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### ***This Thing Called the Future: Intergenerationality and HIV and AIDS***

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#### **Abstract**

In this paper I explore the idea of intergenerationality and examine some ways in which the critical reading of a literary artefact may contribute to our understanding of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. By examining, through a literary text, the lived experience of an adolescent, the text can become a site of research (Smith, 2000) and expose some of the power imbalances that occur in intergenerational relations. Specifically, I explore the concept of inter-relations as a way to understand the blending of adult and child relations by using Stephanie Powers' 2011 young adult novel, *This Thing Called the Future*. Her novel is infused with three subthemes that intersect within the context of HIV and AIDS: the significance of youth as knowledge producers; the possibility of social change; and the importance of agency.

**Keywords:** HIV and AIDS; Intergenerationality; Literary Method; Social Change; Youth.

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#### **Introduction**

In this paper, I examine the issue of HIV and AIDS in the everyday context of adult and child relations. In particular I explore how reading a novel, as an arts-based research method, may deepen our understanding of HIV and AIDS (see Moletsane, Mitchell, Smith & Chisholm, 2008). I do this through an analysis of Stephanie Powers' young adult novel *This Thing Called the Future* which offers examples of intergenerationality that allow for the study of both positive and negative relationships between adults and young people.

*This Thing Called the Future* depicts the life of 14 year-old Khosi who grows up in poverty in South Africa at a time of transition between the old spiritual ways of healers and the newer contemporary world of science and medicine. Khosi's mother, a teacher, lives in the city during the week in order to support her two daughters, Khosi and Zi, while Khosi's 'Gogo' (grandmother) looks after the girls in the country. Khosi struggles to respect her elders, particularly her grandmother, and to honor her mother who has worked hard to give Khosi the opportunity to make different choices in her own future. Powers exposes intergenerational conflicts through her portrayal of Khosi's life and her trajectory towards a future. The

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theme of 'having a future' is reiterated in the novel through Khosi's daily struggles and her journey to the realization that HIV and AIDS do indeed play a role in her life. Her battles are linked to both urban and rural contexts, and are also connected to the constant tugs of the past ways of life and choices for a young girl's future. They are interpreted through the lenses of three generations: that of the Gogo, of Khosi's mother, and of Khosi and her little sister.

The novel offers an illuminating reading of intergenerationality and, using a method similar to that which Ann Smith (2000) used in her reading of *Nervous Conditions*, (Dangarembga, 1988) helps the reader understand the experiences of Khosi and her adolescent journey in the context of living with HIV and AIDS. Literary method, in these cases, adapts the fictional representations of lived experience to point to possibilities of social change. I argue, in similar stance to Smith, that the young adolescents in this work of fiction are not victims; they are living within their life experiences. They may live in frameworks of poverty but are not telling a narrative of desperation; their narratives tell their life experiences within a male dominant society in South Africa. The underlying tone of Smith's review is one of empowerment and I reflect this tone of empowerment and develop a literary space into a site of research that envelops the life experiences of Khosi in her journey through adolescence.

In the first section I develop a conceptual framework that draws on two key areas: intergenerationality, and the idea of youth as knowledge producers. In the next section I build a pathway to understanding my process of engaging Powers' narrative framework as a tool to amplify issues associated with HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa—specifically in youth and family situations ending with possible social change. The final section points to the ways in which intergenerationality can be further explored in real life and not just in fiction through participatory research. I argue that literary method can help to create dialogues about everyday lived experiences in connection with HIV and AIDS.

## Conceptual Framework

### What is This Thing Called Intergenerationality?

Within the context of HIV and AIDS, I am interested in the notion that intergenerationality<sup>1</sup> is part of a complex space of inter and intra-generational interactions. I connect adult and youth sexuality due to cultural transitions and an uncertain future, and create a space for understanding youth as knowledge producers through their everyday lived experiences. Lack of knowledge and information about HIV and AIDS and disbelief in scientific methods have helped perpetuate myths that are difficult to change—for example, sleep with a virgin and HIV and AIDS will be cured—making cultural transitions more complex (Mitchell, Strong-Wilson, Pithouse & Allnut, 2011).

Youth are viewed as being “a non-sexual subject or being” (Allen, 2007, p. 575) when, in fact, a male dominant society pulls them into adult roles within the context of HIV and AIDS. Allen believes that knowledge is power and that encouragement through the school system, of safer sexual education practice, would help build a better sexual identity for young people—yet school environments are often influenced by moral overtones that can prevent useful information from being shared in a user friendly way; for example, giving sexual education classes from a biological viewpoint but not including the social aspects of human sexuality. She argues that youth are taught a split agenda of a non-sexual identity together with given information for a prevention-scenario which makes their lives a duality of information and a game of roulette as far as prevention or the development of sexual identity are concerned—because the school will give out the information but cannot condone a sexual being as a youth in school. There are strong elements of control of children in every school system; within the context of HIV and AIDS misinformation could be interpreted as a serious issue.

High risk behavior is often a signal that there is a lack of information or awareness, and Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala (2002) explores the context of high-risk sexuality by building an awareness of the sexual culture of young adolescents—it is not enough to create awareness through sex education, it is vital to understand the context of risky behavior. Leclerc-Madlala, who researches the social aspects of HIV and AIDS, interprets the high-risk game that sugar daddies engage in with younger women as a lack of knowledge on the part of young women about protecting themselves against HIV. She is concerned about men thinking that condom use is optional because girls and very young women are seen to be ‘clean’ because they have had fewer partners, and younger women for their part believe that older men are safe sex partners.<sup>2</sup>

In order to think critically about intergenerationality Pain (2010) turns the lens towards a relational perspective, and in reading Power’s novel it becomes evident that this relational perspective pulls the intergenerational lens in many directions. One example that Powers writes about is the crocodile; a character she uses to show the constant strong desire of the male who sees the youth as sexual conquest—or forcibly appropriates their sexuality.

### **Youth as Knowledge Producers**

In using the term ‘youth as knowledge producers’ I am drawing on the work of Lankshear and Knobel (2003) which refers to the ways that young people can become resources to each other through cultural production. Evans and Davies (2011) write about the relationships that individuals experience within their everyday lives:

*individuals and populations are positioned ‘in relation’ to knowledge, discourse, and culture, but also relations within them (p. 264, author’s emphases)*

Youth, and young women are positioned in relation to their knowledge construction—yet discourse and culture are part of the cultural factors that can mask or hide children’s voices (Warshak as cited in Mannion, 2007, emphases in original). Youth as knowledge producers is evident in Powers’ narrative and she uses Khosi’s life experiences to introduce the audience to multiple themes that can be connected to living in the context of HIV and AIDS. The use of literary method in this case helps uncover cultural issues that young women experience in an everyday life context. A critical reading of Khosi’s adolescent journey exposes intergenerationality as a cultural issue that may be perpetuating the spread of HIV and AIDS. The novel acts as a tool to help youth understand and explain, through participatory and literary methodologies, that they are aware of the power imbalances in their everyday lives.

### **Intergenerationality in This Thing Called the Future**

In this section I apply the concept of intergenerationality to demonstrate how it can be used as a framework in relation to HIV and AIDS. Intergenerationality is a social perspective that examines HIV and AIDS through a relational perspective (Pain, 2010) and to understand this perspective it is important to understand a bit more about how HIV and AIDS prevention are taught. Often the literature about the prevention of HIV and AIDS is economics based, or about programs of intervention which are medicalized—prevention with the focus on what not to do; a prescriptive viewpoint—and there is little thought given to the social impact aspect of HIV and AIDS (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). The political reasons for this focus on the economy is largely due to the investment of international partners who will fund programs for the distribution of literature about HIV and AIDS—yet this information is mechanical and lacks a human face, a social posture.

Looking ahead to the future and to help young people and seniors bridge the gaps of knowledge Moletsane et al. (2008) have examined issues that are explored in a relational sense through participatory research using photovoice (taking pictures and interpreting them) as well as other arts-based methods. Smith (2000) creates a literary space as a site of research through literary method that is readily available to enhance the representations of fictional lived experience as a place of possible social change. Intergenerationality encompasses cultural traditions, men with multiple sex partners having unprotected sex, and men continuing to harass young girls; and the transitions in society between contemporary and traditional health models all deepen the complex issues associated with HIV and AIDS. Young girls and senior women appear to be the people who balance the realities of these everyday issues within the context of HIV and AIDS.

Youth is a time of experimentation; it is also a time of identity construction. HIV and AIDS is no longer a death sentence and Powers gives voice to an open discussion between Khosi and her friend Thandi on the way home from school. The girls have learned that if you take medication you will not die—but that not everyone responds to the medication either. This not knowing what to believe leaves the two young girls doubting their own identity construction and brings out a number of questions that young girls think about on their way to becoming young women—if they dare think about having a future. According to Mannion (2007), “spaces for children’s lives are co-constructed by the actions of key adults.....” (p. 417). Children are not passive receivers of all adult interactions, life happens around Khosi, Thandi, and Zi and they are subjected to adult interactions—some less pleasant than others. Because of many connotations of slipperiness, slyness, and tenacity, Powers refers to a drunk man in the quote below as a crocodile. The man is a recurring character in the narrative that Khosi has to deal with on many occasions and the crocodile metaphor definitely conjures images of fear:

*The drunk man starts waiting for me (Khosi) at the khumbi (taxi) stop when Zi and I come home from school. He doesn’t say anything to me—he just smiles with his big rotten teeth and follows us home. (p. 70, Powers’ emphases)*

After a few episodes of the drunk man following Khosi and Thandi, Thandi shows her agency by throwing rocks—yet this doesn’t deter him—the drunk continues to follow the girls. One day the conversation turns to Khosi and Thandi says, “you should never walk anywhere alone” (p. 70). This refers to the fear young girls have to deal with because of this intergenerational dominance factor—the girls are socialized to take on the adult responsibility.

Mitchell (2009) in an essay on schools and toilets refers to fearfulness in association with a bogeyman known as the tokoloshe. Powers also writes about the tokoloshe and shows the representation of this childhood icon of fear. In Mitchell’s work the tokoloshe, known as Pinky, Pinky, an urban legend in South Africa, is seen only by young girls. As the South African artist Penny Siopis notes in her Artist’s Statement on a series of visual representations, Pinky, Pinky:

*embodies the fears and anxieties that girls face as their bodies develop and their social standing changes. He can also be seen as a figure that has grown out of the neurosis that can develop in a society that experiences such change and tension as is found in South Africa. It is also a society in which rape and the abuse of women and children is extremely high. (Nuttall, 2002 in Mitchell, 2009, pp. 62-63)*

Pinky, Pinky lives around the toilets where young girls are often raped in South Africa and Mitchell reminds the audience that there is a public (toilets at schools without doors or privacy) and a private (bodily functions) component of examining the fears of young girls in South Africa. She uses drawings and photos

to explore “the powerful images of toilets that young people produced in relation to 'safe' and 'unsafe' spaces in and around their schools” (p. 64). These visual forms of participatory research have helped school officials understand a part of young girls' everyday lives that had gone unnoticed until the photovoice workshop around safety was examined by students and school teachers.

While Mitchell uses images to embody the issues of young girls in South Africa, Powers uses narrative which she builds through Khosi's everyday interactions with her family and friends. Thandi is Khosi's best friend and has a different outlook on life:

*Thandi's jewelry-store sugar daddy disappears quickly, a week or two later. And almost as quickly, she finds a new boyfriend. . . . “His name is Honest, he drives a khumbi, (taxi) he says sometimes he can take the khumbi out after work and pick me up. I can sneak out and we'll go dancing.” She says this all in a rush. “He gave me this”—she holds up her wrist to show off the slender black-and-silver-beaded bracelet on her wrist—“and this”—she tilts her ears to show off the red, gold, and green beaded earrings dangling from her earlobes—“and those are just the first of many gifts, Khosi!” (p. 61, author's emphasis)*

Thandi is not in a position to buy jewelry and there are many willing men, often referred to as sugar daddies, who will trade sexual favors. Intergenerationality is present in the way in which the cultural practices of a male dominant society are part of the everyday life of young women in South Africa. A young adult reading this novel for school or for pleasure can see similarities and/or differences in relation to their own lives. There are many such connections to everyday life issues for young adults in this narrative about Khosi's life.

Young adults' lived experiences with HIV and AIDS can help explain how young women relate to cultural expectations. Poverty creates vulnerability in youth and cultural expectations surrounding sexual education have built a barrier of silence (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). Intergenerational issues surrounding this cultural barrier of silence are perpetuated by non-communication about sexuality and one of these issues is the sugar daddy who is attractive to school girls, and the lack of sexual education for these youth leads to the spread of HIV and AIDS (HIV & AIDS Community of Practice, 2011, p. 21). Intergenerational issues of power are at the base of the context of the sugar daddy.

Fear about the possibility of contracting HIV and AIDS is also expressed in the narrative. A young woman who normally attends church does not appear for a while and when she comes back she is thinner than before. Thandi and Khosi witness how she is treated by the other women in the congregation when during ‘the peace’ (a time of fellowship, hand shaking and hugging within the congregation) members of the congregation do not want to touch this woman. The fear is of catching AIDS because, as much as information is given, there is often misinformation and lack of knowledge to cope with as well. Young women's identities are being altered due to the fear, and not knowing, about HIV and AIDS.

Khosi's mother gets infected with HIV and she (the mother) lives in shock and denial. She stays in the city for an extended period of time and when she returns her ill health is apparent; leaving questions in the minds of her family. Here Khosi wonders about her mother's health:

*I'm thinking of Mama. All the weight she's lost. Could she be HIV positive? It's not possible. Unless. . . unless Thandi's right, and Baba does have other girlfriends on the side. It could happen. It's very common for Zulu men to have more than one girlfriend. Just like in the old days, they married more than one wife if they could afford it. I feel a sudden spurt of anger at Baba. Then I try to calm it. After all, I know nothing. There are other reasons Mama could have lost weight, hey? But I can't think of any. (p. 88, author's emphases)*

Khosi's mother has a difficult time accepting that her husband could have infected her with HIV and this is part of her denial. This part of cultural traditions (men having multiple sex partners) has not disappeared and can be viewed as part of the complex issue of intergenerationality. There is a scene on Zi's birthday, when the girls and their mother go to Durban to visit Baba, in which a young woman comes to the house (the mother-in-law's house) and Baba goes outside and has an exchange with her. This confirms Khosi's mother's fears about her HIV and eventually leads to a heated conversation with Baba. This interchange with the young woman confirms Khosi's mother's worst fear of the possibility of a girlfriend (another partner) for her partner.

Media discourse is present in young people's lives in South Africa; those warnings that appear on billboards and advertisements are everywhere—one is significant on the way home from school for Khosi and Zi:

*Zi interrupts my thoughts, poking me in the side. "Look, Khosi, a new advertisement!" she shouts, pointing at a billboard with a cartoon drawing of a man and woman together, embracing on a blue sofa. Large block letters announce: "A man can get AIDS by having sex with an infected woman." (p. 72)*

This second billboard message clearly places the blame of AIDS on "an infected woman" and Zi and Khosi are witnesses to this language of blame on their way home from school. This is one example of the blame language and of responsibility being placed on women that is part of the dominant discourse that Powers explores with Khosi's narrative.

As Evans and Davies (2011) have discussed, discourse is everywhere—billboards have taken up prominent space in people's everyday world and give a dominant message of blame talk towards women. Zi and Khosi also experience negative blame talk in association with the billboard advertisements that are placed in plain sight. This represents a negative discourse that is faced by young women in their daily lives. Cultural factors in this instance mask the male domination factor in the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Intergenerationality reveals the power of cultural beliefs and the social aspect and positions that occur in the everyday context of living with HIV and AIDS. Young girls are subject to relations of power that circulate around them in their daily lives. By examining the framework that Powers uses in writing this narrative the audience can see the male domination and associated factors, such as the discourse in the media that blames women for the spread of HIV and AIDS, and how Thandi believes that catering to a man is the only way she can acquire material things for herself.

"My grandmother used to say that each generation has its own challenges, its own work to do. You'll figure it out. Just give it time" (Powers, p. 59). Baba attempts to teach Khosi that all generations have challenges to work through and this reminds the reader that intergenerationality is a complex concept that requires reflection. The act of reflection is less invasive than participating in an interview or survey as in a more traditional method of inquiry and it also "affords opportunities for uncovering these silences both from the point of view of the narrator and/or author and the audience/reader" (Moletsane et al., 2008, p. 75).

One more manifestation of intergenerationality occurs in the transitions between a scientific society (medical model) and the traditional healer. Khosi visits the local sangoma (traditional healer) because her grandmother believes in the traditional methods of healing as well as being a Christian. It is not only about healing the body but also about healing the spirit therefore religion is involved in daily practices of culture. Here is an exchange between Khosi and the sangoma:

*“Sho!” she says. “It is terrible! When you become a sangoma, the ancestors never let you rest. They fill your sleep with other people and spirits and recipes for new muthi (herbal potions) to cure this or that illness. It is too much difficult.” She smiles at me. “You go to sleep, never knowing if that is the night they get you up out of your warm bed and say, ‘No, you mustn’t sleep. Go here, do this.’ You wake up in the morning, not knowing where you will go that day or what you will do. Even if you had planned to spend the day with your family, you must obey. . .” At least [Khosi thinks to herself] she is never in doubt about what she must do: obey her spirits. I am all the time torn between Mama and Gogo, the new world and the old world, the science I learn at school and the African medicine Gogo sends me to fetch. (p. 66, author’s emphases)*

Khosi and the sangoma have several interchanges throughout the narrative about life issues; Khosi’s Gogo believes and practices the older traditional ways that use herbal medicine to cure and treat spiritual and physical illness. This is also a form of intergenerationality; one that straddles contemporary life and older traditional ways of healing and knowing. Khosi lives in a home with her Gogo and with her mother, with the support of both, yet there are times when she is confused about whose traditions she will choose to follow. Khosi also has vivid dreams and believes that her ancestors are speaking to her through her dreams.

### **Social Change**

Social change occurs when communities and researchers examine, and act on possible solutions that have previously appeared to be hidden and Powers’ narrative gives strong voice to the social change that is a recurring theme throughout the novel. We see Khosi’s parents struggle to earn their livings and how they are unable to live together because of decisions they made when they were younger. Khosi’s father has paid an economic price for not pursuing an education and, through narrative, Powers examines social change quietly—as when Baba talks about his early life choices in relation to his lack of employment:

*Don’t long for the old days, he says. When your mama and I were young, we thought only about freedom. We sacrificed everything to fight for it. But now, without an education, I can’t even find a decent job. I try and try, Khosi. Every day, I go knocking on doors and nothing. But you can go to school and really become something. (p. 59)*

Social change was something that Khosi’s mother and father both worked towards when they were younger and at great cost to themselves as a couple. Baba was not able to pay the dowry needed in their culture therefore Khosi’s parents never married. Khosi’s father is also honest with his daughter about the political changes in South Africa.

Khosi has a conversation with her mother too, that confirms her fear that her mother has AIDS. Yet the conversation is more; it is a time of exchange about life issues that the mother wants to share about democracy and opportunity and AIDS:

*Do you think the world's a better place now? I [Khosi] ask. Now that apartheid's dead? Now that we have democracy? Yes! Mama exclaims. You have so many opportunities that I never had. But what about this thing of AIDS? I ask. It's killing so many people—I break off, mid-sentence, seeing the look on Mama's face. (p.131)*

*And suddenly I know the truth. I knew it all along, of course. But it has just been confirmed. AIDS. That's what Mama has. The shock of it is so strong, it feels like a small fire has been lit deep in my belly, flames licking up my esophagus. It's burning me up. But no, it's not me that is burning up from the inside out. It's Mama. Her body, utterly betraying her. Mama, I say helpless. It's all I can say, like I've been reduced to baby talk, with only one word in my vocabulary. Mama. But Mama is fierce, glaring at me. So I shut up. You see, you do have a better world, she continues, as if I had said nothing. You can study science or business or medicine. She sees the look on my face. She sees how I don't have words to answer her. How can the world be a better place when it holds such an evil disease in it? (p.132)*

This is a life altering moment for Khosi and her mother yet the mother wants Khosi to know that life has improved from her generation to Khosi's generation. This was Khosi's mother's way of letting Khosi know that social change happens slowly and its effects are intergenerational.

## **Conclusions and implications for moving forward?**

The use of literary methods as a possible driver of social change can be related to creating awareness thus opening dialogues across generations. In this article I have drawn on Stephanie Power's powerful young adult novel, *This Thing Called the Future*, as a way to highlight the ways in which intergenerationality offers a framework for studying both positive and negative relationships between adults and young people. Powers uses Khosi's life experiences as a map to help readers understand intergenerationality portrayed in the framework of a narrative. While literature itself can be a force for social change in terms of inspiring people to act, what I want us to think about are the ways that the novel has so aptly foregrounded what intergenerationality looks like and how we might think about the practicalities of doing something. In this way, I would argue, literature can be participatory. The social aspects of HIV and AIDS are seen through the eyes of those who live in the everyday context of HIV and AIDS. Power's narrative ends with strong words from Khosi's mother to her daughter that supplies the intergenerational hope of each generation to learn from the past and work towards a future. Khosi's *now* is lived in the context of HIV and AIDS and carries the responsibility of the past and a hope for a future. Khosi's discomfort over many intergenerational situations is the backbone of this novel. Power's novel gives voice to cultural and traditional behaviours that have continued without question between each generation. Such behaviours could perpetuate the spread of HIV and AIDS and when awareness is created choices can be made:

*Don't look at the past, Khosi, she [Khosi's mother] says, reaching out a soft hand to caress my face. It's there and will always be there and there is nothing you can do to change it. Now, now you must look ahead. There is only this thing called the future. (p. 132, author's emphases)*

But how can the ideas of intergenerationality as depicted in *This Thing Called the Future* be applied to an everyday context? Leclerc-Madlala (2002) has uncovered "the fact of social acceptance and normalization of sexual coercion" (p.24) in many places in Africa, by writing about cultural issues such as sexual coercion; these issues are discovered to be part of the silences that young women are not aware of until HIV and AIDS becomes a fact of life. Khosi, her Gogo and her mother learn from each other. I want to suggest that as researchers we look for methodologies that allow members of different generations to speak to each

other. In this article I explored through various researchers how an arts-based research method can create connections and help people explore possible social change.

One promising practical area for addressing intergenerationality might be the use of participatory research methods, particularly those that are visual such as photovoice, in giving a space for generations to hear and see each others voices. The use of visual research techniques came into being during the 1990s in many forms that continue to grow in depth and use by many researchers (for example, Wang, 1999; Mitchell, et al., 2005). The use of cameras allows the participants to see for themselves what the issues are surrounding HIV and AIDS (Mitchell et al., 2005) and they also have the potential for different generations to learn from each other's photographs. In their article *Giving a face to HIV and AIDS*, they describe a project in which they encouraged workshop participants, teachers and community health care workers, to be part of the process of knowledge production and in doing so the participants learned from each other; and, from their photovoice experiences, learned that they are empowered through the further creation of dialogues that are an outgrowth of these participatory workshops. The visual becomes the generator of dialogues. It is this dialogue that is such a powerful aspect of Powers' novel and it is this dialogue through participatory visual methodologies that can be such a powerful step towards the future.

Arts-based methods are varied and powerful tools to engage participants in re-thinking their everyday lived experiences. It is vital to discover the 'silences' and to participate in the social action to help turn them into knowledge with young people. Initiating dialogues through arts-based approaches could create social change in how young people connect to each other while living in the context of HIV and AIDS. The participation of youth through the use of participatory methods opens dialogues for social change and a future by empowering youth as knowledge producers.

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of intergenerationality as put forward by researchers such as Talburt (2010) draws attention to three themes that are 'intertwined': "multiple relations to school knowledge; the blurring of categories of youth and adult through circulations of sexuality; and the dislocation of desire from the predictable categories of identity" (p. 53). Applying her analysis to the film *The History Boys* based on Alan Bennett's Tony award-winning play of the same name, Talburt writes about the development of the understanding of subjectivities and how sexualities are often rigidly defined—while making a connection to temporality.

<sup>2</sup> Leclerc-Madlala is seeing a potential shift in the meaning of Sugar Daddies. The flattery aspect and attention to the young women removes their agency to act once the gifts have been given, the young women trade on their physical body as currency in return. Leclerc-Madlala believes this could continue to increase the HIV-epidemic and her research findings cite that for "every year's increase in the age difference between the partners, there was a 28% increase in the odds of having unprotected sex" (2008, p.1). The media interpretation of a high-risk game is de-contextualized, making it appear financial on the surface (media interpretation; young women want men who have money to date them) yet the issues are about safe sex partners (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Leclerc-Madlala (2008) contextualizes youth sexuality and suggests that young women trade in an economic sense for a scale of benefits. This scale of benefits can be "food, school fees, rent...for others fashion accessories" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008, p. 14), it is the consumerist actions that have become more noteworthy in this contemporary era and this has unsettled the younger male participants in the dating scene.

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