



Yanga Zembe

is an associate professor in the Institute for Social Development, at the University of the Western Cape.

She is a behavioural social scientist, whose research explores the role of structural factors such as gender and economic inequalities in the production of social and sexual behaviours that lead to negative health outcomes.

Much of this work has been conducted in the area of sexual and reproductive health, but recently she has ventured into studies examining behaviours and inequalities related to food choices and food insecurity.

Current research projects include (i) a study investigating new forms of transactional sex among young women and men in South Africa; (ii) research exploring the drivers of food choices among South Africans of different social strata and (iii) a research project examining the intersections between gender power inequities, women's agency and food insecurity in rural and peri-urban settings in South Africa.

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Food choices at the intersections of race, class and gender struggles in post-apartheid South Africa

In South Africa's context of inequality, food carries the burden of righting multiple social wrongs. Black, single, working class mothers, use food assuage guilt and compensate for absent fathers and poor living conditions. For people of colour, foods such as sushi and American fast foods are consumed to create the impression of close association with Whiteness, and therefore success and upward social mobility. For young, White millennials, the desire for social inclusion and to disassociate with White privilege

means disowning food choices associated with ecological consciousness, and adopting those associated with solidarity with the Black poor. For mature age Black men, the pressure to adhere to cultural images of ideal masculinity, means avoiding fast foods in public spaces and using food to uphold gender hierarchies at home.

Notably, in the pursuit of these multiple ways of being, nutrition becomes the least prioritized variable in choice-making concerning food.

Mots-clefs

intersecting identities; inequalities; race; class; generation