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Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary Perspectives

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About this journal

The *International Journal of African Reflections (IJAR)*, which is housed at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, publishes multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary peer-reviewed articles that encourage and support researchers in all fields and disciplines, especially female, black and young researchers, by providing a platform to publish their work with the aim of eventually obtaining an NRF rating. The journal also intends to act as a facilitator in building a cohort of scholars from among the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral graduate students through the articles that are published in the journal. It is hoped that new epistemological ideas will emerge, and that this will contribute to improving the quality of teaching, research and learning.

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Preface

It is my privilege to present Volume 3 (2026) of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*), a scholarly platform that embodies iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's commitment to disseminating knowledge that is intellectually rigorous, socially responsive and firmly rooted in African realities. This issue brings together researchers from the humanities, social sciences, law, health sciences and economics to examine some of the defining questions of our time: gender justice, historical memory, land governance, Indigenous knowledge, technological change, institutional accountability, public health and sustainable development. Its interdisciplinary reach reflects a fundamental truth: the challenges confronting Africa do not respect disciplinary boundaries and our responses cannot remain confined within them.

At iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu we understand that a university is not simply a place where existing knowledge is transmitted but a public institution with a duty to imagine, test and build better futures. Our Vision 2040+ is anchored in the aspiration to become a technology-infused African university that is locally responsive, continentally consequential and globally engaged. This vision calls upon us to draw intellectual strength from our location while refusing intellectual isolation; to use technology without surrendering human judgement, and to pursue academic excellence in ways that improve the lives of the communities we serve. The *IJAR* contributes directly to this purpose by creating a credible space in which African experiences generate concepts, evidence and solutions of wider significance.

Vision 2040+ is given practical direction through the university's three signature themes: Food Futures; One Health, and Leadership, Justice and Governance. These themes are not separate institutional compartments: together, they recognise that human flourishing depends on the relationship between sustainable livelihoods, healthy communities, ecological resilience, ethical institutions and responsible leadership. The contributions to this volume illuminate these relationships precisely. Research on external debt and agricultural development reveals the fiscal conditions that can advance or impede food security and rural transformation. Scientific enquiry into the bioactivity of medicinal plants brings indigenous and community-based knowledge into productive conversation with experimental research while opening up opportunities for health innovation. Studies of land boards, apartheid regulation, gendered violence and institutional power demonstrate that development cannot be separated from justice, legitimacy and accountable governance.

The volume also engages directly with the technological future of higher education. Artificial intelligence is already altering the way universities teach, learn, conduct research and administer their responsibilities. Yet technology is never transformative merely because it is new: its value depends on whether it advances equitable access, strengthens human capability and serves clearly defined educational purposes. The analysis of AI adoption in South African higher education, together with the dialogue on literary criticism, pedagogy and the digital humanities, underscores the importance of infrastructure, digital literacy, ethical governance and critical judgement. This is central to our Vision 2040+ ambition. A technology-infused African university must be technologically capable, but it must also remain intellectually independent, ethically grounded and attentive to any inequalities that may be reproduced through innovation.

Equally important is the volume's insistence that language and interpretation are forms of social action. The analysis of feminist speech acts in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …* shows how language can challenge inherited assumptions and direct new practices. Historical research into the criminalisation of interracial relationships under apartheid reveals the opposite possibility: law and official language can classify, stigmatise and control human beings. These contributions remind us that knowledge is never detached from power. The terms through which society describes gender, race, authority, land, health and development influence what institutions permit, prohibit or neglect. Universities therefore carry a special responsibility to cultivate critical literacy: the capacity to identify the assumptions embedded in dominant categories and to formulate more just ways of understanding the world.

This responsibility is particularly urgent for an institution bearing the name of Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu. His legacy represents principled leadership, disciplined service, social justice and an enduring belief in people's capacity to transform their circumstances through collective action. To honour that name, the university must ensure that its scholarship is measured not only by quantity or visibility, but also by its integrity, relevance and impact. Research must confront the lived realities of rural and historically marginalised communities; strengthen democratic institutions; protect human dignity, and contribute to a more equitable distribution of knowledge and opportunity. *IJAR* serves this mandate by enabling scholars to respond to Africa's problems without reducing the continent to a catalogue of deficiencies. It foregrounds African agency, intellectual creativity and the capacity to produce solutions.

The geographical position of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu gives this mission particular force. Our campuses are located within communities

that experience the opportunities and contradictions of contemporary development up close. Questions of rural livelihoods, public health, land, educational access, language, technology and governance are not distant research themes; they shape the everyday lives of our students, staff and surrounding communities. Vision 2040+ requires us to transform this proximity into a scholarly advantage. Community engagement must inform research questions; research must strengthen teaching; teaching must prepare graduates to act with competence and social responsibility, and innovation must yield benefits beyond the boundaries of the university.

The *IJAR* is therefore more than a publication outlet. It is part of the knowledge infrastructure through which our university advances research excellence, supports emerging and established scholars, strengthens interdisciplinary exchange and extends African scholarship into international conversations. A strong university journal safeguards rigorous peer review, promotes intellectual independence and preserves a public record of enquiry. It also enlarges the range of voices and contexts represented in global knowledge. For African universities, this work is essential to epistemic justice: not the rejection of global scholarship, but fuller and more equitable participation in its production, evaluation and circulation.

I commend the authors in this issue for having researched and placed on record difficult questions with methodological seriousness and a commitment to evidence-based knowledge dissemination. I thank the reviewers for the careful and often unseen intellectual labour through which the quality of scholarly publication is secured. I also acknowledge the Managing Editor, the Editorial Board, and the production team for sustaining *IJAR* and bringing this volume to completion. Their collective work demonstrates the institutional commitment required to convert research into an enduring scholarly resource.

As readers engage with this third volume of *IJAR*, I invite them to consider not only the individual findings in its articles but also the shared challenge they present. What kinds of universities, technologies, laws, economies and knowledge systems are needed for Africa's people to flourish? Vision 2040+ calls on iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu to help answer that question through courageous scholarship and purposeful action. The future we seek will not be produced by aspiration alone; it will be built on evidence, ethical leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration and sustained accountability to society.

This volume is a meaningful contribution to that undertaking. It affirms our confidence that African universities can generate the highest-quality knowledge while remaining responsive to place, community and history. It also renews our conviction that scholarly

reflection must lead to transformation. May the ideas gathered here stimulate further research, deepen institutional debate and inspire partnerships that advance healthy communities, sustainable livelihoods, justice and human dignity across the Eastern Cape, South Africa, the African continent, and beyond.

Prof Thandi Mgwebi
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu

Africa in transformation

Knowledge, power and institutional responsibility

Editorial for Volume 3 (2026)

This third volume of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*) brings together nine contributions that examine the ways in which knowledge, power and institutional responsibility shape African lives. Moving between history, gender studies, biomedical research, higher education, economics, land law, literary pragmatics, palliative care and the humanities, the volume asks what makes scholarship answerable to the societies it studies. Its coherence emerges from a shared concern with the conditions under which people acquire recognition, exercise agency, secure livelihoods and receive care. The contributions approach these concerns through different methods and at different scales, demonstrating why African scholarship needs both disciplinary precision and sustained conversation across fields.

The volume affirms Africa as a site of knowledge production, theoretical reflection and methodological enquiry. Its studies engage inherited inequalities together with contemporary pressures, attending to the institutions through which both are reproduced or challenged. Read in their published sequence, they move from the coercive regulation of intimate life and the vulnerabilities of university students to questions of scientific investigation, technological change, economic development and land governance. Feminist language, culturally responsive care and the renewal of literary criticism extend this enquiry into the meanings and practices through which social transformation becomes possible. Together, these contributions give substance to *IJAR*'s commitment to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary scholarship grounded in African realities.

The opening article, AA Marwarwa and M Petse's '"The forbidden fruit": The consequences of interracial sexual relationships in apartheid South Africa', examines the 1952 case of Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Emily Nomatiti in Umtata. Through this case, the authors trace the operation of the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 and the consequences of racial regulation for those brought within its reach. Their historical analysis shows how racial domination entered intimate life through policing, prosecution and punishment. The case also directs attention to the unequal vulnerabilities of the people involved: racialised law operated within existing differences of status and power. By connecting a particular legal proceeding to a wider system of exclusion, the article demonstrates the value of archival

research to recovering the human consequences of institutionalised discrimination.

Questions of power and vulnerability continue in Keneilwe Wanthitha Mashishi, Mahlodi Monica Rebecca Makupula, Jabulani Gilford Kheswa and Mvuyisi Notole's study of sexual harassment and the mental well-being of female students at a South African tertiary institution. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten participants and guided by Power and Control Theory, the authors examine student experiences shaped by poverty, patriarchal norms, alcohol abuse and unequal relations of authority. The accounts reveal the consequences for psychological well-being and academic participation that institutional policy alone cannot adequately describe. The study recommends ongoing counselling, empowerment programmes and education on sexual harassment policies. Its place after the historical article establishes a consequential connection: the protection of dignity requires attention to be given the way power is exercised in everyday relationships, and also to the formal rules intended to govern them. For universities, student safety must surely be integral to the conditions that make learning possible.

The third contribution turns to the investigation of medicinal plants. Azola Zukisani Ntshobane, Elona Ngqayimbane, Suparna Chakraborty, Saif Khan and Talkmore Ngarivhume screen extracts of *Drimia altissima* and *Crinum macrophyllum* bulbs for anticancer, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Their laboratory findings identify promising responses in selected extracts, including activity against cervical cancer cell lines and strong inhibition in an anti-inflammatory assay. These are results obtained from laboratory screenings; they establish grounds for further investigation rather than clinical effectiveness. The authors accordingly call for the isolation and characterisation of active compounds. Their article contributes to this volume by showing how medicinal plant use can inform research questions that are then examined through controlled experimentation. Its significance rests in the disciplined movement from biological resources and medicinal knowledge towards evidence that can support further scientific enquiry.

ST Pika's exploration of the adoption of artificial intelligence in South African higher education shifts our attention to the infra-structures through which knowledge is taught, assessed and administered. Using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the article considers relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability in interpreting the emerging trends and barriers. Personalised learning, student engagement and administrative efficiency feature among the potential benefits of adopting artificial intelligence, while infrastructure constraints,

digital literacy gaps, inequality and ethical concerns complicate its adoption. The analysis places institutional readiness central to the discussion: technologies acquire educational value through the conditions of their use. Investment, staff development and appropriate policies therefore belong in the same conversation as innovation. Following the biomedical study, Pika's contribution extends the volume's attention to responsible investigation and adoption, asking how promising developments can serve public purposes in unequal institutional settings.

Nnane Eric Sumelong's study of external debt sustainability and agricultural development in Cameroon broadens this institutional enquiry to national economic policy. Using data for the period 1996–2023, an Engle–Granger co-integration framework and an error-correction model, the article examines the relationships between external debt and agricultural value added. It reports a negative long-run association between long-term external debt and agricultural value added, together with a strong positive association with gross fixed capital formation. The analysis interprets debt pressures in relation to constrained fiscal space and the resources available for agricultural development. Its recommendations emphasise transparent debt governance, the protection of agricultural investment and the productive use of borrowing. By bringing rural livelihoods and agricultural capacity into the debates on debt, the article asks readers to assess macroeconomic choices balanced against their developmental consequences. The practical question is what public finance enables communities to produce, sustain and improve.

The next article, by Akame Winslow Melle and Akwe Ngole Ray Junior, examines four land management boards in Cameroon through the lens of legal pluralism. The Land Consultative Board, Site Board Commission, Inter-Village Boundary Settlement Commission and Farmer–Grazer Commission operate where statutory rules, customary authority and administrative practice intersect. Drawing on legal materials, interviews and comparative African experiences, the authors identify procedural ambiguity, bureaucratic delay and institutional constraints that limit dispute resolution. They argue for reforms that combine customary legitimacy with clearer safeguards, digitisation, gender inclusion and more effective administration. Its position after the agricultural development study renders the relationship between productive investment and land governance particularly visible. Land sustains livelihoods, but it also carries histories of belonging, authority and communal obligation; the institutions responsible for land management must respond appropriately to these overlapping claims if their decisions are to command confidence.

Gabriel Ndamzi Amadi's 'Doing feminism with words: a Searlean speech act analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …*' then turns to the capacity of language to challenge inherited authority. Analysing 239 coded units from Adichie's manifesto, Amadi shows how assertives contest naturalised gender assumptions and directives translate feminist argument into practices of parenting and socialisation. Commissives and expressives establish ethical and affective positioning, while quasi-declaratives attempt to rename or reclassify familiar gendered categories. The recognition of hybrid forms also allows the article to test the usefulness and limits of its theoretical framework. This contribution returns the volume to gendered power at the level of ordinary speech and conduct. It demonstrates how feminist writing can intervene in the vocabularies through which inequality becomes familiar and in the practices through which it is passed from one generation to another.

The eighth contribution, K Zweni, A Mavembela and G Mkukuli's 'Decolonising South African palliative care psychosocial services for mental health benefit: eclectic context', brings the relationship between recognition and institutional responsibility into end-of-life care. Guided by an ecological perspective and an eclectic narrative review, the authors examine the ways patients' social, cultural and spiritual environments shape their experiences of care. They argue that the exclusion of African beliefs and knowledge systems can undermine culturally responsive psychosocial support, and they advocate their inclusion alongside allopathic approaches in healthcare training, policy and practice. The article offers a framework for reform rather than a clinical evaluation of a new intervention. Read alongside the earlier biomedical contribution, it widens the volume's understanding of health: research into biological activity and attention to the meanings through which patients experience suffering respond to different complementary dimensions of care. Respect for patient preferences and cultural diversity is central to that relationship.

The volume concludes with 'Beyond the Ibadan School', Mark Ighile's dialogue with Emeritus Professor Dan Izevbaye on literary criticism, pedagogy and digital humanities. Reflecting on six decades of scholarship, the conversation revisits the relationships between text, context, authorship, audience and interpretation. Its discussion of a declining tutorial culture and campus collegiality underscores the social conditions through which critical judgement develops. Its treatment of canon formation asks how intellectual inheritance can remain responsive to changing publics and media. Returning to the questions raised by Pika, the dialogue considers digital tools and artificial intelligence as supports for enquiry whose usefulness depends

on humanistic judgement and ethical interpretation. This is a fitting conclusion to the sequence: an issue concerned with institutional transformation ends by examining the ways in which scholars learn to interpret, evaluate and transmit knowledge responsibly.

Through these contributions, institutional legitimacy emerges as a demanding practical achievement. Courts, universities, land boards, healthcare services and fiscal systems exercise authority in ways that affect people's opportunities and vulnerabilities. Their legitimacy depends on how that authority is justified, scrutinised and experienced. The articles illuminate this problem through distinct forms of evidence, from a historical prosecution and students' accounts to legal analysis and economic modelling. Together, they encourage a conception of reform that is attentive to everyday consequences: access to education, security of livelihood, recognition of claims and dignity in care.

The volume also clarifies why the recognition of African knowledge must be accompanied by methodological care. Archival interpretation, laboratory screening, qualitative interviews, narrative synthesis, speech-act analysis and econometrics support different kinds of claim. Bringing them into conversation requires respect being shown for those differences. Medicinal knowledge can generate research questions; cultural understanding can inform care; literary criticism can examine the terms through which values are communicated. None of these contributions needs to assume the methods of another to acquire intellectual worth. Their collective strength lies in making evidence, interpretation and the limits of inference visible while responding to problems that exceed any single discipline.

We thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for their critical engagement, and the editorial and production teams for the sustained work that makes scholarly publication possible. Their efforts support a journal that is committed to widening participation in research while maintaining the rigour on which scholarly trust depends. For emerging and established researchers alike, that commitment entails the opportunity to contribute and the responsibility to formulate arguments that others can examine, question and develop.

Volume Three of *IJAR* invites readers to consider African scholarship through the quality of the understanding it produces and the opportunities it opens up. Its contributions recover histories of exclusion, scrutinise present institutions and propose directions for change without resolving their differences into a single account of Africa. Their shared achievement is to render the relationship between knowledge and responsibility concrete. *IJAR* advances that relationship

by providing a space in which African experiences inform enquiry, African intellectual resources shape interpretation and scholarship remains answerable to the people whose lives give its questions urgency.

Prof Enongene Mirabeau Sone
and
Dr Thoahlane Thoahlane
Editors, *International Journal of African Reflections*

‘The forbidden fruit’: The consequences of interracial sexual relationships in apartheid South Africa. The case of Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Emily Nomatiti (1952)

AA Marwarwa[1]
M Petse[2]

Abstract

From the beginning of human existence, our species has always had an appetite for reproduction. Consequently, there have been debates on human sexual relations through the lens of social standards and various other means. History is one of the most essential fields through which to try to understand human beings through the unending contributions of social researchers. This research was about the impact of interracial sexual relationships in apartheid South Africa. The case was that of Olaf Abraham Voster, a European male versus the King. Voster had interracial sexual relations with an African woman, Nomathemba Nomatiti, in defiance of the Immorality Act 5 of 1927. He was a white farmer who owned a farm in Orange Grove, Umtata, and he had an interracial encounter with Nomatiti, who worked on the farm. This interracial sexual encounter occurred in 1952, when apartheid was at its height. The research examined the response of whites (Afrikaners and English speakers) to miscegenation (interracial sexual relations) and the extent to which the citizens who were directly involved in such relations suffered. The researcher used a single case study analysis to consider the penalties that the affected people had to endure. The findings reveal that the segregation laws of the 1920s disproportionately affected non-white individuals, which only served to exacerbate racial inequalities. The study recommends legal reforms that repeal discriminatory laws, public awareness campaigns to challenge societal prejudices and the establishment of support systems for those affected by past injustices.

Keywords: miscegenation, interracial relationship, Immorality Act, racial oppression, apartheid, sexual relations

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1. Background

> I thought paying for this would save me a lot, my name, my family, my work, and my reputation. I don't know why I became such a coward (Court of the Magistrate of Mthatha, 1952).

Olaf Abraham Voster, a white farmer charged under the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 with having had a sexual relationship with a black woman, uttered this revealing statement. The researcher has used this case to uncover the unpleasant consequences of the Act. The 'crime' Voster had committed was outlawed in apartheid South Africa by the Immorality Act (Ratele, 2002).

The Act prohibited interracial sexual relations between Europeans and other racial groups. The case was heard in Mthatha in 1952. This study of the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 finds that the people prosecuted suffered through the punishments they received and lost a great deal in their lives as a result. It showed, moreover, that it was punishable by law to participate in an interracial sexual relationship at that time. Among the reasons was that interracial sex was outlawed by the apartheid government. In terms of this legislation, interracial sexual relationships could result in prosecution, fines and imprisonment. More seriously, those who committed such an offence would lose their reputation in the community, their family, their job and even their freedom.

This research is important because it attempts to contribute new information to the academic literature regarding the way cases which involved blacks and whites were dealt with. Previous works have examined the Act, with all its amendments, and interviews were the focal point of the studies.

This research sought to bring new information to light by offering a critical analysis of the consequences of the Act. The importance of this research is that it provides an in-depth insight into the ways in which the people charged under the Act were affected. This research attempted to answer the following questions: Why did the apartheid government of South Africa outlaw interracial sexual relations? Did the government succeed in outlawing interracial sexual relations? Did Voster face the consequences of breaking the law? Did the apartheid government ensure that Voster was punished? Did this case affect Voster and Nomathemba Nomatiti, and the other parties who were involved, in any way? Were there severe consequences for breaking this law? This study will fill a gap in the literature and bring new information to the topic. In this study, a single case was used and court testimonies were analysed. The study adopted an analytical approach, in this instance by critically analysing the court testimony of one case, which should serve to provide a clear interpretation of the effects of the Immorality Act on the people who were prosecuted.

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The case analysis focused not only on the person who was charged, but also on the experiences of those who testified in this matter.

The apartheid regime in South Africa institutionalised racial segregation through a series of legal instruments, one of the most controversial being the Immorality Act 5 of 1927. This law criminalised sexual relations between white individuals and people of other racial groups, reinforcing the racial purity ideology that underpinned the apartheid policies. The case of Olaf Abraham Voster, a white farmer from Orange Grove, Mthatha, who engaged in an interracial sexual relationship with Nomathemba Nomatiti, provides a lens through which to examine the socio-legal dynamics of apartheid-era racial regulations.

This article sought to analyse the ways in which the state and white communities responded to interracial relationships, the legal consequences for those involved and the broader implications for South African society. By situating the Voster case within the historical and political framework of apartheid, this study aimed to contribute to an understanding of racial oppression and resistance. Furthermore, it highlighted the deeply personal impact of apartheid-era legislation on individuals' lives, emphasising the intersection of race, law and personal freedom.

2. Literature review

The Union of South Africa's House of Assembly (under the Hertzog government) passed the Immorality Act 5 of 1927; the Act placed a ban on all extramarital sexual relations between Europeans and Africans. In this Act, illicit carnal intercourse was defined as an offence and punishable with prison terms of up to five years for men and up to four years for women. In the House of Assembly Debates, the then Minister of Justice, Tielman Roos, argued that his proposal was defensible because it protected the African women of South Africa and his constituency's womenfolk. From 1928 to 1938, about 550 Europeans (among them 75 women) and 600 Africans (among them 510 women) were punished for offences under this specific Act (Van den Berghe, 1960). In the mid-1930s, the United Party-led government found it difficult to shore up power against the rise of Afrikaner Nationalist ambitions. Among other considerations, the Dutch- and Afrikaans-speaking church in the 1930s showed a major dislike of racial mixing and interracial marriages.

The Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (GNP; Purified National Party) criticised the United Party (UP) of Hertzog and Smuts for its laissez-faire approach towards mixed marriage. The GNP attacked the UP's unwillingness to legislate against mixed marriage, warning that their policy would lead inevitably to widespread miscegenation. The GNP

used these racial slogans as fuel to ensure victory in the ensuing years, gaining votes from white farmers who supported the prohibition of miscegenation. Those Malanites (followers of DF Malan) who were in opposition to some aspects of Hertzog's policies (Devenport, 1966) held that white purity would be safe only if indigenous groups were contained in separate communities and all groups were encouraged to foster national pride and mutual respect. The Malanites' propaganda ensured victory for his party, the GNP, in the 1948 elections. This showed that there was a vast majority of support from the whites for apartheid in South Africa and also for controlling miscegenation (Van den Berghe, 1960).

This article begins with a brief historical background to the profiles of black and white citizens in South Africa, in particular in Umtata (now Mthatha) in the Eastern Cape, prior to the 1950s. Smaller towns often provided the only urban experience that many black South Africans had. The interaction of whites and blacks, colonisers and colonised, was typified in the small-town setting of Umtata in the Transkei region of what was previously the Cape Colony. Umtata occupied a position halfway between the major urban-industrial centres and the rural agricultural hinterland of the Transkei. It was a mixture of rural and urban elements, combining attempts by local authorities to emulate the segregation of the different racial groups on a national scale successfully. However, residential segregation failed for several reasons in Umtata – it was positioned in a black rural area. Other reasons involved the presence of a politically sophisticated black middle class and divisions within the white community. The land-owning black middle class openly contested government housing measures and resisted residential segregation, finally forcing the central government to declare that Umtata, unlike other municipalities in South Africa, was a black urban area. This failure of racial segregation in Umtata can be seen as a metaphor for the subsequent breakdown of the apartheid system in greater South Africa (Redding, 1987).

Residential settings in Umtata were different from those of other residential areas in South Africa. This was because of the small number of whites and the large number of black people. Racial mixing was also common because of residential mixing. Umtata's origins as a town helped to create this paradox. Whites were invited by two local chiefs (Ngangelizwe and Nqwiliso) to settle in the area in the 1860s to act as buffers between the Thembu and the Mpondo chiefdoms (Redding, 1987). With the annexation of the area into the Cape Colony, the white government claimed ownership and sold plots of urban land to all racial groups, including a fair number of Africans and Coloured people working either as semi-independent tenants or as employees, servants or artisans (Cape Archives Depot, 1880 – 1/UTA)2/1/1/2). During the period of transition to a colonial town (1878–1902), most

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black servants usually lived on their employer's premises, while others rented lodgings in town. Still others slept illicitly on the premises of the employers of relatives or friends (Criminal Case 265, 29 June 1893). With this scattering of the black population throughout the town, there was actually no de facto segregation.

Throughout the 1930s and the 1940s, most domestic servants in Umtata were women, the exceptions being gardeners, herdsmen and cooks in the three major (white-owned) hotels. Most manual labourers and government or office clerks were black men. This urban division of labour meant that African women were consistently relegated to the lowest-paying jobs, while men were split into two groups: manual labourers who also received low wages and clerks and skilled workers (including cooks) who received relatively high wages and had much greater job security. Given the lack of adequate records, though, it is impossible to give a definite demographic profile of Umtata's black population (Redding, 1987). The stronghold of the black middle class politically and socially ensured that segregation was not fully implemented in Umtata. Socially, racial mixing made it possible for miscegenation to occur in Umtata because the races in the areas they lived in were not fully segregated.

The social classes of Umtata were not segregated, as mentioned above. However, the lower class was dependent on the upper class, whether it was the black elite or the white elite group. The social structure of Umtata greatly influenced interracial sexual relationships. The rich interacted with the poor by offering them jobs as gardeners and cleaners. The social dynamics also show that arising from the employer-and-employee relationships there were sexual relationships, including interracial sexual relationships. These were often a case of the employers taking advantage of their employees or sometimes there was an agreement between the two parties or other reasons for such relationships. Either way, the relationships were outlawed by the government during the segregationist period in South Africa. Because Umtata was not fully segregated, these relationships transpired, and the case that was used in this research is a clear example of one. Van Voster was a white male who was engaging in sexual relations with an African female who was his maid.

The social hierarchy and racial mixing made miscegenation in Umtata possible as classes and racial groups interlinked socially and shared land and property. The literature corresponds to the research in question, which seeks to fill a gap through an analytical approach to the consequences of participating in mixed sexual relationships. The written works may be a baseline for this research, but there is more to be shared regarding the sexual nature of the people living in Umtata during the segregationist apartheid era. Therefore, this research has

taken a step towards researching and understanding the consequences of interracial sexual relations.

Some works have been written on the Immorality Act and a few will be mentioned in the research literature review. These works include Sean Redding's *South African blacks in a small town setting: The ironies of control in Umtata, 1878–1955*. In this study, Redding writes about the creation of the town of Umtata and its class hierarchy. He also adds how plans to impose racial segregation there did not work because the blacks were in the middle class and the auctioning of land to achieve racial separation was not possible.

In her research, *Interracial intimate relationships in post-apartheid South Africa* (Master of Arts thesis, 2007), Claire Lisa Jaynes sought to identify and explore the discourses on interracial sexual relationships and discourses on racism in post-apartheid South Africa, looking in particular at the last amendment of the Immorality Act. She produced the findings of the research through interviews and group discussions.

Emily Mapula Mojapelo-Batka in her book, *Interracial couples within the South African context: Experiences, perceptions and challenges*, explores the experiences and challenges that face interracial couples living in South Africa. The research findings were derived from interviews with interracial couples in order to gain a firsthand view of their challenges and experiences.

In *The madonna of Excelsior*, the writer, Zakes Mda, writes about the notorious 1971 case in which 19 citizens of Excelsior in the Free State were charged with breaking apartheid's Immorality Act. In this book, the writer tells a fictionalised story about a family, how they came to terms with the repercussions of the Act and how they found solutions that enabled them to survive in surprising ways. These citizens led different lifestyles, but all faced being prosecuted by the Immorality Act. The book shares similarities with this research in that people of different racial groups faced prosecution in terms of the Act.

There are also different cases which are unique in comparison to the case on which this research is based. A few can be mentioned, such as that of *R v H & Another*, in which two white males and three Coloured females were caught contravening the Act and were charged with breaking the law. The appeal of the two white males was dismissed due to the evidence against them being strong (*R v H & Another*, 1959). Another case to be mentioned would be that of *R v E & Another*, where a white male was charged with breaking the Immorality Act by attempting to have sexual intercourse with a Coloured female. This case arose in the town of Stellenbosch, near Cape Town. The verdict was this:

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> The magistrate imposed a sentence of four months on accused No 1, which was suspended for two years on suitable conditions, and treated accused No 2 as a juvenile, placing her in the care of her father (*R v E & Another*, 1960).

Comparing this case with the cases above, this research is unique because it involved an African woman testifying to receive a shorter sentence and the accused white male paying damages to evade the law. The uniqueness of such a case made for an interesting analysis and a suitable source to use for this research.

These are different works in the literature which provide evidence there has been some research that has been written about on this topic of the Immorality Act (Bamford, 1960). The chosen case is based on a specific study area. The analysis also outlines the consequences that came with defying the Act. The detailed analysis of this single case will also show the views of other participants in the case in bringing new information in this study.

This study will contribute new information to the field of historical research. This information will be a critical analysis of the people involved in testifying in the case and involved about contradicting the Act. The works mentioned above act as a basis for this research in the sense that there are similarities in the writings.

3. Historical context: Immorality Act 5 of 1927

The Immorality Act was one of several pieces of legislation designed to enforce racial segregation in South Africa. Initially enacted to criminalise relationships between white and black individuals, the law was later expanded under the 1950 Immorality Amendment Act to include all non-white groups. The objective was to maintain racial boundaries and prevent the social integration that could challenge white supremacy (Posel, 2001).

The origins of racial segregation laws in South Africa can be traced back to colonial rule, where early European settlers sought to establish racial hierarchies that privileged white citizens. The Immorality Act of 1927 was a continuation of these efforts, as it sought to legislate morality and social interaction along racial lines. This was in response to growing anxieties among white South Africans, particularly Afrikaners, who feared that interracial relationships would undermine racial purity and challenge the power structures that sustained white dominance.

The South African government justified the Immorality Act by appealing to concerns about moral and social stability. White political leaders argued that interracial relationships would lead to social disorder and the dilution of the European heritage of the descendants of the

settlers. The Act was heavily influenced by the eugenics movements of the early 20th century, which promoted racial segregation as a means of preserving the so-called superiority of the white race (Dubow, 2014).

The enforcement of the Act was rigorous, with law-enforcement agencies actively monitoring and prosecuting suspected violators. The state used informants, police raids and surveillance to identify and charge individuals engaged in interracial relationships. Many cases resulted in lengthy prison sentences, public humiliation and social ostracisation. The law disproportionately targeted black women, who often bore the greatest social and economic consequences, including loss of employment and community exclusion.

The Immorality Act of 1927 laid the foundation for further racial segregation laws, including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Group Areas Act of 1950. These laws reinforced apartheid's systematic racial separation by ensuring that social, economic and personal interactions remained strictly within racial categories. Despite the legal and social pressures, though, many interracial relationships persisted, highlighting acts of resistance against apartheid's oppressive policies.

4. Case study: Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Nomatiti

The case of Olaf Abraham Voster is emblematic of the racial and legal tensions surrounding interracial relationships. As a white farmer, Voster's involvement with Nomathemba Nomatiti in 1952 sparked outrage among both Afrikaner and British white communities. His prosecution under the Immorality Act highlighted the state's commitment to enforcing racial boundaries, even in rural settings where interracial interactions were more frequent owing to close employment relationships (Giliomee, 2019).

Court records and contemporary newspaper accounts suggest that Voster's case was used as an example to deter other white South Africans from engaging in interracial relationships. The legal arguments presented against him relied on moral panic and the supposed threat that interracial unions posed to the social order. Nomatiti, like many black women in similar cases, faced severe social repercussions, including ostracisation and economic hardship.

4.1 Legal and social ramifications

The enforcement of the Immorality Act had far-reaching consequences for those accused. White men often faced legal penalties, but black women bore the brunt of social stigmatisation. The racialised gender dynamics of these cases reveal how apartheid laws had a

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disproportionate impact on black communities while reinforcing white patriarchal control (Dubow, 2014).

Public discourse about such cases played a critical role in shaping societal attitudes towards race and sexuality. White nationalist propaganda framed interracial relationships as a violation of South African values, further entrenching racial divisions. Meanwhile, resistance movements, including the African National Congress (ANC) and radical activists, criticised the Immorality Act as a tool of racial oppression (Saul & Bond, 2020).

5. Research methodology

This research is based on a qualitative single-case analysis using an instrumental case study method. The instrumental case study is used to provide a better understanding of a social issue through studying a specific case. It is an appropriate method to use for this type of historical research because it provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked by other methods. The case study method is an approach to studying a social phenomenon through a thorough analysis of an individual subject: a person, group, episode, process, community, society or any other unit of social life. All the data relevant to this specific case were gathered and organised to make meaning out of them. This approach rests on the assumption that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type so that, through intensive analysis, generalisations may be made that will apply to other cases of the same type (Ranjit, 2005). In this particular instance a specific type of evidence was used to analyse the findings of the research thematically. Accordingly, two main themes have been identified, which are elaborated on in the next section: consequences of the Immorality Act and the Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Nomatiti court proceedings.

6. Findings

6.1 Theme 1: Consequences of the Immorality Act

This section is an analysis of the court testimonies to find out whether the judge delivered the correct verdict. Voster was faced with major decisions in order to be cleared of his charges, which could have led to his five-year imprisonment. As Voster was a white man in apartheid South Africa, he was at an advantage as the government and the legislation favoured white citizens more than black citizens. The case analysis also brings to light how judgments were made considering a person's background and their skin colour or race. Were the prosecutions fair to all races of South Africa or was there a preference

for a specific race to receive a lighter sentence? This will be done by looking at the credibility of the evidence presented in court and by analysing the court testimonies of those questioned in court, including the accused, and expressing a view on the credibility of the evidence. Because Nomatiti had sexual relations with the accused, Voster, she was one of the key people to be questioned because she was directly involved in the case. She was employed as a maid in Voster's compound and she later became a 'lover' of the accused. She agreed to testify in court since her sentence of four months was going to be dropped if she co-operated. This showed that more evidence was needed in order to prosecute Voster.

In one of her testimonies she stated: 'The intimacy took place in the house and sometimes outside' (CMT, 1952). In this statement, she clearly showed that she and the accused broke the law by defying the Immorality Act. She also stated that 'I also used to have intercourse with the accused when Mrs Voster was on the farm' (CMT, 1952). And this statement clearly showed that this was a love affair, since Nomatiti was a maid and both parties were in agreement about having sexual activities together. She stated

> I have no hard feelings against van Voster but I would not have intercourse with him again. I would not do so because I'm told it is not allowed otherwise, I would have intercourse, with him again (CMT, 1952).

These words clearly show that she had no idea that she was breaking the law for having sexual relations with the accused. Her statement contradicted the evidence of the accused. Her agreeing to having had sexual relations with the accused placed on record provided evidence for the case. Admitting that her baby was the child of the accused also added evidence to the case.

Furthermore, Nomatiti's father had interactions with the accused by making him pay damages. Her father stated: 'He admitted that he had rendered her pregnant' (CMT, 1952). This statement shows that Voster willingly admitted to making her pregnant and this was binding evidence in the case of the accused. Her father also stated that the accused paid damages for her pregnancy. The damages were another source of evidence confirming Voster's culpability:

> I never reported this matter to the police at all. I don't know who did so. I am interested to know who did report it to them. All I was concern [sic] about was my daughter (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, her father also stated that he did not go to the hostile police because he did not want to get his daughter and the accused into trouble. In this statement, he shows that he wanted Voster to pay the customary price for the damages and get on with his life.

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This also shows that Voster paid the damages in order to avoid their actual commitment. Her father gave testimony which corroborated that of the other witnesses. These testimonies were an addition to the key evidence that strengthened the case against Voster.

Nomatiti's mother was present when the accused came to her home to report her situation. Her mother stated in evidence:

> I came to hear of her pregnancy through the accused. He came to my kraal. The accused came to my kraal and he reported my daughter's condition (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, her mother clearly proves that the accused informed the family of her pregnancy. Her mother also corroborates the statement that her husband made when he said that the accused reported the matter to them. This was another witness confirming that the accused visited the home. She also confirmed that the accused did pay damages. It placed more weight on the plaintiff's testimony.

Nomatiti's brother was also called to the stand as a witness. He was present when Voster visited their home to report his sister's pregnancy. This testament provides further evidence that he was the third party involved in the accused's confession about impregnating Nomatiti. He was also witness to the damages and the maintenance price, which made it more difficult for the accused to deny his crime. The evidence presented by Nomatiti was hard evidence to overlook or for the accused to deny. The family might have testified because they had no choice. They may also have done so to ensure that Nomatiti learned a lesson never to get involved in such a relationship with the accused, having suffered the consequences of defying the Act.

Sergeant Van der Merwe stated in one of his testimonies:

> On 12/07/1952 I went to Orange Grove farm where Van Voster lives. I went there in connection with this case. I introduced myself to the accused. I informed him that I had a search warrant to search his house (CMT, 1952).

This statement proved that the law-enforcement officer went to Van Voster's house to check for evidence that would later implicate him in the case. The evidence they looked for was a cheque of £50 which was given to an African, John Nomatiti, by Van Voster. The search for evidence proved successful. As Sergeant Van der Merwe stated:

> I saw him stop at where I afterwards was certain was counterpart no 895370 dated 21/09/1951 made payable to cash for 50 pounds and as it appeared to be that he wanted to tear out this counterpart I suddenly seized it from him (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, the main evidence of the case was seized from Van Voster; therefore the allegations behind the detective's investigation

were validated and concrete. Detective Van der Merwe had a clear case with evidence in his hand. Van Voster was clearly in trouble when the detectives found the evidence in his house and with his agreeing to have signed and made out the cheque to John Nomatiti.

Detective Wiggil, in his court testimony, confirmed all the evidence and agreed with all that he and Van der Merwe had done to crack the case. Detective Wiggil confirmed that they went to see Nomatiti to question her about the case. The detective stated in his testimony:

> I spoke to the girl Nomathemba. I asked her if she had a baby. She denied that she had a baby. I spoke to her on 25/05/1952. She said she had no baby and I then spoke to her father. Neither she nor her father had made a report against Van Voster to me (CMT, 1952).

The statements confirmed a lot from previous testimonies such as that of Nomatiti and her father that they had said nothing to the police that implicated Van Voster in the matter. The detective also confirmed that he and Van der Merwe had seized the evidence from Van Voster. The amount of evidence against the accused was therefore enough to prosecute him.

The testimony of Van Voster clearly indicated that he was trying to evade the law. He stated:

> when she told me that she was pregnant she did not accuse me for [sic] the pregnancy. I have never been to her father's house to tell him that his daughter was pregnant and to accept the responsibility for her pregnancy (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, Van Voster tried to defend himself against all the testimonies given and recorded. In this he tried to show his innocence and he claimed that he was wrongly accused of the pregnancy. Van Voster goes on to say:

> He was kind of blackmailing me saying that he will report me to the superiors (The chief and other elders of the community) and police (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, Van Voster tried to indicate that he was forced to pay the damages for Nomatiti's pregnancy. Van Voster goes on to say he was an upstanding and respected man and for this reason he wanted to hide the scandal. Van Voster saw it better to pay the damages so he could save his reputation and rid himself of the shame he had accumulated as a result of the 'crime'. In order to save himself and his reputation, Van Voster made this statement:

> I deny that this child is mine, I also deny that I am guilty. I was told that the maid should be my wife (CMT, 1952).

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In this statement, Van Voster tried to counteract the testimonies made earlier by Nomatiti and her family. However, this statement and Van Voster's own testimony were not convincing enough to free him of his charges.

First, the child Nomatiti gave birth to was not an African child; it was a mixed-race child. Second, Van Voster admitted paying the damages and those damages cost him a large amount. Third, Van Voster as a European male, could have just reported the matter to the police and it would have been sorted out without his paying such a large amount of damages if he was really innocent. As a government official, Van Voster knew the law and this meant that he was hiding something (such as admitting to paying damages of the pregnancy), meaning that he knew he was guilty of something. The verdict that the magistrate gave was correct since Van Voster had failed to convince the court that he was innocent. The other evidence presented in court was far superior to Van Voster's testimony because there were a lot of witnesses; moreover, the cheque book played a major part in the presentation of the incriminating evidence. The judgment handed down by the judge was 'guilty with a penalty of four months in prison' – a light sentence. The Act stated that if a male has illicit carnal intercourse with the opposite race, the person found guilty would be sentenced to a penalty not exceeding five years with hard labour. In this case, Van Voster was supposed to have received the full punishment as stipulated in the Act.

Van Voster was found guilty in terms of section 1 of the Act and was supposed to get a harsher sentence such as five-year imprisonment. The sentence should have been far more than four months, but the accused was a government official and a white man. These should have been advantageous to the accused; yet, as a government official, that proved to be his saving grace, even though he should have known he was breaking the law. As a white government official, as the accused, he should have been able to cleared himself of such accusations. He denied the accusations because of the power he had as a white man and a government official. In reality, though, the full five years would have been a proper sentence for him.

6.2 Theme 2: Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Nomatiti court proceedings

There were many issues in this case that were contested. For instance, Van Voster's hiding the fact that he had paid the damages for Nomatiti's pregnancy. Then there is the issue of a white man having sexual relations with an African, which was forbidden by law. Third, Van Voster went about trying to conceal his wrongdoings by paying the damages and for the maintenance of the child. Fourth was the question of how the sergeants had got to know about

Van Voster's case. Fifth, the choice of people who were put on the stand for questioning in his case. Sixth, how Van Voster tried to protect himself from going to jail and, seventh, the outcomes of the case for those who were put on the stand, including Van Voster.

This section uncovers and examines the consequences of the Act on Van Voster's livelihood. Olaf Abraham van Voster faced consequences such as going to jail for the maximum period of five years and losing his family. And also losing his farm in Orange Grove if he was to be jailed for a long time, losing his reputation in the community in Orange Grove and, finally, whether or not Van Voster could create a new life with Nomathemba after his release. At that time, a person's treatment during trial was dictated by their 'race', a term which at the time described a person's appearance, mannerisms and assumed descent similarly to the subsequent 'colour classifications' recognised during the apartheid era of South African history. Moreover, race was decided upon by government officials, not predetermined by the true ethnicity of an individual, including the accused.

The accused Van Voster faced section 1 of the Act, which was the penalty imposed on a man who had had illicit carnal sex with a female of the opposite race. The Act stated that the person found guilty would be liable to serve a jail sentence not exceeding five years. Van Voster had to face such a consequence: he was faced with no alternative but to deal with the consequences of his crime. Van Voster stated during the case that 'my work was suffering' (CMT, 1952). This statement alludes to one of the consequences he faced because his work was suffering as a result of this case alone, even before he was to serve his sentence. As a farmer, he had black customers who bought his produce and for this reason his farming business was suffering as a result of his actions. Sleeping with a black woman got Van Voster into trouble. As a result, Van Voster's work suffered. The Act was a powerful strategy the government used to ensure the eradication of miscegenation in South Africa: people who broke the law had to face the consequences of their wrongdoing, and in this case Van Voster certainly had to face the consequences, which could take various forms.

Shame was one of the consequences Van Voster had to face. In one of his statements he said:

> I had to calm the scandal but decided to pay this so as to shut the people [sic] saying bad things about me (CMT, 1952).

In this statement, Van Voster was admitting that the scandal had humiliated him. This led him to take drastic measures to ward off the scandal. The shame might have had a negative effect on him personally and disfigured him when it came to his contribution to the community and family. Shame is caused by awareness of the exposure of circumstances of unworthiness or of improper or indecent conduct.

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In this instance, Van Voster was ashamed of what he had done. Besides himself, he feared that the scandal would shame his family and other affected individuals. At one point he stated:

> I never told my wife that I paid for damages (CMT, 1952).

First, Van Voster might have wanted to protect his family and wife from the scandal he had created. Second, he might have wanted to ensure that his family was protected by his being around and not going to jail. His responsibilities as a family man would be left unattended to if he went to jail for a long time. The Act had a catastrophic effect on those who broke the law and behaved in ways in which the apartheid government was trying to prevent.

Van Voster was an upstanding citizen both in his community and in Umtata at large. He was a farmer and a government official. In the light of this he stated:

> I had thought that my family and my life as a whole would change severely and that I will have a criminal record (CMT, 1952).

He also feared that his reputation as a government official would be tarnished. This meant that his job as a government official was in jeopardy. In addition, he feared getting a criminal record as it would tarnish his reputation as a government official. Therefore, he decided to pay the damages, thinking that paying them would prevent him from going to jail and enable him to attend to his responsibilities freely.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

This study used a case that was heard in Umtata in 1952 to explore the operation and consequences of the Immorality Act. The focus was on the consequences of contraventions of the Act by analysing the testimonies presented in court. Beginning with a brief historical overview of the Act, the article proceeded to detail the court testimonies of the plaintiff and the defendant, together with those of several witnesses. It finds that the Act was one of the most strategic plans of the segregationist South African government to exert control over its citizens. The result was to instil fear in the citizens – especially those who engaged in illicit conduct.

The case of Olaf Abraham Voster serves as a critical historical example of the ways in which apartheid-era laws were used to police racial boundaries and enforce white supremacy. By criminalising interracial relationships, the state sought to maintain control over the social fabric of South Africa. However, these laws also exposed the contradictions and anxieties in the apartheid regime. While interracial relationships were officially condemned, they continued to occur,

challenging the legitimacy of racial segregation. This study contributes to a broader understanding of apartheid's impact on personal freedoms and racial identities.

The study also recommends that resistance strategies should be employed by individuals and communities against such oppressive laws.

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