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## Mixed Race Families in South Africa: Naming and Claiming a Location

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### ABSTRACT

The very act of living across racial boundaries or borders is a challenge to existing ideologies and social structures. Through in depth interviews with ten South Africans, I explore the border patrolling or policing of people who cross race lines in intimate relationships. Interracial partners are concerned with safety and comfort in public places and in the role of parent, they are concerned about their children's sense of belonging. As interracial parents and partners resist border patrolling, they are also resisting racial categories, even as they claim and name locations that may work to reproduce racialisation. The experiences and perspectives of interracial parents and partners presented in this article suggest that racism and other forms of inequality remain entrenched and pervasive. And, despite the dream of unity and non-racialism, inequality between racial groups and classes has grown under neoliberalism in South Africa [Bond, P., 2004. From Racial to Class Apartheid: South Africa's Frustrating Decade of Freedom. *Monthly Review*, 55 (10), 45. Available from: <https://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/south-africas-frustrating-decade-offreedom-from-racial-to-class-apartheid/>] Far from the hope for a rainbow nation the experiences of interracial partners and parents show that race remains significant, hierarchical and defining of ideologies, identities and institution. The interviews highlight that borders of racial categories are contested and charged spaces.

### KEYWORDS

Border patrolling; interracial; Coloured; mixed race; whiteness; racialisation; apartheid; South Africa

## Introduction

With the eyes of the world on South Africa, in 1994, the ANC, led by Nelson Mandela, hoped to fulfil a dream for a rainbow nation. Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the term rainbow nation as a metaphor for a society in which individuals could be 'at once richly, splendidly different, composed of an array of hues and yet united as a spectacular force of nature' (Farred 2001: 175). This force of nature, once mobilised, was to be the basis of the New South Africa, a democratic society defined in the Bill of Rights as 'non-racial' (Posel 2015). Yet, from the beginning the dream and actions did not meet. Under Apartheid, race and class were built together and the 'undoing' inequality would mean addressing both (MacDonald 2006). After decades of Apartheid and centuries of exploitation, many South Africans continue to face poverty, unemployment and underemployment,

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lack of education, racialisation, crime, xenophobia, emigration, violence. In response to myriad challenges, the ANC chose to follow the path of 'a rather extreme set of neoliberal macroeconomic policies' (Ferguson 2007: 76). As the state placed itself firmly behind neoliberal economic policies, it exacerbated issues of race and class inequality (Seekings and Natrass 2005; DeFilippis 2008; Torres 2008; Bradshaw 2009; Bond 2010; Samara 2010; Erasmus 2015), undermined democratic practices, and set the stage for greater accumulation of wealth for whites. The complexity of rainbow metaphor was lost on few. South Africa 'remains an intensely racialised society' (Posel 2015: 2170). Perhaps that is why, on a sunny summer day in 2002, when Lindelwa, a Xhosa woman, cruised down the Durban waterfront in a convertible BMW with her new husband, a white man from England, they were met with great excitement. 'Everyone was like "Viva Mandela! Viva Mandela!" and taking pictures, staring at us, looking out their windows. So amazing! People came and kissed my hand, shook my hand ...'. This interracial marriage, for a moment, may have given hope that the rainbow nation was still possible. Perhaps the general enthusiasm was a collective effort to recover this feeling of hope in South Africa, 'a society growing increasingly restless' (Bond 2004). The restlessness and anxiety has been expressed in a variety of ways across South Africa.

For some, particularly whites, the restlessness is reflected in high rates of out-migration (Andrucki 2010). Neoliberalism has intersected with racialisation processes to create a context in which human capital flows in the old colonial patterns – toward Western white dominated 'deep settler' countries (Steyn 2001; Andrucki 2010). Global social networks maintained and developed over the years give whites a sense of community not contained 'by place and national boundaries' (Crowley and Hickman 2008: 1227). Griffiths and Prozesky claim that

about 20 to 25% of white South Africans have left their country of birth since the 1990s. The most popular destinations are Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. These countries are first-world and English-speaking, and the majority of their populations is white. (2010: 28)

White South Africans are being raised to see themselves as 'citizens of the world' (Appiah 2007: xiii), their identities increasingly tied to 'global whiteness that promises the power and privilege unavailable with the confines of [South Africa]' (Dolby 2001: 12).

Unlike whites that escape confining identities by connecting to white-dominated, Western nations, parents of mixed race children see their futures tied to Africa and thus are consciously choosing to maintain and develop ties in specific African ethnic traditions and groups. This process can be read as parents providing their children with 'origin stories' (Paragg 2017), or ways of knowing and being that locate the children as proudly and unquestionably South African. These active efforts to create ties and connections to African family members and communities are situated in sharp contrast to parents' categorical rejection of labelling their children Coloured.

Under Apartheid racial categories were imposed through violence, and used to uphold inequality. The Coloured category solved a problem for the Apartheid government. It became a catchment for people not easily or clearly (based on myths of purity) belonging to the other racial categories and meant that everyone had a place in the racial order. The clear lines made the racial order to white advantage easier to maintain. Under Apartheid, Coloureds were given some access to white privilege and spoke the language (Afrikaans) of

the Nationalist government. As Daniel Hammett writes, ‘The Coloured population was vital to the apartheid project and was used as a social and spatial buffer between essentialised white and black populations in social and spatial engineering projects’ (2010: 249). Literally created on paper and enforced with violence, Coloureds did not share a common culture or history. The creation of a Coloured category signified for many South Africans that race, a social construction, was imposed to build and protect privilege and power for whites. When South Africa entered democracy the connections between race and citizenship shifted dramatically. Farred argues that while Africanness ‘has translated into full citizenship of and belonging to the post-apartheid state, colouredness has retained its historic ambivalence’ (2001: 182). The Coloured identity has been viewed as marginal and inferior and not ‘full citizens’ (Erasmus 2001; Petrus and Isaacs-Martin 2012). Given the history and status of Coloureds in South Africa, parents of mixed race children respond strongly when outsiders attempt to categorise their children as Coloured.

In this article I draw on in-depth interviews with ten South Africans in interracial relationships as a way to ‘read’ the social construction of race and the national and global context in which race is created, challenged, and maintained. The very act of living across racial boundaries is a challenge to existing ideologies and social structures. Interactions that take place at the boundaries of racial categories, when people cross racial borders, provide a lens into seeing the dynamics of racial formation (Omi and Winant 1996). I explore border patrolling of people who cross race lines in intimate relationships to highlight the way race is reproduced in everyday interactions. The experiences and perspectives of interracial parents and partners presented in this article suggest that racism and other forms of inequality remain entrenched and pervasive.<sup>1</sup> And, despite the dream of unity and non-racialism, inequality between racial groups and classes has grown under neoliberalism in South Africa (Bond 2004). Far from the hope for a rainbow nation the experiences of interracial partners and parents show that race remains significant, hierarchical and defining of ideologies, identities and institution. Moreover, the strength of the opposition expressed by parents of mixed race children toward the label Coloured, is an indication of the marginal position of Coloureds, and the lack of racial flexibility in South Africa. I argue that through the lens of interracial partners and parents we can better understand the processes of racial formation within South Africa.

## Methods

Over the course of several months in mid-2009, I conducted interviews with ten individuals in interracial relationships. These in depth interviews were part of a larger study of friendships across race lines in post-Apartheid South Africa. Each interview took place in English and was recorded, transcribed and coded. I entered each interview with a goal of understanding how individuals make sense of their lives in post-Apartheid South Africa and the importance of race in their lives. Following Seidman’s (2013) methodological approach, I kept the interviews open ended and unstructured. While I was interested in understanding the lives of people in interracial relationships and families, I allowed the interviews to develop in ways that made sense to the respondents. In this way, their understandings of reality unfolded in the context of their experiences and perceptions, not an interview schedule. Once the interview was transcribed, I followed up

with individuals to clarify ideas and statements that may not have been clear or were contradictory in the first interview. I used a modified snowball sample. Given the segregation and the fact that interracial couples often didn't know of other interracial parents or partners, I networked through friends and colleagues. I asked respondents to carve out two hours to participate. Despite busy schedules, participants were gracious and excited to talk about their experiences.

The ten interviews included three men and seven women, eight were heterosexual, one lesbian and one gay man; six were parents and seven were married or in long term partnerships; two were Xhosa, two Zulu, one Coloured, one Indian, three white English speakers and one Black Africa (no ethnic group identified).<sup>2</sup> No Afrikaners were part of this sample. Each interracial partnership included as least one person of African descent.<sup>3</sup> All participants were living in KwaZulu Natal province at the time of the interview. The youngest participant was a 20-year-old university student and the oldest was a 45-year-old professor. Each person expressed intent of staying in South Africa despite the challenges of being in a mixed race relationship. While the sample included individuals with many demographic differences, the stories told during the interviews included many similar experiences relative to border patrolling. The interviews made clear that while legal sanctions against mixed race families and relationships have been removed, social acceptance lags. Individuals that cross lines in intimate relationships face race patrolling on a regular basis. Their experiences reflect the staying power of race despite the constitutionally-backed demand for 'non-racialism' and the dream of 'rainbow unity'. I begin with an overview of border patrolling in South Africa, then explore the ways interracial couples choose to respond and negotiate race and the racial 'gaze' (Paragg 2017), including carving out spaces that challenge Apartheid-era racial categorisation. I conclude with a discussion of the global processes that shape racialisation in South Africa.

## Racial Borders

In the late 1960s and through the 1970s, bulldozers rolled through District Six in Cape Town carrying out a mission to raze buildings and remove 60,000 people from the mixed race community (<http://www.districtsix.co.za>). The destruction of this community was legal under Apartheid. Designated a white-only area, the government drew upon the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act of 1949, the Immorality Act of 1957, the Group Areas Act of 1950, and the Population Registration Act of 1950, to force the people living in District Six to townships, at times, tearing apart families (Dalmage and Steyn 2016).<sup>4</sup> During this period, all South Africans were separated into clear, specific and legally regulated racial categories and families could not form or live across race lines. As was the case in the U.S. with anti-miscegenation laws, regulating family has been central to regulating boundaries around racial categories (Zack 1993; Dalmage 2000; DaCosta 2004). And yet, even as District Six was being destroyed, the Apartheid state was unravelling at the seams. In 1985, the Mixed Marriage Act was removed. That year, Suzanne Leclerc, a white woman from Rhode Island and Protas Madlala, a Zulu from South Africa, married. The outpouring Lindelwa received in 2002 on her wedding day was in stark contrast to the first interracial marriage in South Africa in 1985. On the day of the Madlala-Leclerc wedding, the police acted in menacing ways, but did not stop them. The Group Areas Act was still in effect, so living together was not an option. While their families accepted the marriage,

others were not as open. The LA Times reported in 1986, 'Tired of being gawked at by curious blacks and sometimes hostile whites, Madlala and his wife avoid shopping or eating out together during their reunions once a month' (Johnson 1986). Yet, a change had begun. Between 1996 and 2011, Amoateng and Heaton (2015) found that intermarriage rates grew dramatically, from 303:1 to 95:1. In the 17 years between this initial marriage and Lindelwa's weddings, transformation in South Africa was both monumental and barely recognisable, it was amazingly fast, and painfully slow (Soudien 2010; Thaver 2010; Tikly 2011).

### **Racial Borders: Patrolling, Negotiating and Claiming**

Racial borders are the contested, patrolled and often hostile spaces that demarcate one racial group from another. Historically created, borders are institutionalised and internalised. They exist in how society is structured and how individuals learn to think about and act on race (Dalmage 2000). When individuals cross race lines – whether in intimate relationships or in others areas of life – the patrolling can be harsh and immediate. Legal and extra legal racial border patrolling demarcates boundaries and upholds unequal racialised systems. Over time, racial rules are internalised within cultures and identities and provide the guide for 'doing race' properly. Individuals develop a framework, a 'trained, discerning eye' (Rothman 1998: 51) through which their own and others' racial behaviour is judged. Racial rules vary across time and geographic location, even as a system of neoliberal global whiteness is a shared backdrop and driver to contemporary racial formation. For instance, under Apartheid the Coloured category was developed to uphold a system of whiteness. In the United States, the 'one drop rule' developed as a way to clearly delineate white and black, thus upholding a system of whiteness (Davis 1991). In Canada, a national narrative of 'multicultural Whiteness' developed that places whites at the centre of Canadian-ness, while jettisoning non-whites to the margins (Paragg 2017). While racial structures vary, a hierarchy of whiteness is in place in each of these countries and that hierarchy is situated in a neoliberal global context built on long histories of slavery, exploitation and colonisation. Images of multiracial, mixed race, and interracial (terms vary) families and people are utilised to make claims about racial progress and harmony (Livingston and Brown 2017), as if histories of exploitation have been redressed through intimacy (for a critique of this position, see Spencer 2011; Mahtani et al. 2014). At odds with this imagery are the experiences of individuals living across race lines.

The greater the inequality between racial groups, the tighter the borders are patrolled. In all cases, interracial partners and parents are visible markers that racial rules have been broken and these become targets of *border patrollers*, that is, individuals that act upon uncritical and internalised understandings of the racial order (Dalmage 2000). These border patrollers believe that they have the right, perhaps the duty, to act against people who cross race lines. Patrollers come from 'all-sides' and their reasons for patrolling vary, but each shares a goal of maintaining clear boundaries of racial and ethnic categories. Border patrollers often believe that categories are natural and static, while the irony of their own actions upholding the borders is lost. As in the U.S., women report being patrolled and in more threatening ways than men. The myth of womanhood and motherhood feeds the patrolling of white women (Dalmage 2000; Twine 2010; Shome

2011). Likewise, cast as the gatekeepers of culture, Zulu and Xhosa women report experiencing greater patrolling than men. As Ayanda, a young Zulu woman explained, ‘We are responsible to pass on the culture to our children and if we move outside of our people, they think we won’t do that. The men don’t have that responsibility. That’s why I’m hiding my relationship right now’.<sup>5</sup>

While interracial families can legally exist, in post-Apartheid South Africa, they struggle with negotiating constant border patrolling. In this section I delineate the patrolling faced by people in interracial relationships and explore their responses. The act of patrolling can run the gambit from not seeing the family as together, to a benign stare, to life-threatening violence.

### ***Border Patrolling and Stereotypes***

Lindelwa grew up in dire conditions without parents and often found refuge in a ‘rubbish dump’ in the Eastern Cape. She met her husband, Joseph, a white social worker from England, while he was working in the Eastern Cape. With her short, but athletic build and rich brown skin, she stands in visible contrast to her blond haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned husband and their two cinnamon coloured children. When she is with her children she is often assumed to be the caretaker. ‘I get, “Oh, are you the nanny, where’s the mom”? I’ll travel with them to the public transport and they’ll ask, “Are you taking your madam’s kids?”’

The belief that a black African woman would be the caretaker is not unreasonable. The South African context is highly unequal and a direct outgrowth of colonisation and Apartheid. Of the 1.1 million domestic workers in South Africa, 91 per cent are African and 9 per cent are Coloured, almost all are females (Hegenveld 2015). In this context, Black mothers of mixed race children are often mistaken for being the nanny. While the misread is explainable, Lindelwa’s status is undermined. She can choose to allow assumptions to stand and avoid further intrusions, or she can choose to respond and risk escalation. This choice is complicated when children are present. Moreover, the underlying assumptions informing the ways she’s read and seen by others shift depending on the context. For example, when she’s only with her husband in a white area, she is assumed to be a sex worker, when she is in her Xhosa community, she is assumed to be wealthy because of her marriage to a white man and when the children are present, she’s a nanny. The way Lindelwa is read as she moves through her daily life highlights the shifting contexts of race-making (Paragg 2015, 2017). For her safety, Lindelwa, like all people that cross race lines in intimate relationships must carefully read each context (Mahtani 2002; Paragg 2015).

White mothers face another, overlapping set of stereotypes that guide the kinds of the patrolling they face. Like all interracial couples, they live with the outgrowth of the 1950 Immorality Act that banned interracial sexual relations and created a framework that calls into question the morality of people who cross race lines, sexually. In fact, it was the imagery of the ‘black threat’ against white women’s morality that drove male architects of Apartheid to regulate interracial sex (Jaynes 2007). Similar imagery was utilised in the U.S. to justify lynching, controlling and containing Black men (Hodes 1997; Ferber 1998). The underlying assumption of sexual immorality is invoked each time a White mother is patrolled, particularly if she crossed a race line with a Black male. Dagmar, a

white South African that immigrated from Germany and works as a social worker, retells an incident at the supermarket.

A woman approached, "Are they your children?" I said "Yes". "So did you adopt them?" I said, "No. They are my children". "Yes, I know, but did you not adopt them?" I said, "They are my sons". "You mean you gave birth?" Nobody with white children would be asked, "How did you get to have these children?" But the idea is: Has she actually slept with a black man?

This white border patroller attempts to 'explain away' Dagmar's racial transgression and restore Dagmar to a place of a 'good' white person. Positing adoption as the basis for the family formation makes parenting across race lines acceptable (Dalmage 2000, 2006). In fact, the explanation of adoption supports media depictions of white, Western mothers as the embodiment of goodness and moral superiority (Shome 2011). In the eyes of a white border patroller, then, the assumption – perhaps the hope – is that Dagmar is a benevolent white mother rearing a 'rescued' child of colour (Shome 2011). When Dagmar tells her clearly 'they are my children, I did not adopt them', the white border patroller is shocked, and remains silent.

Amrita, an Indian woman married to a Black American, and living in KwaZulu Natal experiences a similar form of patrolling.

I was playing with my son at the beach and this group of women, Indian women – so, like me! They started talking and saying, "It's so nice for you to bring your maid's child". I couldn't believe it. I was just shocked. I said, "That's my child". And the next thing, "Obviously you've adopted".

As the 'middlemen' under Apartheid, it may be that it is unimaginable to the other Indian women that Amrita would choose a path of downward racial mobility. Moreover, while the protection of Indian womanhood was not on the minds of the architects of Apartheid, casting black men as sexual threats certainly was. Thus, the ethno-sexual boundaries are patrolled relative to the partnering with a Black man.

Given the relative newness of legally recognised interracial relationships and mixed race children in South Africa and the continued pervasiveness of inequality, it is not surprising that when interracial couples and families are out, they are not seen as 'fitting together'. Unfortunately, the patrolling does shape every interaction interracial families have in public. Even if they choose to not respond, they are forced to be aware.

### ***Border Patrolling: Negotiating the Constant Threat***

The constant patrolling, from the annoying stares to outright violence highlights both the active way race is created and maintained daily and the emotional work required of interracial couples to negotiate patrolling. While physical violence is less common than other forms of patrolling, when it happens, it can arise quickly and leave a lasting impression. For example, Lindelwa and her husband stopped at a restaurant in an Afrikaans town in KwaZulu Natal. They were eating and minding their own business when,

These Afrikaner guys called him a kaffir lover.<sup>6</sup> And instead of the manager of the restaurant stopping them, he tells my husband and me to get out of the restaurant-- to go and take the fight outside. These four Afrikaner guys, you know, they are short but well built, rugby players. They dragged my husband by his neck. And it's two against four. They're hitting

us, and then this Afrikaner guy said to me, “You and your kaffir lover need to leave my city. You have to get out of this city, because this city is not for people like you”.

The stress caused by real possibility of violence shapes the way interracial couples live in thought and action. Thus, even when others are not around, for instance, Amrita remains on alert and aware of the mis-read of her family.

If I sit in the back seat with the kids to keep them occupied with their coloring, especially when they’re young, and people see my husband driving, they assume he is my chauffeur, it’s just really difficult.

Being aware of other’s perceptions is not ideal, but it is necessary. As a result, time together in public is not relaxing. Interracial couples must have a good read of their social context, their level of safety, and the animosity of potential patrollers at all times. And, patrolling can take a toll on interracial couples – their stress levels, their relationship, and their leisure time (Dalmage 2000).<sup>7</sup> For instance, one person in a couple may feel more comfortable and safe than the other in a particular context. In these moments, what might be an expression of a desire for connection, say, a wish to hold hands, becomes fraught with layers of possible disconnect if the other person in the couple doesn’t feel safe at the same time. The constant need to stay on guard and the possibility of not being in sync with one’s partner, adds layers of stress to the interracial relationship. In order to negotiate the constant threat, many couples choose not to show affection in public.

Ayanda, a college student dating a white English speaking South African, lives in KwaZulu Natal and is Zulu. She discussed the ways always being on display affects her.

You tend to raise an eyebrow, then you go through this silent analysis, let’s just keep quiet because the more affectionate you become in public, the more you attract attention. It can put a strain on the relationship because you are sticking out like a sore thumb. . . it’s quite taxing.

Jarrood is a white American-born South African, proud ANC member, and father of a newborn daughter with a Zulu woman in a township, explains his response to the constant pressure:

We aren’t passionate as some other couples would be because of the amount of attention it brings. If we’re more comfortable, then fine, but I think initially you would get a lot of comments, you know, you get that “umlungu way”![White or European way] So for people’s comfort for a little while we just don’t impose on everybody.

In addition, to public displays of affection provoking border patrollers, public affection is seen as a white thing or umlungu way. When Africans engage in public displays of affection across race lines, they risk antagonising border patrollers because they are breaking cultural codes that make them appear to be coconuts or sell outs. Not only have they crossed race lines, but now they are acting white and contrary to their traditions.

Cebisa, a Xhosa woman in a relationship with a Coloured person and the mother of a child that’s mixed Xhosa and Zulu (from a previous relationship), discusses the complexities of public affection.

People don’t take it very kindly when you go for another race. We get it everywhere, whether you’re holding hands in public or get that, “How come you being black you leave your own

race and go for another race”? Or say, “Oh, that’s like white people, they are always holding hands, you know we Africans, we don’t like that”.

And, unless interracial couples want to respond to violence with violence, they must learn de-escalation and avoidance strategies. Jarrod explains how he thinks about de-escalation in the face of threats from border patrollers.

I’m not going to go there with you. I am not going to get offensive too. This behavior is common to me, you know? I’ve been through it too many times. But, I know this is an uncomfortable situation for you, not for me. So I’m not going there with you.

Lindelwa also chooses to de-escalate by answering questions without showing defensiveness.

I react kindly to questions that I get from people, because for me, the more you react in a negative way to negative questions, the more it feels that you’re not comfortable talking about such issues.

But staying positive and kind in the face of intrusion and threats (and violence) is not easy. Lindelwa continues,

I used to hate walking with him [husband]. I used to say, why don’t you go out and get some food, we can stay home and not do anything. Because it was just painful, because I’m black and he’s white, we couldn’t be together. And, it depends which part of the city you go to, you still get people staring at you. And, we have been through lots of fights, arguments with people, people treating us as if we did something wrong.

Other couples develop strategies that include carefully selecting where they go and staying in particular areas. Cebisa explains her struggle,

You see, I don’t go anywhere until I see that there’s more mixed couples there, so that I don’t feel as if I’m this only *weird* person in the world you know? I mean I don’t feel guilty about going anywhere, I go and I feel proud, it’s not wrong, you know, we’re not living in the Apartheid-era now, we’re living in a new generation, so I go.

Ayanda also has to talk herself through ‘going out’ because of the added pressure it creates.

So even now when you tend to go out you want to go out to places that are very, very accepting, so you don’t feel so much pressure. Because then eventually you are like, ‘Oh my gosh, you really now feel that you are being openly discussed and it’s not comfortable’. I usually find that in predominantly white places.

Thabisa explains why she’d rather just stay home,

I tell you sometimes I get so tired. It’s like constantly you have to fight to prove yourself, you know, have a positive way of responding to insults. Most of the times, it’s kind of tiring when you have to defend who you are.

In her analysis of focus group interviews with different racial and ethnic groups across South Africa regarding their views of interracial relationships, Childs’ found that in some spaces, it’s hard to know that Apartheid has ended. Childs concludes that South Africa is ‘a country still divided by race, and a spatial and racial landscape where little to no intimate interaction takes place across socially constructed racial boundaries’ (2016: 28). Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti 2014 suggest that as South African social institutions, such as education, become integrated, racial divisions will be ameliorated. Yet,

interracial partners struggle to find a place and interracial parents struggle to provide grounding for their children. Given the history of South African racial categories, many people outside of the family attempt to put the children of interracial couples into the category of Coloured. Parents in this study were clear and consistent that their children would not be categorised as Coloured.

### **We Don't Have A Label, But We Know Who We Are Not!**

Given the marginalisation of Coloureds and that parents want their children to have a sense of belonging – an unquestioned stake in their South Africanness and Africanness – they socialise their children *against* claiming Coloured. Cebisa, like other parents does not want her child categorised as Coloured because they are ‘neither here nor there, they’ve got no culture and, they’ve got no grounding’. While this research includes partners and parents with at least one person of African descent, in his study of ‘biracial identity’ Dennis Frances found that *none* of the White-Indian young adults he interviewed identified as Coloured. Similar to the respondents in this current research he found that, ‘some of the participants reacted strongly to being named as Coloured and related how they differed with those who labelled them as such’ (2006: 10). Parents in this study who see that their children are ‘assigned’ to the Coloured category respond strongly against it. Lindelwa is concerned that her children will not know their culture or have a sense of belonging if they are labelled Coloured.

I am proud to say that I'm an African, I'm Black. But, for my children, they're African because they're born in Africa. I can't say if they are Black or White because they are both, so they can be called mixed-race or whatever, but they are not Coloured, that's the only word that I can never use. Coloured people don't know where they belong--they have no sense of belonging.

The identity or category labelled Coloured is viewed by Lindelwa and others as an imposed location that has no ‘point of origin’ (Paragg 2017) and has been termed ‘idiosyncratically liminal’ (Farred 2001: 177) in South Africa.

Opposition to Coloured as a label stems from the belief by parents of mixed race children that it as an imposed Apartheid category that is marginalised in a post-Apartheid era. It is not a category or community that most parents of mixed race children are connected with and does not provide a sense of belonging or acceptance these parents wish for their children. Moreover, the parents’ lives are engulfed in small and large struggles because of border patrolling grounded in Apartheid categories. As such, they are resisting racialisation and the category they see as anchored in an imposition of injustice and lacking cultural roots. Parents were adamant in both word and deed that their children explicitly and clearly identify with ethnic roots in Africa as a way to counter racial imposition. Amrita speaks directly of her opposition to the imposed identity despite being close friends with Coloured people.

I get very offended if anybody calls my children Coloured. My best girlfriends are so-called Coloureds and I do not want to disrespect their identity, but I find it is a very confusing identity and it's an imposed identity and I want you to know culturally who you. You can say I'm Indian-Africa, have the list of whatever you embrace. I think ethnicity and race are important, race matters, it'd be naïve to think it doesn't, but I think that you have to assert your humanity.

As parents they see their role is to give their children the knowledge, understandings of the traditions and an appreciation for Africa. They do not want their children racially ‘boxed in’, rather hope that the children will grow with strong roots in Africa, yet aware that their identities are much more than a racial label. While white South Africans may see themselves as citizens of the world, respondents in this study expressed a desire that their children be rooted in Africa and unquestionably South African. In this sample, each parent consciously gave their children African names, with a specific intent to anchor them in Africa. In their study on the naming of mixed race children, Rosalind Edwards and Chamion Caballero, found that the naming of a child may ‘symbolise parents’ hopes and aspirations for who their children are and will be, to whom and what they are connected, as well sometimes as what they hope will be left aside’ (2008: 56). In short, names carry significance, and birth names often follow cultural rules, while locating individuals in the world.

Lindelwa explains the ways names are read (and locate) her children in the context of border patrollers attempting to impose a racial identity of her children:

I called my boys Mandla and Ntando. Mandla is ‘the powerful one,’ and Ntando, means strong will. We get people saying, “Why would you call your Coloured kids using African names? And, I’m like, “Who is the Coloured here”?

Likewise, sensitivity to the constructed Apartheid categories, a wish for cultural connectedness and a commitment to South Africa, specifically and Africa more broadly, drove Amrita’s naming choices.

My sons have very African identities -- and their names -- my older son is named Mpilo, it means ‘life’ and my next son is, Philani and that means ‘majestic and unforgettable,’ and my daughter’s name is Fundiswa and it means ‘someone who’s educated’. My kids are very African-centered, we try very much to respect Africa, for them to know Africa.

While, in some places, mixed race people identify as ‘cosmopolitan world citizens’ (King-O’Riain et al. 2014), parents in this study are firm that their children will develop identities located in specific cultural communities. A sense of belonging and connectedness to Africa is seen as a priority and as important as a stance against the West and as a way of prioritising ethnicity over (or at least, alongside) imposed racial categories. Lindelwa stated,

I’m not going to put my kids in a box, you know, at the end of the day they’re half Xhosa and half British. They will have to decide when they grow up where they want to be, it’s not up to me to make that decision for them.

And, as she goes back to the Eastern Cape to visit her family, Lindelwa’s children are immersed in their traditional culture, something that brings the family pride. ‘My grandmother is so proud of having these kids, she keep on spoiling them and – “Leave them! They’re my Xhosa boys and they have to know Xhosa culture”’.

Cosmopolitanism, as lived by white South Africans, may allow an escape from the degrading Apartheid legacy while accruing benefits in a global arena, but does not give children a sense of belonging. It is in this space that interracial parents wish to raise their children as grounded ‘whole’ people. Amrita reflects on the wish for her son’s humanity that she sees as threatened by racial labels and categorisation.

I'd like to see my son as a whole person. We have given him an identity of being an African male – now he might come an decide to be something else as he grows up, he might say, this is jut too constraining for me, this is who I am, but at the moment we don't want him to be biracial or multiracial. But I just find like the bi and the multi, it gives me the same feeling as Coloured, it's like you're really nothing but some mixture.

Interracial partners and parents struggle to raise their mixed race children with a sense of self that both transcends degrading Apartheid categories while taking pride in Africa. In light of their own experiences, raising their children to believe in non-racialism, whether defined as colour blindness, post-racial society, or the end of racism, is not an option. Given the pervasiveness of border patrolling, racialisation, and the legacies of inequality, parents of mixed race children in this study ask: How can we raise our children to be grounded and accepted as whole.

## Conclusion

Soudien (2010) has referred to race in South Africa as a 'zone of intense confusion', such that cross-racial networks, communities and trust needed for a strong democracy are undermined. The lack of integration in social institutions, the lack of critical race awareness, and resulting lack of interaction across race lines (Amoateng and Kalule-Sabiti 2014; Childs 2016) hinders the sense of reciprocity, mutual obligation and trust across lines of difference. Instead, the borders are places rife with stress, strategies and avoidance, particularly when 'racial rules' are viewed as not properly followed. Despite the centrality of non-racialism to the South African constitution, interpersonal relationships in South Africa remain deeply racialised. Exploring the experiences of interracial parents and partners helps to gain insight into the processes of racial formation, the daily work South Africans engage in to 'do' race. The border patrolling is a central piece of the work and can be seen with clarity through the experiences of people living across racial borders. Understanding the actions and perceptions of interracial couples relative to the negative patrolling and their own choices about being in public and ways to raise their children, shed light on the ways that race can be challenged, despite its staying power.

In post-Apartheid South Africa, racial identities, categories and meanings are highly contested and charged, even as they have staying power. Analysing the experiences of interracial couples that lived across the racial lines created under Apartheid, provide insight into the ways the colour lines are contested and understood in South Africa. The experiences and reflections of the individuals in interracial relationships show that, at times, the colour lines in South Africa are stark. The dream of non-racialism remains elusive. Interracial couples and children do not yet have a place in the New South Africa but, are forging new pathways that draw on both global and local understandings of race, culture, nationhood, and geographical location. While young whites in South Africa have developed identities grounded in neoliberal whiteness and cosmopolitanism (Dolby 2001), parents in this study are not raising their children to see themselves as human capital or as cosmopolitan. In fact, cosmopolitanism has a 'groundlessness' that mirrors the culturalless-ness that, for these parents, defines Coloured. In a struggle for their children's humanity and belonging, they articulate clearly what they do NOT want for their children. They also articulate their wish to help their children develop identities

grounded in specific cultures – the pathway, they see, to mitigating the oppressive and degrading role of imposed racialised categorisation.

## Notes

1. This research fits with a growing literature that explores parenting mixed race children (for example Twine 2010; Song and Gutierrez 2016).
2. The participant that identified as Coloured lives as white (accepting the assumptions others make about him). He is in a relationship with a person that identifies as Khoisan.
3. This was not planned, but an outcome of the snowball sampling.
4. The acts were amended and reworked over time. I list the original acts.
5. Research by Amoateng and Heaton (2015) show that African men are more likely to out-marry than African women.
6. Kaffir is a racial slur used against Black Africans.
7. In his research on the ways middle-class Blacks negotiate racism in public places, Feagin (1991) found that Black couples must negotiate their response to the situation and then with one another.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

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