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Leveraging Critical Diversity Literacy (CDL) to Promote Social Justice through Reflexive Research in Higher Education

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Submission date: 5 March 2024; Acceptance date: 22 May 2024;
Publication date: 18 June 2024

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ABSTRACT
Critical Diversity Literacy (CDL) is a lens we can use to achieve social justice consciousness among privileged identities in academic spaces. CDL, by Melissa Steyn (2014), consists of ten criteria that reveal how and why specific differences make a difference. Among other things, CDL exposes the workings of power through structures and individual complicity within structures. CDL is about having the capacity to read the complexities of the twenty-first-century world. The article argues that CDL nurtures the development of "critique towards" normalised quotidian language and personal prejudices in research in higher education. Critiquing and interrogating our positionality comes with the literacy of social, political and economic scenarios that play out in our practices. Using the intersections of race, gender, and disability, the article shows how researchers can use Steyn's ten CDL criteria to acknowledge differences in research in higher education. In this article, the researchers argue that the university, its curriculum, pedagogy, and research methods are contested

cultural terrains. The article illustrates how CDL can challenge some limitations of traditional research methods in creating positive social justice outcomes.

KEYWORDS
Critical Diversity Literacy, pedagogy, social justice, university, diversity
DOI: 10.13169/intecritdivestud.6.2.00134

Introduction

The Critical Diversity Literacy (CDL) framework by Steyn (2014) provides various frameworks to interrogate power. CDL informs the approach of the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies (WiCDS) in its educational and advocacy initiatives (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014). WiCDS is a centre that seeks to produce critical research that recognises power as the focal point of interrogation, seeking to determine how and why normalised accounts of reality are legitimised as the proper regimes of thinking about the world. Critical perspectives also seek to expose the concealed structures of power deployed in its construction and maintenance and the disempowerment of others (Cannella & Lincoln, 2012). CDL is a critical thinking approach, but we employ it in the current article in areas of research and higher education.

CDL is a set of theoretical tools formulated by Steyn (2014) to deliberately engage with how power influences differences that matter. According to Steyn (2014),

> Critical Diversity Literacy can be regarded as an informed analytical orientation that enables a person to "read" prevailing social relations as one would read a text, recognizing how possibilities are being opened up or closed down for those differently positioned within the unfolding dynamics of specific social contexts. (p. 381)

CDL is self-reflective and realises that in as much as we "read difference in the world … we also write it in that we participate in the production of scripts that help or harm other people" (Steyn, Burnett & Ndzwayiba, 2018, p. 3). This is key to reflexive research practice that uncovers and recognises the difference that the researcher's difference makes (Reay, 1996). It echoes Pascale's (2018) call for scholars to turn decolonial lenses on the epistemic foundations of their endeavours where she argues that: "As scholars concerned with equity, we must always ask how, and to what extent, our work is implicated in systemic inequalities" (p. 46). CDL is a ten-point distillation of critical theories that state skills required for a conscious and just engagement with human diversity (Steyn, Burnett & Ndzwayiba, 2018). We have devised ten ways to think about our research tied to the existing ten CDL criteria. These will be outlined in the final section of the article.

Among the other characteristics of CDL, is its attempt to capacitate people with an understanding of how some differences are constructed as those that make a difference while others remain unmarked (Hall, 2007; Steyn, 2014). CDL enables one to engage with the discourses circulating within the various definitions of being a particular type of human being. Steyn (2014) posits that:

> Having a language for CDL assists our agency not to be in the grip of dynamics that we cannot name; it enhances the capacity to recognize, point out and insist on the reality of the practices, strategies, and effects of the operation of power on difference. (p. 385)

This article argues that the often-unnamed relationships established in research can be relationships of domination depending on the actions and decisions researchers take during their stay in the space. It also seeks to flesh out the importance of being conscious of differences while conducting research. This is based on the realisation that social research is always political (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 76), and it has the potential to reproduce existing social, economic and political power arrangements. Research risks duplicating the university's dismembering effects which are a consequence of its coloniality (de Sousa Santos, 2012; Gaidzanwa, 1995; Grosfoguel, 2002, 2007; Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Quijano, 2000; Vanyoro, 2020). These scholars define coloniality as the continued existence of the colonial matrix of power's influence in modern Global South institutions. Coloniality speaks to power arrangements that are influenced by multiple identity markers such as race, gender, and disability. Coloniality of power is a term developed by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano to critique the endurance of colonialism. Grosfoguel (2002, p. 4) defines coloniality as the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of formalised colonial administration. Therefore, the university and its research office form part of the enduring colonial institutions of domination. Using the intersections of race, gender and disability, the article shows how researchers can use the ten CDL criteria by Steyn (2014) to acknowledge differences in research conscientiously. By acknowledging that the curriculum, research methods and pedagogy are a contested cultural terrain (Lather, 1991) the article explicates how CDL can been used to challenge some limitations of traditional research methods in coming up with praxis-oriented research.

Since research and data analysis are historically based on formulaic and evidence-based techniques, they are susceptible to operating under limitations that reproduce essential representations of research participants, groups, or experiences. This is even more likely if we consider that research and data analysis processes are structured within pedagogical prescriptions and assumptions that are based on raced, gendered, and abled institutionalised colonial legacies. Pascale (2018) posits that:

> Many disciplines continue to naturalise scholarship by teaching research methods—techniques for data collection and analysis—without also teaching the epistemological and ontological logics that constitute the range of valid methods. (p. 52)

As such, there is a continuous transmission of methods that do not always consider the different contexts in which the researcher is located.

Kobayashi (1994) posits that "every discursive field is a site of negotiation and struggle for power, and the politics of doing fieldwork will inevitably come up against the politics of the field" (p. 79). One's internalised prejudices and surrounding socio-economic and political structure will interact with research in complex ways that demand individuals to look for potential biases. Therefore, this article considers how researchers can use CDL to read their imbrication with power systems in the research field.

Where and for Whom Has Knowledge Been Historically Produced?

As we have already shown, research and the university have both been normalised as white (colonial), male, and able-bodied, making them dismember non-Western communities. As Pascale (2018, p. 54) shows, research methodologies are historically produced social formations that circumscribe and produce culturally specific forms of knowledge. This is knowledge based on power relations that make the "researched" the other to the researcher, who in comparison most likely occupies a position of both epistemic and systemic privilege. Against this backdrop, it is worth acknowledging the quotidian power contestations that research presents for those seeking to carry out politically emancipating research and those to which emancipation is deemed to be "given" through research.

The habitus of the modern university is not for the subaltern. Foucault (1980) argues that no naturalised form of knowledge is instituted without the influence of some form of social determination. All canonical knowledge is produced in relation to hegemonic systems of power, which are (West)Eurocentric, colonial, white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal, christonormative, capital(abl)ist, anthropocentric, nationalist and militaristic. This makes it knowledge that was generated based on certain lenses rendering it important to be critical of such hegemonic knowledge. These hegemonic knowledge systems subtly manage the type of oppression we (re)produce if we go about our work with non-reflexivity. Mignolo's (2007) colonial power matrix explains our immersion in modernity and what it means for our relationship with the university. The colonial power matrix operates through control of the economy, authority, gender, and sexuality and control of knowledge and subjectivity (Mignolo, 2007). The Bologna process upon which the modern university is built is highly colonial, breeding institutional authoritarianism under the guise of scholarly authority (de Sousa Santos, 2012). This scholarly authority is phallic, male, hetero-patriarchal, and able-bodied. Mignolo (2007) argues that modernity is deeply connected "with the geopolitics and body-politics of the knowledge of white European and North Atlantic males" (p. 13). This statement illustrates how the world is built on Eurocentric ideas of what it means to be human, that is, white, male, heterosexual, and able-bodied.

Power relations are not just economical but operate "at all levels of interrelation between the different domains of the colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 15). This matrix also ties into Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's (2001) ideas on kyriarchy, a term she used to refer to a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, ruling and oppression. Kyriarchy addresses the intersecting power systems that lead to the subordination of others. We, therefore, acknowledge that knowledge and bodies are (de)legitimised through kyriarchal power relations that the university and non-reflexive research mediates.

Disciplines also enforce exclusionary practices. According to Pascale (2018), "Social sciences were designed by people with power and privilege to examine 'others' those who are poor, disenfranchised, or 'foreign'" (p. 48). Using the framework of coloniality of power, scholars (Pascale, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2002, 2004; Quijano, 2000) have identified how the enduring legacy of colonialism still influences current research and university

practices. Quijano speaks of how the colonial thrived on the standardisation of categories such as the "racial", "ethnic", "anthropological", or "national" as categories based on "objective", or "scientific", inquiry (Quijano, 2007, p. 168). Likewise, among the research's current pitfalls is the risk of universalising local experiences or adopting European epistemologies and methodologies for local use without reflexivity. We know that universities have historically served the expansion of empire (Grosfoguel, 2002), therefore we need to be critical before uncritically adopting the methodologies they teach or the competitive lifestyles they naturalise.

Colonialism is a system that thrives on politicising differences that make a difference (Steyn, 2014). Likewise, today's standards for scholarship are compromised by methodologies and methods entwined with colonial productions of difference. Coloniality still has power over what is considered quality, standard, rational, or measured, and that is male, white, and able-bodied. This leads to a scenario where those whom the university considers more human become the most successful. This is in keeping up with the university's role in inculcating exclusionary discourses and practices. For example, colonialism's historical dependence on research to disseminate eugenics shows that the academy and research served to provide a "facticity to racism" that appealed not to the spirit but to a politicised reason that operated in a particular mode (Pascale, 2016, p. 157). Hence, the worst news, even for emerging social-justice-oriented researchers, is that Western culture maintains hegemony over the production and legitimation of knowledge (Lather, 1991), particularly in the university.

In fulfilment of their studies, individuals produce research that buys into these standards, and the line between social justice researchers and imperialists becomes blurred by unconscious complicity. For Grosfoguel:

> The success of the coloniality of power is achieved by producing subjects who, while socially located on the oppressed side of the colonial difference, think like those in the dominant positions—that is to say, they take up dominant epistemic frames. (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213)

As a result, being socially/geographically located on the oppressed side of power relations will not guarantee that one is thinking from a subaltern epistemic location (Pascale, 2018, p. 51). Being from the global south does not necessarily mean we are inclusive in our approaches.

(Dis)Abilityism is one of the norms overlooked by academics. (Dis)Abilityism is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of activity restrictions on people with impairments and undermining their feelings (Thomas, 2004). The colonial power matrix and kyriarchy underscore the need to view disability as a product of myriad and complex systems of dismemberment and dehumanisation rooted in colonialism. Coloniality allows us to see the disabling effect of neo-colonialism and capitalism on former colonies and the continued dismemberment of their people. According to Muzite (2020) as cited in (Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020), there is an urgent need to see colonialism for what it truly is in the context of disability; that is, as something more than a metaphor for domination but as

a historical event that is responsible for the creation of disability. For Pascale (2018, p. 47), "the dehumanization that colonizers inflicted upon people around the globe was constituted through ontologies that rendered colonised peoples (and consequently their nations) as fundamentally deficient and developmentally primitive" (p. 47). This "deficiency" discourse forms part of the repertoire of colonialism that saw the need to attribute "both physical and psychological inadequacy" to the black other. This resulted in systemic ableism, a norm that marginalises people living with disabilities (PWDs) and those defined as racially inferior. It is easy to medicalise disability by conflating PWDs with helplessness as objects to be studied rather than as subjects and agents of research (Chappell et al., 2014). Explaining his use of youth with disabilities as co-researchers in sexuality research, Chappell posits that "youth with disabilities are social agents capable of constructing and deconstructing their social world within a reflexive and enabling research environment" (Chappell et al., 2014, p. 386). This means non-disabled researchers let PWDs lead the research process, instead of assuming that they are incapable of doing so.

Goodley (2013) posits that disablism intersects with hetero/sexism and racism in how they both rely on infantilising and hypersexualising women and Blacks.

While all colonial knowledge is racialised, all knowledge is gendered. McKeganey and Bloor posit that a "taken-for-grantedness of gender influences" still exists (1991, p. 198). There is silence on how male researchers' gender increases the possibilities of normalising maleness as the gender of our research participants (McKeganey & Bloor, 1991) and of the legitimate academic.

Bypassing Ignorance Through Reflexivity

According to Strickland (1994), the challenge of difference is not its opposition to sameness but its potential to expose relations of domination that those in positions of power would rather not discuss or deal with. As a result "the social sciences have been predicated on 'an epistemology of ignorance', a state of 'unknowingness', that obfuscates our privileged positions of power" (Pascale, 2016, p. 158). For Reay (1996) "Even when differences are integral to the data, researchers can choose to ignore them" (p. 445). This forms part of a strategy that erases differences to conceal power. This can also be done through discourses portraying identities as the same. Pascale (2018) shows how culturally meaningful forms of "'difference' enunciate relationships of power by establishing a purportedly oppositional category to difference— an imaginary 'sameness' or homogeneity" (p. 47).

Such ignorance ties to Steyn's (2012) framing of an ignorance contract, a *modus operandi* of power where the privileged fail to acknowledge that the oppression of the other exists. Ignorance is also acknowledged in Moya's (2011) assertion: "Our identities predispose us to see or not see; listen to or not listen to; read or not read; cite or not cite; concern ourselves or not concern ourselves with specific Other peoples, issues, and societal dynamics" (p. 79). An ignorant, non-reflexive nationalist researcher, for example, is more likely to reproduce essentialist ideas of the nation without being able to question the logics of power loaded in this very idea. The researcher's identity and positionality will have a pro-nationalist discursive and epistemic effect that can, at best, be racist, tribalist, or xenophobic.Adopting

a reflexive approach is therefore vital for researchers. Reflexivity involves the researcher asking themselves how their positionality predisposes them to make certain assumptions, ask specific questions, see certain problems, and shape it into their "interpretive horizon" (Alcoff, 2005). Interpretive horizon is essential to understanding situated reasoning and how context impacts how one experiences the world (Alcoff, 2005). According to Bailey, White and Pain (1999), reflexive management of the research process should be applied to each stage, from the early planning and establishing of relations in the field to the writing-up of conclusions, in order to pursue qualitative validity. Reflexivity is not just a one-time event but involves explicating the researcher's position concerning the research (Steyn et al., 2018, p. 3). We must carry out a continuous reflection on our positionality throughout. According to Reay (1996), it is important to state the difference between someone just saying something and exploring its consequences for our research. In their writing, a researcher can identify as white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male, but reflexivity calls for much more than that. It involves an open examination of whether any or all of these characteristics of one's self-identity contribute to bias (Reay, 1996). Writing about reflexivity is one thing, and being reflexive on a practical level is another. The latter involves realising the "knowledge-generating potential of identities" (Moya, 2011, p. 79), that is exploring how our identities are complicit in shaping the type of knowledge that flows into existing canonical knowledge systems. This helps to adopt decisions that reformulate concepts and the inclusion of alternative thinking domains that produce pluriversality.

At this juncture, we will outline ten non-linear CDL criteria that are useful for the reflexive researcher:

1. Construction of Differences Within Unequal Power Relations

The first reflexive criterion entails thinking about the construction of differences within unequal power relations. Steyn (2014) states, "All of our categories for thinking about difference are socially manufactured within unequal power relations." They do not represent a predetermined, natural order. Researchers must ask how differences encountered in research are socially constructed and held in place through systems of power that naturalise the "unnatural". The naturalisation of the "unnatural" reinforces centres and margins of humanness, creating false hierarchies of being that result in inclusion or censure. Steyn (2014) shows how we are socialised in a world where specific differences make a difference while others remain unmarked. The differences that make a difference are complicit in the construction of binaries such as man/woman, able-bodied/disabled, or white/black. "In every instance, one side of the binary is valued more highly than the other" (Steyn, 2014). One end of the binary is guaranteed of rewards, while the other is censured and erased. These binaries seek to cement human social understandings into self-fulfilling "common sense" (Steyn, 2014). Hence as researchers, we need to ask ourselves whether we are buying into the dominant constructions of what is rendered common sense or natural. Suppose a general assumption among a group of people is that women occupy a naturally subordinate position. In that case, male researchers must ensure they are not buying into this bias.

Researchers also need to ask which differences are visible or salient and which are most likely repressed. This inquiry ensures that we do not prioritise other differences at the expense of erasing other forms of difference, such as disability. Pascale observes the erasures perpetuated by traditional research methods founded in "epistemologies of the North Atlantic" (Pascale, 2018, p. 49). The enactment of silence by scholars is most profound when the absences produced by research methods are thoroughly naturalised (Pascale, 2018). One must be conscious of the hierarchy operating between the differences. By recognising this difference as important, one can come up with different ideas on how to work with this hierarchy. For example, when thinking about violence, there is a tendency to attend more to the materiality of violence while neglecting symbolic violence. The concept of symbolic violence refers to non-physical violence that manifests itself through power disparities between social groups. Given that distinctions are unique and ever-changing, it is crucial to pay attention to the ways in which centres and margins are replicated, moulded, and redrawn in various contexts.

2. Value of Different Positionalities

The second criterion involves recognising different social locations' unequal symbolic and material value (Steyn, 2014). Understanding that different social locations entail different rewards allows us to empathise with marginalised people and hold their experiences respectfully. This entails refraining from treating experiences as "evidence" or "data" but as a reality that demands critical attention. In an interracial space where one is doing research, white male positionalities invite more rewards than Black male positionalities. Through this recognition, one attempts to open room for Black men to speak and be heard, thus avoiding the pitfall of facilitating the silence of the Black men's voices in this racially diverse group. In such spaces, we also need to ask the following questions: "How is human value/mattering distributed? Which positionalities are taken as normative? Which are included/excluded, and who belongs?" in this space I find myself in. This may take the form of reflexive exercises that allow for reflection on one's social, economic and political positionality.

Background research on the area where the research site is located allows for a macro view of how disadvantaged people's voices are generally perceived by that community. This is important because while they appear separate, power and context are intertwined in specific ways (Ahonen et al., 2014). Understanding how rewards, freedoms or choices operate in that broader community provides insight into how (de)valued voices are conferred currency. Overall, these perceptions shape how censuring, disciplining, and policing of actions operates within the group. For example, if PWDs are undervalued by their community, they will most likely be undervalued or censured during the research process. It also becomes difficult for PWDs to voice out their concerns. This is because "it is difficult for non-dominant and subordinated people to express their personhood in ways that … fall outside of the 'admissible' ways of being endorsed within their societies" (Steyn, 2014, p. 382). If researchers do nothing about this dynamic the views of non-disabled people are more likely to dominate or to be taken more seriously than those of PWDs.

3. Intersectionalities

Even within supposedly similar groups, some differences emerge along age, gender, sexuality, and class. Therefore, it is important to examine how intersectionality shapes the social currency of supposedly similar groups. The third criterion thus entails investigating how intersectionalities are either played off against one other or mutually sustaining. One must consider the evidence (if any) of how discursive, psychological or physical violence operates at different intersections. This is because not all people benefit from the same power systems in the same way, a phenomenon captured in intersectionality theory (Collins, 2000). According to Collins (2000), intersectionality refers to a matrix of oppression where interlocking systems of oppression are constantly interacting. For Nash (2008), all women are intersectional subjects whose womanhood will intersect with other social positions to multiply disadvantage them. While a similar group can pull together towards similar experiences, a variant axis of privilege of oppression and privilege impacts other resistances, refusals, and oppositional bits of knowledge. The question is: "Can I recognize non-dominant bits of knowledge or bodies operating at specific intersections, and how are they being disqualified/discredited/undermined?" An example is the typical undermining of indigenous medicinal practice in spaces where Western medicinal practices are valorised. As previously shown through an outline of the colonial power matrix and kyriarchy, coloniality can be considered the basis of power formations that create zones of being and zones of non-being (de Sousa Santos, 2012). These indigenous medicinal practices become associated with epistemologies emanating from the zone of non-being. Therefore, our research processes need to acknowledge the possibility of different identity markers that shape a researcher's experiences and prejudices. This will enable one to carry out socially relevant research that is cognizant of differences that shape our collectivity. Intersectionality capacitates a researcher to read how identity markers and subjectivities do not exist in isolation but speak to one another in nuanced ways.

4. The Currency of Systemic Oppression

While it is easy for some to assume that the past is ahistorical, it is imperative to consider the currency of systemic oppression. Powerful groups tend to lose track of the earlier processes involved in forming inequities by attempting to create an ahistorical present. For example, white men in a focus group may respond to questions about their privilege as merit-based without acknowledging how racism afforded them an economic advantage. A historically informed inquiry undertaking involves asking what and why we are encouraged to remember or forget. According to Steyn (2014), these remembering and forgetting struggles are about current social arrangements, as groups jostle for relative advantage. Researchers who view research and data with an "it's all in the past" mentality risk reproducing the domination of others by refusing a critical memory of the past and how it has led to our current social arrangements. Hence, it may be important for researchers to be curious about the following questions: "In this research context, how is the past being used to entrench or dismantle privilege or oppression? How are struggles for redress or recognition being opened up or closed down? How can relations be shown to be contingent, not inevitable?"

For example in a conversation that deals with the question of poverty in South Africa, the researcher needs to pick up how some participants may take up an ahistorical approach that depoliticises the impact of the apartheid history on economic and spatial distribution. The last question allows researchers to open to the idea of present-day events as complicit in constructing future inequalities.

5. Understanding That Social Identities Are Essentialist

The fifth category involves a realisation of the essentialisation of social identities. Steyn et al. (2018) argue that this criterion is based on the following observation:

> Power normalises social identities through naturalising them, creating a sense that there is something essentially (biologically or culturally) different about a particular group of people that we have no social control over. These stereotypes mask the socially constructed and contingent nature of all social identities. (p. 5)

Most identities are naturalised through essentialisation. While other stereotypes are built on so-called social realities, essentialisation is the process through which all social groups, e.g. Muslims, are assigned the fixed identity of the terrorist. According to Kobayashi (1994):

> Racism and sexism have gained social and academic legitimacy through practices of essentialism (ascribing essential and immutable qualities to a category of persons on the grounds of "race" or "sex") and naturalism (maintaining that such qualities are "naturally" rather than socially produced, and therefore part of a natural order that cannot or should not be changed). (p. 76–77)

If a researcher's interpretation of the status quo follows essentialist notions, we are unlikely to pull out the social constructivist nature of "fixed" identities like gender and race. Likewise, in a focus group, the more privileged in a group tend to essentialise other social groups through either xenophobic or homophobic remarks. The essentialisation of these social groups involves ascribing immutable characteristics to them. Some participants may declare knowledge of these differences and how for example, they have an immigrant or gay friend. However, acknowledging these differences is not enough if the differences are pathologised (Reay, 1996). Hence, Kurzwelly, Rapport, and Spiegel (2020) "conclude by considering social anthropological approaches that might permit an understanding of individuals and society in ways that neither lead to nor need essentialist thinking and instead recognize the contradictoriness, flux, and incompleteness inherent in social life" (p. 65). This is an anti-essentialist approach.

According to Calas and Smircich (2009), if we are not careful as researchers, we risk reproducing the assumptions taken for granted attached to the research subjects. For Kobayashi, a concept that is so naturalised that no one, including the researcher, has even thought to question it, is the most difficult to understand. We must go beyond essentialism and naturalism to ask the right questions (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 78). To achieve this, one must unnaturalise one's bias by invoking an "unnatural discourse". Invoking unnatural discourse

forms part of the broader project of what we refer to here as "making the normative strange". This will be discussed in the last section of this article.

6. Grammar and Vocabulary

Because language occupies an essential role in research, it is apt that the sixth CDL approach to research involves grammar and vocabulary: "The possession of a diversity grammar and a vocabulary that facilitates a discussion of oppression and privilege" (Steyn, 2014, p. 385). This is based on the observation that language occupies a pivotal position in enforcing social stereotypes. Researchers need to be aware of how closure is encouraged in a group discussion and how to open this up. By capacitating research participants with language that names power systems they become more equipped to explain power systems that they would not otherwise have been capable of naming. There is always something at stake in how different people are naming differences. For example, what white people refer to as colour blindness may be experienced and named as racism by a black person in a group. Therefore, those who assume a grammar and vocabulary that names power systems and equips vulnerable people are more likely to enhance the creation of emancipatory communities while conducting research.

The question people are encouraged to ask under this criterion is how recognition is encouraged or discouraged by the language used in a space. Steyn gives an example of how language was used in the reframing of disability by the Disability Rights Movements. Once considered the product of one's impairments, disability is now understood as something that comes about because of "the normalizing pressures of an ableist society" (Steyn, 2014, p. 386). Language can, therefore, shift understandings of norms and marginality.

7. Coded Hegemony

The seventh criterion looks at coded hegemony and how the obfuscation of the operations of power takes place. Hegemony is when one group is dominated by the other by consent (Gramsci, 1971). For example, a White man might not tell a Black woman that he is oppressing her, but he creates the necessary conditions for her to accept lower wages. Likewise, racial advantage can be referred to as "colour blindness", thus concealing the racist ideologies behind it. Coded hegemony can also be read through how unearned benefits/advantages are being "rewritten" as merit, virtue, etc. This rewriting shifts the focus from treating disadvantage as a result of oppression to dealing with it as a regular part of social relations. Coded hegemony, therefore, involves the deflection of oppressive relations. However, once a researcher identifies how obfuscation occurs, they can also ask questions about who is benefiting and what is being curtailed through coding.

This obfuscation is partly because those in dominant positions would instead not acknowledge or deal with differences (Reay, 1996; Strickland, 1994). Their deflection may also take the form of legitimisation, co-option or containment. Legitimisation affirms the "truthfulness" of reasons behind the circumstances of differently positioned individuals. Meanwhile, co-option involves making the oppressed believe their disadvantage is because of their shortcomings. The consequence of both these processes is containment, a phenomenon where resistance is constantly placed in relation to the hegemonic code.

8. The Material

Researchers will benefit from understanding who in their research is materially dependent and on whom they are dependent. While neo-liberalism may have individuals believe that the economy has open opportunities for everyone, understanding who gets to be economically active in advantageous or disadvantageous ways is critical. The material encapsulates the structural matters at play in shaping different positionalities. It involves inquiring about the spatial arrangements shaped within power relations. For example, how is the fact that people in the research focus group stay in different parts of the city evidence of power relations? How is the fact that I am a researcher who occupies a materially different position from them critical in building empathy towards others? Steyn (2014) posits that the arrangement of space reveals much about the proper relationship between people and reflects social norms. Spatial arrangements invoke the question of distance and proximity and how we are made to feel unrelated to oppressed people.

The material is not only spatial but also involves objects such as clothes, food, digital gadgets or properties and how certain forms of signification with social consequences are attached to them. This is because these objects can be used to either mark differences or translate between differences. The material also involves how taste is involved in marking socially salient differences. As part of CDL reading, taste is not considered innocuous as and when it comes up in research or in the higher education space. For example, race and class differences are easily masked as taste differences. Things, commodities, and tastes are vehicles that maintain or communicate positionalities (Steyn, 2014). They create discursive and material distance between people. For example, if someone says they buy their lunch from a certain cafeteria, that also reflects their taste, race, and class. While researchers can easily overlook these objects and commodities and their relationship to personal identities and power, we must understand that commodities always circulate in socially significant ways. This means the circulation of commodities relates to economies of power and requires critical interrogation.

9. Emotions

Emotions and affective economies are also important in research. This is because while feelings are easily overlooked, they are caught up in collectivities (Steyn, 2014). Identifying and naming feelings is an integral part of a researcher's CDL sensibilities. This criterion asks the following questions: "How is bonding/belonging being negotiated to create socially significant differences? How do different groups matter?" One may ask: "What feeling worlds are people participating in?" "How do these oppose or support dominant ideologies?" For example, a group with more similar beliefs and characteristics tend to agree or stick together in a focus group discussion. This closes out other perspectives that can be considered to be in the minority.

The question of emotions also assists the researcher in framing critical questions. The researcher can ask that individuals reflect on their emotions and that they be conscious of what makes them sad, happy, angry, and why. Likewise, researchers sometimes feel complacent toward certain issues, and we need to ask ourselves why this is the case. In a group set-up, we need to consider who is doing the emotional labour, to whom compassion, empathy, indifference, contempt, or rejection is encouraged and how relationship, separation,

reciprocity, or non-reciprocity are being established between people. Sensitivity to the dynamics will allow researchers to identify their prejudices and allies, activists, and oppressed or dominant parties within a group.

10. Transformation Praxis

The primary purpose of any socially conscious actor is to someday contribute to transformation. Transformation praxis, the last criterion, describes where theory meets practice. It involves recognising and thinking about the power dynamics in operation and having a general conversation about those dynamics. It also involves the following questions to our experiences and observations: "Is there evidence of disidentification? How are the prevalent social relations being interrupted towards greater social justice? How can these efforts be made more visible, strengthened?" Steyn et al. (2018) posit that the result of all nine criteria is social justice:

> Understanding, and committing to, the preceding nine principles should ultimately result in taking action in the real world to change relations of domination and inequality. Once people learn the ability to see through the coded structures and harmful arrangements sustained by unequal power, injustice becomes undeniable, and action unavoidable. (p. 6)

This criterion is about putting all nine criteria into action.

A Summary of CDL-Related Questions

The CDL-related questions researchers can ask themselves during research are summarised in Table 1 and 2 below.

Concluding Remarks: Making the Normative Strange Through Alternative Methodologies

One of the ways to avoid conduct that reinforces binaries and norms involves what we referred to earlier as "making the normative strange". To make the normative strange, researchers must consider themselves immersed in the collective politics of knowledge making and the university. Identifying how we are positioned as researchers in our societies can help us remember who we are and the difference we want our work to make in other people's lives through research. This is no simple task. However, it can help us think of ways to unnaturalise traditional models by invoking an "unnatural discourse" (Kobayashi, 1994), which can help us research with the people, not on or against them (Smith, 1999). We unnaturalise our usual ways of researching and understanding differences by opening methods up to different communication modes. Overall we need to allow participants to express themselves in their language, make our research spaces disability friendly and create spaces that will enable queer people and women to express themselves. There is also a need for future research that deals with this phenomenon of making the normative strange through research.

Table 1 CDL Criteria and the respective summary of questions for researchers

Criterion 1: Construction Of Differences Within Unequal Power Relations	Criterion 2: Value of Different Positionalities	Criterion 3: Intersectionalities	Criterion 4: Currency of Systemic Oppressions	Criterion 5: Social Identities
Which differences are operating in this context?	How is human value/ mattering distributed?	How are intersectionalities operating? Are they played off against one other? Mutually sustaining?	Is there an attempt to rewrite the past?	Are social groups being essentialised?
Which differences are visible/ salient?	Which positionalities are taken as normative? Which are included/excluded and how do these determine who belongs?	How are systematic benefits being played out?	How may there be a tendency to lose track of the earlier processes of forming of inequities? Is there an attempt to create an ahistorical present?	Are immutable characteristics being ascribed to them?
Which differences may be repressed?	How are rewards/freedoms/ choices operating?	What evidence is there that/how violence is operating at different intersections (Discursive/ psychological/physical)?	What are we being encouraged to remember/ forget?	Is there evidence of internalised oppression/ dominance/inferiority/ superiority?
Is there a hierarchy operating between the differences?	How are censuring/ disciplinary/policing actions operating?	Where are the resistances/ refusals/oppositional bits of knowledge happening?	How is the past being used to entrench/dismantle privilege/ oppression?	How are the social identities related to the social realities in this context?
What evidence is there of how violence is operating, be it discursive/psychological/ physical?	How are blindnesses/denials operating?	Can I recognise non-dominant knowledges operating at specific intersections?	How are struggles for redress/ recognition being opened up/ closed down?	
How are these differences being naturalised?	Whose views tend to dominate? Who is taken seriously?	How are they being disqualified/discredited/ undermined?	How can relations be shown to be contingent, not inevitable?	
How are centres and margins being reproduced/reshaped/ redrawn?	Are there differences within positionalities? Different stances within positionalities?	How can organic experience be legitimised?		

Table 2 CDL Criteria and the respective summary of questions for researchers

Criterion 6: Grammar and Vocabulary	Criterion 7: Coded Hegemony	Criterion 8: The Material	Criterion 9: Emotions	Criterion 10:
How is closure being encouraged? How can I open this up?	How may obfuscation be operating here?	Who is materially dependent on whom?	How is affect circulating among/ between collectivities? How are feelings caught up within collectivities? Which feelings?	Who recognises the dynamics at work?
What is at stake in the ways differences are being named?	Who is benefiting? What is being curtailed?	Who gets to be economically active in advantageous/ disadvantageous ways?	How is bonding/belonging being negotiated to create socially significant differences?	Who thinks about them?
How is recognition being encouraged/ discouraged by the language being used? What are the effects?	How are unearned benefits/advantages being "rewritten" as merit, virtue etc.?	How are the spatial arrangements shaped within power relations?	How do different groups matter?Which objects attract strong emotions, and why?	Is there evidence of disidentification?
	How is attention being deflected from oppressive relations?	Is distance used to signify a moral/social order?	What feeling worlds are people participating in? And me? Who is doing the emotional labour?	How are the prevalent social relations being interrupted towards greater social justice?
	How is ambiguity being encouraged here?	How is the built environment reflective of power relations between differences?	To whom is compassion/ empathy/indifference/contempt/ rejection encouraged?	How can these efforts be made more visible, and strengthened?
	How is legitimisation/ co-option/containment operating?	How are objects being used to mark differences, or translate between them?	How is relationship/separation reciprocity/non-reciprocity being established?	
	How can the norms operating be made visible?	How is taste marking socially salient differences?How are commodities circulating in socially significant ways?		

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