

Deconstructing Heteronormativity and Hegemonic Gender Orders through Critical Literacy and Materials Design: A Case in a South African School of Education

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, I conduct a critical reflection of the processes of production in which I operated during the design of a workbook for an undergraduate critical literacy course aimed at using language to engage with controversial topics related to issues of diversity in sex, gender and sexuality. I begin with a brief summary of the four main sections in the final workbook: 'Language', 'Policing and Subversion', '(Re)Design', and 'Social Impact'. I then outline and discuss the three main processes that I view are pertinent to any materials design aimed at addressing controversial issues of diversity: 1. 'Identifying 'Real' Themes', 2. 'Identifying Theoretical Concepts', and 3. 'Applying a Critical Pedagogical Structure'. These interconnected processes of production illustrate the complex negotiations between texts, theory and socio-cultural context that are needed for the effective design of educational materials: From finding exciting and subversive resources online or in the media to the re-conceptualisation of the workbook while journeying through the literature on sex, gender, sexuality and critical literacy pedagogy. Using my own workbook as a case, I argue that in order to deal with diversity in the classroom, critical self-reflection must be viewed as a practice which enables one to understand how pedagogical choices might have a real social impact on learners, education and socio-cultural context. In this way, I aim to consider how my own design choices affect what it means to engage with controversial topics in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Type the phrase 'Homophobia in South Africa' into the Google search bar. Do the same for 'Transphobia', 'Gender violence' and 'Gender diversity'. On 25 February 2016, I searched these phrases in order to identify the number of results each search would incur. I found that 712 000 results appeared for homophobia in South Africa, 119 000 for transphobia, 3 640 000 for gender violence and 5 470 000 for gender diversity. In each case, there was a mix of search results: From online articles and web posts, to blogs and scholarly work. While I did not go through the millions of results individually, their headlines suggested a rather bleak picture of South Africa in relation to issues of sex, gender and sexuality. Terms such as 'violence', 'inequality', 'corrective rape', 'silence' and 'injustice' dominate the pages, suggesting the condition of the South African context in relation to these identities. From patriarchy to heterosexism, South Africa seems flooded with separatist discourses that use both violence and silence to maintain hegemonic norms.

Statistics South Africa (SSA) reinforces the ways in which many South Africans see gender particularly. The notion that gender and sex are the same thing is maintained in *Gender Series Volume 1: Education and Gender 2004-2014* (SSA 2015), as well as in volume 2 (SSA 2014), by only including the findings related to literacy, access to education and competence of girls and boys. While the report emphasises the disparate relationship between South African boys and girls and education, revealing significant and persistent gender inequalities, it overlooks the range of biological sexes, gender identities and sexual identities that contribute to the lived inequalities of so many South Africans. SSA works with a normative and conflated understanding of sex and gender. It is important to note that the SSA does not provide a report on sexual diversity or sexual orientation.

Given the silence that surrounds gender and sexual diversity in the SSA reports, one online article that appeared during the Google searches did engage with the role of education in dealing with sexed, gendered and sexual diversity: *Homosexuality in South African schools: Still largely a silent taboo* (Davis 2015). This article discusses the role that education plays in citizenship, socialisation and social justice projects by making reference to Deevia Bhana's (2014) *Under Pressure: The Regulation of Sexualities in South African Secondary Schools*. Both the article by Davis (2014) and Bhana (2014) outline the stereotypes and problematic beliefs that are held about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersexed (LGBTI+) identities, if those identities are even known about in the first place. Here, the problem that South Africa faces is not just one of phobia, but one of *difference* and *certainty*.

How South Africans deal with difference, and therefore diversity, influences what social justice might look like. Therefore, methods of engaging with diversity as resource need to create spaces and conversations that allow South Africans to move beyond preconceived certainties. The classroom can become such a space, and teachers and learners must dare to engage with difficult conversations. In the words of Paulo Freire

A pedagogy will be that much more critical and radical the more investigative and less certain of "certainties" it is (Freire and Macedo 1987: 358-359).

Any critical orientation to teaching and learning is fundamentally about developing awareness. Many of the seminal researchers across the fields of critical theory (across themes and social concerns such as Marx 1844; Eagleton 1986; and Gramsci 1992), critical pedagogy (such as Kumashiro 2002; hooks 1994; and Freire 1970), critical literacy (such as Janks 2010; Vasquez 2004; and Morgan 1997) or critical language awareness (such as Fairclough 1992 and 2001; Halliday 1976; and Janks 1993) discuss notions of awareness, consciousness or even recognition of the diverse ways of seeing, doing, thinking and being. As such, these theories and perspectives contribute to what can be understood by the term 'critical' and engage with the relationship between language, literacy and power across contexts.

Critical literacy, a product of this interdisciplinary school of thought, thus seeks to engage with the politics of language, literacy and the power that meaning can hold. It also seeks to develop awareness of the social, political and cultural constructions that govern people in different ways across place and time. And, in order to do this, a critical literacy approach requires those involved to let go of their certainties, their undeniable truths, and to step out of their own shoes in order to learn new and alternative ways of seeing the world. This is easier said than done, and raises the question of 'how'.

In this chapter, I therefore aim to engage with what it means to do critical literacy, as a teacher and teacher educator by focusing on the design of educational materials. Using a workbook that I designed for teaching about issues related to sex, gender, sexuality and the confluences between them from a critical literacy orientation, I reflect on the processes required for producing critical educational materials. It is important to note that while my workbook is aimed at confronting topics related to sex, gender and sexuality, there are a myriad of social concerns and controversial topics that can be addressed. Gender and sexual diversity is but one example of a controversial topic to be deconstructed and critically reflected upon.

I propose the use of 'critical reflexivity' (Elliston 2005) when analysing pedagogical choices and their effects. This method asks researchers, teachers and teacher-researchers to consider how their own identities and pedagogical choices affect the collection and analysis of data. In education and when designing educational materials, using critical reflexivity means becoming hypervigilant of one's own practices and treating one's own work as the data to be analysed. This is not merely to justify the actions of the teacher-researcher, rather it is a task that entails "locating the 'experiences' about which one writes within fieldwork pragmatics and drawing out their sociocultural insights, theoretical ramifications, and significances" (Elliston 2005: 42). Reflection thus becomes a process for engaging with the ways in which theoretical positions emerge in pedagogical practice. In the sections to follow, I outline the theories related to representation and critical literacy in relation to the topic of gender and sexual diversity. Thereafter, I discuss the construction and theoretical rationale for the design of my workbook before conducting an analysis of the processes involved in producing the workbook.

METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this chapter includes the workbook that I designed for a second-year critical literacy course at a Johannesburg university for initial teacher education. The course is a compulsory course for Bachelor of Education students who choose English as a major or sub-major. The workbook uses a critical literacy approach to teaching and learning, and is activity-based. The topic that the workbook addresses is that of issues related to sex, gender, sexuality, and the confluences between them in representation. However, it should be noted that while the workbook and the course focus on issues of sex, gender and sexuality, these issues are raised as one example of a controversial topic that critical literacy allows teachers and learners to engage with. Throughout the course reference is made to how critical literacy, and any critical engagement with language and literacy as a socio-cultural practice, can be used to maintain or challenge relationships of power (Janks 2010; Fairclough 1989).

Critical reflexivity, then, becomes a tool for qualitatively analysing the workbook in order to theorise my own pedagogical choices and the processes involved in making those choices. Such an analytical tool enables one to step outside of their own practice, in this case to step outside of teacher practice, and to evaluate that practice in relation to the relevant theory. It is a kind of ‘queering’ that makes something “strange unto itself” (Elliston 2005: 44) in order to reveal the constructedness of that practice. Over and above the reconceptualization of practice (pedagogy), critical reflexivity also allows one to step out of their own knowledge base and evaluate their practice in relation to the framework of knowledge that they hope to be working in (epistemologies), despite their own political and cultural positions.

Freire (in Elbaz 1988) explains that critical reflection is paramount to good teaching, and that teachers need to engage with critically reflective practices in order to develop a pedagogy that is responsive to the socio-cultural contexts that it works in and for:

Freire speaks of a problem-posing education as a collective process in which participants reflect on their situations, coming to perceive them as ‘objective-problematic situations’ and acquiring the ability to intervene in reality as they become more aware of them. This process is seen as analogous to the decoding of “an enormous, unique, living ‘code’ to be deciphered” (Freire 1970: 103 cited in and discussed by Elbaz 1988: 174).

Turning pedagogy into an ‘objective-problematic situation’ is not an easy task. It requires stepping outside of one’s own identity as teacher, as learner, as situated in time and space, and asking the questions that matter: Why did I make these choices? Whose interests do I serve through this text/pedagogy? Who do I choose to empower or disempower, and why? Who do I choose to foreground, background and silence? And, what is my text/pedagogy doing to me, my learners and even my context? (adapted from Janks 1993: iii). Answering these critical questions means developing an awareness of how we, as teachers, use pedagogy and text (design and selection) to position our lessons, perhaps foregrounding our own ideals about education, representation and identity.

Freire discusses three steps involved in making the critically reflexive turn: sympathetic observation, dividing and reintegrating the total situation, and then (re)structuring a program of educational action (Elbaz 1988: 174). The first step includes observing, identifying and recording a situation as a ‘problem’ (Freire in Freire and Macedo 1987; Elbaz 1988). Therefore, the situation to be reflected on is made into an object for observation and analysis. The second step requires that the observed situation be analysed for contradictions, or ‘limit-situations’, where practice and epistemology meet with some friction. Such friction can be caused by the differences between what is represented (in text and pedagogy) and the experiences that teachers and learners have in reality (Elbaz 1988). Finally, the third step requires an action to be taken. This means the redesign of texts (New London Group 2000; Janks 2005 and 2010) or the reconceptualization of pedagogy in order to engage better with cultural context. Here, teachers and learners are required to take their learning, unlearning and relearning of reality and use it to transform their limit-situations. In relation to materials design, this final step means redesigning materials in more socially just and responsive ways that is conscious of new or alternative ways of thinking, new knowledge, new experiences and realities.

In the following sections, I present a summary of my workbook by making reference to the theories related to critical literacy (my pedagogical position) as well as theories related to sex, gender and sexual identity in representation (my political position). Thereafter, I critically reflect on the processes involved in producing the workbook. In this section, I consider the role of text selection, content and pedagogy in materials design by mapping out the decisions that I had to make and correct as I designed the workbook.

THE WORKBOOK

The workbook that I designed for the critical literacy course in comprised of four main sections: ‘Language’, ‘Policing and Subversion’, ‘(Re)Design’, and ‘Social Impact’. Each section identifies a general theme or process linked to *doing* critical literacy (Janks 2010 and 2013). That is, it follows a process of deconstructing current texts and representations (and the language used to construct them), looking at the positioning power of texts as well as alternative (subversive) representations, transforming (redesigning) normative texts and representations, and finally developing an awareness of the social impact that language and representation has on socio-cultural circumstance and experience (Janks 2013 and 2014). Throughout the workbook, a variety of gendered and sexual identities are explored: from heterosexuality and cisgender types which hold hegemonic status, to gay and lesbian identities, to bisexual and transgender identities that are often side-lined in even the queerest of spaces.

Language

The words we have to speak about sex, gender and sexuality can be slippery territory. Over time, words shift in connotation according to shifting socio-cultural circumstances and power relations. Different languages have different words and meanings that could be attached to those words. The objective, then, in this first section of the workbook is to consider what language we use to speak about sex, gender and sexuality, and how the meanings of those words have been conflated in various ways, across various languages and the cultures and ideologies that inform them. When we speak about men and women, do we actually speak about masculinities and femininities? Do we know how to name gender ambiguous people in non-discriminatory ways? What identities do we not actually have linguistic terms for, and what does this mean for both the people who inhabit those identities and the people who think and talk about those nameless identities? What words do different languages have or not have, and what meanings do they convey? And, finally, what does language reveal about who matters?

Policing and Subversion

In the second section of my workbook I focus on how the language of policing, heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality is used “to examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women” (Rich 1993: 227) as well as people who identify with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexed identities. It is “[e]ducation that is critical of privileging and Othering” (Kumashiro 2002: 44). Moreover, this section also looks at occurrences of the subversion (Butler 1993 and 2006) of gender and sexual identities as ways of expanding our imagination beyond prescriptive gender performances, and exploring human agency in constructing identity through representation.

(Re)Design

In section three of the workbook, I have chosen to shift away from abstract discussions on heterosexuality, heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality to a more recognisable instance of these power relations. In the tradition of a critical and post-structuralist practice, this activity is an example of “the shift to a more micro-level of analysis that [lends] itself better to the complex interplay of different aspects of inequality” (Barrett and Phillips 1992: 4). This section thus begins with an analysis of a common restroom sign. It is normative in every way: there are two figures (male and female); there are two colours (pink and blue); and there are markers of differentiation (the dress and shoulder width). The question is, however, are these representations of sex, gender or sexuality and how

have these identities been conflated? Furthermore, how do these representations, in their commonplace simplicity, position those who use these restrooms and the subversive identities that exist beyond these representations?

Social Impact

Any critical approach to education aims to be socially transformative (Janks 2010; Kumashiro 2002; Morrell 2008; Vasquez 2008). This is the same for a critical literacy pedagogy, where the idea of social impact is worked with in two main ways: one, that every text is positioned and positioning. Therefore, every text works to position its readers and to influence their ways of thinking about the world. And two, texts and their meanings can lead to a range of social responses: from anti-homophobia movements to organisations that want to preserve definitions of ‘traditional marriage’ as between a man and a woman. Transformation is elicited in big-P political movements as well as in individual and local little-p politics (Janks 2010).

PROCESSES OF PRODUCTION

Following Giroux’s (1987) understanding of literacy work in education, I have aimed to construct the workbook from the understanding that

literacy [has] to be viewed as a social construction that is always implicated in organizing one’s view of history, the present and the future; furthermore, the notion of literacy [needs] to be grounded in an ethical and political project that [dignifies] and [extends] the possibilities for human life and freedom (Giroux in Freire and Macedo 1987: 2).

However, in order to construct a workbook that organises views of history, normativity and critically deconstructive practices, a number of processes need to occur. From brainstorming and experimentation to the exploration and application of different theoretical approaches, I have been involved in several processes that informed and influenced my design choices for the workbook.

In an attempt to understand both the processes of production and the conditions of production (Fairclough 1989 and 1992) of my workbook, I have mapped my own design process from the initial and shaky conception of the workbook to the final product. Thereafter, I use this map as a framework for discussing some of the defining decisions that I had to make within each of these phases and continuing processes:

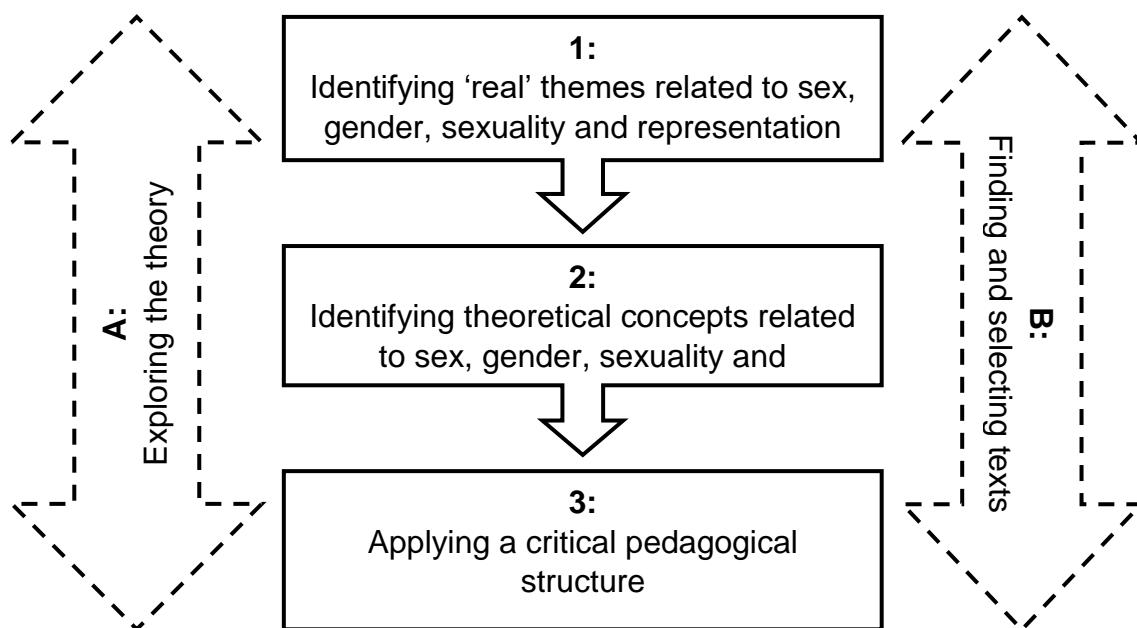


Figure 2: *Processes of Producing the Workbook*

The term ‘processes’ connotes ongoing activity, however Figure 2 illustrates that within the overall process of production there are three main phases with two continuous processes alongside. Here, I understand the term phase to represent defining parts of the overall process that end or are transformed at some point to give rise to a new phase. There are three main phases that I identify: 1. Identifying ‘real’ themes; 2. Identifying theoretical concepts; and 3. Applying a critical pedagogical structure. Each phase led onto the next until the final workbook was produced. It is possible that more phases could be added in relation to the intentions of the designer over and above the constant need to review and redesign texts (Janks 2005 and 2010). What is important to note, then, is that these three main phases were influenced, even directed, by my simultaneous and ongoing engagement with theories related to sex, gender, sexuality and representation (“A” in Figure 2) and the everyday texts that represent these theoretical perspectives (“B” in Figure 2). These two processes locate my workbook, and me, in a theoretical and social context, and give socio-cultural relevance to the workbook.

Identifying ‘Real’ Themes

Often what is thought of as normal is something that has been *made* more apparent through repetition – we are constantly bombarded with sexualised texts from the time we awake (clock radios blaring news reports or radio-hosts’ discussions on celebrity gender performance), to making our ways to places of work and school (billboards looming over high-density streets and highways advertising elusive products hide behind beautiful, intertwined and oppositely-sexed bodies), till homecoming in the evening (where nuclear families and the promiscuity of their children fill our televisions). And this is just one example of my middle-classed, South African experience where I need to look, and look carefully, to find truly subversive representations – or, at the very least, equitable representations of the social categories that I inhabit as a gay, male, Indian, twenty-something academic in South Africa.

What is significant to note through this daily journey is the presence of sexualised materials that have become common place in South Africa. More significantly, however, are the power relations between genders (Connell’s 1995 patriarchal dividend) and the silencing of non-heterosexual identities or practices (Rich’s 1993 compulsory heterosexuality) that is evident throughout these taken-for-granted texts. They are a kind of social policing that confines human imagination to patriarchal and heteronormative tidiness.

It was easiest, then, to begin by locating texts for analysis. From these texts, at least one would serve to illustrate how a particular theme is manifested through normative representations (Janks 2014). Such representations could then be deconstructed to help learners understand the various ways in which normativity and socialisation work through language. The following extract comes from a section on families that was designed during this phase:

family

1. What do you think makes a family?
Do a mother and a father have to run the house? Can a family have foster parents? What roles can grandparents play? What if the parents are divorced? Can children run a household? Do there have to be any siblings? How many people make a family? Could your friends be your family too?

2. Make a list of the people in your family.

3. Look at the restroom sign below and answer the questions on gender and sexuality.

Gender|Sexuality



1. What are the common roles for men and women in a heterosexual house-hold?

2. Are these roles the same for all heterosexual couples? Think about different cultures, religions and societies.

3. What does this sign say about who holds the power in this family? How does it do this? Is this true for all couples and families?

4. Do same-sex couples have ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ gender roles?

6. How do you think same-sex couples split house chores between them? How is it different from or similar to heterosexual couples?

7. What assumption is being made about the structure of a family in this restroom sign?

8. Have you ever seen a restroom sign that shows other kinds of family structures? Why do you think this is so?

9. How is this restroom sign an example of heteronormativity?

10. Do you think that restroom signs could be more inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersexed people? Explain how it could be done or explain why you think it couldn't be done.

11. Do you think it is fair for male-female headed families to have more representation? Why or why not?

Figure 3: Phase 1 extract: Family

The main text that prompted the activities in this extract is that of the family restroom sign. It is the text that helped me to identify ‘families’ as a relevant topic for the workbook (Janks 2014). Beginning with a real and authentic text that sparks interest, then, helps to focus an activity or section despite the vast abundance of other texts that actually exist. It allowed me to pinpoint a topic, identify the issues within it and then to develop an activity.

However, this topic is a highly sexual one: normatively and historically, families have come to represent a unit for reproduction and are therefore ‘naturally’ heterosexual (Dasgupta 2000 in Connell 2005; Goode 1982). Foucault’s (1984/1992) *The History of Sexuality* can be used to counter this construction, but I do not discuss this due to lack of space. In relation to the workbook, however, I have made a definite choice regarding what kinds of imagery and ideas to use regarding how visible sexual attraction or intimacy should be portrayed. This is not to mean that I chose between images of sexual intercourse and those without. Rather, sexuality might also be displayed through certain, everyday intimacies: holding hands, kissing, hugging, holding bodies and gaze. Because the workbook is envisioned for use in a school classroom, I chose representations that I deem ‘appropriate’ for adolescent learners. Perhaps some of what I deemed ‘appropriate’ at the time of design was conflated with my fears of what might be read as socially inappropriate by my audience, whether true or not.

The following texts illustrate the kinds of intimacy that I do include in the course and workbook:

Text:	Description:	Location:
KFC magazine advert	There are four people seated around a coffee table eating KFC take-out food. An older female and male are recognisably parents to one young girl child and an even younger boy child. The group’s identity as a family unit is anchored by some relatively large red text at the bottom of the advertisement, which reads: “There’s no time like family time”. This text is positioned next to the KFC logo and slogan, “sogood”. All the actors in this advert are white and middle class, which is identifiable by their surrounding furniture, the condition of their environment and their clothes.	Workbook p15 Lecture 4: <i>(Re)Design</i> Slide: 11
Dentyne advert	Three images are placed next to each other in comic book fashion, each with semi-transparent white text to anchor the image in relation to common social networking and text messaging phrases: “friend request accepted”, “the original voicemail” and “the original instant message”. The first image shows two women hugging. They are friends, as indicated by the first slogan. The next two images are more pertinent to the course and understanding normative representations of sexuality. “The original voicemail” shows what seems to be a man whispering into a woman’s ear. The ‘male’ figure remains elusive because we do not see a face, however this person is somewhat masculine: baseball cap, unkempt hair, string cheek bone. Only gender markers can be used to assume a sex. The third image shows a man and a woman kissing. Such normative and socially acceptable displays of sexuality should be recognisable to learners and comfortable for teachers because of its now commonplace status.	Lecture 4: <i>(Re)Design</i> Slide: 19
Response to homophobia	The final text is a post by an unknown author. Similar to the Dentyne advert, it shows three square black-and-white images in comic strip form, or even in the likes of Kodak photograph prints (square image with a white border and white ‘tab’ below for writing a caption or notes usually related to the image). All the images are of couples	Lecture 4: <i>(Re)Design</i> Slide: 20

	<p>photographing themselves in a mirror. The first picture shows a male and female couple with the male figure kissing the female figure's neck. Similarly, the second image shows two male figures, topless. One male figure kisses the other's neck, while the other has an arm wrapped around the first's head. Finally, the last image shows two female figures, with long hair and simple white vests, kissing. These images are a parody of normative texts that only represent heterosexual acts of intimacy as publically acceptable in many contexts. However, this text tries to extend what is considered appropriate public intimacy to include gay and lesbian couples as well. These images are then anchored by the text: "i'm sorry but i can't see the difference".</p>	
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Table 3: *Representations of Family and Intimacy*

While these texts do not include explicitly sexual acts between people, I still found myself fearing how learners and teachers might respond same-sex intimacy, and so I removed the Dentyne advertisement and the 'response to homophobia' text from the workbook. Instead, I used them with more adult audiences in the lecture hall, for the critical literacy course where, hopefully, such intimacy might be discussed in relation to theories of representation and identity. However, this does not negate the range of possible responses from adults who embody complex arrays of identities: from liberal to conservative, from left to right wing, or from culture to culture. The restroom sign, then, seems to become a safe representation that alludes to ideas of family structure, relationships, reproduction and intimacy without explicitly confronting these ideas. Such issues of risk and safety need to be considered and may have been my shortfall in designing the workbook. Certainly, more questions need to be asked about what risks might be necessary in the classroom or in teacher education, and how safety might reproduce problematic norms.

Furthermore, during the first phase of design I was still exploring the theories on sex, gender and sexuality in relation to representation and education. While elements of the section in Figure 3 might be useful, it does still contain some fundamental design flaws which are characteristic of activities and 'sections' that were constructed during this design phase. These flaws are largely due to a lack of theoretical cohesion: firstly, the activities do not always reflect the theory effectively and thus cover the content on sex, gender and sexuality by focussing on 'feelings' and 'personal responses' rather than informed criticism. Secondly, theory is sometimes incomplete, which means that the links between activities and theory can be rather haphazard. Figure 3 is an example of the latter, where gender and sexuality are still understood and represented as binary opposites instead of drawing on the identity gem, which was only constructed later. In the design of this activity, I inadvertently reproduced the very binaries I sought to disrupt. Being placed at the beginning of the workbook, and the course, also meant that students would recognise this as a normative representation and perhaps would not be equipped yet to fully deconstruct it in ways that went beyond the fundamental binary being represented.

This meant that although it was useful to begin designing my critical literacy workbook by situating it in real-life, recognisable topics, it was not nearly enough. These topics and ideas for activities further needed to be situated in sound theoretical approaches and understandings. Without a good theoretical grounding, the activities are only based on my own ideas about what the representations of sex, gender and sexuality ought to mean for education. Even in the final rendition of the workbook, such shortfalls should be dealt with either by students and teachers.

Identifying Theoretical Concepts

The theories on sex, gender and sexuality constitute a vast terrain of knowledge and perspectives about how to understand each of these social categories, how each is practised and the interrelations or connotations between them. Compounded on this are theories of power; of semiotics and the functions of language and representation; as well as a myriad of pedagogical approaches and theories that can be

combined in different ways to construct critical literacy curricula. However, bringing these fields of study together also allows us, as teachers, learners and students, to expand our capabilities for deconstructing and then reconstructing texts (Janks 2005) across modes and genres. Moreover, it should also allow us to ask the right kinds of questions about texts, everyday interactions and the ways we construct ourselves and others through language.

It is thus imperative that educational practice be located in sound theoretical understandings of the world and the ways to be in it. This second phase therefore involved reconsidering my initial designs through various theoretical lenses. Deciding what theory to draw on and what texts to use, and when, became a process of compromise. Some texts are only useful for illustrating one theoretical concept, and while some theories include important concepts, it is difficult to find an authentic text that is appropriate for the classroom. I therefore began to realise that design involves negotiation between text, theory and interest.

In the initial design of the workbook, sections were separated according to what I identify as 'real themes'. However, the theory on sex, gender, sexuality and representation names concepts in different ways. Being concept-based, rather than just thematic, becomes useful for a critical literacy approach. Once a concept is taught, students should begin to apply that skill or idea in their own lives to bring real and relevant issues back into the classroom (Vasquez 2000 and 2001).

I therefore began to reorganise the activities in the workbook using theoretical concepts as my guide: moving, adding and removing activities according to the skills and ideas I thought learners would need to deal with various issues on the representations of sex, gender and sexuality. Thus emerged the four sections of the workbook: Language, Policing and Subversion, (Re)Design, and Social Impact.

Theory did not just influence how I separated sections and main ideas. It also influenced how I understood sex, gender and sexuality in relation to gender performance, power and representation as whole and intersecting fields. As this understanding changed, so too did the content that I wanted to include and the ways in which I represented that content. For example, in the first section of the workbook, *Language*, I was determined to present students with a visual representation of the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality that expanded upon the normative notion that heterosexuality is the only legitimate or natural orientation. Drawing on queer theory's agenda to dispose of essentialised binary relationships, I began designing a model for thinking about sex, gender and sexuality, and the confluences between them. This model, most importantly, also needed to be flexible enough to include a vast array of nonconforming identities.

From Butler's (2006) gender performance to the more empirical research by Tucker (2009), Gevisser and Cameron (1994), and Msibi (2014), to name a few, theorists revealed the myriad of gendered and sexual identities across South Africa and globally. This meant *unlearning* my own gendered language that came so easily, but that also sternly resisted change. I was confused about what pronouns to use for transgendered and intersexed people; I began to notice that my conversations constructed us-them positions between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, between homophobes and 'moral' people, and even between myself and other gay men. I came to realise that the language I was using to talk about myself or even my partner could be homophobic or sexist. It also meant using the identities, and the language(s) used to express those identities, that are particular to a South African context (Msibi, 2012 and 2014; Tucker, 2009; Francis and Msibi, 2011; Luyt, 2012).

The following figures show the progression of the way I mapped sex, gender and sexuality in order to come to terms with them and their confluences. Next to each diagram, I have given a rationale for their construction, and what shifts in understanding lead to re-representation:

Diagrams in chronological order:

1.

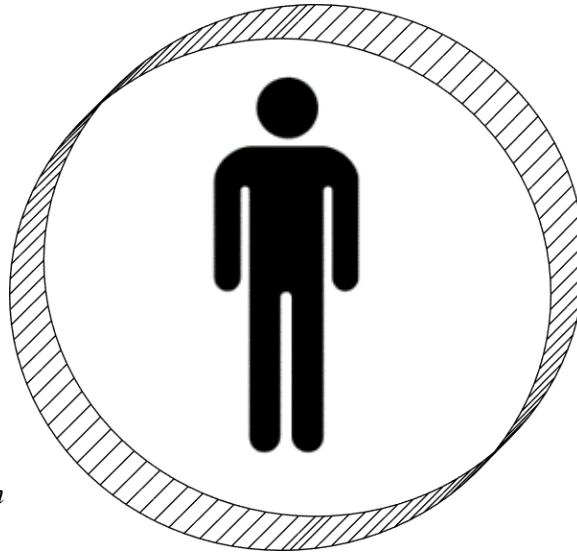


Figure 5: *The Universal Man*

[Removed from workbook]

Initially, I thought of starting with the concept of the ‘universal man’. By deconstructing this symbol, I was students would recognise the presence of male dominance in representation. And, that the universal male symbol establishes an ‘original’ gender, of which femininity is a copy, as well as an ‘original’ sexuality, where homosexuality and bisexuality are constructed as distorted copies of an authentic heterosexuality (Butler 1993). However, does not map sex, gender and sexuality. Even if this exercise does reveal some of the power relations inherent in these concepts, it does not visually represent sex, gender and sexuality in a comprehensive way.

2.

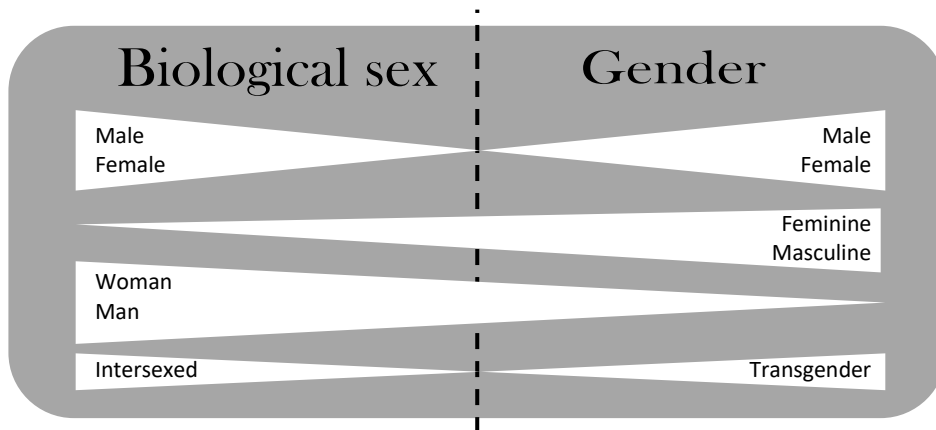


Figure 6: *Sex/Gender Model*

[Removed from workbook]

I then moved to trying to separate the concepts by categorising them according to ‘biological sex’ and ‘gender’. That is, what does the language we use actually refer to? When we speak using words like ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘man’ and ‘woman’, are we speaking about biological sex or, due to conflation, are we using them to actually speak about the socio-cultural practices of gender performance?

In order to represent this conflation, where words for gender are used to signify biological sex, I used the tapering effect given by the triangles in the diagram. I imagined that meanings were like molten sugar: when it drops at an intended spot it settles. But, the sugar can be stretched and pulled into new spaces while still leaving the initial blob in its original position. Words that refer to biological sex, that in some sense had originated as terms for biological sex, had been pulled over into the social realm.

Their meanings had been conflated with gender while still maintaining some sense of their original reference to biological sex.

However, there are two significant problems with this representation: 1) it neglects any representation of sexuality. And, 2) this representation essentialises the identities that it does include. There are only three distinct sexes and two genders, and what I consider an unsatisfactory representation of transgenderism and negates its diversity.

3.

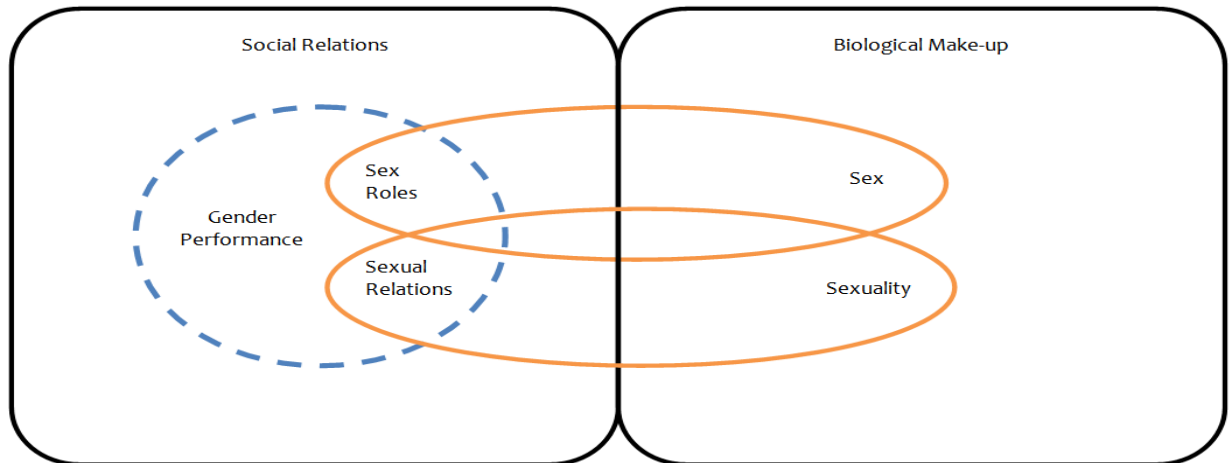


Figure 7: *The interactions between Foucault’s (1984a/1992) Social Relations and Sexual Relations being enacted through Butler’s (2006) Gender Performance (Reproduced)*

[Removed from workbook]

This representation is based on Foucault’s (1984/1992) theorisation of the interaction between social relations and sexual relations, as well as Butler’s (2006) theory of gender performance. I aimed to show in this diagram how our social relations are influenced by our sexuality, and visa versa. That is, the socio-cultural value systems that govern our sexual relations can be transposed onto our social relations. If, as society may see it, a same-sex sexual relationship (through identification as gay, lesbian or other identities based on same-sex sexual relationships) is considered ‘deviant’, that judgement might influence one’s social relations – in the workplace, at schools, with family and friends. We see this in the condemnation of celebrities who come out as gay in controversial ways, such as Caster Semenya, or in the serious stigmatisation of early childhood teachers who come out as gay or lesbian.

But, this representation is still insufficient. It still maintains the binary between the biological and the social. It also misrepresents sexual relations as a form of gender performance, maintaining a problematic conflation.

4.

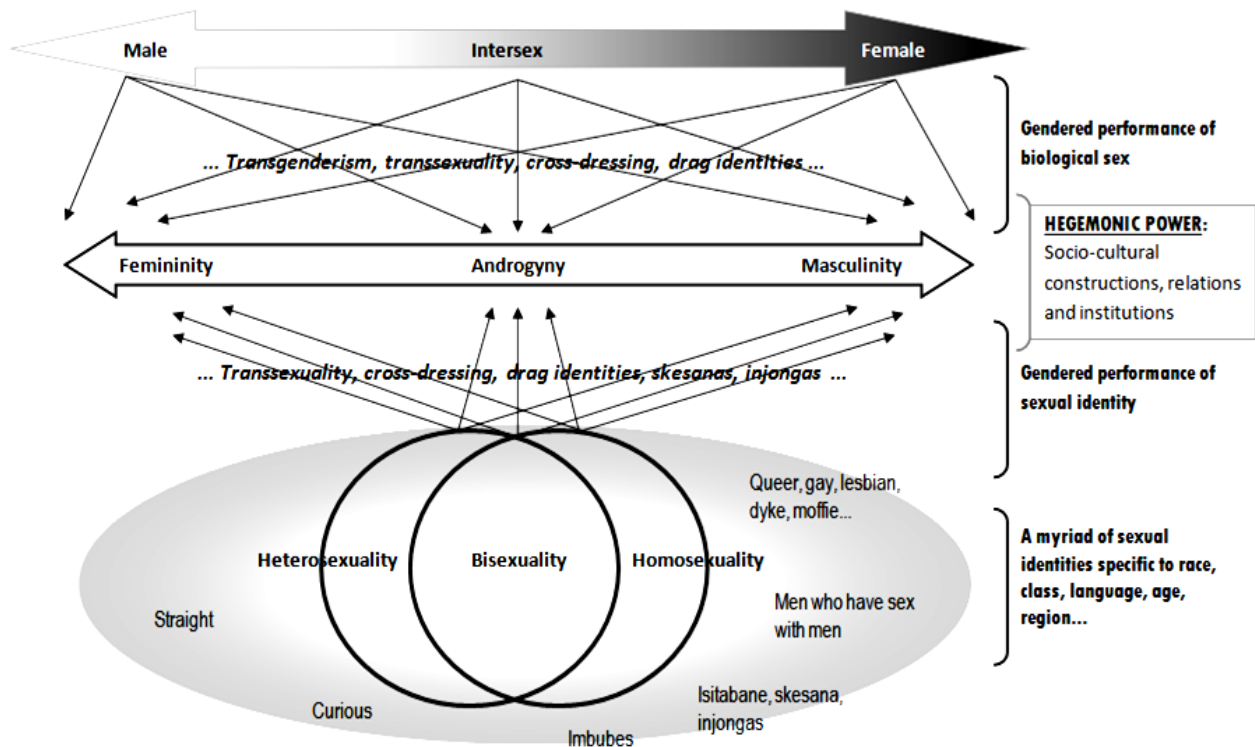


Figure 9: *The Identity Gem – Mapping Sex, Gender and Sexual Identities*

[Used in workbook]

The final model for representing sex, gender and sexuality is the ‘identity gem’. It encompasses sex, as a continuum ranging from male to female but also including biological variations in sexed identities such as intersexed; gender also as a continuum, which spans over masculinity, femininity and androgyny; and sexuality, which includes interconnections between and beyond heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual identities represented within a cloud of self-identified sexualities by different communities. Again, the spaces between these categories involve the gendered performance of either sex or sexuality. They are socially and culturally bound practices, and the deviances from those practices, that make sexed and sexualised identities visible. However, it is also within this space of gender performance that the gendered hegemonies of our time, place and culture police our identities and how we conceive of them.

Furthermore, transgenderism, transsexuality, cross-dressing, drag, skesana (active sexual partner) and injonga (passive sexual partner) identities have been included as possible gendered performances of sexual identity. While they might not necessitate a particular sexual identity, or sexual orientation, such ‘nonconforming’ gendered identities still intersect with sexuality and should be foregrounded.

In this way, the model, and so the workbook, becomes adaptable to context. Students, learners and teachers should insert the identities that emerge from their particular contexts into the model whilst also questioning the language used to express these identities. Furthermore, there is space for the imagining of new identities that could speak directly to individual communities or the experiences of those community members. Any critical design of educational materials, then, should be considerate of the fluidity of language, knowledge and truth across space and time, and include a space for those using the materials to insert themselves and their experiences in critical ways.

Applying a Critical Pedagogical Structure

The structure and sequencing of the workbook emerged from a question of how to make education, and those who partake in it, aware of social injustice in relation to praxis. That is,

How can teachers work together in the interests of developing critical subjectivity among themselves and their students that can begin to rehabilitate the pathological development of homophobic discourses in current school policy and practice? Further, how can teachers and students develop a collective praxis that takes up in a politically charged and pedagogically progressive way the contradiction between social relations of homosexuality and the social form of “alterity” (one’s relationship to the “other”)? (McLaren 1995: 109).

Such questions are not new. They have manifested in various forms regarding social injustices of, amongst others, race, class, language and gender. But, what is significant here is the reiteration of the need for *praxis*. Education bent on social justice should not fixate on theoretical possibilities of social equity but on the development of critical and socially equitable *practice*. This is evident in work by Paulo Freire, Norman Fairclough, Vivian Vasquez, Hilary Janks, Kevin Kumashiro and so many other critical literacy or critical pedagogy educator-researchers.

In the case of my workbook, I have aligned its structure with Janks’ (2014) work in *Critical Literacy’s Ongoing Importance for Education*. In this article, Janks (2014) identifies 5 key elements of a critical literacy project: 1. Finding and naming the issue; 2. Linking the issue to learners’ lives; 3. Assessing relevant information; 4. Textual design; and 5. The social effects. Each of these elements contributes to an overall critical structure for teaching. That is, they are fundamental parts of a process that teachers and learners are to take when doing critical literacy. They are also not finite elements, but recurring processes that should be re-evaluated as new and more pressing issues are named (Janks 2014).

A RESPONSE TO THE WORKBOOK

What students do in class has emerged out of the phases and processes of production of the overall workbook. We can refer back to Figure 6 here to consider how shifts in conceptualising the workbook took place in phases one and two as a result of the ongoing processes (A and B in Figure 6) of exploring the theory and the texts that exist in social forums. Such an abundance of information and textual designs (Janks 2014) meant that I had to be selective of what I thought students and learners should do and the kinds of questions and topics that would be appropriate. Note that even the kinds of texts that are available for analysis influence what is included and excluded, as well as the role included texts play in the overall workbook and course materials. What we can see from figure 6 is also how the first four elements from Janks’ (2014) article can work in integrated and fluid ways. Sometimes an issue is named when we read a text or come across a theoretical concept, while at other times it is the process of exploring learners’ lives that reveals more pressing issues or misinformation because of the texts they have already been exposed to. It is the convoluted negotiation between these elements and their interactions with each other that requires a teacher, or materials designer, to consider the intent of a course and the social effects that that course and its components could have.

In one example, students also critiqued the course, the content and the practices we were engaging in. One particularly critical student stands out in this regard. The following statement, recorded in the field notes for lecture two on policing identities, emerged during a discussion on Caster Semenya and the number of articles written about her sex and gender performance (see Greenfield, 2012 and Ndebele, 2009):

Student: (With passion) This young woman did not choose to be the way she is. I don’t like this critical literacy. Not ok to talk about these articles too private. Don’t like the way she is being talked about. Not suitable for classrooms. She is not there to defend herself.

We see the student resisting the path of discussion in class. Such a critique illustrates two main ideas: 1) a lesson using a critical literacy approach needs focus and structure that can be adhered to. While a teacher should be able to develop the lesson according to students’ or learners’ concerns (Vasquez, 2000, 2001 and 2008; Janks, 2014), it also needs to be defined in relation to its purpose.

And 2), this suggests that education should be open to critique and redesign. This student illustrates that the use of critical skills does not need to be directed to only abstract content, but also to the processes and structures that govern learning. What information are we exposed to? Who decides what perspectives we get to see in the classroom? How much authority over my own education do I

have? I consider this an important development in the course because of its revelations about the power relations between teachers, their students and classroom content.

I then use this critique to inform the repeated class where I decided to ask students to critique our discussion:

- Researcher: I was criticised for using this article [on Caster Semenya] why? Why did I use it?
Students: Shows gender issues ... C.S. [Caster Semenya's] case is controversial, shows the gender issue
Student 1: Context as S. [South] African ... we know and can relate; issue of culture
Student 2: But aren't we doing exactly what the article is doing? Isn't this hypocritical?
Student3: Semenya doesn't get to speak like article
Researcher: Yes. Focus on rep. [representation] What do they do in the images?

When the students in this class did not critique my lesson in the same way as the first student, I chose to use the critique myself to illustrate to the students that they *should* be critical the course. The paradox of a critical approach to education means that education itself is contestable at all times. Any critique of the course, then, should become a resource for understanding how education can be transformative and equitable.

CONCLUSION

From Janks' (1993) *Critical Language Awareness Series* to her 2013 *Doing Critical Literacy*, the need for a critical approach to teaching and learning is evident. However, the design of critical educational materials to support teachers and their own critical literacy practice is also vital to the project. As such, it becomes important to think carefully about how these materials are designed in order to develop the capacity to design our own lessons, curriculums and materials for doing critical literacy and transforming literacy education.

In this chapter, I have thus outlined some of the perspectives on critical literacy as well as the theories related to sex, gender, sexuality and the confluences between them as one example of a social justice issue to be dealt with in classrooms. I then critically reflect on the design process of the workbook by mapping out the pedagogical decisions I made, unmade and remade during the production of the workbook

However, critical reflexivity also takes consideration of "the dialectical relationship between reflection and action" (Elbaz 1988: 178):

To the extent that a teacher is able to analyse the situation in depth and perceive its inherent contradictions, [his/her] ability to act to change that situation is enhanced. But insofar as [he/she] sees no options for action that will bring about change, [his/her] very ability to perceive the situation will in turn be limited (Elbaz 1988: 178).

Elbaz's (1988) discussion of the limits of reflective work in teaching suggests the need to recognise that all designs and redesigns are both positioned and positioning (Janks 2010). That is, in the case of my own workbook, the texts and theories will become outdated. Over time, new texts and representations will become available and old ones will become history. The need to engage in critical reflection and (re)design is thus a continuous one. It goes hand-in-hand with the constant need to reimagine social contexts and political concerns.

What I would recommend, then, is the establishment of a continuous design process, where teachers design curriculums, teach, reflect, redesign, teach, reflect, and so on. Perhaps, then, a print-based workbook is not enough to engage with this process. Rather, an online, interactive and participatory workbook that grows over time and space would be more appropriate. An *online workbook* that uses critical literacy to engage with a range of social justice issues would enable teachers to design materials and curriculums that further give access to other teachers to educational resources constructed for a social justice education. Such a forum would allow teachers to constantly engage with current and relevant social issues in ways that initiate social action, as well as contribute to the collection of such resources.

Furthermore, initial teacher education must engage pre-service teachers with critical reflexivity as a practice. This would include the critical analysis of educational materials as a concrete method for engaging with the need for continual (re)design of teaching practice, resources, contexts, identities, and

even epistemologies. The fluidity of knowledge and what it means to teach and learn should be embodied in the very changeability of teaching practice and thought.

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