Gendered Learning/Learning Gender in Do-It-Yourself Communities of Practice

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, and has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university or institution.

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This 12th day of June, 2019

For my aunty,
Cynthia Larkin Redlich
(17 February 1937 – 18 December 2018)

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Abstract

In this research, I explore the learning that occurs in a case study of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) workshops for women. DIY is associated with men's work in the traditional division of labour in the home. Many women as a result, are excluded from this field of knowledge. This research is situated in the field of feminist pedagogy. This feminist pedagogical theoretical framework is extended through an engagement with social constructionist theories of learning and everyday social practice. The learning experiences and the effects that these experiences have on the everyday life worlds of women are analysed. There is a community of practice in these workshops which is caring and engaged. The workshops provide a dialogic co-creative space where women can learn DIY in an embodied way. However, despite providing a safe space for women to do identity work and question hegemonic constructions of gender, these workshops are also spaces where dominant discourses of gender difference are reiterated. Furthermore, the intersections of gender with race and class affect the dialogic co-production of knowledge. The study highlights the importance of ongoing communities of practice to support learners who have entered a field of learning which has previously excluded them. It also emphasises the importance of constant conscious engagement with the social dynamics of learning spaces.

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1 Introduction

In the 1980s on Johannesburg's west rand, I was a teenager at a state high school. One day I decided that I would like to do woodwork instead of housecraft. I thought I may need to be able to make furniture and fix things in the future. Sewing and cooking were not a priority for me. I also used to assist my dad with his DIY, but he never taught me how to do things, I was just there to hand over tools and holds things together. I wanted to know how to make the things he could. The request to do woodwork was met with reactions ranging from raucous laughter to frowns of deep concern. No one actually said that I couldn't, and no one explained why I couldn't. I just knew that I shouldn't ask again. Decades later, I saw an advert for a women's DIY workshop. My desire to learn DIY had not gone away, I had tried to teach myself skills with limited success and if anything, my desire to learn DIY had deepened. I decided to attend the workshops.

In this research, I would like to explore DIY workshops for women as a community of practice which places into question hegemonic norms conveyed through formal education and habitus. The sub-questions of this research concern how the legitimate peripheral participation in the DIY community engenders feelings of empowerment. In this way, I would like to examine the subversive potential of learning and performing a skill associated with the life worlds of men. At the same time, I would like to explore the power relations associated with this community of practice. Using theories from critical feminist pedagogy and concepts such as habitus and performativity, I would like to examine how women reinforce hegemonic gendered stereotypes intra communicatively in the DIY community. The significance of this study is that limited gender categories have to an extent been placed into question and girl children are excelling in fields previously closed to them, but the habitus of gender identity remains similar and backlash politics (Faludi, 2006) have reinforced many of these identity categories. In commenting on the ways in which schooling continues to reinforce gender stereotypes, Richardson (2015, p. xi) writes:

> But if the teachers in this book did not cause sextyping, they certainly did not challenge it…or even talk about it. They accepted and often reinforced what we academics say is "constructed"—a view that gender is a performance. It is not innate, genetic, or inborn. Very few teachers wanted to be what the great sociologist David Riesman once called a "countervailing force"—the daring idea that educators should occasionally question what others take for granted. In fact, they celebrated the labeling and stereotyping that would, in their opinion, prepare the young to be happy heterosexual adults.

In this research, I embarked on an ethnographic research journey to examine the ways in which adult women have begun to claim a space in a field of learning which has been particularly difficult for them to enter – DIY (do-it-yourself). The aim of this research then is an exploration of the extent to which DIY workshops for women counteract hegemonic norms of femininity in a specific case study. To achieve this aim, I attended and participated in workshops to document the learning experiences of the attendees and to document the gendered dynamics of the workshops. I interviewed facilitators – oldtimers of the DIY community of practice and analysed fieldnotes to understand the effect of the DIY workshops on the lifeworlds of the attendees. I also analysed artefacts associated with the DIY community of practice to deepen an understanding of the socio-political nexus of DIY and women.

2 Methodology

The theoretical and methodological bent of this research is firmly housed in a social constructionist paradigm. Social constructionism is a response to the limitations of positivism. The positivist method is based on the premise that there are universal truths that can uncovered with the right knowledge base and the right research tools. Its origins lie in the natural sciences and the social sciences have sought to emulate the method. This method, however, has been brought into question by both sciences. In the natural sciences, the universality of truth has been questioned. For example, gravity was always considered to be one of the absolute constants of the natural world. We now know that gravity fluctuates across the globe and over time (Hirt et al., 2013). Social constructionism (which has weaker and stronger forms) (Allen, 2005; Sayer, 1997) is the idea that truth and knowledge are constructed in social systems (which are themselves constructions) rather than pre-existing external realities (Baert, Weinberg, & Mottier, 2014). It is a term used in the context of humanism and poststructuralism and is a teleological approach to the analysis of social systems. Teleology is the theory that our identities and knowledge systems are a product (or an effect) of the social (Perlman, 2004).

In accessing these teleological constructions, pedagogues and other social scientists have presented several research techniques based on the idea that society is constructed through discourse. Discourse, as the term suggests, is a focus on the ways that different phenomena are spoken about. This 'speaking' is not just the spoken word in a conversation or a lecture, but refers to the symbolic order that constructs and makes sense of objects and social processes. If we think of the work of Baudrillard (1981), these objects (including speech acts) then come to signify – act as a referent to – a discursive order. To access this discursive order, social constructionists have developed specific ways of gathering and analysing data. The task of the analyst in a social constructionist framework is to look at artefacts and examine their meaning to question the everyday use of symbol systems (Keller, 2013) and the relations of power associated with them.

In a clear exposition of critical discourse analysis, Keller (2013) traces the theoretical basis of the technique to the work of Althusser who emphasised the relationship between ideology and materiality. Institutions materialise hegemony; they situate identities (and are thus the basis of identity formation); and ideologies are held in an institutional matrix. So, when we think about how identities are formed in educational settings, we need to think about the range of institutions that serve identity construction. Similarly, educational institutions are key in analysing the identity formations upheld by other institutions. Anything associated with these institutions can be analysed as a component of the symbolic order of the institution and researchers frequently analyse multiple artefacts produced by the institution and other institutions to establish a richer sense of context.

Feminist approaches to methodological praxis enrich and extend critical discourse analysis by encouraging researchers to take stock of their socio-political position regarding the communities that they research (Haraway, 1988). Feminist researchers are encouraged to foreground the experiences of women in marginalised communities (Hesse-Biber, 2012) and to be critical of their own gaze (the way that they construct the research to conform with hegemonies) (Mohanty, 1988). Furthermore, feminist methodological theory and praxis promotes an awareness that researchers inhabit power relations which may take voice from participants and claim them in an insensitive manner – either through pity or through imposing an inappropriate

theoretical order on the narratives that they encounter (Butterwick, 2012; D'Arcangelis & Huntley, 2012). Here it is important that there is a radical openness to the voices of participants and to reflect these voices carefully. In response to this challenge, many feminists have completed research using grounded theory. This is a research practice which entails the radical openness of the researcher to building theory from the research gathered rather than entering the field with a defined set of theoretical categories (or hypotheses) and testing for the validity of the theory (Walsh et al., 2015). Autoethnography is another important feature of feminist methodology (Ettore, 2017) and it is common to find feminist researchers narrating their own experiences in feminist research (Gergen & Gergen, 2007). Ettore (2017) argues that autoethnography, while sometimes perceived as narcissistic and irregular by the academy, is a powerful way to bridge the gap (and power relations) between etic (the researcher) and emic research. Autoethnography can act as a device to minimise the dialogic distance between researcher and participant – it emerges from an in-between space (Ettore, 2017; Gergen & Gergen, 2007).

In this research, I intended to maintain a balance between emic and etic positions to build a more dialogic engagement with the subject matter. As with other social constructionist education research, artefacts include ethnographic fieldnotes and participant observation diaries; DIY tools; utterances and performances in the workshops; DIY manuals; and the form and function of the lessons. The approach in this research is idiographic (as opposed to nomothetic). The different artefacts were compared to build a narrative of women and learning in the DIY workshops. I attended four workshops and collected participant observation data. These workshops ran for four to six hours and covered a range of DIY skills. I completed all the workshops with the participants (and even built a few pieces of furniture and completed some home repairs). I formally interviewed the facilitators of the workshops and analysed the notes that I took of the interviews. I also visited different hardware stores and consulted relevant DIY manuals. Detailed field notes were kept of these research experiences and these were later analysed using thematic content analysis. This small localised case study was analysed in terms of the theories surrounding women and learning and adult education, but it was also treated with an openness to emergent themes. To complete the analysis of the data collected, the intention in this research was to extract the stories that the different artefacts told and compare these narratives to one another

and to broader theories. A specific case study approach was selected, but artefacts were also included if they were pertinent to the analysis of the case study. Interpretative thematic content analysis was useful to categorise ethnographic field notes into themes. Some of the themes were established a priori in theories of women and learning, but as other themes emerged from the content, they were included.

3 Literature review

Introduction

When I muse about being a woman and confronting the challenges thereof, I am often struck by the fact that women gained the right to vote little over a hundred years ago. All women in South Africa have only been able to vote for the last twenty-two years while women in Saudi Arabia were granted the right to vote only seven years ago. The late nineteen sixties and seventies saw a burgeoning of thought associated with the liberation struggles of the formerly colonised world and the changing role of women in society. Underscored by a Marxist-humanist framework, feminism emerged in many countries as a project concerned with ensuring that women could reach their full potential. At the same time the idea of popular education to shift false consciousness emerged in the works of the likes of Che Guevara. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian pedagogist was a central theorist in liberatory pedagogy and feminism soon turned to examining the ways in which the identity of girls is constructed in schools, unlearning 'false' conceptions of what women should be and the ways in which women learn.

It is difficult to make the global generalisations of those who are inclined to categorise feminism into different waves. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Western society entered into a phase of profound backlash against many of its central tenets of feminism and campaigns for gender justice (Faludi, 2006), while women's social movements continued to expand in many postcolonial developing economies. The feminist intellectual tradition, like many others, emerged under the influence of poststructural and psychoanalytic positions. Led by theorists such as Butler (1990, 1993), the very basis of female subjectivity was brought into question. Subjectivity was no longer a fixed entity, but a fluid end point of discourse. The body and the institutions which establish and uphold hegemonic norms became the locus of investigation. In developed and developing economies, the backdrop of adult education also shifted

dramatically as capitalism moved into a post-Fordist globalised phase. As economies became more stretched, adult education began to feel the squeeze. The role and demands of the private sector expanded in all aspects of adult education. Adult education programmes had to prove their relevance and popularity. Education became market driven, consumer orientated, and the emancipatory discourse of adult education morphed into one of empowerment – and this often represented the capacity to engage with the neoliberal market. Post structuralism also infused pedagogical theories and writers such as Bernstein presented compelling theories of learning, identity and educational settings drawing on Bourdieu. Knowledge was no longer seen as fixed and conventional wisdoms were challenged. Approaches to women's adult education opened up to diversity in terms of learning styles, what was considered to be valid knowledge and how different groups had differential access to privileged educations.

Andragogy

Adult education is underpinned by two ideological projects. The first relates to the reproduction of hegemonic identity categories. These identity categories in turn uphold the neoliberal state (Mayo, 2009). Neoliberalism marks the moment in capitalism where there is an overproduction of goods. Adult vocational training is a long established discipline associated with Fordist industrialism (Field, 1995). This training was characterised by production line training (using mainly repetition as a learning strategy) and human resource training programmes to learn how to better manage workers (ibid). In post-industrial capitalism, work has shifted away from manufacturing to more tertiary sector (retail, financial services and administration) employment and to a more flexible and adaptable manufacturing workforce (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). For many, vocational training offers a means of skilling or reskilling and has often resulted in people gaining employment, better paid work or starting their own small, medium and micro enterprises (Mayombe & Lombard, 2015). The core political impetus for this kind of training is to for learners to engage in the relations of neoliberal capitalism more effectively.

The second ideological project of adult education relates to the "critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization" (Freire. Paulo, 2005 [1970]). "Critical pedagogy and critical thinking are constitutive of and in

alignment with transformative learning and transformative praxis" (Maseko, 2018, p. 84). Neo-Marxist adult education theorists make the distinction between lifelong learning and critical adult education. Their starting point is Gramsci's analysis of state apparatuses (English and Mayo, 2012). The first is the repressive apparatus and is represented by different elements of state security, the second is ideological and is concerned with upholding the state through a network of cultural and ideological institutions (ibid). Education is part of this ideological state apparatus. The effect is to uphold the status quo – what Gramsci terms hegemony. Hegemony is "the way in which prevailing power relations are maintained through inculcating dominant values, beliefs, norms and discourses, which come to be viewed as 'common sense'" (Bowl, 2017, p. 161). Lifelong learning is associated with upholding hegemony whole critical adult education is concerned with questioning hegemonic constructions.

Radical educators, however, argue that adult education can assist people to question and ultimately liberate themselves from normative systems. Freire's (2005 [1970]) approach, for example, is to use the process of learning to enable people to find critical distance from their own reality and to analyse their life experience and the institutions that serve to influence who they are in a more critical light. Humanist approaches to adult education also engage with this idea of the emancipatory potential of adult education. This is exemplified in the "Learning to Be" report (also known as the Faure report) produced in the early 1970s by UNESCO:

> …the aim of development is the complete fulfilment of man [sic], in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments—as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer…lifelong education can produce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life—'learn to be'.
>
> (Faure et al., 1972, p. vi)

There is a tension between these two ideological projects. In the 1990s, adult education discourse shifted from the liberatory as exemplified in the preceding quote, to one which emphasised skills and competencies to access the labour market (English & Mayo, 2012; Lucio-Villegas, 2015). Adult education shifted from promoting

the collective and improving critical literacy to individuals training for the workplace. As universities were placed under increasing pressure to produce graduates who are measurably vocationally ready, the more critical components adult education have atrophied in formal and less formal adult learning contexts. English & Mayo (2012) document the shift from adult training as a state or NGO based endeavour to a subcategory within the domain of human resources and Lucio-Villegas (2015) argues that this shift is associated with perpetuating the socio-political status quo rather than promoting transformation.

Adult education has complex implications for transformation. It can be both transformative and normative in the same moment. In a form of trickery, what is presented as transformative frequently reinforces normative hegemonic values. For example, Bowl (2017) posits that the idea of empowerment, which so dear to radical pedagogy, has been co-opted into neoliberal discourse. Instead of the rights-based collective empowerment associated with community, empowerment has become a personal responsibility centred on self-management. The meaning has shifted: to be disempowered is an individual deficit (ibid) rather than a function of socio-political institutions. In terms of conventional neoliberal discourse, we now buy and consume training for empowerment.

Formal, non-formal learning and education permanente

In the early 1970s, a strong interest in adult education emerged in developed and underdeveloped contexts (particularly South America). This interest emerged from a crisis in education: curricula were often unsuitable; countries were battling to fund formal education; economic growth and the growth of education were out of phase; there was a disjuncture between education outputs and employability (Smith, 2001). In attempting to resolve some of these issues, pedagogists working for UNESCO introduced definitional categories such as lifelong learning; formal; non-formal and informal education. Phillips Coombs (1968, 1973) was a central figure in both acknowledging the crisis in education and in recognising forms of education other than formal education. He defined informal education as “the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment” (Coombs, 1973, p. 289). Informal learning is regarded as “unorganised and unsystematic”. Writing at

the same time, radical pedagogists like Freire (2005 [1970]) draw our attention to the ways in which established (informal) knowledge bases can be stuck in false consciousness[i]. Nevertheless, pedagogists from the 1970s onwards acknowledge that informal learning is a central component of accumulated knowledge bases which serve to inform the understanding that people have of their environment and self-identification. Despite this exposition, in 1996, Lave commented that although social practice is a fundamental part of learning, it is frequently characterised as “informal”, “limited”, “local” and “disordered”. These derided educational practices, nevertheless, are powerful and robust and effectively question and provide an alternative to formal education. Coombs (1973) defined “nonformal” education as a category between informal and formal education. Unlike informal education, nonformal education is organised, however, does not fall into the established formal system. Coombs (ibid) links a broad range of activities from second chance learner programmes and pre-school to scouts and sports clubs. There appears to be a qualitative difference in intent here both in terms of the educational rationale for the programme and the intent of the learner to acquire a skill or access a knowledge base.

In everyday pedagogic praxis, the divisions between formal, informal and nonformal education are not at all that distinct. Those who enter formal education having been exposed to nonformal and informal educational experiences which align with formal education, are often far more prepared and adept at the formal schooling system. Likewise, much of nonformal learning, is so profoundly influenced by informal learning, that it is difficult to see where the one begins and the other ends. The same can be said for Knowles’ (1973 cited in Bowl, 2017) characterisation of adult learning. In his vision, the adult learner is self-directed; has an established knowledge base of experience and prefers problem-centred learning. A number of theorists argue, however, that Knowles is only describing a certain type of adult learner (feminists pedagogues argue that this is a masculinist construction of learning). Adult learners range in learning styles and established knowledge bases as much as child learners and to orientate adult education to just one style of learning can be exclusionary. Feminist scholars in particular, argue that many women flourish in community lead forms of learning (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; N. R. Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996; Hayes & Flannery, 2000).

Andragogy is a loose concept and a diffuse field that connects to a range of meanings and educational praxes (Lucio-Villegas, 2015). The concept of lifelong learning was first touted as a means to conceptualise informal, nonformal and formal learning and how these interact over time. The reality of lifelong learning is that most of these different categories overlap and are dependant on one another (Bowl, 2017). Radical and humanist andragogists have suggested that lifelong learning (or *education permanente* to indicate its association with critical pedagogy) is the basis of shifting conventional wisdom (Wall, 2017). In this model, andragogy has a far more complex role to play in society. Informal education is the arena in which hegemonic norms are established and preserved (Hey, 2006), but is can also be the arena where adults, in the right conditions, can reflect on their life experiences (Bowl, 2017) and bring different meanings to them which in turn represents a shift in identity. There are also many possibilities to foster cohesion. Amin (2006) argues that for social cohesion to prosper, cities need to develop public life. This idea of public life is centred around connection and solidarity. “It means experimenting in everyday situations that bring people from different backgrounds to work together in projects of common interest, so that a habit of intercultural formation emerges” (Amin, 2006, p.1017). *Education permanente* can challenge preconceived ideas, but it also can also promote sociability as learning communities meet across race, class and gender.

Women and andragogy

In 1983, a group of four women who identified as feminists and education theorists wrote a book together called *Women’s Ways of Knowing*. This was a ground-breaking text and formed the basis of feminist pedagogy and andragogy. The central concern of this foundational work is “to bring attention to the missing voices of women in our theories of how people know and learn” (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996). The five perspectives that form the foundation of their work have since shaped feminist andragogic studies.

First, is the idea of silence (Belenky et al., 1986) and voice. (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996) describe silence as “a position of not knowing in which the person feels voiceless, powerless, and mindless.” Hayes (2001) extends this concept by positing that voice is an active process that embodies connection. There are three types of voice: literal which indicates the way language is used in learning situations;

metaphorical which relates to an expression of identity; and political which relates to power. Voice also refers to ways of talking. *Report* talking establishes a dominant position of individual expertise while *rapport* talk is about building a relationship (E. Hayes & Flannery, 2000). In groups where there are men and women, men are more likely to dominate. In all-women groups there are, however, still dynamics of domination and without ground rules about creating a safe learning space, women may even emulate the confident aggression of men in groups. There are, however, also opportunities for connection and rapport which theorists argue are limited in mixed or all men groups (ibid). Butterwick (2012) reports of an experiment where women purposefully changed the way that they spoke in a seminar to avoid interrupting, lowering the timbre of their voice, inviting others to speak and to refer to women when speaking. While they reported that it was difficult to maintain this behaviour, the tone of the class was dramatically altered. More people spoke and the atmosphere of the group was more contemplative than combative as it was previously perceived.

English & Irving (2015, p. 108) extend the concept of voice, “voice and silence are different for all women”. For example, for many women, silence is a preference, while others may see it as exclusionary. The *silencing* of women’s voices, however, is always oppressive. Voice on the other hand, may take a number of forms including silent protest, dance and other political performances (English & Irving, 2015; E. Hayes & Flannery, 2000). The key message is that there is no specific way of women learning in the same way as there is no specific way for men learning (English & Irving, 2015). At the same time, women frequently require a safe space for learning where their voices can be heard without having to resort to masculinist modes of silencing. English & Irving (2015, p. 112) and Butterwick (2012), however, caution against erring “on the side of having all people feel comfortable, engaged, and have their voices heard both literally and figuratively”. Their concern is that in avoiding disharmony, groups may suppress dissent and “naming and probing problematic issues”. The corollary of voice of course is the listening to others. In an inspiring piece of writing, Butterwick (2012) draws our attention to the identity work that comes with the politics of listening as an act of solidarity. Listening to the experiences of others requires a moral humility – a radical openness to hearing voice with curiosity and sensitivity (ibid).

Second, is the perspective identified in *Women's Ways of Knowing* as received knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986). This is where the source of knowledge and intellectual authority is invested in more powerful and knowing others. There is often an intolerance for ambiguity in the realm of received knowledge and critique and engagement is often seen as challenging and combative. Belenky et al. (1986) argue that this way of knowing presents knowledge as static and fits neatly with Freire's concept of the "Banking Model" of education (Freire, 1974). This refers to what at the time was a taken for granted concept of learning which subjects the student to an oppressive learning structure based on the teacher-student relationship.

> This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)…it turns them into "containers", into "receptacles" to be filled by the teacher…knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing.
>
> (Freire, 1974, pp. 71-72)

Freire (1974, p. 73) names ten characteristics of education. Of interest to this research is the eighth tenet of this characterisation, "the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it". Freire then goes on to compare the relationship of the teacher and the student to that of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. He (ibid) eloquently writes about the result: it is "people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge…"

In their third perspective, Belenky et al., (1986) identify subjective knowing as an intuitive and personal knowledge space. "Subjectivism is for women a position from which they redefine the nature of authority. It is a position at which their views of experts and expertise undergo radical change" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 68) This concept is developed in Lawrence's (2012) work on somatic knowing – it entails listening to the body. Nieves (2012) sees intuition as a skill and a learning resource. Indeed, in many cases, it is intuition that inspires women to seek adult education opportunities in a specific field.

Procedural knowing concerns the techniques and procedures used for acquiring, validating, and evaluating knowledge (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996). This fourth perspective of knowledge is subdivided into separate knowing – this is a critical and (seemingly) impartial engagement with a subject. Connected knowing on the other

hand is empathetic and engaged (Clinchy, 1996). It is about understanding the position, the context and the meaning that the knower inscribes into their understanding. This is another one of the more controversial concepts in the book *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Subjective knowledge and connected knowledge have been critiqued as being solipsistic and relativist. In later publications, the authors are careful to draw a distinction between connected knowing and subjectivism (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996). The intent of something like connected knowing is not to relativize knowledge so that anything goes; connected knowing is about suspending judgement and listening to the places that learners come from (Clinchy, 1996). There is a shift from authoritative interlocutor of knowledge to facilitated co-creative understandings of different positionalities.

Flannery (2000) blurs the distinction between subjective knowing and connected procedural knowing. She rearranges these concepts into two categories: learning through the connection "with/in" self and learning through connection with others. She also conceptualises a break between learning and knowing. Learning with/in the self is about the process of knowledge acquisition which for many adult learners is not as sequential as it is for younger learners. (Although one could argue that it isn't sequential for younger learners either despite the attachment that many formal institutions have to it). Knowledge acquisition is a process of gleaning, picking up knowledge when and where you can find it and moulding the connections between them. Learning with/in the self is a subjective process where the self becomes the referent of knowledge as opposed to an external (masculine) voice claiming authority over the internal world of knowledge (Flannery, 2000). Intuition is part of this internal world of knowledge: it is a "unity" of self. Connected knowing is about connection with the voice of self – it is a conviction that knowledge gained through personal experience is the most trustworthy (Flannery, 2000). Learning through connection *with others* is a dialogic mode of learning and knowing. It depends on connection with self. Bakhtin (1984, p. 287 cited in Rule, 2015) expresses the sentiment as "I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance)". Learning through connection with others acknowledges that women often learn the best through interaction. This interdependency leads to relational and collaborative knowing (Flannery, 2000) as opposed to the authoritarian monologue (Rule, 2015).

Connected knowledge acquisition is a much-vaunted concept in women orientated learning and many pedagogues have drawn on the concept to show how girls can learn more effectively. However, there are two glaring critiques of this position. The first is that it appears to emphasise gendered differences and the concept also assumes that all women learn in a similar way. There have been many studies which ostensibly support the different ways in which boys/men and girls/women learn, but none of these have been conclusive in their findings. Flannery (2000) goes to lengths to explain why women learn in a more connected way than men, but also cautions against generalising the way in which women learn. A related critique is that it is assumed that all men are comfortable with learning in the confrontational report talk style of learning. As Faludi (2010) has shown in her book *Stiffed*, men are also limited by normative gendered constructions of identity and this includes learning styles. While learning styles may be associated with a particular gender, women and men have all sorts of learning styles. Transformative learning requires educators to be aware of gendered power dynamics and the "feminist pedagogue will need to experiment with a variety of approaches, be ready to meet resistance, and come to terms with the variety of learners and motivations" (English & Irving, 2015, p. 119).

For some authors, this deep recognition of the other in learning is not enough. They expect connected learning to make further connections outward to "take the learners' points of connection and to link them with larger social issues. We have the implicit mandate created from our political ideas to move deeper with the learner to crucial issues such as feminism, globalization, and world poverty" (English & Irving, 2015 p. 111). Feminist pedagogues such as Tisdell (2000, p.155), argue that knowledge acquisition entails agency through "expanding consciousness, capacity for voice, and self-esteem as knowers construct and express new knowledge and become more fully authors of their own lives". While she embraces the different perspectives of learning discussed in *Women's Ways of Learning*, she critiques this psychological approach to women's learning as being insufficiently concerned with issues of gender, race and class. Grande (2003) argues that (white-privileged) feminist engagement with race and class is insufficient and misguided. This, she argues, is a consequence of much post-structural framing of feminist pedagogy. Post-structuralism regards power as diffuse and Grande (2003) argues that this obscures dialectical power relations. Furthermore,

she argues, white women (teachers) are a central part of racism and to move forward, white feminist pedagogues need to critically engage with their role in the colonial-racist project.

Constructed knowing is the final position presented by the authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Knowledge is regarded as equivocal. This is a social constructionist position which recognises that while objects and phenomena have materiality, as Foucault (1972) shows us, the way they are framed and understood is a product of discursive categories. The process of knowing something is a process of understanding that knowledge is not foreclosed and knowing something is about understanding different modes of knowledge construction outside of self. Knowing is a tentative negotiation of different subject positions in relation to one's own (ever-shifting) subject position. It is about an openness to different knowledge systems outside of the normative, dominant discursive categories that one may find comfortable. A feminist perspective adds to this formulation by asking the knower to critically examine "the hidden agendas of power in the way societies define and validate and ultimately genderize knowing" (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996, p. 7).

In response to Grande's critique and others like her, a more politically orientated perspective of women and learning has solidified over time. "Critical feminist pedagogy stretches beyond personal development and inclusion, as worthwhile as these are, and moves toward social transformation" (English & Irving, 2015, p.104). Critical feminist pedagogy is not a new field and it is an offshoot of the works on critical pedagogy which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1992, critical feminist pedagogy was firmly rooted in poststructuralist feminist theory. "Institutional discourses define the classroom, the teacher and the student…subjectivity, identity and knowledge are the work of schooling" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 2). Drawing on Foucault (1972, 1995 [1977]), the core contribution (amongst many) of the poststructuralist emphasis on critical education is the idea that knowledge is not fixed and that it is embedded in hegemonic discourses and that education is a carrier of hegemonic discourse (Darder & Baltodano, 2002). Furthermore, poststructuralist thought also highlighted the opacity of the taken for granted discursive practices of learning: the conventional wisdoms of learning and curriculum (Slattery, 2013). Post-structural theory opened several avenues for understanding the microphysics of power and identity formation in

educational institutions (Richardson, 2015). In the concept of the carceral archipelago (Foucault, 1995 [1977]), post structuralism also presented a theory of the continuity of discourse across different institutions such as the media, the family, the medical fraternity, the legal establishment and educational institutions.

More current engagements with critical feminist pedagogy still draw on the core perspectives explicated in *Women's Ways of Knowing* but have emphasised and developed two aspects of gendered learning. Women-oriented theories of learning are replete with writings on learning as embodiment. The concept of embodied cognition emerged in relation to the work of neuroscience. Embodied cognitionists question the emphasis of mind over body in the works of many cognitive theorists. They argue that knowing is a result of "bodily experience, possessed of content already, and not given content or form by an autonomous mind" (Anderson, 2003, p. 104). The body is integral to the learning process and to stored knowledge bases. The acquisition of knowledge is grounded in "physical, lived reality" and the body holds knowledge in a largely unconscious way (Rambusch & Ziemke, 2005). In critical performative pedagogy, the body is at the centre of the pedagogical process (Perry & Medina, 2011). There are a number of theories of how the body acquires knowledge. A more functionalist approach emphasises innate qualities and sees knowledge acquisition as a fairly static process. Another approach views embodied knowledge acquisition as a process in which the body encounters dynamic patterns in the everyday life which create a somatic order of perception and concepts (Nūñez, Edwards, & Matos, 1999). The body is viewed as a "site of cultural inscription where norms, practices, and symbols are inscribed by the body and for the body" (Perry & Medina, 2011, p. 63). Drawing on Appadurai's oeuvre, Perry & Medina (2011, p. 70) continue their analysis arguing that this process of inscription results in an imaginary that "is an essential part of the identities we perform, and our participation in various communities". Participation in these communities is a core component of *education permanente*.

Embodiment is a central discourse in feminist theory. Feminists have either viewed the biological functioning of the female body as an impediment to liberation or have reified the female body as the source of feminine power (Threadcraft, 2016). Butler's (1990, 1993) conceptualisation of the body breaks with this tradition. Drawing on Foucault's notion that entry into discourse, rather than a set of prefigured biological

and/or environmental determinants, frames identity[ii], Butler (1990; 1993) contends that it is in this way that the binary of the sexed body is culturally constructed. The repetition of everyday life reinforces the production and reproduction of these constructions. She terms this compulsive repetition of this construction as performativity (Hey, 2006). Butler's work has gained popularity in the field of education. Educational ethnographers have drawn on the notion that identity is relational to analyse the politics of educational subjectivity: to "take up the question of articulating a theory of the psycho-social formation in terms of the 'different' materialities of class, sexuality and gender" (Hey, 2006, p 453 - 454). Richardson (2015, p. 3) sums up the project clearly,

> There is no need for children to learn gender in a binary (male/female) and static manner. Society should be more nuanced by now, and demand that our schools recognize and actively teach about a flexible and ever evolving spectrum of gender.

The second major concern of critical feminist pedagogy is the decolonisation of learning. This project ranges from reassessing the content of learning which is centred on white masculinist Western modalities (Connell, 2007) to thinking through ways in which learning can build and engage a sense of solidarity for the other (English & Irving, 2015). The premise of this turn in critical feminist pedagogy is that mainstream feminism homogenises the experiences of women and lacks an anticolonial analysis (D'Arcangelis & Huntley, 2012). The call in this literature is for white feminists to acknowledge their role in the colonial project and to acknowledge the differential access that women have to education and other forms of privilege (D'Arcangelis & Huntley, 2012; Grande, 2003) and to use this access to build a pedagogy of solidarity (Butterwick, 2012; Manicom & Walters, 2012). There is a responsibility to create a secure space of learning by coproducing ground rules and fostering a core sense of respect and inclusion (Manicom & Walters, 2012).

One of the issues for critical feminist pedagogy and critical adult education in general is ensuring that the Master/Slave dialectic is not reproduced in the adult educational setting. In 1994, bell hooks poignantly described her experiences of alienation at school.

> School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was

> suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how we lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us.
>
> (hooks, 1994, p.3)

hooks writes from a north American context, however, her experiences of alienation in the schooling system can be applied to the experiences of many people from marginalised communities. In addition, women have experienced a profound pressure to subscribed to gendered norms[iii]. White women were accepted into the education system so long as they conformed to the hegemonic notions of white femininity. Black women were expected to conform to hegemonic neo-colonial principles of subservience and obedience. In their book, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) describe the creeping process of imposing a set of hegemonic norms such as these as symbolic violence. They define this as the imposition of cultural meaning while ensuring legitimacy by rendering the power relations involved in this process opaque. This results in a set of social conventions which are rarely interrogated.

Symbolic violence is maintained and normalised in habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures". Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977, 31) application of this principle to learning provides a powerful means to understanding the power relations associated with education both formal and informal.

> PA [Pedagogic Action] entails pedagogic work (PW), a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce durable training, i.e. a habitus, the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after PA has ceased and thereby of perpetuating in practices the principles of the internalized arbitrary.

Bernstein (1990) elaborates on Bourdieu's concept of pedagogic action. In answering the question as to why working-class children, despite numerous interventions, continue to do poorly at school, Bernstein draws on Durkheim's conceptualisation of class and Bourdieu's analysis of social practice. In his book, *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) develops his ideas about how the hegemonic cultural order of social class is established and maintained. Bourdieu's habitus is a diffuse model of culture and power in that it argues that codes which symbolise the hegemony are intertwined in different artefacts and social behaviours. Bernstein argues that education works as a major

building block of this codification of the hegemonic order. The education system is organised to uphold privilege through the pedagogic text. This refers to the collection of discourses, educational artefacts (such as the classroom and its equipment and textbooks) and social relationships (the relationship between teacher and student) which maintain the dominant hegemonic order. The pedagogic text does not operate on its own but is part of a larger system of codes that maintain privilege.

The traditional (positivist) understanding of education is that the student develops the capacity to acquire and process information at different developmental stages. Assessment is to ascertain whether the student has acquired this information sufficiently. In terms of Bernstein's schema, however, evaluation rules (of which assessment is part) are about enabling the "acquirer to understand what counts as legitimate and illegitimate communication, social relation or position" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 66). Recognition rules, as Bernstein terms this process, assess how well the student conforms to and plays the educational field which in turn points to their capacity to conform to and play the rules of the hegemonic order. Students are expected to understand the classificatory system of the privileging text and infer the meanings that should be collated to construct their legitimacy within the institution (Singh, 2002).

While Bernstein is concerned with a class, his analysis is a powerful tool to understand gender in child and adult learning. The pedagogic device codes privilege and also maintains specific modes of masculinity and race. Despite many shifts in education, schooling is still orientated to white middle classed children. Likewise, adult education is often orientated to learning skills to enable adults to better serve neoliberal capitalist frames of reference. Before moving forward, however, it is essential to acknowledge the complex kyriarchies of race and class in this equation. For example, I am struck by the growing number of adult training schools for domestic workers which have emerged in Johannesburg in the last fifteen years. It is predominantly white middle classed women who take their helpers to these trainings or hire helpers from agencies which guarantee that helpers have been on domestic training courses so that they can fulfil the gendered division of labour in the home and continue to work with relative ease. Intersectionality is a heuristic device to think through the various degrees and contexts of oppression that occur along lines of race, class and gender (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). It is also "a tool to interrogate and intervene in the social

plane" (Cho et al., 2013, p.786). In interrogating the "curdling" (C. L. Griffin & Chávez, 2012) of intermeshing oppressions, the pedagogic device can be made more context sensitive. The device could be envisioned as layered and as each layer of layer is peeled back, there are new layers coding a different form of pedagogic text which cluster around a core of white masculine privilege.

Bernstein's pedagogic device remains a powerful mode of analysis but has been critiqued by several scholars. One of the most sustained of these is the critique that Bernstein fails to provide a praxis for transformation. There is an emphasis on "reproduction over transformation" (Mutch, 2003, p. 394). A related criticism is that Bernstein's work is rooted in a cultural deficit theory and Bourdieu himself pointed out that Bernstein reified the codes of the middle classes (Sadovnik, 2001). Bernstein does not effectively account for the richness of the knowledge base of those entering formal education. In recognising that learners bring an existing knowledge base to the learning experience, Lave and Wenger (1991) counteract Bernstein's reification of the middle class in their concept of the community of practice. Lave's (1996) project is to provide an alternative conceptualisation of learning which recognises that formal education only serves to further marginalise already disadvantaged learners. She, however, is more concerned with a praxis of learning which does "not naturalize and underwrite divisions of social inequality in our society" (Lave, 1996, p. 149).

In Lave's (1996) ethnographic approach to learning, she describes social practices as powerful and robust forms of learning. Drawing on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and the role of the more knowledgeable other, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that far from informal and disorganised, learning in the "lived-in" world is effective within shared communities. Communities of practice are "an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities...a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98).

The praxis of communities of practice is called legitimate peripheral participation. If one can imagine newcomers to a community of practice as entering the periphery of the knowledge and skills housed in the community, oldtimers are those who have

maintained a relationship with the community of practice for some time and act as guardians of the knowledge base. As one moves from newcomer, to oldtimer, one's knowledge base is expanded. Lave and Wenger (1991) caution that the process is not linear. They use the image of centripetal participation to show that there are multiple cores and peripheries in any community of practice and it is this diversity of engagement that makes for a growing knowledge base. Furthermore, they argue that knowledge acquisition in communities of practice is non-linear. The process is fundamentally different to that in the traditional formal institution. Instead of the power relations associated with the teacher/learner relationship, learning occurs in a "richly diverse field of actors". As learners become more established in the community of practice, their identities shift: "changing knowledge, skill and discourse are part of developing an identity...If the person is both member of a community and agent of activity, the concept of the person closely links meaning and action in the world" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 122).

Learning, gender and performance

Lave and Wenger (1991) present a model of learning which is connected and dialogical. It goes a long way to imagining the praxis of democracy and humanism. Nevertheless, the concept has its critics, James (2007) for example, notes that while Lave and Wenger acknowledge that there may be power relations and issues with access and transparency in communities of practice, they do not explicate this, nor offer a way of minimising these negative aspects of communities of practice. One of the ways in which we can understand the praxis and power relations associated with gendered learning in communities of practice is through the idea of performance. Bourdieu often refers to performance – it is the performance of cultural interlocutors that conveys habitus. He does not, however, develop the concept. Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) work on performativity extends this engagement and provides a framework for analysing the embodied practices of the community and how these reinforce or subvert hegemonic norms.

Jean Lave (1996) writes about gender and communities of practices, however, the most sustained critique of gender performativity and communities of practice comes from the ethnographic research of discourse analysts (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Davies, 2005; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1999; Ehrlich, 1999; Holmes & Meyerhoff,

1999; Ostermann, 2003). In these discussions, authors are interested in the relationship between habitus and gendered communities of practice through language. Ostermann's (2003) discussion of how two gendered communities (organisations), one consisting of policewomen and one consisting of mainly university-educated women, deal with women reporting domestic abuse, is an elegant exemplification of this work. She argues that the relationship between habitus and communities of practice can be found in language: discourse being the symbolic asset acquired and conditioned by social, economic and political factors. In communities of practice, women (amongst other groups) mutually engage in specific activities which give rise to a set of socially shared linguistic and non-linguistic practices. Once again, there is a return to the dialogical process of coproducing knowledge (albeit in a far more extensive exposition of the concept) – to voice and identity. There is a complex interrelationship between communities of practice, gender performativity and habitus. This interrelationship provides a powerful theoretical framing for the collection and analysis of research on the relationship between gender, power and performance in communities of practice.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I have attempted to weave an intellectual tapestry to enable a conversation about the meanings and engagements presented in the case study of women learning DIY. The name of this tapestry is Voice, Silence, Listening. The work of Bernstein allows us to hear how the lack of habitus of DIY constructs a story in many women's lives of the self as dependent. Lave and Wenger's work on communities of practice and theories of learning and embodiment offers a means to analyse the dialogic teaching processes in the context of the case study. The extensive engagement of feminist pedagogy with the power dynamics associated with voice and the coproduction of knowledge frames an analysis of the identity work associated with learning DIY and the microphysical power relations between learners and teachers. The feminist pedagogical *oeuvre* also teaches about the politics of silence – how voices are silenced by those who perceive themselves as more powerful; how holding silence, opens safe spaces for others to speak.

4 Empirical Findings

Entering the field

It's a crisp morning, I arrive at a neat suburban townhouse. I am greeted loudly and happily by a black woman bedecked in a bright yellow Builder's Warehouse cap and T-shirt. I instantly like her. We enter a room, stuffed with wood, board, and cheap instant coffee. There is a discussion in full swing about the reactions of friends and family to the announcement that the participants were going to a DIY workshop. It's an animated discussion, full of laughter. There are nine women collected around the table. Seven of them, middle-classed white women; a Chinese woman and an Indian woman make up the cohort. The facilitator wears her bright yellow Builder's Warehouse cap the whole time. As I walk in, I hear a woman speaking loudly, "My boyfriend just guffawed", another woman adds, "even my female friends were like – whoa".

Do it MYSELF

Could you imagine meeting someone who was unable to cook even the simplest dish? They would be completely dependent on others to make a sandwich or scramble an egg. Most of us would find this scenario unacceptable, yet there are millions of women who are in this situation when it comes to DIY. They are unable to do the simplest maintenance to their physical environment. They cannot drill a hole in the wall, fix a cupboard or change the washer on a dripping tap. They are completely dependent on men and either need to beg assistance from a family member; pay a handyman (who frequently will not even consider being called out for minor low paying repairs) or live for months, if not years with the problem. DIY is a basic life skill. It is as important as cooking; being able to grow food; sewing on a button. For many of the women at the workshops, it was no longer acceptable to be so dependent on men. *Marthie,* for example, came to the workshop because she was "so tired of begging her lazy husband to fix things". She was now going to do the work on her own.

Home maintenance was not the only reason why women came to the workshops. An exchange at one of the workshops exemplifies the range of reasons women had for attending.

> A woman in a pinstriped shirt says, “I want to make a desk I saw on Pinterest”, another interjects, “This course will also show you how to deal with workmen”, the other nods sagely…
> One of the participants was divorced five years ago. She has a new boyfriend who said that she should reclaim her ex-husband’s work shed. She continues, “so I cleaned it out and painted it this beautiful deep lilac. At first, I felt overwhelmed, but then I started doing things. My boyfriend laughed at me when I said I was going to this workshop even though he encouraged me to claim my ex-husband’s workshop.”
> “So you find it empowering”
> “I love it”
> A woman of Indian descent says she is single and a Chinese woman nods. Before being asked, a well-groomed blonde woman interjects and says, “well I am not on my own, but my husband’s useless”. “That’s a sad state of affairs”, pipes one of the women.
> The woman in the pinstriped shirt says she is recently divorced. Pain crosses her face as she speaks about it. During the workshop she slips and says, “I’m sure my husband has one of these”. Only to remember that she doesn’t have a husband anymore.
> The woman sitting next to me is middle aged. She says little, but mentions she is a grandmother. She shows me photographs of her brother’s wood handiworks. They are delicate and filigreed.
> “Lovely,” I say.
> “I want to do stuff just like this”, she’s says quietly, longingly.
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Powertools Workshop)

Many of the women I spoke to had had some life-changing event in their lives. Women had either lost their partners through divorce or death. The workshop was a way for them to move on from the loss and reconstruct their lives. One of the women at the advanced power tools workshop explained that this was a way she could still feel close to the memory of her husband. Other women were single mothers and needed to lower their household maintenance costs to make ends meet. It was also a way of concretising a sense of independence. For some, change was imminent, they wanted a new direction in their lives. They wanted new careers or were thinking of moving away from their partners. Some simply wanted to make things for themselves and their families. Several said that they just “wanted to *feel* empowered”.

In South Africa, the category of craft workers is defined as those who are working in building; wood working; handicraft and printing; garment makers and food processing and other crafts (Statistics South Africa, 2012). This category encompasses the fields associated with DIY – household maintenance, furniture making and home decorating. In 2015, the market share for craft workers was substantial at 12.4 percent

(Department of Women, 2015). This is the second highest market share for skilled workers and the third highest market share of all three work categories of highly skilled, skilled and unskilled (ibid). The market share for women, however, is only 3.5% for this category (ibid). Only 12 percent of craft workers are women. Furthermore, women are more likely than men to be unemployed (ibid).

For several of the study participants and participants of the broader community associated with the workshops, DIY had provided them with substantive economic empowerment and the workshops also provided the participants with an easy – entry springboard to careers in furniture making and décor. *Bekezela*, for example, was one of the workshop facilitators. She had left Zimbabwe during Mugabe's presidency in 2004 as the economy of the country began its significant decline. She had come to South Africa and found work as a domestic helper. The person she worked for was a woman who was a furniture maker and had skills in metalwork, construction and plumbing. *Bekezela* expressed her interest in learning DIY skills to her employer who was willing to apprentice her into the practice of DIY. In 2008, her employer taught her how to use power tools such as the jigsaw. *Bekezela* was a quick learner and soon she was assisting her employer in making furniture on regular basis and was now making many of the pieces on her own. For *Bekezela*, DIY was life-changing:

> DIY changed my life in so many ways. Financially it changed my life…DIY changed who I am. I've got two kids at university. It totally changes who you are. I am doing TV shows and I see myself and I say, "there's me, a domestic worker!" I want to now help others.
>
> (Interviews, workshop facilitator, 19 May 2015)

Anisa, a young lower middle-classed woman of Indian decent, originally hailed from KwaZulu Natal (KZN) and took an office job in Johannesburg. She did not enjoy her work as an administrator. She found a carpenter in KZN to assist her with making toy boxes which she then sold online. She had sold twenty-two boxes in two months. She reported a profit of R25 000 per month. She was attending the cabinet building workshop so that she could build and personalise the toy boxes herself with an aim to eventually leaving her office job completely.

A community of female craft workers grew around the DIY training workshops. One of the facilitators gave an account of how one of the participants came to the advanced

tools workshop and “shivered like a leaf” when it came to operating the angle grinder. She now ran a small business where she built with concrete. There are also groups of women from low-income backgrounds who attended the workshops and were now running small and medium enterprises building headboards and ottomans. Several participants had also gone on to become interior decorators and some had even become workshop facilitators themselves.

The participants in the DIY workshops do not only come to learn a specific skill. They come to the workshops with a set of imaginaries. Some come to imagine their lives without the significant others who fulfilled DIY work in the division of labour in their homes. Others are claiming their independence and imagine gaining a sense of empowerment. Some see DIY as an opportunity to make different lives for themselves. DIY classes for women are important for this kind of identity work. Many women are motivated to take the class as part of a transformational journey.

The lesson

The way in which the workshops were presented promoted a dialogue between the learners and between the facilitator and the learners with each other. Each workshop began in a similar way. The facilitator would stand at the door welcoming the learners. While waiting for other learners to arrive, the workshop participants were invited to have tea and coffee and would begin to chat with one another. A sense of conviviality was well established by the time the lesson began. The facilitator begins the workshop light heartedly – she has already made a connection with many of the women. Safety first: she explains the basic procedures to avoid injury. The facilitator speaks animatedly and uses humour to make her points and to further establish an atmosphere of comfort and dialogue. Most of the humour is centred around the differences between the way men and women approach DIY. While the facilitator is sensibly dressed in workman’s shoes, jeans and a T-shirt, from the start there is a reiteration of gendered roles which goes along the lines of even though DIY is associated with men, women can do it just as well, but we need to be extra careful due to our feminine attributes.

> The facilitator discusses safety issues at length. Interweaved in the presentation is a lot of information on how to protect your manicured nails and how women are in general more careful than men, they tend to regard

> safety and do things properly. The participants nod sagely. She mentions that we need to wear closed shoes, not strappy high-heeled sandals.
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Powertools Workshop)

> …ladies we're smarter than men…if you ask hubby to do things, men don't consider measuring
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Storage Ottoman Workshop)

After some basic theory about different kinds of screws, nails and wood, the learning fast becomes an embodied experience. All the workshops are sensuous in nature. The facilitator invites the women to touch and feel the different materials and the tools in a somatic familiarisation with strange objects.

> We learn the difference between, straight, Phillips, Pozi and Robertson squared screws and a participant quips to her friends, "no more coffee shops for us, now we'll do woodwork". As the facilitator demonstrates the use of the smooth-shanked screw, one of the participants says, "Oh boys learn this in woodwork class (at school)".
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools)

This embodied learning is the starting point of the main work of the teaching – confronting fears. The facilitators argue that fear of power tools is one of the major impediments to women doing DIY. The first part of engaging this fear is to explain that power tools have changed significantly over the last ten years. This is explained in an empathetic way and the facilitator tells us that the first step to overcoming fear is to familiarise ourselves with power tools. The women share stories of their fears, some even squeal with mild panic as they are given power tools to handle. The form of the instruction follows very closely, the examples given by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their discussion of communities of practice. The facilitator pairs us up and in another instance of the dialogic nature of the workshop, she gives us a problem to solve and, in a master – apprentice mode, she provides guidance when we make a mistake. In their pairs, the women follow one another: as one masters a skill, she supports the other to master the same skill. As the women solve the problem that they have been set, they move to help groups of women who are still in the process of gain confidence and skill. Mastery of the drill is the main objective of most of the workshops and there is build-up of tension and excitement as we get closer to drilling. At the advanced workshop, the "main event" is the angle grinder.

Learning how to drill

Objects have value and in Marxist theory this value is either use value or exchange

value. In puzzling why capitalism has persisted despite an abundance of commodities, Baudrillard (1981) posits an extension of the traditional Marxist formulation of use and exchange value to include sign value or symbolic value. “Sign exchange is a process in which goods are exchanged as commodities, but with the new element of symbolic value, or status, they provide the consumer” (Koch & Elmore, 2006). Baudrillard’s work is post-structuralist in that he argues that consumption, more than production, is a key driver of capitalism.

For Bourdieu, consumption drives capitalism in times of market saturation. The objects of consumption need to be valorised in a different way to how you can use them or how they can be exchanged for something else. The sign value of an object has two components: first, the object is associated with a particular lifestyle through a range of marketing procedures; second, the object is valorised, fetishized and consumed as part of a system of codes associated with the lifestyle. The act of consuming the object, recursively entrenches the signification of the lifestyle. Bourdieu refers to how an object becomes part of the habitus of a social group. The consumption of the object serves to reinforce the system of codes associated with the particular lifestyle (Ehrnberger, Räsänen, & Ilstedt, 2012). It is now part of a chain of signification in which one object can stand for the system of codes that signify the lifestyle. While Bourdieu uses the idea of habitus to explain how the tastes, styles, education and skills of the wealthy classes become naturalised, his work is relevant to discussions of the habitus of gender.

The drill has long been associated with division of labour in the home sphere (Ehrnberger et al., 2012). The first drill was developed in Germany in 1895 (Ulrich, n.d) and the first portable gun style drill (see figure 1) was developed in 1916 by Black & Decker (Griffin, 2016). The inspiration for the design of this tool came from the Colt gun factory which was situated nearby the Black & Decker plant at the time.

Figure 1: The first portable trigger drill (Source: Griffin, 2016)

At first, these drills were only used in factory settings, but as management observed workers taking the drills home to use on home projects, they realised that there was a DIY market potential and by 1923, it began to sell a lower priced version (Griffin, 2016). The importance of adult education to market these tools was recognised and Black & Decker invested in a number of mobile classrooms to teach salesmen how to use and sell the product, so that they could teach the buyers.

The genealogical association of the drill with an almost exclusively male workforce ensured that the drill became associated with “men’s” work in the household.

> The drill’s modern form speaks to the maleness of its target user, the type of masculinity that the user performs, and the gendered specificity of domestic work done in the garage (as opposed to domestic work in the kitchen, for example)…The drill allows its owner to connect himself to masculine archetypes that step in and perform for him…It gives the user a sense of power as he is now better able to manipulate and shape his environment to his will.
>
> (Ulrich, n.d.)

To demonstrate the gendered habitus of the drill, Ehrnberger et al. (2012), set up an innovative experiment. They inverted the classic design elements of the drill and the

hand blender as they work on similar rotary mechanisms (see figure 2a,b and figure 3a,b), but are associated with different gendered domains in the household. They then take the products to a home show and document the reactions of the attendees.

Figure 2a: The naturalised ‘masculine’ drill design

Figure 2b: Applying naturalised ‘masculine’ design principles to the hand blender

Figure 3a: The more ‘feminine’ design of the hand blender

Figure 3b: Applying naturalised ‘feminine’ design principles to the drill

(Source: Ehrnberger et al., 2012)

Even though the Dolphia drill (figure 3b) performs like the traditional drill (see figure 1a), it looks ridiculous, flimsy and ineffective. Indeed, this was the reaction of most of the people at the home show. While participants were most impressed by the hand blender that was built in accordance with naturalised masculinist design features, many responded with humour, commented on its 'cuteness' or dismissed it when they saw the drill designed in accordance with naturalised feminine principles of design. Ehrnberger et al. (2012, p. 85) conclude that,

> It is therefore important that designers understand how the artefacts they create affect the formation and maintenance of these ideas, which include gender. The form can be considered to embody, reflect, and reproduce gender roles and power structures in our society

This research also demonstrates what is at stake when women learn how use a drill. It is an embodied performance of claiming a slice of the habitus associated with masculine power. At the women's DIY workshops, the attendees had very limited DIY experience or training. For many the workshops were liberating and a particularly rewarding moment in all the workshops came in the moment when women used the drill for the first time. Consider the somatic engagement that the workshop encourages.

> The facilitator, then hands out 18V cordless drill drivers. Like everyone else, I enjoy lifting it up, handling it. Feeling its weight in my hand. I have a 14.4V drill, a lighter choice, but I love its smooth ergonomic grip and streamlined battery. I am loving this and so are others, but several are apprehensive. The facilitator tells us that the cordless drill driver was developed by manufacturers as a women's tool as they realised that more women were getting involved in DIY work. We learn the difference between the different colours used for power tools: green is for DIY, blue is for manufacturing. We learn the benefits of high-end Bosch tools and lower-end Ryobi and Skil tools. The women are riveted…
>
> The facilitator then takes out a very large corded drill and speaks to us about the drill and hammer settings. It is a key-chucked drill and as the facilitator puts some muscle into opening the chuck. One of the participants says,
> "**This** is a man's drill".
> "If you lose the chuck-key, you can't replace it", says the facilitator.
> "If you lose the chuck-key, you're screwed," titter, titter, titter…
>
> The facilitator shows us how to use the torque control of the drill. The conversation is animatedly dominated by four women – all white, the others listen quietly. All the women start sliding the torque control and with looks ranging from gloating satisfaction to deep apprehension, they whizz the drill drivers. As they master a concept, they show each other and exchange information. I ask what the red button is for, the woman in Pinstripes

> exclaims excitedly, “I figured it out on my own!” As the facilitator shows us, she smiles smugly…
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools).

The workshop is characterised by an openness which encourages a dialogic engagement between the participants. This is further reinforced by the facilitator who encourages participation. Thus, while the facilitator gives input, the women share their own knowledge with each other. The dialogic engagement means that the workshops take the form of a community of practice. The different levels of existing knowledge shape the levels of legitimate peripheral participation with the facilitators as oldtimers and those who have never done any DIY work whatsoever as novices. Having said that, most members of this community of practice share their knowledge base even if the knowledge shared, as the woman who challenges one the participants for “being such a man” shows, is tangentially relevant to the field of DIY.

> As the facilitator continues, it is clear that several of the women have done this before. A woman with Versace sunglasses on top of her head interjects repeatedly, answers all the questions and when someone says, “I didn’t know that,” she commiserates, “Oh no! Shame!” Others are also keen to show what skills and knowledge they have mastered…
>
> Amidst exclamations of “Now I learnt something else”, I hear a woman saying that her drill driver is “woman proof”. Her neighbour says, “Now I know what I want for my birthday, but I want the biggest one”. In response, the Indian woman sitting on the other side of her asks her very quietly why she is being such a man – always wanting the biggest and the best. She doesn’t respond but tells how she asked her domestic helper to clean the shed at her house so that she could play DIY after the workshop…
>
> A woman in advanced middle age with blue painted nails, shifts the torque and plays with the drill driver. She mentions something about speed and the facilitator corrects her and says that we are not dealing with speed but torque. As the facilitator explains that one has to keep drilling as you draw back the drill to clean out the dust, one of the participants remarks that she learnt “the hard way” that if the hole is not clean, the screw clings to wood dust rather than the fabric of the wood…
>
> We now move into the “practical” session. We each get given two pieces of wood and told to drill to get comfortable with the drill driver. The eagerness is overwhelming, squeals of joy and “are we doing this, are we doing that?” As one of the participants figures out how to do things, she demonstrates to others. Another participant exclaims, “I’m loving this”. The facilitator comments on my skill with the drill driver. I smile – nice to be acknowledged…
>
> Another woman interposes, “it’s like a Merc and a VW taking off from a traffic light. The Merc just has more oomph.” The facilitator tries to explain further,

> "it's not about speed, but force. We don't work with speed in DIY, we work with force…"
>
> Having finished before the others, I pick up a spade bit and open a hole into some wood. "That is the coolest thing ever", says one of the participants and the well-groomed blonde coos, "Awesome". The woman wearing pinstripes removes the battery on her drill driver to change bits, "you can't be too careful," she says.
>
> (*Fieldnotes* Introduction to Power Tools)

The acknowledgement of, and willingness to, share existing knowledge bases and skills within the workshop community of practice, ensures a co-creative space of learning. As the workshop ends, the community of practice shrinks back to the facilitators as the oldtimers. There are, however, also a set of women who link in to the workshop community of practice either by continuing to take further workshops (*Fieldnotes*, Bathroom Cabinet; Storage Ottoman and Advanced Power Tools) or by forming a loose network of women who have honed their skills to a higher level or have moved on to become professional craft workers. This network is maintained through requesting advice, or contracting one another for work and through craft-based exhibition events such as Hobby-X (Interviews, 15 May 2015).

I am struck by the conviviality of all the workshops and how quickly a sense of community is established between people who have not met each other before. This connection between participants happens across race and class. A sense of intimacy is apparent early in the workshop and at teatime, the connection is affirmed and strengthened. This connection between the women enhances the learning experience and there is a real sense of joy in the learning as women delight in their newly acquired abilities.

> The facilitator asks how the participants feel now that they have done the drilling a few times. "Fantastic!" say all the women and the woman in pinstripes adds, "please don't make us stop, I'm enjoying myself so much."
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools)

At the end of the workshop, many of the participants make plans to go to more workshops together and some exchange telephone numbers with each other.

The workshops are not only about learning a skill, but also about entering a system of codes associated with masculinity. At the same time, the workshops have a warmth, openness and conviviality. This is an instance of connected knowing. There is also the

potential for women to experience themselves outside of gendered norms in a safe context which attracts an array of different people. One of the facilitators commented that the first workshop was in 2007 and attracted twenty people. From the beginning it attracted a range of identities and she noticed how many new friendships were made at the workshop. As the workshops expanded to other cities, one of the branches held their workshops at a large hardware store in a public area. They quickly learnt that this visibility was considered unsafe, "people were gawking, and ladies don't want people to see them making mistakes" (Interviews, 19 May 2015). The second facilitator, who teaches most of the workshops explained that she actively fosters a connection with people through speaking with warmth, friendliness and transparency, "you look, you know me already" (Interviews, 19 May 2015). It is this active fostering of connection and safety which makes the workshops so popular and satisfying.

"It's my turn now…"

I am surprised to find a man attending one of the workshops. The facilitator begins the workshop. Her usual banter about broken nails and sensible shoes for DIY practice is much toned down. When she does make reference to women learning DIY, she gives him a small smile and exaggerates her inclusion of men, making sure she adds "and men" to each of her assertions about women and DIY. When she makes her usual light hearted jibes about the different approaches of women and men to DIY, she turns to him and says, "Not you bra".

The workshop goes well. We are learning how to make a cabinet for the bathroom. First comes the theoretical part. The facilitator is explaining different joins to us. The man starts nodding while she is speaking. His demeanour is that of a teacher encouraging a schoolchild who is giving a correct response. He interrupts her and starts to explain the different joins to her and giving titbits of advice. *Mansplaining*: the term was coined by Rebecca Solnit in her 2008 essay *Men Explain Things to Me*. It refers to the assumption that some men make that women are inadequately knowledgeable in their field of expertise (Rothman, 2012) and require their input (which can often be limited or incorrect). Mansplaining is associated with a particularly condescending and patronising style of interaction. "…mansplaining is not a universal flaw of the gender, just the intersection between overconfidence and cluelessness where some portion of that gender gets stuck" (Solnit, 2008). The facilitator responds

to him lightly and we move on to the practical side of the workshop. The mood for the rest of the workshop is subdued.

While mansplaining may appear trivial it "…is problematic because the behavior itself reinforces gender inequality. When a man explains something to a woman in a patronizing or condescending way, he reinforces gender stereotypes about women's presumed lesser knowledge and intellectual ability" (McClintock, 2016, n.p.). It is particularly concerning in a woman-focussed learning environment because it sends the message that the learners are inadequate. An instance of report talking, mansplaining silences voice. When the workshops were initially offered, there were three workshops: one for women, one for men and one for children. The workshops for children and men were quickly closed. The children were very difficult to teach ("it was a nightmare") and the men simply did not want women to teach them DIY, "there was the stigma of a woman showing a man – it didn't quite gel" (Interviews, 19 May 2015).

Context

Foucault (1995) argued that identities are shaped through interaction with a range of different institutions. This begins at birth, in the institution of the hospital, through the legal institutions that register the self, through the family, schooling and work. He refers to this as the carceral archipelago. Feminists, such as Judith Butler, have used this concept to understand how gender identities become shaped through these different institutions. This is a different conceptualisation of power to structuralist feminists who were more concerned with a dialectical relationship of dominance and oppression. Post-structuralists argue that the operation of power is more diffuse – it is the constant interaction with similar messages across different institutions which instils gendered identity norms. So, while the workshop serves to give women a space where they can experience themselves outside of gendered norms, there are numerous instances both outside and inside the workshop where hegemonic heteronormative constructions are reiterated.

One of the facilitators recounted her experiences of antagonism towards her when she took a weekend position at a large hardware store.

> I went there and they said they didn't know I was coming. I felt like crying, nothing had been set up. I mentioned that they should set up a gazebo for me and they didn't like that. They didn't like me. It didn't affect me, I just kept on giving the workshop.
>
> (Interviews, 19 May 2015)

Once I decided to put up a set of shelves. I had the braces and the brackets and I went to a large hardware store to buy supplies. I was pleasantly surprised to find an advert in the décor section of the shop, showing a woman doing DIY. "We can do it!" I thought to myself and smiled. I then move to the section of the shop where you can purchase bolts, screws, nuts and nails. There is a deli selection laid out in different lengths and thicknesses. Store assistants give advice, take your selection, weigh it and then give you slip to pay at the cashiers. Business is brisk, there are a lot of people waiting for service. I was the only woman. I waited my turn. Presently, I realised that *all* the men who arrived after me have been served. The shop assistants walked around me to greet them and ask them what they need. I thought to myself, "I'll approach the next free attendant". The shop assistant finished, I tried to catch his eye, he studiously ignored me. I tried another and another, the same thing happens. "So, this is how it is", I thought. Finally, as one of the assistants was finishing, I stood beside him and as he turned to assist someone else, I said in a friendly tone, "hi, it's my turn." He turned to me with a frustrated look on his face and raised his eyebrows. I asked for ten 5mm screws and ten matching wall plugs. "What's it for", he demanded with some hostility. I explained that I was in the process of putting up shelves and I needed supplies. "That's the wrong things for the job", he replied and starts selecting different screws. I tried to correct him as politely as possible, he ignored me. He stared me down, weighed the screws and gave them to me in a clear plastic bag. I walked away with the bag to the next aisle. I looked down at the little bag. They were so clearly wrong, he hadn't listened to anything I had said. I put the bag down on the shelf (hiding them) and went back to the nuts, bolts and screws section. This time I went to the prepacked section. There was only a bag of 100 of the screws I needed. I bought the bag thinking, "it's not so bad, I can always use them for other things" (I still seventy-five left in my garage).

Despite the discourse of empowerment and the embodied claiming of masculine signifiers, the women in the workshop counter these emancipatory feelings with self-talk which undermines the affective aspects of the learning experience.

> The facilitator is now showing us the three types of drill bit, “shoo, my brain’s going crazy, I’ve learnt so much”, says the woman in pinstripes. There is a woman in Versace sunglasses trying to draw the bits, “I’m making these spastic”. The facilitator says that she has already put them on the website, “oh, that’s just like a woman” says the woman in pinstripes.
>
> The woman in the pinstripe shirt apologises for “getting it so slow”.
>
> This drill is woman proof…
>
> The participant with blue nails is still battling the concept of torque, “I guess it’s a physics thing. I can’t understand speed and force”, she says glumly.
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools)

In workshops that build on the Introduction to Power Tools, however, there was far less of this kind of self-talk. In my own experience, I felt confident and capable after the workshops, but as I worked on my own – away from the community of practice – my lack of experience was a hindrance. I would encounter problems and find that I was either unable to resolve them on my own or would find that without a community to encourage me, my resolve to persevere slowly eroded. I also found that when I did ask male family members, friends and acquaintances for their advice, they tended to mansplain and take over the project that I was working on. Furthermore, despite the work the facilitators did to allay my fears of angle grinders in the advanced workshop, I am still scared of them.

Without the habitus of DIY and without a community of practice which could act as a safe supported space to gain experience and maintain my motivation to learn, my learning and DIY practice ground to a halt. Thus, it was only when I asked for assistance and was let down a few times, that I decided that I needed to persevere, find more experienced female masters or male allies who understood how to give advice and find an ongoing community of practice to support my efforts. Much has been made of the ways in which women are treated in different learning contexts and how this affects their level of participation in the classroom and their learning experience in general. Hayes (2001) discusses how learning is affected by different

social contexts. Each of the small incidents which women encounter as they develop their skills may appear trivial, however, the incidents and the contexts that they occur in, serve to uphold an already dominant discourse. These incidents which appear trivial are micro-aggressions which serve to normalise gendered divisions of labour. The message throughout is that this is a man's field. Outside of the workshop, it requires a great deal of determination to dismiss this message; learn the skills (and suffer the mansplaining that comes with that) and make the mistakes that form the basis of experience. This is particularly true, when mistakes illicit jeering rather than constructive engagement.

These micro-aggressions are more complex in the context of race. The main facilitator of the workshop is black and for the most part, the participants treated her as a respected old-timer, however, there were also instances where the dialogic nature of the workshop broke down around race.

> The women are bossy, they interrupt the facilitator to show their knowledge and show each other how to do things crowing with an air of competitive mastery…two of the participants are now interrupting and interjecting all the time – bossily showing people what to do and correcting the facilitator's English…As we start to explore the different drill bits and how they relate to screw heads, I identify the two main types as star- and straight-headed screws – "Phillips", says Pinstripes. We continue discussing magnetic and non-magnetic, one of the women interrupts the facilitator, "but it's better to use magnetic". There is a tension building. I respond lightly, "so now I know", much laughter and the tension is (seemingly) released. Time is running out and the women are tired. The facilitator has to do something and a second facilitator [who is white] comes to demonstrate the jigsaw. There are less interjections. The workshop participants become quiet and then it is over.
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools)

The facilitator confirms the issues with race that she encounters.

> Teresa: What is it like to teach?
> Facilitator: At first I was scared in front of people especially white people. I was anxious because I am black. I need to be quick minded. I have to give the right response to questions. I eventually got used to whiteness – I got comfortable, but once there were two Afrikaans ladies who turned their chairs away from me. It made me want to cry.
>
> (Interviews, 19 May 2015)

The safety of the space, the conviviality and the dialogic engagement is differentially distributed within the community of practice of the workshop. Gendered micro aggressions are articulated through negative self-talk and there are micro aggressions that affirm broader racist discourses. The effect of these micro aggressions is to set

up some voices as more relevant than others – another instance of report talking which undermines the rapport talk established in the workshop.

Another way of accessing the broader context of the workshops is to analyse relevant DIY manuals. The classroom in formal education is replete with teaching tools: teaching materials, textbooks and so forth. Each of these artefacts is associated with a particular teaching style and reflect dominant discourses of childhood. For example, if you consider changing discourses on moral training in formal schools, you would probably find a ferrule as an artefact of 19th century school discipline. Presently, you can find classroom artefacts such as "bucket fillers"[iv] and "thinking chairs" in mainstream classrooms. The ferrule is scorned and teachers are exposed in newspapers for using corporal punishment. Textbooks are also frequently in the media for their presentations of race and gender. Textbook content has changed significantly in relation to the sociological shifts in South African society (although many would argue, these transformations are not enough). Manuals act as the "textbook" of the autodidact. They, and internet articles, are the cornerstone of informal DIY education often inspiring their readers to seek more formal channels of training.

In front of me are two South African DIY – how-to books. One is a second edition of a DIY manual written by Riaan Venter in 2007 (originally published in 2006). The other is a DIY manual targeted to women by Janice Anderssen. The DIY book for women is the only of its kind and forms the basis of many of the lessons at the DIY workshops for women. Venter's book is titled "The Handyman" after a show that the author presented on South African television. On the cover of Venter's (2007) manual is a picture of the author in a mix of a dress jacket and bowtie and casual utility pants and slip slops. Bald and jovial, he is facing the reader and is holding a cordless drill across his torso. Four thumbprint images have been included indicating the contents of the book: "Step-by-step instructions"; "Use the correct tool"; "New ideas for rooms"; "Technical drawings". Anderssen's book is titled "DIY for divas: an introduction to power tools". On the cover is a blonde woman seated sideways on a ladder with her back arched. She is dressed casually in a tight denim skirt and a tank top. Her feet arch out of a pair of flip flops with her heels resting against the ladder. She gazes saucily up at the camera with a raised hammer in her hand. Each chapter in the book is titled with I ❤ my… (I heart my…) and the name of the power tool. In *The*

Handyman, the chapter titles are arranged according to different home spaces: nursery; bathroom; kitchen; (home) office space; patio; out & about (which is mainly about gardening and garden projects).

The Handyman is all about the relationship between masculinity and DIY:

> How do you get Riaan Venter to wear a tux? You can threaten him (if you haven't had a glimpse of the circumference of his forearms)…Then you can approach him calmly with his own philosophy, which is, briefly: "I want to show the whole country that do-it-yourself is easy. It's not just for tough guys with rough hands and overalls, it's for everyone." So we took him at his word: "Even the man in the tux can do it himself – and in style." (We just couldn't get Riaan out of those trousers. We thought of threatening him – but then we saw those forearms, and Riaan kept the trousers.)
>
> (Venter, 2007, n.p.)

There is a clear differentiation between two different forms of masculinity here. There are "the tough guys with rough hands" and then there is "the man in the tux". He does not expand on the differences between these two categories. It doesn't matter, clearly the "the man in the tux" is defined in relation to the "tough guy" and Riaan, with his vast forearms, falls into this latter category. Riaan is clear about men's DIY duties to their wives and family. After introducing the different tools and how to construct a workspace, the first chapter of DIY projects begins.

> Here's free advice for fathers-to-be. If your lady leans back behind the baby-bulge, with both hands in the small of her back, and she's thin-lipped as she says, "No – nothing's the matter…", then you should already have started on the little one's room.
>
> (Venter, 2007, p. 31)

The theme of the duty of the father to the family continues into the "Kitchen" section.

> This is the heart of the home, where the warmth, the atmosphere originates. It's where we gather to satisfy some of our most basic needs – eating and drinking. This is where my mother left her mark on us, with hot malva pudding on winter afternoons…It's around the kitchen table where being a family begins, where children are raised and taught…create the right spaces for them.
>
> (Venter, 2007, p. 61)

Venter (2007) draws attention to the traditional relationship between hyper masculine identities and the field of DIY. While he does not question this identity or the relationship of this identity to DIY, he acknowledges that there are multiple masculine identities. He then attempts to expand these different masculine identities; however, he is not specific about these different identities and he reinforces traditional

conceptualisations of the division of labour in the home. Apart from references to wives, a woman is only included once in the publication. A small section on gardening is presented by a woman. While the publication is replete with images of Riaan Venter, where there is a woman present in the publication, we only see her hands in a few pictures. Very little in this text serves to question the relationship between the field of DIY and conventional wisdom understandings of masculine identity. When Riaan says DIY is not "just for the tough guys with rough hands and in overalls, it's for everyone" – "everyone" except women. There are no real challenges here. A self-directed adult learner who does not fit this vaguely expanded identity category would struggle to find the inspiration to question "societal prescriptions" and begin "to search for their own identities" (Flannery, 2000).

The text, *DIY for divas*, overtly challenges the normalised relationship between "tough" men and DIY and claims DIY for women.

> While it was once considered a man's job, nowadays women are becoming adept in all manners of arts and crafts, DIY projects, home repairs and home improvements. Today's power tools are designed with women in mind: they are lightweight, easy to hold and easy to use. As more and more women empower themselves with the tricks of the trade to get things done, power tools are no longer solely in the male domain.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011)

The book is jam-packed with images of women drilling walls, tiles, cabinets and other general bits of wood; operating power screwdrivers; cutting out pot plants and using power saws to cut wood at challenging angles. Anderssen (2011) presents many projects for women to complete. Most of these relate to décor and small home repairs.

Anderssen (2011) also has a specific pedagogy. The one aspect of her pedagogy is to promote empowerment and self-esteem. She frequently speaks of empowerment and pride throughout the book and encourages women to question traditional divisions of labour in the home.

> There was a time when using tools was a definite no-no for any self-respecting women. DIY and general repair around the home were strictly in the male domain, and women quietly retired to the kitchen. My, how things have changed!
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.7)

> Self-proclaimed DIY diva and proud of it!
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.6)

> I hope to address many of the areas where we ladies lack basic knowledge of tools, and to debunk the myth that DIY is only for men.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.7)

Another aspect of her pedagogical approach is to carefully establish a break with previous modes of doing DIY (which are associated with men) which she argues were more difficult. Things have changed, she assures us. DIY is now easy.

> All you have to do is choose your tools, have your wood cut to size, drill a few pilot holes – and the job is done.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.7)

Scaffolding is another aspect of her pedagogy.

> As you work through the basic project that follow, your level of confidence and expertise will improve.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.7)

> I cannot stress enough the importance of being relaxed and comfortable when using power tools. If you follow these safety guidelines, practise with your tools to build up confidence, and know what can go wrong, you will come to realise just how safe power tools are when they are used properly.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.15)

While this text inspires women to reimagine their identities, the message that the manual gives is complicated by the use of particular types of identity. The images in DIY for divas consist entirely of young, slender, conventionally attractive, white women. While Ms Anderssen's hands are photographed, the only image of her is at the back of the book, in the author by-line. There are no images of black women, large women, elderly women, disabled women nor butch women. This is a very sanitised and attractive version of DIY. Indeed, as Anderssen (2011) asks the reader to reflect on safety, she is quick to mention how to manage dresses and lipstick rather than promote comfortable cotton pants and full-face masks.

> Tie your hair out of the way, and if you're going to be sanding, wear a cap or headscarf – sanding can get messy at times. And unless you want your lips to feel like the topping on a sugar doughnut, leave the lipstick off!...Make sure that no loose items of your dress can be caught up as you work.
>
> (Anderssen, 2011, p.15)

The women depicted are also clearly middle-classed. They wear expensive clothing and have hairstyling which is done in affluent hair salons. The tools depicted are one

of the most expensive brands – Bosch and the publication is sponsored by one of the more expensive hardware stores in South Africa – Builder's Warehouse.

A socialist feminist analysis of this orientation to white middle-classed women would be rather sceptical of the intent of this manual. As the DIY market becomes saturated (there are only so many power tools you will purchase in a lifetime), capitalist concerns are seeking untapped markets and women who have the financial means to buy expensive tools are a potentially lucrative market. While the manual is ground breaking in terms of representing women as DIYers, it is also makes cynical use of liberal feminist discourse to promote profit. The problem with this is the women who could most benefit from learning DIY, working class women in poorly paid jobs or underemployed women in the informal sector, are excluded. The message of this manual potentially could be that even if one never actually completes one of the projects, the book serves to inspire women to resist normative divisions of labour. Unfortunately, in this case, the imaginary of women DIYers is limited.

That DIY for women is both a liberal celebration of middle-classed female actualisation and an exercise in creating untapped markets, is further borne out in the following example. Anderssen (2011) makes much of the development of tools specifically for women's use. The development of the cordless drill, however, has much more to do with space exploration than the gendered norms of DIY. In 1961, Black & Decker introduced the first cordless drill powered by nickel cadmium (NiCd) batteries (NASA, n.d.). Black & Decker then developed a "zero-impact wrench". This was developed for NASA to prevent astronauts from spinning around (J. Griffin, 2016). The original drills were heavy and had limited safety features. There are many anecdotes on the internet about men repeatedly spraining their wrists when using them. There is also the added safety risk and the inconvenience of a cord. With the introduction of the rechargeable NiCd drill, these issues were resolved, but the batteries were very heavy and were difficult to handle for longer DIY timespans. The introduction of the much lighter rechargeable lithium-ion battery in 2005 meant that drills became cordless and lightweight. The brushless motor was developed by the tools manufacturer Makita in 2004 (J. Griffin, 2016). This powerful motor was again developed for aerospace and military usage. In 2009, Makita introduced a light impact driver with a brushless motor

(ibid) and it is this impact driver that is the much touted “women’s” drill driver. The drill driver was only retrospectively marketed as a power tool for women.

These workshops may be about empowerment for women, but they are also about marketing tools to an untapped market in the same way that the powertool was marketed to male household dwellers in the 1950s. DIY andragogy may be use empowering discourses, but this obscures that there is also a marketing aspect to the training. The training has the potential to be empowering for women and there is a great deal of potential in terms of economic empowerment, however, the costs associated with the training and DIY makes it unavailable to those who need it the most, working class African women who may have limited access to informal training opportunities of this kind.

When we discussed the types of women who came to the workshop, one of the facilitators was quick to say that she originally thought that the workshops would become a gay and lesbian space, it had not done so. While she is saying this to me, she grimaces. I check in with her and ask if she means butch women, she says yes. The comment puzzled me. This seems oddly anachronistic. There are most certainly women of a range of sexualities attending the workshops. Some of the women wear makeup and many do not. I cannot imagine anyone doing DIY in strappy high-heeled sandals – certainly none of the women in any of the workshops arrived in anything like it. In the workshops, that DIY can be a feminine pursuit, is compulsively reiterated. There is also a semi-joking concern about feminine sensibilities:

> As the facilitator shows us how to screw a bit into a drill, she says, “excuse me for using the word “screw””, it is clearly a tired joke for her, but the women titter away.
>
> (*Fieldnotes*, Introduction to Power Tools)

This joke is repeated at the workshops and the ritualised performance of femininity at the workshops is almost parodic. With the juxtaposition of women with a field traditionally associated with men, the compulsive reiteration of femininity intensifies. This negotiation of DIY and femininity is extended in the broader context of DIY products designed for women. For example, there are now lavender and pink coloured toolkits – lady’s toolkits – with lightweight tools which are intended for women.

While there may be courses to teach women DIY and hardware stores stock pastel purple toolkits and special “pink power” drills, the division of labour holds strong. As with many male-dominated fields, women are granted conditional entry. Indeed, that there are special kits with lightweight “pretty” tools only serves to reinforce heteronormative categories of gender that undermine the potential of the DIY workshops for women to question the binary construction of gendered identities and to promote a more nuanced and inclusive engagement with gender and other intersections of identity.

5 Conclusion

DIY workshops for women present an opportunity for an embodied questioning of the social construction of gender in terms of the division of labour and in terms of the social construction of the male/female dichotomy. They have great potential to counteract hegemonic norms of passivity, incapacity and dependency associated with femininity. The workshops function very well to achieve this. The image that is reflected to women when they can drill and angle grind and fix their own plumbing, is one of confidence and power. This is achieved in the DIY workshops and it is achieved in a way which honours the voices of women through a dialogic, problem-based learning environment. The community of practice that emerges in these workshops is caring and engaging. This is a dialogic co-creative space and the somatic knowing that is built into these workshops is basis of the joyous and thrilling learning experiences of the women who attend these workshops.

This dialogic engagement with other women and self is, however, hindered by several factors. Because the DIY community of practice displaces hegemonic norms of gender, it becomes a terrain of self-doubt and self-limitation. Despite the warmth and conviviality of the workshops, without clear ground rules, the space is not safe for everyone. It can become an arena for racism and an intolerance of gendered identities which fall outside hegemonic orders. These dynamics are reinforced by the compulsive performance of femininity at the workshops. In this way, the workshops are also about social conformity and exclusion. There is a current of alienation which runs through these workshops. Furthermore, while the community of practice functions well during the workshop, there is little infrastructure to support an ongoing community

that women can become part of in a sustained and more casual capacity. Within the broader context of women being at times discouraged to DIY, it is important that these ongoing communities exist to counter doubting self-talk and loss of motivation to continue this learning experience, which is not only about skills acquisition, but also about identity work.

DIY for women is a powerful tool to counter hegemonic discourses of gender and the workshops can be used to promote more nuanced ideas of gender. It is hard to DIY on your own and the collective problem-solving associated with building furniture and completing home repairs also allows for a dialogic space in which racism, ableism and exclusionary practices can be challenged. We need representations of women which do not place whiteness, middle-classed values and conformist femininity at the centre of learning. This can be done by critically reviewing the artefacts and microphysical social dynamics associated with DIY and with other learning fields where women are granted limited and conditional access.

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Appendix: Ethics Clearance Certificate

Wits School of Education

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Website: www.wits.ac.za

12 March 2019

Student number: 8801486X

Protocol Number: 2014ECE058M

Dear Teresa Dirsuweit

Application for Ethics Clearance: Master of Education

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Gendered Learning/Learning Gender in Do-It-Yourself Communities of Practice

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that clearance was granted.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

M Mabela

Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

Cc Supervisors: Ms A Kearney and Dr K Gillespie

ENDNOTES

[i] The concept of false consciousness and Freire's use of it has been heavily critiqued for being over simplified. Thompson (2015, p. 450), however, argues that the concept is redeemable if it is used to consider "the very mechanisms that produce and constitute those mental processes that produce false conceptions of the world and allow hierarchically organized elites to exert dominance over others".

[ii] There are similarities between Foucault's concept of normalization and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and these along with differences within the theories should be a topic of enquiry, however, this falls outside of the scope of this research.

[iii] Boys of course were also expected to conform with often very toxic notions of masculinity in schools.

[iv] Based on the book "Have you Filled a Bucket Today" by Carol McCloud, bucket fillers is a teaching tool designed to demonstrate the positive effect of kind and helpful behaviour on family and community.