

# The place of design in a theory of critical literacy

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## Abstract

In my synthesis model for critical literacy, I argued for the interdependence of theoretical concepts in the field: domination or power, access, diversity and design/redesign. In this paper, the focus is on design/redesign. I will define the concept and then, using classroom examples taken from two research projects, illustrate ways in which this concept articulates with the other three.

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## *Introduction*

At the first Joint National Conference of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, the Australian Association for Teachers of English and the Australian Literacy Educators Association in Adelaide in 1999, I introduced my synthesis model for critical literacy education (Janks, 2000). This model argues that the theoretical concepts in the field of critical literacy: domination or power, access, diversity and design/redesign are *crucially interdependent*<sup>1</sup>. (See Table 1). Since then, I have used occasions such as this to zoom in to one of the concepts in order to explore the idea of interdependence. In *Deconstruction and reconstruction: diversity as a productive resource* (Janks, 2005) the focus was on diversity, in *The access paradox* (Janks, 2004), presented at the 2003 IFTE conference in Melbourne, the focus was on access. In this paper, the focus is on design and redesign. It pays particular attention to the shaded rows in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Because the model theorises these different emphases in critical literacy in relation to one another, the model is more than a synthesis. I now refer to it as the interdependent model of critical literacy. In addition, I now use the concept of power, rather than the concept of domination so as not to privilege a Marxist theory of power.

Table 1: The interdependent model for critical literacy

Power without access	This maintains the exclusionary force of powerful discourses
Power without diversity	Without difference and diversity, powerful forms lose the ruptures that produce challenge and creative transformations
Power without design	The deconstruction of power, without reconstruction or design, removes human agency.
Access without power	Access without a theory of power leads to the naturalisation of powerful discourses without an understanding of how these powerful forms came to be powerful.
Access without diversity	This fails to recognise that difference fundamentally affects pathways to access and involves issues of history, identity and value
Access without design	This maintains and reifies powerful forms without considering how they can be transformed.
Diversity without a theory of power	This leads to a celebration of diversity without any recognition that difference is structured in dominance and that not all discourses/genres/ languages/literacies are equally powerful.
Diversity without access	Diversity without access to powerful forms of language ghettoises students.
Diversity without design	Diversity provides the means, the ideas, the alternative perspectives for reconstruction and transformation. Without design, the potential that diversity offers is not realised.
Design without power	Design, without an understanding of how powerful discourses/practices perpetuate themselves, runs the risk of an unconscious reproduction of these forms.
Design without access	Runs the risk of whatever is designed remaining on the margins.
Design without diversity	This privileges powerful forms and fails to use the design resources provided by difference.

I begin by explaining how I use the concept of design and why it is central to the model. Then, using classroom examples, taken from two research projects, I will illustrate ways in which this concept articulates with the other three.

### *The concept of design*

Design is the concept used to refer to multi-modal text production. I focus first on production, then on multimodality.

#### 1. Production

The word 'writing' cannot be extended metaphorically to non-verbal texts in the way 'reading' can. While we can talk about reading gestures, film, clothing, photographs, bodies, space and so on, we do not talk about writing them. The word 'design', unlike the word 'write', *does* work across multiple modalities - multiple forms of meaning making or semeiosis - you can design a dress, a page, a poster, furniture or a classroom. I therefore use 'design' as catch-all word for imagining and producing texts. 'Imagining' sees design as a blueprint for production in which there is a 'deliberateness about choosing the modes for representation, and the framing for that representation' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001:45). But in text production there is no clear separation between designing and producing in that the ongoing process of semiotic choice and change, made easy by digital technologies, enables ongoing re-vision and re-design. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, 'The boundary between design and production is ... blurry' (2001:55).

#### 2. Multimodality

The work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) has stressed the importance of multimodality in an age where new digital technologies have effected a communication revolution. It is now possible to produce permanent records of embodied oral texts, visually sophisticated written texts designed on our laps, as well as multimodal texts which make meaning by combining a number of modes of

communication: verbal, visual, aural, spatial, gestural. The New London Group's (1996) work in multiliteracies argues that students have to be taught how to use and select from all the available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning, while at the same time combining and recombining these resources so as to create possibilities for transformation and reconstruction (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997). This definition of design places the emphasis on multimodality.

Because all texts are constructed from a range of semiotic options, they can be deconstructed, unmade, unpicked and then re-constructed, to offer a different representation of the world. Now when I teach critical reading, I ask students to examine or imagine alternative designs, and then to deconstruct those (Janks, 2000; Janks 2004). The ability to read texts critically, including our own texts, creates the conditions for transformative re-design. The ongoing cycle of representation-deconstruction-redesign is captured by Paulo Freire when he says that

To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to its namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming* (1972a: 61).

In this way Freire links literacy - writing, reading and re-writing the world and the word - to human agency and the power to effect social transformation. Design is therefore essential to the integrated model because it moves us beyond critique to action.

I turn now to two pedagogic interventions in two different research projects to consider multimodal text production in relation to the issues of access, diversity and power.

### *Fun and Games*

The games project is part of an ongoing collaborative research project *Critical literacy, social action and children's representations of 'place'* which began in

2001 as a small scale literacy study, initiated by Comber and Thomson at the University of South Australia (Comber, Thompson and Wells, 2001, 2002; Janks, 2002; Janks and Comber, 2006). *Fun and games* is a book produced by Grade 4 children at Phepo school, a poor school in Atteridgeville, an African township outside of Pretoria for students at Ridley Grove, a poor school in Adelaide, South Australia. The challenge for the teacher was to support young children who speak different African languages and who are learning through the medium of Setswana to show and explain their games to children in an English medium school, living in Australia. The occasion for this project was the upcoming visit of their teacher, Emily Langa, to Ridley Grove.

Pat Thomson and Barbara Comber had been working with Marg Wells at Ridley Grove to theorise how children engage with their 'place' in the world and how 'critical literacy' might make new resources available for neighbourhood as a social practice (de Certeau, Giard & Mayol, 1998). They invited Hilary Janks from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg to join them, in the belief that a comparative study across different contexts of poverty would produce a better understanding of the relationship between 'habitus' and 'habitat' (Bourdieu, 1999) that might open the way for thinking about the local in relation to the global. The project on games does not focus on the link between habitat (place) and habitus (embodied subjectivity) as explicitly as in other work based on this research (Janks, 2003). Nevertheless, township games are both embodied and placed. By making them the subject of cultural exchange with children who are differently placed, township children's identities and knowledges are given both recognition and validation. In addition, the movement of educators has enabled staff from these two schools to gain an understanding of what more might be possible in their own contexts at the same time as giving children an opportunity to project and receive the knowledges, rooted in their own places, to children elsewhere.

When Marg Wells visited South Africa in 2002, she brought two books that her Grade 3/4 students had produced for the students at Phepo school. These books are magnificent. In *A is for Arndale*, each child wrote a text for one letter of the alphabet about their neighbourhood and illustrated it with a

painting in bold, striking colours. Careful attention was given to layout and presentation: the texts were typed, the pages were laminated and the book was ring bound<sup>2</sup>. Similar attention to detail was evident in *Letters from Ridley Grove*. Here each child designed a page to introduce him or herself to fellow students across the world. In each of their pages, the children's out-of-school lives cross over into their school literacies, enacting what Anne Haas Dyson has called a 'permeable curriculum' (Dyson, 1993, 1997, 2003).

For the teachers at Phepo who had never before produced a book, the splendour of the Ridley Grove books was both a threat and a challenge. Initially they decided that Grade 3/4 children could not produce a book in English, so Shikwambane, Matolong and Janks worked with Grade 7s to produce *A is for Atteridgeville* (Janks and Comber, 2006). In the hope that we might be able to produce a book with Grade 4s, Emily Langa and I, set out to establish whether or not this was possible.

We had to overcome the following difficulties:

1. The class had 44 children. The classroom was crowded with little *space* for movement, play, or art work.
2. Children had to produce a book in English, with limited skills in the *language*. Collaboration across continents and the move from the local to the global, necessitated the use of English. The children in Langa's class spoke a range of African languages. Setswana was the medium of instruction in school from Grade 1 to Grade 4, with English increasingly used as the medium from Grade 5.
3. Material *resources* were limited. (Children had little access to picture books, limited materials for producing a book, and at the time no access to digital technologies).

Langa and Janks managed to overcome some of these difficulties by working together and pooling their resources. Langa who speaks the children's languages worked as the teacher: she negotiated which games the children

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<sup>2</sup> Support was provided by the University of South Australia.

wanted to demonstrate, she supervised their demonstrations outdoors, she worked with them in class to produce their verbal texts. Janks did the video recording, typed the students' work, supervised the art production, and provided the materials and the know-how for producing and assembling a low-cost book.

Crucial to the success of the project was the use of multimodal and multilingual pedagogies and the appropriation of alternative spaces in the school for working with the children. The decision to work with three different modalities (performance, drawing and words) enabled us to move from performance to text. We knew that we could capture the games on video. What we hoped was that once we had knowledge of the games, we would be able to scaffold the children's written work. We relied on performance to act as the pedagogic platform for writing.

*Bana baka e tlang gae* (My children come home) is a game of catch in which the mother calls the children to come straight home from school because there are 'dangers' (Video archive) on the way. You have to get home without being caught by one of the 'dangers'. This game takes place in response to chanting and singing. What follows is a discussion of the game as represented in each of the three modalities. What this multimodal approach shows is that each of the modalities used, affords different possibilities of representation even when the task, to 'explain' the game, remains constant. The three modes required different organisations of resources, space and pedagogical practice.

#### *Video text*

Video is a good medium for representing a game as an embodied performance of an unfolding sequence. The video text demonstrates the game. We watch the children playing and witness their enjoyment. It is clear that it is as least as much fun to be a lion that catches the children on their way home, as it is to be one of the children. The boys in particular delight in being the lions. As the children who are caught become catchers, the number of lions begins to exceed the number of children. Although everyone will

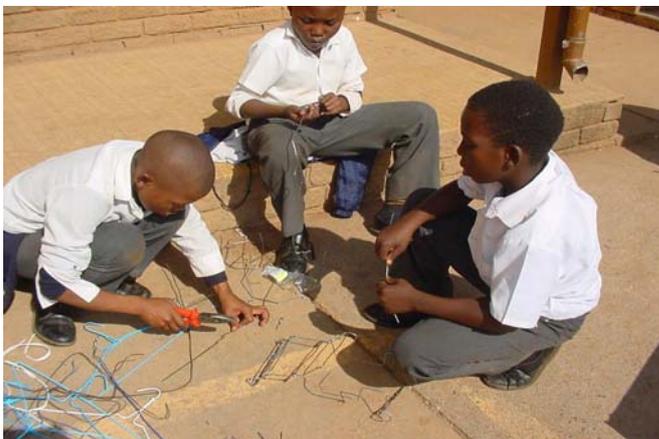
eventually get caught, there is pleasure in being clever and fast enough to evade the lions for as long as possible. There is a great deal of laughter and the children enjoy all the different roles. Even the mother who does not get to run or catch, gets a solo part, and is chosen because she has a big voice.

Because *Bana baka e tlang gae* is an outdoor game of catch that ‘needs a big space’ we moved outside the classroom for the performance. The teaching at Phepo school remains fairly traditional as can be seen in the photograph in Figure 1. Bringing play into the curriculum freed children’s bodies from the confinement of their desks, their over-crowded classroom and teacher-fronted pedagogy. There is a noticeable shift in how the children comport their bodies. (See Figure 2).

Figure 1



Figure 2



### *The visual text*

In drawing a game, children have to select a particular moment in the game to represent. Figure 4 is the children's drawing of *Bana baka e tlang gae*. The drawings were done collectively by children who chose to work on them. As a group we spent several hours on different days working in the staff room, with the children sharing felt-tip pens. Often the colour selected was based on what was available at that moment. Some children elected to draw, others to outline or colour in. The drawings became a collaborative effort, rather than the vision of one child. As with the video recordings, the spatial constraints meant that this activity was done outside of the more 'formal' space of the classroom. The children worked together around a large central table, made by pushing big tables together. The atmosphere was more relaxed than they were used to in the classroom and the children were clearly having fun.

Figure 4



In their drawing (Figure 4), the children capture the moment just before the mother calls, when the children see the 'dangers' (Video archive) that lurk in wait for them on their way home from school. Much of the pleasure of the game is in this moment of anticipation just before the chase. The 'dangers' are portrayed as fierce beasts: a spotted leopard with very red lips and eyes, a brown lion licking its lips in anticipation, a red spotted dog with its tongue salivating. The representation of the people is more ambiguous. Only two children seem perturbed: the one child, bottom left of the frame, who appears to be running away, and another, top left of the frame, who seems to be standing back. The others look fairly aggressive: one child appears to be throwing something at the 'dangers'; most of the children have open mouths and are leaning forward; one is gesticulating at the beasts, one is shouting<sup>3</sup>. Even the student with his hands in his pockets is leaning towards the danger. Only two of the children have school satchels and only one appears to have a tie, indicative of a school uniform. The students look older than primary children and semiotically are shown as western and hip: purple clothes, bright shoes, and modern clothing create this impression. The representation of the mother in traditional attire, symbolised by her bare breasts provides a strong contrast. It is as if, despite the representations of the 'dangers' as menacing, this is the mother's old-fashioned fear, which most of the children experience as a challenge rather than as a threat. The over-riding impression, however, is one of engaging humour. Both the people and the animals are cartoon-like caricatures. We are reminded that this is after all a game, which should not be taken too literally.

### *The written text*

The written text (Figure 5) gives instructions for playing the game. It defines the different roles for participants, the spatial requirements, the script and the sequence of events. It provides the rules that govern the actions and enables one to understand how the game unfolds and concludes. In articulating what children need to play the game, no distinction is made between real players

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<sup>3</sup> The words being shouted are hard to read. The first line says, 'Mama ke tshaba tau' (Mama, I am afraid of the lion) and the second line is indecipherable. The words and the child's posture contradict one another.

(children) and make-believe roles (mother, lions). Players and 'a large space' are presented as being of the same order of requirement for the game.

Figure 5: *Bana baka e tlang gae*

**Bana baka e tlang gae**

1

We need 5 lions.  
We need children.  
We need a mother.  
We need a big space.

2

The mother stands at the door of the house and she calls the children.  
Mother: Bana baka e tlang gae. (My children come home).  
Children shout: Re a tshaba (We are scared).  
Mother: Le tshaba eng? (What are you scared of?)  
Children: Re tshaba ditau. (We are scared of the lions).  
Mother: Ba ba nthatang le ba ba sa nthateng e tlang gae!  
(If you love me or not come home).

3

The children start running home. The lions chase the children who dodge and duck and pull and hide and run away, but the lions catch some children.

4

When the children get home they say to their mother:  
Children: Kabošiga ga go iwo sekolong.  
(Tomorrow we are not going to school because on the way  
the lions are going to chase them).

5

The game starts again. Now there are more lions because the children who were caught become more lions.

6

The game goes on until all the children are lions.

7

At the end the mother is without children.

This written representation of *Bana baka e tlang gae* includes the words of the game that are shouted as cues for action but it is less easy to see the spatial

organisation of the game than in the drawing. The mood in the written text is also different from both the video and the drawing: here the children say that they are scared of the lions that lie in wait for them; they describe the struggle that ensues to escape the lions, and they voice their reluctance to go to school. In the end there is no escape: all the children are caught and the mother is left alone. The game itself could be a representation of the fears of both mothers and children in communities where the dangers are real and children have to walk home unescorted. It could as easily reflect children's reluctance to go home when mother calls, or to go to school, when they could be playing with their friends.

In order to support the children in Grade 4 to produce this written text Langa returned to the classroom. She worked with the class as a whole, asking questions with the students responding individually. This breaks with production in the other two modes and marks a return to schooled literacy. First, she established the genre by asking students to answer the following questions in their own languages and to think about what the Australian children needed to know in order to play the game.

- What materials will they need?
- What instructions do we need to give them?
- What is the correct order for the instructions?

Allowing the children to use the full range of their multilingual resources enabled all the children to participate and to hone the information and the instructions before they were translated. Once the class was satisfied with the formulation, someone in the class who could, translated the words into English with help from other children and with help, when necessary, from the teacher. Langa wrote what the children told her in point form on the board and a scribe copied out the instructions. We decided to use point form for two reasons. A numbered list of instructions is appropriate for the genre and short point-form text was more suited to the children's linguistic abilities. Later, I typed the instructions, so that the students would experience the pleasure of

seeing their words in professional-looking print <sup>4</sup>. Slowly, step by step, the children built up the instructions for their games.

In addition to using the children's multilingual resources to enable them to produce and then translate their instructions for playing the game, the teacher validated the use and translation of the township chants and songs in the children's written texts. Because the video text includes songs in the children's African languages, their use in the written text was naturalised – they needed to provide the words of these songs for their Australian audience. The inclusion of the children's languages in writing for circulation outside of South Africa, validates linguistic hybridity in written text and becomes an important means for children to display their multilingual identities to their Australian peers. Four of the eight games in the archive include children's songs and chants in African languages.

*The interplay of design, power, access and diversity in the Games project*

Access, diversity and a theory of power underpin this project which focuses on multi-modal text production. The power vested in knowledge lay with the children as they knew more about their games than we did. In schools that are only beginning to work with child-centred approaches to education, members of staff were able to experience children's expertise as non-threatening and they could see the value of using the knowledge that children bring to school as a resource (Comber and Simpson, 2001; Vasquez, 2005 ; Moll,1992; Dyson, 1993,1997, 2003). In making their games part of the curriculum, in inviting children to record and share their games, we gave their everyday out-of-school knowledge a privileged status. That we were interested, and that they were allowed to play these games out of the classroom during school, increased their pleasure. But it was the knowledge that children in Australia were the real audience that gave the work meaning. That children elsewhere might play different games, or the same games differently inflected, energised the project, and the sharing across diversity offered the possibility of real cultural exchange.

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<sup>4</sup> Now that the school has computers, this work can be done by the children themselves.

The project gave students access to dominant literacies, powerful technologies, and the means of production. We wanted students to see themselves as knowledge makers, who could produce artefacts (a book, a video) rooted in their own lives that would be valued beyond their own local context. We wanted young Grade 4 children to imagine themselves as agents whose placed and embodied knowledges mattered to their peers on the other side of the world.

Literacy in this project is embedded in a set of relations that positions multi-modal textual production as a form of global mobility, with real readers and viewers across the world who without the the affordances of text, would otherwise be out of reach. Literacy here is precisely not 'isolated' or 'detached from any interlocutor' or 'somehow self-contained, complete' (Ong, 1983:132). It enters into practices of circulation which in a modest way helps students to see themselves as part of the global flow of information and knowledge. It gives them a glimpse, in Grade 4, of a wider world to which they can belong, and in which they can claim a space for themselves. In the cross-country literacy project we wanted students to begin to imagine themselves as players on a world stage thus increasing their capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2002). These ideas are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: The interdependent model for critical literacy

Power without design	The deconstruction of power, without reconstruction or design, removes human agency.
The recognition of power, for example, exclusion from the class of knowledge makers, who contribute to the global flows of information, is interrupted by the circulation of children's texts.	
Access without design	This maintains and reifies powerful forms without considering how they can be transformed.
While students are given access to the production of written text, in a genre important for education and in a powerful global language, they are allowed to transform the genre by the inclusion of an African language.	
Diversity without design	Diversity provides the means, the ideas, the alternative perspectives for reconstruction and transformation. Without design, the potential that diversity offers is not

	realised.
The imagined differences between children's games in different countries become a productive resource, which is realised by the production of texts in different modalities.	
Design without power	Design, without an understanding of how powerful discourses/practices perpetuate themselves, runs the risk of an unconscious reproduction of these forms.
In South Africa, discourses of schooling often exclude children's funds of knowledge, in the search for quantifiable outcomes. Similarly code-switching, while recognised as natural in oral interactions, is still not encouraged in children's writing. This project does not reproduce these normative practices.	
Design without access	Runs the risk of whatever is designed remaining on the margins.
Access to powerful forms, digital technologies and the means of production are key to this project, as is access to new publics and practices of circulation. It matters that these games travel. Where the project is limited is that students did not handle the digital technologies themselves.	
Design without diversity	This privileges powerful forms and fails to use the design resources provided by difference.
Students were allowed to use a range of forms to express their local knowledge. (In addition to games, children also made toy cars from wire and demonstrated hair-braiding).	

### *The reconciliation pedagogies project*<sup>5</sup>

Design articulates differently with power, access and diversity in the Reconciliation Pedagogies project (Ferreira et al, 2006). In this project researchers worked together with teachers to imagine what reconciliation work in South African classrooms might look like ten years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began its work. Working across the disciplines of English, History and Art in three secondary schools proved productive. What one of the English teachers described as 'art envy' moved the classroom work from written text to multimodality, culminating in students

<sup>5</sup> Ana Ferreira, Hilary Janks, Ingrid Barnsley, Charles Marriott, Monique Rudman, Helen Ludlow, Reville Nussey, worked together on this project over a period of a year. Barnsley, Marriott and Rudman are the three secondary school teachers; Ferreira, Janks, Ludlow and Nussey are teacher educators based at the University of the Witwatersrand. This section of the paper is indebted to Ferreira et al (2006).

producing postcards to encapsulate their understanding from, or experience of, the project.

Ferreira et al, (forthcoming) provides an overview of the project which in 2005 had two distinct phases. In the first phase the teachers encouraged students to work from their own experience of being sorry in order to respond to a range of stimuli. The following examples are typical of the work produced by students in the different classes.

- a drawing of a girl who is 'sorry for herself' with a rationale in writing;
- a drawing which explores the relationship between a son and his now dead father who appears as a ghost at his own funeral with a written explanation;
- a letter from a boy to the school principal apologising 'for being involved in a fight at school and then arguing with the prefects and teachers' together with a collage depicting male violence;
- a letter in which Macbeth apologises to Duncan for killing him.

Where they did offer social commentary this was not tied to a particular South African sensibility. They produced, for example,

- a drawing of women as cut-out dolls. In her rationale the artist explains that she 'refuses to apologise for being different' (Student's rationale)
- a letter from Jennifer Lopez to 'all the animals she's killed by wearing so much furr' (Student's explanatory comment) with a collage of women wearing fur coats.

In summing up the work of this first phase of the project, we recognised that

we had not engaged with reconciliation in a historically contextualised way. As a result students had taken individual and personal approaches to reconciliation as 'sorry' work in their own lives (lower case, little *r* reconciliation) rather than a social and political approach to Reconciliation (with an upper case, big *R*)<sup>6</sup> (Ferreira et al, 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> We have based the idea of little 'r' and big 'R' on Gee's (1990:142) little 'd' and big 'D' discourse.

While we were working with new multimodal literacies, the work was not critical. Even where the texts touch on relations of power (as in the drawing of the cut-out dolls, the collage depicting male violence and the anti-fur collage) this leads to back to the individual and the personal rather than to an analysis of the social. There is little analysis of power, no use of diversity as a resource for new ways of seeing, and little sign of disruption or change. As this was part of an international project on Reconciliation Pedagogies, the students did have some sense of a wider audience for their work, of greater access to new publics.

These concerns led us in the second phase of the project to collaborate in designing a unit of work on the TRC. Despite our fears that students were resistant to engaging with the past and despite our own reservations about the TRC process <sup>7</sup>, we believed that investigating South Africa's attempt at national reconciliation could produce a more critical pedagogy. The classroom work was based on four pedagogical moves:

1. Providing students across the schools with the same basic information on the TRC process;
2. Positioning students as researchers who could interview adults in their communities to ascertain how the TRC affected people they know;
3. Requiring students to present their findings to the class;
4. Requiring students to reflect on the project by designing a postcard that captured in word and image what stood out for them from the TRC project. Students were also asked to produce a written reflection.

Inviting students to investigate their own communities led to important learning experiences in those classes where students had differential access to informed people. Across the different classes, students' access to interesting narratives depended on their identity locations and the funds of knowledge available in their communities. For many students, this was their first experience of a curriculum that privileged the subjugated knowledges of

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<sup>7</sup> For a fuller discussion of both these points, see Ferreira et al (2006)

their communities. For the first time, who the students were that had access to the appropriate cultural capital shifted.

Some of those more privileged children, sort of white suburban group<sup>8</sup>, were really disappointed in their parents. They were upset that this thing, that they were hearing was so momentous, had been ignored. (Teacher, Research Circle transcript, 17 October 2005).

This displacement was not contested. Because many of the students were profoundly moved by the stories they were uncovering about what had happened to members of their own families during the apartheid struggle, what they had to offer was recognised by the class as valuable for everyone. One of the teachers reported that

when they were giving some examples of apartheid atrocities, they were the quietest class I've ever had ... Everyone was listening, even the total skater boy hooligans ... everyone was listening, listening, listening. (Teacher, Research Circle transcript, 17 October 2005).

Not only did some of the children come to see their own families in a new light but the students and the teachers learnt to see one another differently. In one class in particular, this constituted what Kamler and Comber (2005) describe as a 'turn-around pedagogy'. Because this teacher was deeply affected by the story of one of the class 'thugs', who learnt 'life-changing stuff and was really saying deep things', she learnt to read him more sympathetically. In the first two pedagogical moves of this unit of work, access to information and knowledge intersected with diversity to change the power relations in the classroom, as the personal intersected with the political. In the one small class where students did not have access to diverse funds of knowledge, there was far less engagement with the project.

By positioning students as researchers of history who could teach one another, the teachers made it possible for the students to engage with South

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<sup>8</sup> That access to different understandings of the struggle against apartheid is still racialised in South African classrooms is not surprising. At the same time, it is important to stress that the split along racial lines was not absolute.

Africa's oppressive past. In writing about students' reluctance to deal with the past, McKinney argues that,

We ... need to take seriously the difficulties of young South Africans of living with the legacy of an oppressive past that was not of their making... We cannot ignore students' feelings of entrapment, accusation and despair and in doing so we need to find ways of tapping the optimism about being South African that many of these young people express (2002: 71-72).

According to Desmond Tutu in his introduction to the TRC report (1999), the TRC project stands at the cross-roads between 'a past marked by conflict, injustice, oppression and exploitation' and the future promise of 'a new and democratic dispensation characterised by a culture of respect for human rights' (Tutu, 1999, TRC report, 1:20). Because of its location at this specific, historic juncture, in their postcards students could choose to look backwards to a painful past or forwards to a born free future. In addition, because the TRC was itself contentious, the students felt able to take up their own positions in the design of their postcards. It is clear from an analysis of these 71 postcards that these positions are socially rooted and informed by the politics of history, place and identity. (See Figure 10).

Because postcards are spatially condensed multi-modal texts, students had to capture their ideas in a single image and an abbreviated text. By and large they used the verbal mode to express an attitude or position or to describe, narrate and report. The genre of the postcard-picture appears to have freed students to work more symbolically. The visual mode lends itself to abstraction and metaphor and many of the students were able to produce powerful images. Figure 10 includes images that stand out either visually or because of their metaphorical significance and Figure 11 includes four full postcards. These examples are included to give a sense of the potential of this pedagogy.

Figure 10

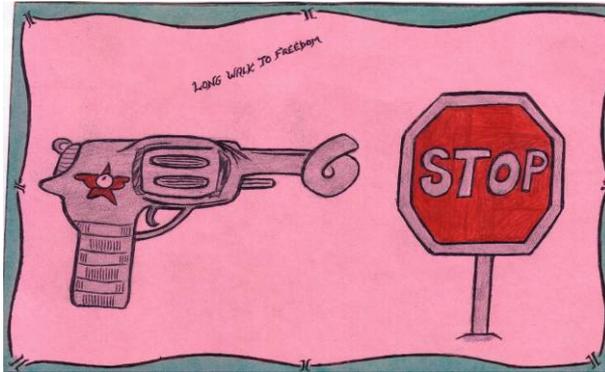
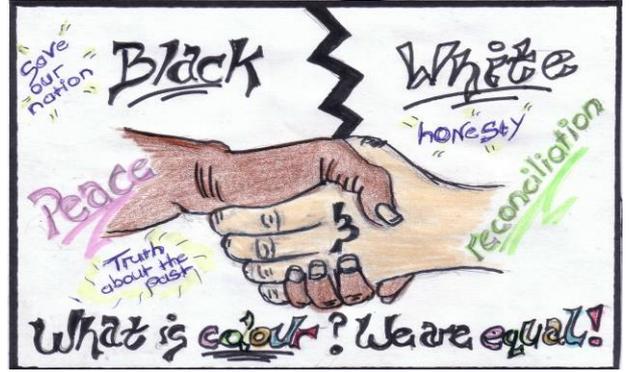
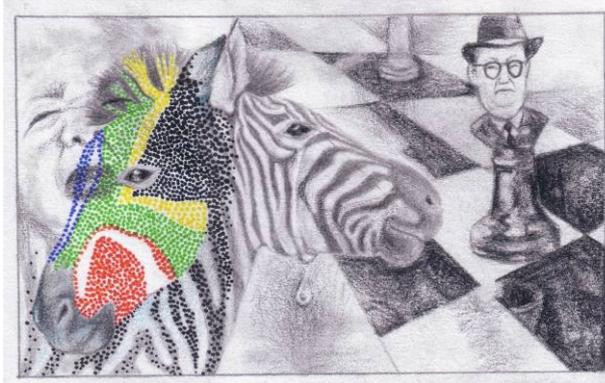


Figure 11



This is exactly what happened to you. You people tried to come clean, instead you added on more blood to yourself. You will always remain with blood on yourselves.

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
The person reconciling

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
The victims



The building is labeled T.R.C Dry Cleaners as I believe that the TRC was just to give people the opportunity to remove the blood of the people they killed, just as the sign says. However I do believe that the T.R.C Helped unite our country and truly make a New South Africa. This is represented by the flag. The background shows how the different race groups mix

To: Jenina Kanyee  
121 Indian Street  
Lenasia  
Johannesburg  
Gauteng  
South Africa, 2004



Shape of the future  
Truth and reconciliation  
is the water  
of our land.  
We have to deal  
with the past  
in order to shape  
the future.

Addressed to: \_\_\_\_\_  
Winnie Mandela  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



The two phases of the project help us to understand how work that is critical needs questions of power, diversity, access and design to pull together and counterbalance one another. In the first phase of the project, design is tied to personal experience and individual creativity. It allows students to think about 'sorry' work in the context of their own lives and their personal relationships. Although not critical, because it remains decontextualised, a-historical and uninflected by questions of power, diversity and access, the focus on reconciliation with a small 'r', provides a pedagogical platform for phase 2: the TRC project. In this second phase, itself a re-design, what counts as valued knowledge disrupts existing relations of power in the classroom. Previously excluded community funds of knowledge enter the curriculum when teachers use diversity in the class as a productive resource. In this way all the students are given access to a range of perspectives and insights from across the racialised divisions in our society and an opportunity to learn from one another. This recognition of the other in itself contributes to the national project of Reconciliation and in a small way to the critical project of social transformation. The interdependence of power, access, diversity and design is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Interdependence in the Reconciliation project.

Power without design	The deconstruction of power, without reconstruction or design, removes human agency.
A focus on the abuse of power in the past, without the possibility of transformation removes human agency. This leads students to resist learning about South Africa's history. In phase 2 of this project, The TRC faces the past while at the same time offering students a way forward.	
Access without design	This maintains and reifies powerful forms without considering how they can be transformed.
Access to knowledge without the ability to remake it creates the sense of entrapment (McKinney, 2004). The TRC project invites students to understand each others' past in order to remake their futures.	
Diversity without design	Diversity provides the means, the ideas, the alternative perspectives for reconstruction and transformation. Without design, the potential that diversity offers is not realised.
In phase 1 of the project students rely on their own design resources. In	

phase two diverse funds of knowledge inform what students design.	
Design without power	Design, without an understanding of how powerful discourses/practices perpetuate themselves, runs the risk of an unconscious reproduction of these forms.
In phase 1, design is based on interpersonal relations of power within a discourse of humanism; in phase 2, subjugated knowledges enter the classroom to de-stabilise this dominant discourse.	
Design without access	Runs the risk of whatever is designed remaining on the margins.
In phase 1 students' work is based on personal experience and there is no access to a broader community's funds of knowledge. In phase 2, marginalised knowledge moves to the centre and is privileged in the classroom.	
Design without diversity	This privileges powerful forms and fails to use the design resources provided by difference.
Phase 1 fails to use the design resources provided by difference. In phase 2 diversity is a resource for a critical engagement with the past while providing possibilities for the future.	

## Conclusion

It is important to recognise that power, diversity, access and possibilities for redesign manifest themselves differently in different contexts and different classroom projects. Table 4 provides a summary of the different articulations of these concepts in these two very different projects.

Table 4

	Games Project	Reconciliation Project
Power	This project gives children's local knowledge a privileged status and validates their home languages. Children have the opportunity to see themselves as knowledge makers who can contribute to the global flow of information.	What counts as valued knowledge disrupts existing relations of power in the classroom by changing which students have the appropriate cultural capital. Subjugated knowledges destabilise dominant discourses.
	Children are given access to	All students gain access to a

Access	dominant literacies and the means for producing their own book.	wider range of community funds of knowledge.
Diversity	Here the diversity is provided by the link between a school in South Africa and a school in Australia. Local knowledge is sent abroad and children in Australia are the real audience that children in South Africa have to imagine.	This project only works because diversity within the classroom leads students to an engagement with the past through the narratives of real people, the family and friends of their classmates. Here the personal is constructed within social relations of power and diversity is a resource for seeing history differently.
Design	In using their own languages, the children are able to redesign the dominant monolingualism of South African texts.	Different community funds of knowledge provide the class with other ways of knowing that give them the resources needed for design and re-design.

Power, diversity and access are always inflected by context, so that the conditions of possibility for both design and re-design are always historically and politically specific. Because literacy is at the centre of the politics of text and identity we have a responsibility as educators to create opportunities for students to reflect critically on their world in order to re-imagine and re-design it - to rename it - so that they can act in ways, however small, to make a positive contribution to the creation of a humane and hopeful future.

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