africa after conducting research at two formerly coloured schools during the transition from apartheid to democracy. This study analyzes how students make sense of their place in these changing educational and national contexts and argues that young people develop identities through multiple, often conflicting discourses. Soudien discerns several discourses: the Official operates at the political level and is driven by the power-holding group; the Formal operates at an institutional level, such as a school attempting to cultivate a specific community; and the Informal operates within social worlds. In the setting of schools, these three discourses collide. Remnants of the apartheid past left African students feeling inferior and like

“visitors” (Soudien, 2001, pg. 316), even as the school espoused a multicultural environment and many students formed connections across racial lines. Coloured students participated in the non-racialism promoted by their school while the incessant racialisation outside classroom walls propelled a resurging coloured identity within social groups. The oppositional discourses youth encounter create a troubled identity, meaning that there exists “doubt in people’s minds about what is important in working out who they are and where they belong culturally, racially and in a variety of other ways” (Soudien, 1995, p. 324). In other words, Soudien argues that unstable selves emerge within an unstable South Africa; youth struggle to reconcile the apartheid past, the hope for a less racialised future, and the still divided reality. Still, Soudien believes that young people make strategic choices regarding how they engage in these conflicting discourses to provide themselves the most freedom.

McKinney (2007) conducted a similar study at a primarily Afrikaans university, where she taught two South African literature courses with the aim of analyzing and getting students to analyze the nation’s social issues and students’ positionings within them. McKinney found that students skirted around ‘race’ and instead engaged with ‘culture’ as a form of insurmountable difference. While students believed replacing race with culture was more politically correct, this merely re-inscribed the apartheid justification of the incompatibility of white culture with the various black cultures (Zulu, Xhosa, coloured, Indian, etc.). McKinney argues although the specific language has changed, the discourse of difference remains in tact. The students still viewed race and culture through an essentialist lens which bases identity construction on difference to and rejection of the ‘other.’ Walker (2005) has similar findings. She writes, “Ideologies produce an unreflexive ‘commonsense’ and what we take to be ‘natural’ in the world, for example, that it is natural for people to forge friendships with others like themselves rather than, say across racial boundaries” (Walker, 2005, p. 134). Put differently, interpersonal relationships are influenced by social structures such as race and culture which privilege “interactions grounded in sameness” (Walker, 2005, p. 139). Both McKinney and Walker ultimately assert that the familiar ways of understanding race and identity must be deconstructed so people are no longer trapped in the old, destructive meanings of ‘white’ and ‘black.’ If youth can negotiate race differently in the new South Africa, possibilities may open up for new subjectivities and social relations.

Concurring with previous scholarship, Bhana (2016) identifies a similar sticking problem in youth interactions. Studying how race is engaged at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban,

Bhana finds that students follow familiar racial patterns which preserve divisions. Space on the university campus remains organized by race and exacerbates the lack of informal interracial interaction between students. Language also proves divisive, as English is pitted against isiZulu as an articulation of race and class. White, Indian, and coloured students speak English on campus and show resentment toward the black students who tend to speak isiZulu outside the classroom, and this language barrier is seen as a source of conflict and distance between races. However, class interferes as some of the more economically privileged black students choose to speak English over isiZulu, revealing the heterogeneity of black identity. In another work, Singh and Bhana (2015) argue that class creates nuance in identity, as middle-class black students have the language tools to engage in more cross-racial mixing or, as other black students see it, to align themselves with white students. Student identities and relationships are indeed informed and constrained by broader institutional environments such as class and race, but Bhana (2016) argues that youth still possess the agency to redirect their individual investments from maintaining restrictive racialisation to challenging these constructions.

Dolby (2000) expands on the possibilities youth hold for remapping race. Her research focuses on the way youth conceptualize and produce race in the nation's new sociopolitical context. After spending one year at a multiracial high school in Durban in 1996, Dolby finds that race still commands young South Africans' lives, but that they actively negotiate and make new meanings of race as their lives are increasingly informed by multiracial interactions and globalization. Dolby locates taste—music and fashion preferences—as a central site of identity construction for youth, who utilize the discourse as a way of coding race. Dolby is sure to stress, however, that taste is not merely “an expression of a particular racial or ethnic group,” but a “practice [which] creates and recreates race” (2000, p. 16). Dolby uses this discursive analysis to define identity as a process of change and formation and race as a dynamic notion open to reconfiguration. How the students utilized taste—whether they conformed to the commodities and styles associated with their racial group or whether they chose to cross over into another territory—contributed to the construction of racialised identities, as well as their interaction with other racialised subjects. Therefore, youth ‘work’ their identities by tinkering with taste, a site of struggle where collisions and connections occur. Most noteworthy is Dolby's analysis of students who actively traverse taste and racial boundaries; these students displayed agency in constructing individual identities that confounded the racial logic of the school. Moreover, the way they

ventured into the borderlands between races, Dolby argues, loosens the constraints of race and hints at a future which allows for multiplicity, ruptures, and the ultimate deconstruction of the racial habitus.

These authors reveal that youth produce racialised identities through their interactions with the unstable terrain of post-apartheid South Africa. Soudien's (2001) exploration of conflicting discourses exhibits the oppositional worlds youth must make sense of and navigate. McKinney (2007) and Walker (2006) find that social relations are driven by understandings of difference and sameness which reify racial boundaries. Bhana (2015) analyzes how students actively preserve racialised worlds through space and language, though she finds that class can create cross-racial alliances and intra-racial conflict (Singh and Bhana, 2016). Dolby (2000) discovers a new discourse of race informed by taste which both re-inscribes racial categories and allows for the transgression of racial lines. This collection of scholarship ultimately illuminates the agency youth hold in constructing identities within the constraints of history and power structures. Each author argues, in their own way, that youth can bolster or subvert race through the ways they choose to engage in the discourses around them. These findings point to the fact that race still determines how people identify and relate to each other in South Africa but that new, more liberatory possibilities exist for those willing to step outside old discourses and create new ones. The various positions youth take up regarding race filter into their ideals of intimacy, where they must navigate conflicting discourses of non-racialism and racial separatism. Thus, intimacy is a site which intersects with constructions of identity and social worlds and which may hold the possibility of new border-crossings.

### **Exploring interracial intimacy in racialised societies**

Interracial relationships are considered deviant in racialised societies, as they stray away from the same-race, heterosexual norm of sexuality which guarantees racial purity (Childs, 2005). Childs (2005) produces an impressive analysis of the social worlds of interracial couples in the United States and the attitudes and views of their communities. Her book resists pathologizing individuals and, instead, locates the narratives of 15 interracial couples and participants of six focus groups in the structural contexts which mediate discourses around interracial couplings. The analysis is premised on the idea that these discourses reflect the social and political hierarchy of race in the U.S. Further, Childs argues these couples exist on the borders between races and this

unique position enables us to see how racial boundaries persist. Unlike the authors above, Childs stops short of asserting these couples have the ability to shape new discourses, but she, nevertheless, provides groundbreaking insight into the existing meanings attached to interracial relationships.

Childs (2005) presents a mountain of evidence showing that interracial relationships are subtly and explicitly opposed in all communities because of persistent racial ideologies. In white communities, participants generally agreed that interracial couples were acceptable but that they would not personally engage in such relations. Childs identifies distinct discursive patterns which justify these positions: “‘not my preference,’ ‘nothing in common,’ ‘what about the children?’” (2005, p. 74). These strategies allow individuals to espouse a color-blind discourse while simultaneously reproducing racialized attitudes. In other cases, white participants had never considered interracial relationships as a viable possibility, as this presented a reality completely outside their available discourse. In black communities, opposition was more explicit and grounded in the painful history of discrimination. Black participants expressed apprehension rooted in the idea that white partners would ignore or contribute to experiences of racism. They also reprised black folk in interracial relationships, as they understood them to be struggling with internalized racism or rejecting the black community and, in the case of men, black femininity. Participants of both races perceived several other motivations people had for entering interracial relationships, including fetishization of the other, status, money, and sex. These discussions promote symbolic, disguised racialisation which serves to perpetuate the idea of black and white people as incompatible and interracial couplings as fundamentally deviant.

Jaynes (2007) conducts a similar study in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and examines how the “discourses on interracial relationships intersect with racist or antiracist discourses” (p. 34). Focus-groups and individual interviews yielded rich insight into how people define race in the post-apartheid era and how this affects their perceptions and experiences of interracial intimacy. Jaynes finds that conceptions of race have failed to shift significantly from the colonial and apartheid eras; South African youth, for the most part, still view race as a biological and cultural difference and as essential to the human experience. These notions are both supported and contested in the discourse Jaynes unearths on interracial intimacy, which primarily regards the perceptions and lived experiences of these relationships. For example, participants painted race in essentialist terms when discussing culture, conflating the two concepts. Some

opposed interracial relationships on the basis of respecting cultural legacy, while others engaged in interracial intimacy but found culture to be a roadblock. One white woman expressed shock at the cultural practices, such as animal sacrifice, of her black partner, and she discursively constructed a dichotomy of primitive blackness and civilized whiteness which she must “get used to” (Jaynes, 2007, p. 51). However, Jaynes found that racism between partners and within families was vehemently denied. Though they found race to be integral to one’s identity and upbringing, participants curiously asserted that race doesn’t actually matter once one enters an interracial relationship. Thus, Jaynes reveals the tension between discourses of nonracialism and those of cultural essentialism which operate simultaneously in interracial relationships.

Jaynes (2007) also found that discussions of the family are utilised to justify opposition to interracial couplings. References to parental acceptance, concern for the children of interracial marriages, and cultural upbringing all crop up as reasons to not engage in interracial intimacy and these justifications, though lacking racialised terminology, disguise the subtle racism encoded within. Jaynes writes, “In the discourse of the family, interracial couples and families pose a threat to the dominant model of the family, and the accompanying ideologies of femininity, patriarchy and white supremacy... The idealised construction of the family as nuclear, patriarchal westernised, ethnocentric and conforming to racial hierarchies, is of value to the stability of the state” (2007, p. 409). Put differently, the family functions as a controlling ideology which produces citizens who strive to maintain a racial status quo. Therefore, opposing interracial relationships on the basis of protecting the family necessarily has racist undertones.

The most recent and powerful study on interracial intimacy comes from Jansen (2017) as he shares the stories of ten interracial student couples in South Africa. The interviews are presented in the form of uninterrupted, first-person narratives, allowing the voices of the couples to displace any judgment or criticism potentially embedded in a theoretical framework. Jansen identifies several compelling themes in these accounts of how youth come into and survive interracial relationships in a society filled with strict racial practices. He finds that family and social environments, such as schools or geographical regions, shape people’s understandings of interracial relationships. In many of the cases, Jansen notes that parental acceptance of interracial contact influenced the participant’s attitude toward racial mixing, even if only one parent—usually the mother—promoted an open-minded environment and the other—usually the father—showed

apprehension. Culture and ‘racial guardedness,’ or the fear of racial prejudice, constitute the main justifications of perturbation.

The more innovative findings concern reprisal. Jansen (2017) finds that the couples endure reprisal from strangers through stares of surprise or disgust, snipes—abrupt verbal attacks—and snubs—creating distance from interracial couples. Reprisal can also come from friends who ‘racially coax’ a person to cross back over the racial divide and return to their own group. Jansen argues the practice of reprisal derives from ‘scripted knowledge,’ acquired over years of interpellation into racial systems which teach which relationships are acceptable. Reprisals have three goals: to police the color line and restore the ‘natural’ racial order, to punish the couples through public shaming, and to teach others that racial mixing is objectionable. For those who witness reprisals—Jansen shares the example of a little girl who witnesses her mother drop her bag in shock and horror upon seeing an interracial couple—the message is clear: one must stay firmly within their racial identity and racial group in order to belong. Jansen’s analysis effectively links the micro-experiences of youth to the macro-influences which structure their lives. The scripted behavior interracial couples tolerate stem directly from apartheid, thereby reflecting and reproducing racialised practices of the past. Jansen argues that these practices were created by institutions and, thus, new ones can only be spread through institutional transformation. Despite racialised institutions and social backlash, the students Jansen features find safety, comfort, happiness, and love in their relationships. He cites the couples’ ability to live together and love each other as examples of the possibility to break away from normative racial systems—a necessity for mending the traumas of the past and for moving toward an equal and united society.

Less has been written about how sexual desire and imagination factors into interracial intimacy. Bhana and Pattman (2010) begin to traverse this territory in their study of Grade 11 white girls’ racial and sexual identities. The authors found that the girls constructed their identity in opposition to blackness through racial essentialism. Yet they also expressed desire for boys of other races, specifically coloured boys. The girls associated this with “free will and agency as against ‘constraints’ imposed by their parents, peers, and culture” (Bhana and Pattman, 2010, p. 377). Bhana and Pattman found that interracial desire destabilised whiteness and, especially for the girls who had been in interracial relationships, caused the investment in whiteness to decrease. This suggests expanding notions of sexuality which hold the possibility of subverting racial

essentialism and shifting the racialised lens through which identity is constructed. The authors write:

Desiring beyond race is suggestive of the cracks in familiar race and sexual relations in South Africa. Such desire shows the minutiae of transformation in the emotional sexual landscapes of the society. Although sexuality, gender and race relations are sourced in colonialism and apartheid, such familiar relations are not inevitable but open to change... Desire is not automatic and determined and programmed by race. (Bhana and Pattman, p. 379).

This change is still contingent upon social and political contexts, however. The girls experienced restriction from families and peers who still subscribed to apartheid beliefs and they found stereotypes, as well as classed and racialised spaces, limiting.

However, these findings stand in stark contrast to another study Singh and Bhana (2015) conducted, which found that most university students rejected interracial relationships. They argue this to be suggestive of apartheid legacies which continue to regulate students' sexual relations and "limit the possibility of conceptualising interactions beyond what is familiar" (Singh and Bhana, 2015, p. 24). Therefore, the fact that the sexual desire of younger white girls is widening to include other races suggests that the sociopolitical context of the country is slowly shifting and that South African youth may be employing their individual agency to promote change within the everyday contexts of sexuality, desire, and relationships.

Thus, these authors shed light on the relationship between interracial intimacy and the larger workings of race. Childs (2005) discovers that persistent racial ideologies produce negative attitudes toward interracial relationships. Jaynes (2007) points to specific discursive strategies, such as culture and the family, which justify opposition to interracial dating. In both works, the authors argue that the meanings given to interracial intimacy reflect racist discourses within society. Jansen (2017) takes a new approach by exploring the experiences of interracial couples without imposing any social theories. As a result, apartheid scripts, discourses of racism and non-racialism, and pure love appear in the micro-interactions of students which reveal the way they make meaning of themselves and others in South African society. Like Jansen, Bhana and Pattman (2010) present a more hopeful outlook. Their findings of white girls' sexual desire aimed at boys of other races suggests an expanding sexuality which points to ruptures, however small, within the familiar discourses against interracial intimacy. These studies illustrate interracial intimacy as a symbolic site for the challenges racialised societies pose to identity and sexuality.



## **Conclusion**

Interracial intimacy is an understudied field despite its rich relevance to issues of race and sexuality at all levels of society. The scholarship presented here outlines the discursive links between these multiple fields of study, showing that race and sexuality, including desire, constitute and are constituted by webs of power. Though this shapes individual's conceptions of themselves and the world around them, these constructs are not static. Instead, people can engage with discourses in ways which challenge, support, or complicate existing power relations. Scholarship on youth identity in post-apartheid South Africa exhibits this phenomenon. The generation raised in the new democracy hold conceptions of race and identity reminiscent of the apartheid past, but they also exhibit emerging ways of being informed by shifting sociopolitical contexts. The way they choose to invest in these conflicting discourses will shape the future of race in South Africa. Young people's understanding of race informs how they conceive interracial intimacy. Existing literature reveals that racialised ideologies produce understandings of interracial intimacy as deviant, but South Africa's slowly changing climate is generating more positive conceptions of cross-racial mixing, even if this is limited to the rare interracial couple or the realm of desire. Therefore, the way youth experience, envision, or desire interracial intimacy provides insight into how they continue to engage with restrictive or expansive discourses of race and sexuality.

## Methodology

The data for this study comes from three focus groups and two individual interviews, a combination that produced substantial qualitative data in the short period of time allotted for this project. All participants were university students between the ages of 18-24 drawn from two universities in eThekweni. Participants were recruited through various contacts: the advisor to this project, a professor at one of the universities, and the director of an educational NGO. One individual interview was conducted in a private home while the rest took place on the university campuses. Individual interviews spanned 30-60 minutes, while the focus group discussions spanned 60-120 minutes.

Participant selection was based solely on age, as this project intended to explore the views of born-frees, and while I still attempted to secure an equal number of male and female participants and students across the racial spectrum, there was no exclusion on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, relationship status, or other means. The make-up of these higher education institutes surely affected the participant pool as African students comprise the overwhelming majority of most South African universities. Thus, out of the seventeen students interviewed for this study, 11 are black African, 3 are Indian, 2 are coloured, and 1 is white. While I had initially hoped to conduct two single-sex focus groups—one male and one female—logistical issues and time constraints resulted in two of the focus groups including participants of both genders while one was exclusively male. All focus groups were multiracial, though not racially balanced. Such demographics, though somewhat unintentional, proved interesting; gender and race dynamics were occasionally palpable and fostered lively discussions with a range of perspectives. At the same time, the racial composition may have limited discussions in ways which are discussed in the next section. Additionally, due to the avenues through which students were recruited, most of the focus group participants knew each other and were friends. Thus, rapport was already formed between participants, allowing them to engage with these intensely intimate topics with more ease than they would have with strangers.

Both the focus groups and individual interviews were semi-structured; I prompted participants with open-ended questions related to specific themes regarding intimacy and race—for example, ideals of intimacy, family, and conceptions of interracial intimacy (see Appendix A)—but participants ultimately steered the discussion. Youth have authority on what issues are paramount to their lives and I encouraged participants to enact their agency to decide how to and

to what extent to engage topics of race and sexuality. This approach resulted in threads of space, media, and whiteness which I did not set out to discover but which proved important for these students. Additionally, sexuality was approached broadly with the intent to include all forms of intimacy—attraction, desire, love, sex, emotional support, marriage, etc. When possible, I utilized gender-neutral language to resist interpellating students into hetero-normative discourses and to allow discussions of homosexuality to emerge, though this did not occur. All participants submitted informed consent (see Appendix B) and were briefed on their rights to withdraw consent anytime or to abstain from answering any questions. The topics covered in these sessions were deeply personal and somewhat contentious, and when sensing discomfort or reluctance to engage, I reminded participants of their rights. Participants, for the most part, talked openly and eagerly. If anything, some students were confused why I encouraged deeper discussion about issues of race and identity which they regarded as self-evident.

Further, my own experiences often came into play during these discussions. Several participants asked why I chose this topic, whether I'd ever consider dating a South African, or how I would navigate the situations I posed to them. For the most part, I was successful in deflecting their questions until the conclusion of the formal interview, as I did not want to influence their answers in any way. In some cases, however, I disclosed the reason for my investment in this topic during the interview. Sharing the fact that I'm the child of an interracial couple resulted in some surprise, but I do not believe it affected participants' answers in any significant way.

All focus group discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher (see Appendix C)—a painstaking task but one extremely useful for analysis. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of participants and were purposefully selected to adhere to any particular cultural or ethnic background with which a participant identified. In the case of Kevin, a young Zulu man, he chose to introduce himself using his English name, and I adhered to this decision when selecting his pseudonym. Next, data was analysed thematically using Braun & Clarke's (2006) qualitative content approach, which involves reading transcripts multiple times to identify patterns, coding data, sorting codes into themes, and refining themes to fit within the story the data tells. The themes which emerged are particular to this data set and do not reflect the experiences or opinions of all youth in South Africa.

In analysing the data, I attempted to withhold value judgments which could result in the reproduction of Western-centric discourses or racial hierarchies. Following Jansen's (2017) appeal

for conceptual approaches to research, I tried to understand and empathize with the students' testimonies in order to produce an analysis which centers youth's understandings of race and sexuality and which regards this as valid and important.

### **Limitations of Study**

This study was conceptualized, proposed, researched, conducted, analysed, and written in just over six weeks. With this tight schedule, the size and scope of this study are necessarily limited. While the three focus groups and two individual interviews produced rich insight, more time to plan and execute this study would have resulted in a more thorough methodology. Single-sex focus groups, I believe, would have allowed participants to feel more comfortable sharing intimate desires and details. Additionally, follow-up interviews with select participants would have allowed them to expand on their perspectives without the pressure of conforming to group opinions. More time and resources also would have allowed me to refine themes further.

Multiracial focus groups proved to have their limitations. Though this method garnered a range of perspectives in one session, dialogue around race may have been constrained in this environment as participants were likely aware of sensitivities surrounding race and the possibility of offending others. For example, when I asked Focus Group C whether racial stereotypes affect people's perceptions of interracial relationships, the only participant willing to answer the question was Ben, a white male. The three Zulu men showed reluctance, so I steered the conversation in a different direction. Had there not been a white man sitting across from them, perhaps Mondli, Siphon, and Luzuko would have been more comfortable sharing their perspectives on this topic.

I was also limited by personal biases and my lack of research experience. I attempted to balance my investment and experience with this topic with reflexivity on my positionality. While my life is deeply connected to interracial intimacy in the U.S., I am not South African, I have not experienced the complexities of race specific to this country, and I have often been read as white during my time in Durban. Had an 'insider' conducted this study, results may have differed. Additionally, my gender may have come into play, particularly when interviewing male participants who may have been hesitant to share intimate or sexual desires lest they be considered crude. Further, language was a barrier, particularly in Focus Group C in which three of the participants spoke isiZulu as their first language and were, at times, noticeably uncomfortable speaking English. Despite this, I believe all participants felt comfortable sharing openly with me.

Lastly, this study has been produced by a young and novice researcher limited in time, resources, and knowledge.

### **Participant Biographies and Focus Group Compositions**

These biographies reflect, using many of the same terms, the information participants shared about themselves.

#### *Individual Interviews*

**Nikki**, 22, a coloured female. She grew up in the Bluff, a primarily coloured and white area, which she describes as being less “community based” than surrounding coloured neighborhoods. She was raised in an open-minded family and attended a small private Catholic school from Grade 0 to Grade 12. She is pursuing a masters degree in exercise science.

**Aditya** is Indian and Muslim, though not very religious. He stays by the beach in Durban and likes food. He was shaped mainly by his parents’ divorce. He attended a majority white private primary school and a primarily black semi-private secondary school.

#### *Focus Group A*

**Nandi**, 20, a straight black Zulu female who grew up in Greenwood Park, a predominately coloured neighborhood.

**Thula**, 20, a straight black Zulu female from Pietermaritzburg.

**Lerato**, a black Zulu female from Pietermaritzburg.

**Zintle**, 23, a straight black Xhosa woman from a small town in the Eastern Cape.

**Sophie**, a straight coloured female who grew up in Newlands East, a predominately coloured community.

**Zama**, a straight black Zulu female from Port Shepstone, a small, primarily Indian town.

**Sizani**, 22, a straight black Zulu female.

**Thabo**, a straight black Zulu male from KwaMashu, a primarily African township outside of Durban.

#### *Focus Group B*

**Anika**, 20, an Indian South African from the Tamil culture. She grew up in Westville, a racially diverse, wealthy suburb. She attended a formerly white school which is now racially mixed. She is atheist. She has never been in a relationship but imagines the dating scene in Durban to be okay.

**Sana**, 20, an Indian South African who grew up in Durban. She attended Indian schools growing up and never had a white classmate until university. She comes from an open-minded Christian family, and she has never been in a relationship.

**Kevin**, 21, a black Zulu male. He grew up in predominantly black communities and remembers that the one coloured girl at his primary school was the only non-African classmate he had until university. However, he grew up mixing with other races outside of school and home and learning about other cultures.

#### *Focus Group C*

**Luzuko**, a black Xhosa male from the Eastern Cape studying environmental science.

**Sipho**, a black Zulu male from Durban studying marine biology.

**Mondli**, a black Zulu male from KwaMashu studying microbiology.

**Ben**, a white male from Umhlanga Rocks, an affluent primarily white suburb. He is studying computer science and information technology and sees himself as an average male, though he finds himself to be awkward at dating and relationships.

## Primary Research

### *Introduction*

Like anywhere else in the world, youth in South Africa are invested in relationships and love (Bhana 2017). When opening the conversation with the participants of this study, I asked how they experience the dating scene in South Africa—whether it’s easy to meet and approach people and where that usually happens. Immediately, racialised discourses arose. For example, Sophie, a coloured woman, explained that young people connect mainly online nowadays, but Thula, a black woman, quickly countered, “I’m not coloured, I don’t have WiFi around the clock... It works differently for different people from different places.” Similarly when Ben, a white man, expressed his parents’ relaxed outlook on dating, Siphon, Mondli, and Luzuko described how dating amongst young people is viewed negatively in their communities due to high rates of teenage pregnancy and strict values. Thus, we see that race affects how these South African youth experience and understand dating, whether this is due to class standing which is so inextricably linked to race in this country (MacDonald 2006) or harsh realities of sexuality and gender in their communities. Premised on this knowledge, this study seeks to understand how youth conceptualize interracial intimacy in a racialised society

From conversations with the 17 young South Africans who sit at the center of this study, I have identified five themes which impact their conceptions of interracial intimacy. This section explores these themes in-depth. In *‘The apartheid regime, it has made us to be so far apart’*, I discuss apartheid’s effect on how participants’ understand acceptable intimacy, emphasising the racial borders which remain central to their lives. Next, in *‘It isn’t all kumbaya,’* I present the conflicting racial discourses participants utilised to debate interracial intimacy. Here, the tension between non-racialism and realities of lasting racial oppression becomes evident. Further, this section examines shifting constructions of whiteness. The third section, *‘It’s death or a funeral. It’s not a pretty thing to see,’* portrays the barriers family, communities, and culture present to participants’ acceptance and enactment of interracial intimacy. The fourth section, *‘Oh Lord, I wish I’ll get there one day,’* explores how youth experience attraction toward people of different races as mediated by their own racial identities. Additionally, this section addresses why some participants desired interracial relationships and how others viewed these desires. Finally, in the last section, *‘You have to reach the realization in yourself that it’s more than possible,’* I evaluate how youth’s imaginations of ideal intimacy and futures connect with the possibilities they

understand interracial relationships to hold. Though these five themes do not contain all the issues discussed in these interviews, this study addresses a breadth of discourses in which participants passionately engaged.

***‘The apartheid regime, it has made us to be so far apart’: Apartheid legacies***

The ‘apartheid mindset’ was predicated on the notion of race as essential difference. Though the legislative measures which infused race into state operations have dissolved twenty-four years into democracy, the scars of apartheid still impact people’s psyches. This section explores how understandings of acceptable intimacy still reflect the ‘apartheid mindset,’ even though participants of this study were born after the official end of this system of racial separation.

All participants agreed interracial relationships fall outside the norm in South Africa. Words such as ‘weird,’ ‘abnormal,’ ‘strange,’ ‘wrong,’ and ‘out of place’ were used to describe how interracial relationships are generally viewed in South Africa, though these terms don’t reflect the personal views of participants, as they all maintained they had no problems with interracial dating themselves. Such sentiments emanate from a worldview which holds that people of the same race should stick together and that racial mixing should be limited. Chloe explains this mindset:

So, it’s like you’ve got to be in your box. With your people. And not mix, kind of. Like we can mix but not too far, you’ve got to know where the line is kind of. Some people see it that way. Like, coloureds should date coloureds. Whites should date whites. And keep it in those boxes and not mix.

Chloe’s description points to the ideology underpinning apartheid—that races must be kept separate. As outlined in the historiography, stigmas against racial mixing have existed since the 1600s in order to secure white supremacy. During apartheid, The Group Areas Act and the Immorality Act ensured couples and families would be racially homogenous, thus dictating people’s emotional landscapes for the better part of 50 years. Two decades after the destruction of these laws and the apartheid systems, participants discussed views of same-race relationships as intrinsic to human behavior and interracial relationships as defying the natural order of the world as prominent in their communities today. This lingering discourse suggests this racialised system succeeded in ingraining ideas of race as a valid and natural category of difference in the minds of South Africans.



“The line” Chloe speaks of is also salient. This invisible boundary of what type of mixing is acceptable has changed over time. During apartheid, any contact between races which suggested equal power relations—acquaintances, friendships, or lovers—was strictly forbidden; now friendships across racial lines has become, more or less, accepted among South Africans. Intimate relationships, however, cross this hidden line. Participants reason this by explaining that relationships require two individuals to come together in the most intimate and intense ways and for people of different races, this can easily create difficulties with culture and family:

**Sophie:** I think we more as millennials, we more, or born-frees if you wanna say, we more, we’re already accepted to having friends outside of other races. But yeah, and I think, like I said, I think it’s different because you’re living with somebody that is like, I can respect you as maybe, maybe I’m an atheist and I’m a friend of yours but you’re like Christian. Irrespective if you’re black, I can respect that but now if we are to date now. Problems. *Problems.*

...

**Zama:** I think if I had to bring my Indian friends home, [my family] wouldn’t mind. Maybe they’d make a joke of like, now we’re gonna have to talk English cause they don’t understand Zulu or if I had white friends, like they’d make a joke cause that’s how my family is. But now when it’s someone that I’m dating, this person will obviously like have to come around and [inaudible] and the person and I have to get married. There’s a lot of like, cultural clashes that would happen as well. And also, yeah, I think it’s—it’s very easier when it’s a friendship cause I think there’s a lot of things that you can let slide... That’s fine but with dating, now, it’s sort of like harder because you can’t even know a lot of things, but when you’re friends, then it’s way easier, it’s way easier.

Jaynes (2007) argues that discourses of culture and the family often mask racialised discourses which are the real, underlying reason for rejecting interracial relationships, particularly in the context of a post-colonial society where miscegenation was ardently abhorred due to investments in ‘racial purity.’

Anxieties over raising families also surfaced, as participants articulated concern for how the children of interracial relationships would relate to their parents and identify racially. Sophie, a coloured woman, says she’s happy she’s not a first generation coloured person, as she believes these situations create more confusion than harmony. Children and parents, she suggests, wouldn’t be able to relate as their racial experiences would differ, whether this a white mother not understanding why her coloured child is getting ignored at a beauty shop or a coloured child not being able to relate to the power and privilege of their white parent. Kevin agreed that having a child would present conflict between the two families who would both want the child to be raised according to their culture, while Anika said that only when the prospect of raising a family with a

person of another race would her family take issue with interracial contact. Such discourses are reminiscent of anti-miscegenation rhetoric which posited that children of interracial couplings are “tainted as a rule with illegitimacy, its association with the family is peculiar; the half-breed, according to the opportunities his appearance offers, feels that his membership of the family and cultural group is nothing definite” (Findlay, p. 9). While participants’ statements present real and valid concerns regarding the realities interracial relationships would pose to their lives and existing and future relationships, anxieties over culture, family, and children trump values of compromise, learning, and cultural exchange only in a society which holds racial difference at its core. This ultimately prevents positive forms of hybridity and border-crossing to materialize.

Some participants recognize the marks apartheid has imprinted on the minds of their families and community members, while others engage in discourses of racial difference as inherent. Aditya, for example, says, “I don’t think it’s from the whole apartheid thing. I think it’s that in the past, people used to generally stick to their own people.” Here, Aditya understands separation by race as instinctive—it’s just the way the world has been ordered for generations—and not as a product of institutions and webs of power. Luzuko, on the other hand, illustrates a firm grasp on apartheid’s role in governing personal relations:

It’s mental colonization... Due to white people so going around, growing in a society where [a] black person would marry a [black] person, where a white person would marry a white person, they’ve ended up making that a system. That is how it should be done. So there’s no valid reason, or there is no belief that a person has why he or she won’t marry a person out of their race. So each, yeah, that’s the system, that’s a brain system of how a person have saw things being done.

Luzuko discerns apartheid’s power to implant “a brain system” of normative intra-racial intimacy in the minds of whites and blacks alike with the intent of maintaining white dominance. By recognizing that there’s no essentialist truth to the idea that people should engage in intimacy with those in their race group only, Luzuko identifies the constructed nature of this belief.

Participants believe the older generation who lived through apartheid upholds this mindset while they view youth as becoming more open-minded over time, as apartheid becomes located in the past. In many ways, this rings true as all participants expressed attraction toward individuals of different races and willingness, to an extent, to date interracially—things that could not have been openly admitted thirty years ago. However, participants’ utilise language and hold opinions which suggest that this idea is still embedded in their constructions of the world. Aditya communicates that “somewhere in [his] brain it’s hardwired, that somebody should be Indian”

because of how he grew up seeing Indian-Indian couples around him. He, as well as other participants, cite racially homogenous friend groups in schools as evidence of same-race relationships being natural. Aditya justifies racial cliques by saying that people of the same race “are obviously the people you identify with more,” harkening back to Walker’s (2005) idea that social interactions are predicated on sameness. Though Aditya may indeed identify strongly with other Indian students, he was socialised within a society recovering from apartheid, a system which privileged same race interactions while criminalising cross-racial mixing. When asked whether interracial relationships should happen more often, Chloe says:

It’s normal that it doesn’t happen... if people are more open-minded it would happen more often, but I don’t think it’s something that’s wrong with the world that people don’t, because of how people have been, how people’s minds have been set on certain things.

Even though Chloe understands apartheid’s social effects and connects this to the lack of interracial relationships in South Africa, she still regards this as “normal” and acceptable.

The ‘apartheid mindset’ affects how the participants enact intimacy, as well. After the men of Focus Group C convey that they find girls of other races attractive all the time, they go on to discuss how difficult it is to act on that attraction:

**Luzuko:** I do find myself attracted to girls of a different race with different norms and traditions but it’s hard to approach someone who’s different from you... we consider it hard, but it’s the same as approaching a girl of the same race because what you’ll say to this girl is the same as what you’ll say to a girl of a different race. It’s just that I assume that due to the fact that South Africa has been to exposed to apartheid regime, it has made us to be so far apart.

These young men experience attraction as mediated by race. Luzuko impulsively constructs girls of another race as different enough to warrant pause when considering approaching them. Quickly, however, he qualifies this by saying there is no tangible change between talking to an African girl and a girl of a different race and shows recognition that this mental barrier stems directly from the apartheid system. Similarly, Mondli reveals that he once found an Indian classmate attractive, enchanted by her beauty and the way she dressed. But when he told his grandmother of his desire, he was immediately threatened with violence should he ever bring the girl home. Mondli actively avoids his crush and hopes they never end up together, as he understands his grandparents’ perspectives: “I understand because, because of their grandparents. What they are telling me is what they were told by their grandparents, so I won’t change what they were taught.” Instead, Mondli tames his desires to conform to the apartheid mindset which defines his attraction to his Indian classmate as deviant. Further, Mondli’s story illustrates his socialisation into this racial

order. Ideas of who are supposed to be together are passed from generation to generation through institutional contexts and social practices (Jansen 2017), and Mondli's attraction alone is not enough to subvert these powerful forces which signal to him what constitutes appropriate behavior.

Imagining relationships outside of these boundaries proves difficult for the participants. When asked how they would react if they were set up on a blind date with a person of another race, most participants said they would be shocked. Focus Group C expands on their imagined reactions:

**Luzuko:** It would be because in my mind, I drew someone who come from the same race as me. I had someone of the same race as me in my mind. So my expectations would be like, wow, I never expected this. But actually as [Sipho] has said, that would be a good surprise. It would be a beautiful surprise, actually.

**Ben:** I wouldn't be expecting, like [Luzuko] said. Because I don't think that maybe someone would do that to me, maybe they, I don't know, not so acceptable, if that makes sense. But it would be a good surprise. I would enjoy it.

Though adamant the date would be a positive surprise, Luzuko and Ben reflect that they're conditioned to imagine a partner from the same race group as this is more acceptable. If unwittingly pushed into a situation of intimate interracial contact, participants would experience shock and, importantly, confusion at who would arrange such an unusual pair. Ben seems to question, 'Who in my circle would find this okay? Why would they do this to me?' exhibiting a struggle to make sense of a situation which deviates so far from the norms of intimacy. Focus Group A finds it difficult to understand how their Indian professor's marriage to a German man works out considering all the cultural and religious differences. These examples exhibit the power racial boundaries hold over students' conceptions of sexuality, as they find interracial intimacy so far outside their reality that even imagining how these relationships are formed or function becomes difficult.

The material in this section illuminates the saliency of the 'apartheid mindset' in contemporary South Africa. Racial separatism has been occurred for centuries, even before there were laws to legitimise this practice. Thus, the destruction of apartheid legislation has failed to end the practice of strict racial homogeneity. The instruments have merely changed from law to socialisation based on what one sees around them and the messages they receive from their communities. Thus, participants revealed the 'scripted knowledge' on intimacy and race they've learned from a racialised society (Jansen 2017), as they are aware that intimate relationships, rather

than just friendships, cross the invisible line of acceptability. Though participants believed this mindset is dissolving, their language and views suggested a lingering legacy which affects their intimate world. The way these youth experience, imagine, and enact intimacy still appears constrained. Lerato summarizes well when she says, “I just struggle to think of relationships outside of what already exists in society.”

***‘It isn’t all kumbaya’: Conflicting discourses of race in South Africa***

In 1994, South Africa transformed from the apartheid state to the Rainbow Nation—at least according to official discourses. The concept of a peaceful, multi-coloured society is cracked as ideologies of non-racialism conflict with material racial divides. Participants fell into and moved between these two discourses as they attempted to convey the world they live in, one in which race is salient but often veiled. On one side, several participants located racial tensions as primarily in the past or as the domain of older generations. In contrast, younger generations are becoming more open-minded, with Kevin noting that the majority of people you meet are open to different races and cultures. Race seems to function on the periphery for these youth, as several expressed that race doesn’t affect them in their daily lives. While Childs (2005) finds that people often promote colour-blindness—or the erasure of the social significance of racial markers—in discussions of interracial intimacy, the participants understood the weight race holds for *others* in South Africa but believe they are not affected, as exhibited in the extract below:

**Anika:** I guess, nowadays, you’re not really going, well I’m not really going through like proper struggles, kind of thing. It’s like cause it’s not really like, cause I guess like my parents were in the middle. So it’s like I had an okay-ish upbringing. Never really struggled or anything. But it’s like, obviously some people are still trying to get there... obviously in your day-to-day life, the people you meet are all okay and stuff. But it’s just the stuff in the news that you hear and read about is just really extreme.

Similarly Aditya believes that while “black people do have a tough time in South Africa,” his parents “worked hard enough to separate [him] from that growing up” and he continues to separate himself from people who focus on race.

Both statements suggest class and racial hierarchies as the reason race is no longer conspicuous in their lives. Anika is of Indian origin and so her family was “in the middle” during apartheid, meaning they were considered superior to Africans but inferior to whites, and class divisions often mirrored this racial hierarchy. Singh and Bana (2015) find that class creates nuance in students’ identity constructions, as a middle-class standing allows black youth to distance

themselves from their racial identity and instead, align themselves with the power and economic privilege associated with whiteness. While Anika and Aditya still strongly identify as Indian and believe their culture and heritage is important to their identities, Anika’s “okay-ish upbringing” as connected to historical racial and class privilege makes it easier for her to avoid the harsh realities of economic disparity and racism suffered by poor black people. Though Aditya may have meant that his parents “worked hard” to instill in him open-minded values, his non-racial ideology was surely bolstered by his parents working to separate him from racialised poverty—something many black people in this country are struggling to achieve.

Other participants experienced starkly different realities. Focus Group A lives in a world where racism is inescapable and where racial tension weighs heavy on their hearts. For them race and racism are more or less synonymous with South Africa—“within a South African context,” Lerato says, “race is something that defines us so hard.” Constructed against whiteness as power, participants experience their blackness as a social marker which immediately renders them inferior in the eyes of society. For these youth, race is palpable in both broader systemic inequalities and micro-interactions.

Though Sophie calls out Afrikaaners for being extremely racist, most of their discussion around oppression centered on Indians. Lerato calls Indians “the white version of the oppressed,” meaning that, though considered a minority, Indians enact their power to oppress those beneath them. All participants in Focus Group A appeared to agree with this, but Zama and Sizani exhibit the most animosity toward Indians, rooted in the pain of their past experiences. Zama describes her hometown of Port Shepstone as a hub of “conniving” Indians who look out only for themselves. In high school, she would receive lower marks than Indian students even though their work was of the same caliber because of the Indian mindset of exclusive racial uplift. Sizani, meanwhile, regards Indian men as disrespectful to black women because of the sexualization she has experienced.

When Sizani shares how Indian men who would come into her job at Gateway, a high-class mall, Lerato challenges the essentialist notions of Indian men as perverts:

**Lerato:** Could it maybe be that we’re now conditioned to accepting that type of disrespectful behavior from black men because there’s nothing we can do about it, we have to protect them and from white men because there’s nothing we can do about it, they are superior, that we over, like, we over exert or over exaggerate it when it comes from the non-black and non-white men?

...

**Zama:** Really now. Realistically, where the cheapest thing at [Gateway] is probably R200. Black people do not have food. Black people are living in shacks, fam.

**Lerato:** That's true but I'm speaking on—

**Zama:** They are not about to be in a place that they can barely afford to be in and not looking for a job. A black man goes into [Gateway] with his CV in his hand, not to look at your legs...Indians are supposed to be minorities and they're supposed to have experienced oppression just like we did but I feel like at some point they felt like they could find the nearest people that they could feel like they were better than. And where I come from, that was us. That was the black people. So if you're going down to Margate you're gonna get oppression from the white people. You come up to the higher areas of Port Shepstone, you're gonna get it from Indian people because they feel like they can put a stamp, they can say they're better. If an Indian guy's approaching you as a black girl in Port Shepstone, he's not approaching you cause he's interested in you, he's approaching you because he's bored with his Indian wife and he can throw you out at like any moment. It's not cause he's genuinely interested in you. He sees you as a piece of meat that he can stick himself into. So there was no, there was no proper interest from Indian guys, like if you're from Port Shepstone and that's just how it is. So if like, I say that I'm not gonna date Indian men because of the experiences that I've had, I'm fine with that. I can die with that. I don't care, I wouldn't flinch, even. Offer me money, I wouldn't take it. Like I'm done, like I'm off-put from them.

In this exchange, discourses of gender, class, and space intertwine to create an image of the micro and macro workings of race in these young South Africans' lives. Lerato understands the issue of female objectification as one of gender—men have the power to disrespect women—which is then complicated by race; black women do not have the power to oppose gendered oppression white men but they don't have the privilege of contesting such oppression from black men, as it may sacrifice the unity and safety of the whole race. Zama, however, locates the problem within the class structure. Indian men's economic privilege allows them to enact their gender privilege, while black men are too burdened by their economic insecurity to hyper-sexualize black women. Zama also acknowledges the role of space in her experiences; in areas where Indians form the majority, she suggests, they will capitalize on their power to oppress others. Thus, though their readings of the situation differ, both Lerato and Zama believe institutionalized systems of gender and class produce a reality of black female oppression, one which is heightened by space.

Zama's lived experiences have indelibly impacted her view on interracial relationships. Traumatized by Indian men, she refuses even to entertain the notion of dating one. Other participants indicate similar wariness of interracial intimacy. Relatability appears as the main

concern, as participants fear that a white partner would be unable to understand their struggles as black women. Here, race is regarded as a prominent factor in shaping life experiences and a fixed barrier which prevents understanding between people. Thula paints a picture illustrating why practically, dating a white person might be impossible:

I can't date someone from La Lucia because, first of all, I can't be out past a certain time cause I'm gonna get shot at. And [a white person] person can do that. If I'm found with [a white person] in some dodgy part and we're both climbing over a wall and I take my cell phone out of my pocket, I'm gonna get shot 20 times.

Thula utilises a discourse of space to explain the difficulties of interracial dating. While the relationship may work within the confines of their private worlds, as soon as the pair steps outside into a racialised world, the dynamic shifts. A black woman, Thula suggests, can not move safely through all spaces as her skin colour makes her a target of violence, while white men have the privilege to inhabit these spaces without danger. Racialised spaces exist as a reality for black women such as Thula, forcing her to consider bodily safety when imagining possibilities of interracial intimacy.

Fears of racism within the relationship itself also presented themselves in the conversation. Thula summarizes this powerfully, saying, "I do not know if I could find [a white person] I would date realistically who wouldn't remind me at every single turn that I'm a kaffir." Thula draws on this racial slur to evoke the abuse, humiliation, denigration, and dehumanisation Africans suffered under apartheid when this word circulated commonly. She fears that dating a white man would elicit such feelings inside her for, whether her partner intends it or not, his whiteness would inherently amass more privilege than her blackness. Lerato concurs and adds nuance by distinguishing between her imagined experiences of dating a white person versus dating a non-black person from another minority:

For me, I definitely, it wouldn't be hard to date a coloured man or an Indian as it would to date a white man because at the end of the day, I think, in terms of the oppression, I'd still get the exact same oppression as I would from them as I would a black man. And I definitely date black me.... a black man can oppress me the same way as a coloured man and an Indian man could, where as a white man can oppress all four of us.

Again, Lerato draws on gendered nuance to explain her views on interracial dating. She is sure to implicate black men in the gender oppression she faces as a black woman, while she recognizes that a white man would hold the social power to oppress her dually—through gender *and* racial hierarchies. Unlike those who found Indian men to hold salient racial dominance, Lerato



understands all three of these minority groups to lack privilege in South Africa, a conception of race which opens up more possibilities for interracial intimacy.

Both participants construct whiteness as inherently oppressive, directly countering popular discourses which glamorize whiteness—what Nandi describes as “a narrative of how white guys are... the whole woo you, flowers, and he’s the knight in shining armor, you know comes in on a horse, here to save the day.” Focus Group B also confers on the issue:

**Sana:** It’s, it’s like, it’s always been that way *[laughter]* I don’t even, like it’s not even South African specific, it’s like you watch TV and it’s just white people on television. And you know, it’s just, yeah. I mean apartheid, I don’t know what to tell you *[laughter]*.

**Anika:** I think looking at Indians specifically, white people ever since they colonized India, they’ve been highly glamorized. A lot of Indian people are anti-dark skinned so even if you’re a dark-skinned Indian, they’re like very against it. Lots of skin lightening stuff. There’s like, white people are kind of seen as your ideal type, kind of thing.

**Sana:** Or just like being fair and stuff. And that’s, that’s even the old people that are just like, the lighter-skin that’s your baby, if your child is pale that is amazing. Yeah.

**Kevin:** Well most of the television we watch is completely, the majority of what you see is white people. And so all the beautify products that are being advertised mostly you see white people and so people have this idea already that the standard is white. This is the goal.

Participants highlight media’s role in promoting these images, but they also attribute the idealization of whiteness to colonization and the apartheid regime. While Sana struggles to articulate exactly how apartheid rendered whiteness as the norm, Steyn (2001) accredits this racial construction to the unequal power relations between whites and blacks. Webs of power produced the notion of whiteness as inherently superior to blackness, and the disparate material realities of each race legitimised this discursive formation.

Participants noted that older generations still engage this idea of whiteness as an essentialist truth. Siphos says, “When [my family] see someone who’s white to them it’s like they’ve seen an angel.” For this reason, several participants believe their families would be more willing to accept interracial relationships if their partner was white. Sana and Anika argue that their grandparents would still take issue with an interracial relationship but find could accept their white partner more easily than a black partner. Kevin, however, believe their families would actively celebrate the infusion of whiteness into their communities:

[My family would] be more accepting of white people than white the Indian relationship... They would celebrate if you came home, if I came home with a white person or if I came home with an Indian, like, [judgmental], “Ughhhh.”

What is important to pull out of these discourses is that an idealisation of whiteness is still transmitted throughout society via institutions such as media and micro-interactions with family. Thus, the fact that Focus Group A disassociates with this narrative of whiteness suggests fissures; instead of whiteness as the ideal, whiteness becomes the enemy.

This section has thus provided an overview of the racial discourses utilised by this select group of youth. Following Soudien’s (2001) argument that youth confront a multitude of structures which produce identities, these young people engage in conflicting discourses which indicate both apartheid remnants and an investment in non-racialism as central aspects of their identity formation and relationship to the surrounding world. Some participants believe South Africa is heading toward a ‘post-racial’ state, where race ceases to be an important system of organization, while others find race to remain a powerful and painful determinant in their lives. Further complicated by gender, class and space, these racial discourses prove to impact participants’ imaginations of interracial intimacy. This took the form of apprehension toward interracial relationships, as participants believed oppression could lurk just below the surface. These views demonstrate a construction of whiteness as inherently oppressive which opposes older notions of enviable whiteness, though other participants noted that these beliefs still circulate within their communities and affect views of interracial intimacy. Thus, despite attempts to transcend race, it remains an inescapable fixture for youth and their intimate worlds.

***‘Oh Lord, I wish I’ll get there one day’: The politics of desire***

Little has been written on how youth in South Africa desire across racial lines, possibly because attraction has been so constrained by the ‘apartheid mindset’ discussed earlier in this paper. This section explores desire and attraction as integral aspects of sexuality and important in conceptualizing interracial intimacy. All 17 participants responded affirmatively when asked whether they find people of other races attractive. Some found the question trite and replied as if interracial attraction was straightforward and trivial, while others reacted with enthusiasm, such as the girls in Focus Group A:

**RT**<sup>1</sup>: I heard some murmurings over there about whether you guys are attracted to white guys, is that a yes?

**All**: [*agreement*] Oh yes, yes. Ja.

**Thula**: Yeah, have you seen rugby players? [*laughter*]

**Nandi**: When they're so tall and they get that nice tan.

**Sizani**: They are very attractive.

**Thula**: Do you know what rugby is?

**RT**: Yeah.

**Thula**: So there's, there's this guy called Patrick Lambie.

**Lerato**: Hey, you love him! [*laughter*]

**Thula**: My nigger!

**Sophie**: Ja!

...

**Zintle**: With his blue eyes.

**Zama**: They're very attractive.

**Sizani**: [*echoing*] They're very attractive.

Basic attraction toward people of other races is commonplace for and openly discussed among these young people—a reality which already exhibits a shift away from the limited attraction allowed during apartheid. Though some experienced attraction as pure and simple—based on love, similarities, emotional connection, and general physical attractiveness regardless of colour—others articulated more complex discourses of desire.

Physical attraction, for instance, is complicated by race and discourses of black sexuality. Historically, blackness has been hyper-sexualized, with black men regarded as sexual beasts and black women as sexually potent. Participants identify a similar form of sexualization and objectification aimed at the black body in contemporary South Africa. Black women's "big booties," as Sophie explains, are the object of white and Indian men's fascination. The combination of essentialist constructions of black sexuality and difference between the 'typical' features of black women and those of women of their own race render the black female body a sexual novelty. The case is similar for black men, according to Sana and Anika, who say that some white girls exclusively date black men. These fixations reproduce the historical hyper-sexualization of

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<sup>1</sup> "RT" denotes the researcher's speech

blackness, pointing to continuities in colonial discourses which effectively underline racial difference and fetishize the Other.

The children of interracial couples are also objects of desire. Focus Group A discuss the idealisation of bi-racial babies in the extract below:

**RT:** So do you think there are specific reasons people enter interracial relationships?

**Zama:** I want coloured kids. I'd love kids with curly hair.

**Zintle:** Curly hair!

**Zama:** All adorable. It's one of the reasons. It's, it's *[laughter]* it's what Thabo said when he said that sometimes you don't maybe, where you're from and you try to like distance yourself from your own race. So the further you get away from your own race, that's why maybe some, I know some black women enter into relationships with white men to distance themselves from being black or identifying with anything that strongly connects them with being black. It's basically some type of dilution. Something to dilute.

Though Zama initially promotes the glamorization of bi-racial children, she ends by analysing the underlying racism motivating this discourse. Desirability exists on a binary, with whiteness sitting on one end as the ultimate aspiration and blackness on the other as repulsive. Any move up this ladder renders one more desirable in the eyes of a racialised society. Thus, proximity to whiteness is the focus of idealisation in the discourse on bi-racial children. Focus Group B identifies another layer, when Sana asserts that the romanticisation of bi-racial children allows people to conceptualise and accept interracial relationships:

**Anika:** Like I know most people like mixed babies. They're like, "Ohhhh, they're so cute."

**Sana:** That's so weird though. I think that's weird. Okay personally. I think that's like a weird thing, a weird way for white women specifically to accept interracial babies on their own. It's weird I don't know why they say that.

**RT:** Say more about that. What do you mean by white women accepting?

...

**Sana:** Okay, like I'm saying this from movies and TV and stuff, they're always like, "Ugh, mixed babies are so cute." All babies are cute! What makes them cuter exactly? Then a coloured, what's cute about them is their skin tones, then what? It's just varying degrees—it doesn't make sense at all... I feel like that comes from, like, it's like a defense kind of thing. It's like, they're saying that to, because it's the only way they can accept it. Like they can understand this thing. That's how I would interpret it, so I would be offended if someone said that to me.

Sana points to the operation of disguised racism in discourses of interracial intimacy. Though people who ogle over bi-racial babies seemingly support interracial unions, upon closer inspection, it appears as a way for people to make sense of interracial intimacy and miscegenation in a society which is supposedly post-racial but which still views race as an essential identity marker. Black-and-white unions don't make logical sense, according to "scripted knowledge" (Jansen 2017), but such views cannot be openly expressed lest someone call racism. Fixating on the race of the child of an interracial union subtly re-centers race, allowing people to locate the mixed-race family within a familiar racialised discourse under the guise of endorsement. Therefore, people construct bi-racial babies as desirable for both their proximity to whiteness and for their role in maintaining racialisation despite the blurring of racial boundaries.

Participants expressed varying degrees of desire to engage in interracial intimacy. For some, this was simply wanting to try something new. Thabo, for instance, conveys that black girls can have too much attitude and expresses interest in dating a girl of a different race "just to see if they'd be the same... just to see like the difference between the two." Race is linked to behavior in this statement and interracial intimacy is understood as a way to cross into new territory where, in Thabo's imagination, girls may be fundamentally different. Moreover, this discourse suggests that white women are easier to date than black women (Childs 2007), again constructing whiteness as positive in relation to blackness. Chloe, however, shares how perceptions of black 'behavior' obstruct interracial intimacy:

**Chloe:** There are so many people who are intimidated by me without me having done anything. But simply because I'm coloured people are already intimidated by me.

**RT:** So do you think their perception of you prevents them from even trying to engage in, like if a black guy was like, 'She's cute but she's coloured.' Do you think that would happen?

**Chloe:** It has happened! Many times.

**RT:** How does that play out?

**Chloe:** It doesn't [*laughs*] because I'm very perceptive so I can see if somebody is interested or not interested, that kind of a thing, so I would notice but I would notice that the person would tend not to approach. Because I'm coloured.

Violence, alcoholism, drugs, and bad behavior comprise the coloured stereotype in South Africa. In Chloe's view, racial stereotypes hold enormous weight in people's minds and ultimately deter

them from engaging in relationships across race lines. Notions of racialised behavior, as both participants suggest, influence sexual proclivities—for some, it increases the desire for interracial intimacy while for others, it thwarts it.

While attraction toward all races appeared universal for participants, the active desire to cross these boundaries was not. Sana could not understand why a person would harbor such a specific desire, particularly when the realities of interracial dating are so complicated, while Kevin views this targeted desire as a fledgling faze everyone goes through until one realizes dating is the same across all the colour spectrum. Childs (2007) finds that many African-American communities respond negatively to interracial relationships, viewing them as a way for “un-authentic” black folk to remove themselves from the black community. Childs writes, “When it comes to interracial unions, blacks who cross the color line are often accused of sacrificing their blackness for a white ideal” (2007, p. 87). Participants of this study advanced similar rhetoric:

**Zama:** Okay there’s a black woman dating a white man. The black woman is a white apologist. So you basically always there to defend white people and their actions or you have put up this invisible thing, this wall, where by you don’t see racism.

...

**Thabo:** Some people, some people, sorry, some people date people of other races because they don’t identify themselves as, as—

**Zama:** *Yes.*

**Thabo:** —of their own race. So yeah, I understand what she’s saying. Like people, some people because maybe of a certain area that they lived in since birth, they start like maybe, let’s make an example of a black person in maybe a white community. He’s lived in a white community his whole life and has had white friends and, you know, interacted with white people a lot. So he doesn’t really understand because like, there’s, there’s almost like two separate worlds when it comes to black and white. Or rich and poor. Like a black man’s story is mostly someone who’s in a township or in a certain area and comes to a suburb to get something done and then go back, you know? So if you’ve lived in an area where there’s, where you’re constantly surrounded by white people and you don’t know anything about your own culture, you don’t relate to other black people even in conversation then it’s hard for, for—

**Zintle:** You to identify.

**Thabo:** Yeah it’s hard for you to identify with people of your own race so you start identifying more with people of another race and start thinking that you are also—

**Zintle:** *Yes.*

Consistent with Childs' (2007) findings, these youth understand black-white relationships as a betrayal of the black community. The black partner aligns themselves with whiteness in ways both intentional—excusing racism—or unintentional—growing up in white areas—with the goal and result of negating their blackness. Blackness, here, is both fixed and fluid. There is an authentic black experience linked to space, class, and dedication to the black community. But Thabo and Zintle insist that those who fall outside these standards are still black yet they engage in interracial intimacy because they don't see themselves that way. Thus, blackness is unstable and subject to slippage.

The individuals who indicate interest in dating outside their race seemingly uphold these notions, but it is essential to understand how their own concepts of black communities and what it means to desire interracial intimacy adds nuance. While this study doesn't seem to psycho-analyse participants or their desires, individuals who longed to date interracially seemed to be motivated by the prospect of escaping the black community. The Zulu men in Focus Group C—Mondli, Siphoh, and Luzuko—consider relationships among black people toxic, particularly when compared to relationships in other communities. These “parasitic relationships” are characterised as dishonest, unfaithful, and purely sexual. In contrast, the men describe Indian couples they see around campus as serious, trusting, and centered around love. In their view, race determines the nature of intimate relationships. The men crave emotional connection and support but this exists only outside of the black community, thus leading them to desire intimacy across racial lines. When asked what they think when they see an interracial couple, Luzuko says, “To me it's like, oh Lord I wish I'll get there one day.” The participants also located other problems in black communities, including close-mindedness, corruption, jealousy, and divisiveness. All three men aspire to move away from their destructive environments and they understand interracial dating as a way to avoid the negative trappings inherent in their racial groups, as well a path to changing future generations. If Siphoh were to start a family with a woman from another race, he says he would give her authority over the children so she could impart positive morals and characteristics. When asked whether he would allow a black women the same agency, he responds, “No.. they are corrupt.” Thus, Siphoh appears to make meaning of race through an essentialist framework which adheres to old discourses of white superiority. He is willing to sacrifice his place as head of the household, an aspect central to Zulu culture according to these men, in order to eliminate the negative traits inherent in black communities and promote the positive characteristics of whites.

Zintle stands apart from the rest of Focus Group A because of her desires for interracial intimacy. While Group C's views are embedded in racial essentialism, for Zintle "it's more than race, now. It gets to culture." She continues, "As much as I'm black, I'm Xhosa." Throughout the discussion, Zintle describes her cultural background as restrictive and oppressive, whether this be patriarchal norms, violent rituals, or spiritual traditions. She says:

All those things, they come with being black. You know? It's not that I don't identify with it, but can't I just be black without having to have like this whole lot of things that I have to do to kinda establish the fact that I'm black. Why can't I just be black with race? ... Like why, why is culture, why is race, what does being black have to do with all these other things that come with it? Like that's one of the reasons why I personally prefer dating a white guy.

Zintle challenges the tendency to conflate race and culture and the notion of racial authenticity. For her, being black does not mean conforming to the traditions and norms within her community; instead, she suggests a more expansive blackness in which the individual has the agency to construct the meaning of their own race. Zintle struggles to inhabit a world where culture and race are tightly linked and she views interracial dating as a strategy to avoid the trappings of culture. Discussions revolving around culture painted white people as culture-less, a trend Jaynes (2007) also notes. Participants discursively constructed black and Indian cultures as 'strong,' while white and coloured cultures were non-existent. Whiteness, again, is constructed as the norm against which everything else is measured and coloured-ness somehow becomes a void of culture, as well, despite, or perhaps because of, its mix of 'real,' 'pure' cultures. With this view of race and culture, Zintle imagines that dating a white person would allow her to escape over-bearing culture and to live freely in her black skin.

Though participants initially maintained that attraction is attraction—race doesn't change anything—closer inspection reveals underlying complexities. Desire, as this section has demonstrated, weaves together discourses of race, sexuality, and identity. Physical attraction can be complicated by historical constructions of black sexuality while obsession over bi-racial babies disguises subtle racism. Participants' personal desires for interracial intimacy stemmed from essentialist understandings of race and an idealisation of whiteness or, in Zintle's case, frustration over cultural constraints and narrow ideas of blackness—thus, desire threatens both the reification and the expansion of racial constructions. Others in the black community, however, view aspirations of interracial dating as a simple betrayal of the black community or a rejection of blackness. Discourses of desire point to an expanding youth sexuality in South Africa, for young



people's intimate thoughts consistently cross racial lines in a way unimaginable during apartheid. However, desires and attractions don't exist alone; instead, they are informed by the broader socio-political contexts and racial politics. Thula struggles between her attraction towards white men and a conception of interracial dating as rife with racial tensions. For her, desire is confined to her thoughts, for dating across racial lines can only work, as she says, "in a different universe."

***'A great freedom in democracy': Imagining the possibilities of interracial intimacy***

As discussed earlier in the paper, participants hold different understandings of the current role of race in South Africa, but they all conveyed similar visions of an ideal society—one where racism ceases to exist and is replaced with equality, mutual understanding, and an acknowledgement of race as having material effects. This is the "different universe" Thula and other participants believe would allow interracial relationships to form and thrive. The question then arises of how such an ideal becomes reality. The way participants imagine the possibilities interracial relationships hold for creating a more open-minded society suggests that, perhaps, part of the answer lies in the relationships themselves.

Romantic relationships, in general, require a higher degree of intimacy than friendships, characterised by mutual commitment, emotional security, and shared goals. Thus, intimate interracial relationships exist as special sites for engaging in cultural exchange and establishing a profound awareness of and empathy for people of different backgrounds. Following this notion, participants agreed that interracial intimacy held one outstanding positive: the ability to learn about other people from different backgrounds and to break down racial boundaries. Sophie believes that interracial relationships, particularly between two people deeply invested in their culture, can "make you understand we're all different, respect differences, and celebrate similarities." Thus, interracial relationships can produce deep understandings of each partner and their backgrounds, cultures, and values, resulting in the destruction of stereotypes. Chloe, for example, believes interracial relationships would allow people to see that she does not fit the stereotype of a violent coloured girl.

Moreover, interracial relationships have the power to mediate cultural differences. Participants cited culture and family as the primary barriers to interracial relationships. They feared disharmony between the two families, the community's rejection of their partner, and incompatibility between cultural backgrounds. Recurring concerns included religious differences,

traditional practices—particularly in black communities, and patriarchy—which participants regarded as most prevalent in black and Indian communities. Sana, however, believes cultural conflicts can be mediated with the possibility of each partner preserving their distinct beliefs:

Like personally for me, as long as there's, like I'm allowed to do my own religious stuff and cultural stuff and they're allowed to do whatever they want, it's, as long as there's acceptance, it doesn't matter... It's cool to have cultures mixing. That's how you get a world of people who understand each other more. And that's important.

Therefore, interracial relationships can challenge old constructions of race as an essential category of difference which renders people inherently incompatible. Instead, Sana believes these unions can demonstrate that people of different races and the cultures to which they subscribe can coexist peacefully.

Cultural understanding, however, doesn't address all aspects of racial difference. As discussed previously, race as connected to class and gender still functions as a powerful force in many young people's lives and participants expressed concerns over whether partners of a different race could ever understand the historical and contemporary oppression faced by their race group. Thabo posits that this is possible with mutual reflexivity:

I just look at how a person of another race would be willing to learn about my race, to learn about me and why I am the way I am and vice-versa. So I think it's more of like knowing the other person through knowing yourself type situation... Like understanding yourself and your surroundings and understanding how that relates to another person of another race's. Finding yourself first and knowing about yourself before trying to interact with someone else from a different race group.

Here, awareness must go beyond culture and racial behavior—it necessarily has to include the structural realities which produce the material and discursive realities of race. While a person of another race may never truly comprehend one's racialised experiences, racial consciousness can be achieved by reflecting on how the powers and privileges of one race come at the price of another's.

The racial bridges outlined above are not just crossed by the two individuals in the relationship; participants imagine that the positive racial relations spurred by interracial intimacy will be passed on to the next generation. Luzuko explains that the child of an interracial couple would regard racial mixing as normal, to such an extent that racism and rejection of interracial contact would be difficult to register. This belief points to the power family environments have for challenging institutional structures of socialisation. Ben concurs, arguing that bi-racial children would be less racist because of their upbringing. Thus, interracial unions present the possibility of

sustained change in racial relations, as values of acceptance and co-operation among people of different backgrounds would be passed to the younger generation, eventually resulting in the erasure of racialised modes of thought and racial boundaries.

Moreover, discourses of the family hinted at the possibility for interracial unions to produce healthy and dynamic families. When asked to describe their ideal family, most participants painted a picture of an open-minded, supportive, and accepting unit. This discussion led Focus Groups A and C to question how this ideal would change if they were to build a mixed-race family. While some still struggled to imagine how they could build a cohesive unit with the influence conflicting cultures, religions, and values, Luzuko believes the bond holding the family together would be stronger, as the interracial parents at the head of the family would be an example of how “to get through thick and tough times.” Thabo also identifies the unique possibilities of a mixed-race family:

We would be able to equip that child with the basics of both backgrounds and allow that child, like give that child the basics and then let the child live and learn as they’re supposed to, learn whatever they want to learn and then come back to what the basics are. So I think in that sense, it would, it would make a better situation because you’d be able to raise the child with different backgrounds.

Thabo argues that imparting the values of multiple cultures onto a child will not confuse them, as others suggest, but will widen their knowledge-base and give them the tools to engage more effectively with the increasingly diverse world. While ‘cultural purity’ may not be possible to maintain in mixed-race families, participants point to new constructions of the family which fulfill and expand aspirations of the ideal family.

For many participants, however, understanding and acceptance, even if passed to future generations, isn’t enough to overcome structural racism. One of the final questions I posed to Focus Group A was whether interracial relationships can overcome racial boundaries. Zama explains this in a profound way:

Speaking for South Africa, we are *hurt*, bruh. It is deep over here... we're not even starting to, we're not even starting to deal with like racism or like racial prejudice or like oppression. We haven't touched the surface of starting to. Like I feel like maybe from the outside we call ourselves the Rainbow Nation but it's not like that. It's not. When I was younger, right? And I wasn't so exposed to the world as much as I have been throughout growing up, I honestly believed in the Rainbow Nation that would make us do competitions and in primary school, I would think, hey there's a white kid, I can like. I saw the white kid, we're equal, that's what my teachers were telling me. But me, growing up, I can see it's a whole other ballgame. It's a whole different thing. Especially because

being black, it's, it's, it's, it's, you're just. You can't help but being the oppressed. It's a very... I can't even name. Like being a black woman, there's very few instances where, I can't even name instances where I'm the oppressor. It's just basically being the oppressed. So me, like dating, like interracial dating, I don't see it being something that's gonna be like, we are the world, kumbaya. We haven't even scratched the surface of racial relations. Racial relations in South Africa are the worst they have ever been.

For Zama and other young people who participated in this study, racial healing requires more than love between two individuals. The micro-workings of interracial relationships, though revolutionary in their own right, cannot mend the economic, material, and emotional legacies of apartheid. Structural change must intertwine with transformation on the level of discourse and micro-interactions in order for race's destructive effect on the political landscape of the nation and the emotional geographies of people's lives to cease.

## Conclusions

This study has addressed the way seventeen South African youth conceive, desire, and imagine interracial intimacy post-apartheid. Conversations surrounding community perceptions illuminate salient remnants of apartheid which still impact what forms of intimacy are deemed acceptable. Though youth fully support interracial relationships, pointing toward a move away from the ‘apartheid mindset’ of homogenous relationships, their language and predispositions toward intra-racial coupling indicates lingering institutional and community scripts of interracial intimacy as deviant. The role of race in participants’ lives and South Africa more broadly surfaced repeatedly in discussions; some felt the effects of non-racial discourses in South Africa, expressing that race does not significantly impact their lives, while other participants suffer painful material and discursive realities of race and racism, heightened by class, space, and gender. Participants’ discussions around desire illustrate the complex interplay between human attraction and historical constructions of race which fetishize and demean blackness and glorify whiteness. Exploring how desire is impacted by racial discourses makes clear how desiring intimacy across racial lines holds possibilities for both the reification of essentialist notions of race and the creation of new constructions. Finally, participants were asked to imagine positive aspects of interracial intimacy. Their answers revealed possibilities embedded in these relationships for increased racial awareness and cultural harmony and the potential to pass these values onto future generations. These possibilities, however, are always mediated by the socio-political and structural realities of race. These four themes comprise the major discourses participants utilised when prompted to engage with the concept of interracial intimacy, speaking to important issues which impact their constructions of race and sexuality in South Africa’s shifting terrain.

I now return to the two discourses presented in the introduction of this study—‘racial barriers can be overcome’ and ‘I’m attracted but practically.’ The four themes outlined above surfaced organically as participants grappled with whether they would engage in interracial intimacy. On one hand, investments in non-racialism and the knowledge that race has no biological truth led participants to accept the concept of interracial unions. Every one of the seventeen participants responded affirmatively in some way when asked whether they would date interracially. For some, such as Sana, Ben, and Thabo, race presented some conflicts, such as culture and family, but they believed this issues could be resolved. Ben, for example says, “I think maybe after awhile you show you’re serious... it will develop into something great and beautiful.”

Other, such as Zama, Thula, and Lerato, however, struggled to see how these differences, along with material realities of race, could be bridged. These discourses were not discrete, however, and other participants moved between them, sometimes within the same thought, as they attempted to reconcile conflicting ideologies and realities. These discursive entanglements, however, suggest that race and sexuality are no longer fixed in the minds of South African youth. Instead, as Sophie says, people are beginning to “reach the realization in themselves that [interracial intimacy] is more than possible.” Thus, participants’ views of interracial intimacy suggest that apartheid may be beginning to lose its grip on one’s conceptions of world.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study provides a brief overview of several important topics regarding interracial intimacy in South Africa. However, the small size and scope of the project prevented in-depth analysis of these themes, each of which deserves more specialized attention. Additionally, this study represents the views of only a select few youth. Different sampling, such as single gender or same-race, may yield new data. There were other topics which arised which I was unable to touch on in this study, such as the interracial blesser-blessee phenomenon and racialised sexual stereotypes. Additionally, more work needs to be done on the realities of mixed-race families as they become more common in South Africa, with special attention given to how interracial couples navigate raising children with the influence of multiple backgrounds and how bi-racial children identify or experience intra-family racism. Space, geographical location, gender and upbringing also present interesting interconnected threads.

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## Appendices

### *A. Sample Interview Questions*

#### Introductory

1. Each person, talk a bit about yourself and the community you come from. (urban/rural; suburb/informal settlement/township; middle class/working class; education background?)
2. What is dating like among people your age in your community? Is it easy to meet people and approach people you are interested in?

#### Individual Imaginations and Desires

3. What is your idea of an ideal partner? What do you find attractive in a partner?
4. Would you ever consider dating someone from another race?
5. Imagine you were set up on a blind date and when you arrived, the person was of a different race. What would you think or do?
6. How different do you think the experience of interracial dating would be? Would you be comfortable with it?
7. Do you think there are positives to dating outside your race? Barriers or negatives?

#### Perceptions and Conceptions

8. How would your family/friends/community react to your dating someone outside your race? How would their reaction impact on you and your relationship?
9. When you see an interracial couple, what do you think?
10. What do you think are people's reasons for entering interracial relationships? Are there economic factors?
11. Do you think interracial relationships are becoming more common? Why/why not?
12. Do you know anything about the history of interracial relationships in SA? Apartheid laws?

#### Future and Closing

13. What do you think of the current state of democracy in SA? Are you optimistic about your future? Why/why not?
14. Anything else anybody would like to say that they haven't already?

### **Individual Interview Questions:**

#### Introductory

1. How do you identify?
2. What parts of growing up shaped you the most? What aspects do you feel had the greatest influence or impact on you?
3. Do you have many friends from other races?
4. Have you ever dated out of your race group?

#### Imaginations and Desires

5. What is your idea of an ideal partner? What do you find attractive?
6. Do you find yourself attracted to people of other races?

7. Do you ever imagine what it would be like to be with someone from another race? Which race and why?
8. Do you think there would there be any barriers between you and your partner in an interracial relationship?
9. What would it be like dating a \_\_\_\_ person? How would this be different from dating a person in your racial group?
10. Would there be any benefits to dating outside your race?
11. Would you feel comfortable in an interracial relationship? Do you think a person from another race could meet all your needs?

#### Aspirations and Future

12. Would you view inter-racial dating any differently from a long-term interracial relationship? Why/why not?
13. What is your idea of an ideal family? How would marrying and having a family with a person from another race impact this?

#### Perceptions and Conceptions

14. How would your family/community react if you dated a person from another race? How much would this matter to you?
15. Do you understand why people enter interracial relationships? What are their motivations?
16. Why aren't interracial relationships more common? Should there be more interracial relationships?
17. Do you think people get along well with people who are different than them?

#### Closing and Future

18. What type of future would you like for yourself? How do you feel about SA's future?
19. Anything else you'd like to share on these topics?

## ***B. Sample Focus Group Transcripts***

**RT:** Do you think those negative reactions would significantly impact the relationship?

**Luzuko:** At first, really at first it would. We would have a great negative impact, yeah.

**Sipho:** Okay for me, I think it will have an impact on the relationship but it will make it very strong because I believe, I believe when something hits me, I have to hit it back, yeah.

**Ben:** I think the relationship would take quite a knock. If your family doesn't, I don't know, approve of who you're dating, they might feel almost threatened, but hopefully they'll, we'll all get through it. That might be quite a challenge, now that I think of it.

**RT:** When you're out and about, when you see an interracial couple, what do you think? Do you take notice of it?

**Luzuko:** To me it's a good thing to see that, especially when watching movies, seeing people dating from different races, to me it's like, oh Lord I wish I'll get there one day. It's a good thing to see. In such a way that I once said that when I marry, if I marry a person of the same race as me, I just want to marry maybe a Black American, an African American, stuff like that. Just shifting from my community. I like it, I really do.

**Sipho:** I also like that. Like changing, make a change, from my community. See a bigger change in me. Bring something different to them. Although I know maybe sometime they could reject it, but just to make a change, yeah. I like something different.

**Ben:** I think it's wonderful, it shows that the world's becoming more accepting of each other, breaking boundaries that have been there for literal centuries. So it's quite a huge improvement you would say.

**RT:** Do you think that people have specific reasons that they enter interracial relationships?

**Luzuko:** Maybe or maybe not. Because for Africans, it would be for specific reasons. For African society, really. The African race, it is gone through a rough patch of relationships. As I've said, to them, their relationships are for economic benefit and maybe to satisfy some lust desires. Maybe for African person to move from one race to another, it would be for specific reasons. Bearing in mind that maybe if I change the race, I will, that will find someone maybe who's on the same page as me. I assume, I assume.

**Ben:** I actually forgot the question, drawing a blank, sorry.

**RT:** Do you think people have specific reasons for entering interracial relationships?

**Ben:** Not at all, really. I think they just care for each other. A bond that can't be broken, just as in a normal relationship. That's what I hope at least.

**Sipho:** Yeah, I think, let me specific to girls because there are lots of girls, they go into interracial relationships because they're looking for money.

## C. Informed Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to understand how youth in South Africa understand intimate interracial intimacy, meaning love, dating, sex, and attraction between people of different races. The way youth perceive interracial relationships will provide insight into how they understand race, identity, and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa. Participants in focus groups will be asked questions on a variety of theme—their upbringing, desires, perceptions of intimacy, and future aspirations. Individual interviewees will be selected from focus groups and will be asked further questions along similar lines. The data collected will be used for a research paper submitted to the School for International Training and may be stored for future use.

2. Rights Notice

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

a. *Privacy* - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.

b. *Anonymity* - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise. Pseudonyms will be used in place of names where appropriate.

c. *Confidentiality* - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's name printed

\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer's name printed

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer's signature and date