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The Continued Absence of the LGBTIQA+ Community in School History Textbooks in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

School history textbooks in South Africa are essential teaching and learning materials for most history teachers and learners, because they are often the only materials used to engage with the past. These textbooks are also considered to contribute to the construction of an ideal citizenry, as well as fostering national identity, unity, and reconciliation (Bertram and Wassermann 2015; Bam, Ntsebeza and Zinn 2018). However, our concern is that while textbooks appear to be used to construct an ideal citizenry who is supposed to have reconciled and united into one national identity, there also appears to be a concerted effort to exclude, within both the written and visual texts of the textbooks, those South Africans who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual, and many other identities (LGBTIQA+). Through abyssal and post-abyssal epistemology as our theoretical frameworks, and critical discourse analysis as our tool of analysis we were able to investigate how four history textbooks across four grades within the Senior and Further Education and Training phase that we purposively and conveniently sampled

continue to exclude LGBTIQA+ contributions and experiences within the knowledge base of the school history curriculum, despite the pivotal role some played during the struggle against apartheid. We have since concluded that the erasure of the LGBTIQA+ community amounts to another dehumanising act against this group of people that is epistemic, existential, and ontological in nature. We also argue that this act denies all history teachers and learners, irrespective of their sexual orientations, the opportunity to engage with diverse historical contributions and experiences of all South Africans.

Keywords: Abyssal Epistemology; History textbooks; HMTT; LGBTIQA+; South Africa; School history.

Introduction

School history textbooks serve as critical teaching and learning material for learning about the past in most parts of the world. In the case of South Africa, textbooks are used as a primary educational resource because many do not afford to have other educational aids to work with given the country's history which is characterised by historical inequalities that continue to find expression in the contemporary era. Hence, in 2000 the History/Archaeology Panel tasked with investigating the teaching of history in schools highlighted the importance of history textbooks in its report to the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal. It argued that history textbooks 'remain at the centre of the history learning encounter' and this makes them 'central to the cause of an improved history education' (DBE 2000: np). The current Minister responsible for Basic Education, Mrs Angelina Motshekga, has maintained the panel's view that textbooks are the most 'effective tool to ensure consistency, coverage, appropriate pacing and better quality in terms of instruction and content' (DBE 2009: n.p.). More recently, Section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution, Basic Education Rights Handbook (2017: 266–272), has since pronounced the importance of textbooks in contributing to a meaningful teaching and learning experience. Section 5a of the same handbook tasks the Minister responsible for Basic Education to prescribe and enact norms and standards related to the conceptualisation, procurement, and provision of educational resources, especially textbooks (Bharath 2023).

Consequently, textbooks in South Africa are also one of the most valued educational resources because they play an important role in imparting what is considered legitimate historical knowledge (Chisholm 2015). Within school history, this knowledge is divided into 'substantive' and 'procedural' knowledge (Counsell 2018). The former is considered to be the legitimate content knowledge that both history teachers and learners ought to know and engage with, whilst the latter is more concerned with the legitimated historical skills that history teachers and learners need to acquire and master to engage, understand, and critique the former knowledge (Dean 2004; Bharath 2023). Therefore, in this study, we were particularly interested in investigating how the substantive knowledge contained in textbooks that we reviewed continues to be a site where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual, and many other identities (LGBTIQA+), contributions, experiences, and histories continue to be marginalised, especially since the like of LGBTIQA+ figures such as Simon Tseko Nkoli, Beverly Palesa Ditsie, and many others have also contributed to the struggle for basic human rights for all, the fight against apartheid, and access to antiretroviral medicines during the height of the

human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic (Bhardwaj 2023). However, we continued with our investigation focused on the substantive knowledge, aware that both knowledge forms are of importance especially if we are serious about initiating history learners into the discipline (Bertram 2008).

Against this background, this study sought to investigate the continued absence of LGBTIQA+ contributions, experiences, and histories in the knowledge base (i.e., substantive knowledge) in four history textbooks across four grades within the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) phase. This was partly informed by the fact that the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) school history curricula pronounced on the importance of 'reflecting the perspectives of a broad social spectrum so that race, class, gender and the voices of ordinary people are represented' (DBE 2011: 8). This assertion is also emphasised by the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) Report that advocates for a more gendered lens in the study of the past (DBE 2018). The study also sought to explore how the continued erasure of the LGBTIQA+ within the school history textbooks could be reversed or transcended to reflect the diverse contributions and experiences of all South Africans.

This article is presented in the following manner. First, we explore what it means to be LGBTIQA+ in the world. Second, a literature review on the struggle for basic human rights and visibility by the LGBTIQA+ community is carried out. Third, we carry out another literature review to make sense of the politics that underpin school history textbooks in (South) Africa and elsewhere. Fourth, we articulate our preferred theoretical orientations which are informed by abyssal and post-abyssal epistemology. Fifth, we outline our preferred research methodology underpinned by critical discourse analysis. Both our theoretical grounding and the research methodology informed our engagement with the four textbooks that we reviewed which were purposively and conveniently sampled, as well as the literature reviewed. In the sixth place, we present our data and findings. Last, we make a case for school history textbooks in South Africa that are post-abyssally informed.

It is also worth mentioning from the onset that we understand and use the phrase LGBTIQA+ as references to persons that identify outside cisgender identities which denote gender identities that correspond with one's sex that was assigned to and registered for them at birth (Pakade 2024). In consequence, we are of the view that people's lived experiences should not nor ought to be reduced to mere concepts to be studied. However, if such a reductionist approach to our lived experiences was to prevail, our understanding and appreciation of the complexities, nuances, and authenticities that characterise our experiences as humans would be completely lost to us all. And it is from such situations that

the dehumanisation of one by the other finds most expression. Lastly, we use the phrase LGBTIQA+ to speak about a group of South Africans whose contributions, experiences, and histories persist in being excluded in both the written and visual texts (i.e., substantive knowledge) of school history textbooks. We also use the phrase cisgender to denote South Africans whose contributions, experiences, and histories persist in being included in both the written and visual texts (i.e., substantive knowledge) of the very same school history textbooks that we engage.

Literature review: Of queer, Africa, and othering

Being LGBTIQA+ in (South) Africa and the world

'African' and 'queer' are two categories of analysis and thought that are often constructed as being antagonistically opposed (Otu and van Klinken 2022). This is because, through abyssal thinking, being queer is often considered by some (South) Africans and other people of the world as being anti-Christian, a foreign construction or import, and thus 'un-African' (Msibi 2011). This framing of queerness in Africa is based on the belief that the mere existence of LGBTIQA+ on the continent is as 'destructive to African culture as colonialism itself' (Hartline 2013: 7). In fact, the othering and persecution of LGBTIQA+ people is deeply entrenched in colonialism itself. Throughout Africa, much of the continued criminalisation of homosexuality relies on colonial laws (Soweminmo 2019). For instance, in apartheid South Africa several laws were adopted and enacted such as the inclusion of sodomy in schedules to the Criminal Procedure Act 52 of 1977, the Security Officers Act 92 of 1987, and sections of the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 195 (Reddy 2006; Botes 2023). These laws, amongst others, were characterised by profound discrimination, fear, isolation, and othering. For the African LGBTIQA+ community, these laws were further worsened by the oppressive racial segregation, and systemic and institutional injustices that they had to endure (Wells and Polders 2006; Mchunu 2023). This double othering continues to keep LGBTIQA+ communities out of the epistemes that inform textbook knowledge selection.

In 1996, democratic South Africa adopted a new constitution that guaranteed LGBTIQA+ legal protection against any form of discrimination and violence. However, this has proven not to be enough because the LGBTIQA+ community in South Africa is still subjected to different forms of violence and discrimination in schools and the general public. This violence and discrimination against the South African LGBTIQA+ community, especially LGBTIQA+ learners, has been observed in a study conducted by

Msibi in a township school in the Province of KwaZulu Natal where one lesbian learner bemoaned how some of her teachers were homophobic. She described the victimization she suffered at the hands of one of her homophobic teachers in this manner:

> *… called me to the staffroom. She started shouting at me and was telling me to stop acting like a boy. She said I need to stop this lesbian thing because I will start making other learners like me. (Msibi 2012: 524).*

In a similar study conducted by Francis, another lesbian learner recalled how one teacher:

> *She tried to chase me from the class because she didn't want to teach an istabane* (Francis 2017: 6).

These learners' experiences and others yet to be told paint a picture of a democratic society yet to come to terms with the fact that LGBTIQA+ persons exist, and they too deserve to be rehumanised by being treated with kindness, love, and respect. They deserve to see themselves as part of the history of the country in which they reside.

In other parts of the African continent, LGBTIQA+ persons continue to be exposed to violence by their governments. For example, recently we came to witness Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, and his government adopting a repressive anti-LGBTIQA+ bill into Law. This bill criminalises the '"promotion' of homosexuality, as well as relationships between consenting adults outside cisheteropatriarchal norms with the possibility of the death penalty for those convicted of 'aggravated homosexuality'.[1] Other instances of anti-LGBTIQA+ rhetoric and initiatives have been observed in other African countries such as Ghana—where an anti-LGBTIQA+ bill officially known as the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill (2021) is currently before the Ghanaian parliament (Dankwa 2021; Otu 2021, 2022). The Kenyan parliament is also considering an anti-LGBTIQA+ bill before it that would see consenting LGBTIQA+ adults being jailed for up to 50 years for simply being themselves (BBC Africa, 2023). Many other African countries have since adopted this anti-LGBTIQA+ stance (De Araújo 2021a and b; Gaudio 2009; Hendriks 2018, 2021, 2022; Munro 2012, 2015, 2016; Onanuga, 2021; Rodriguez 2019; Rao 2020).

Globally, the LGBTIQA+ community also finds itself in a precarious state as a result of anti-LGBTIQA+ violence. For instance, the States of Georgia and Florida in the United States of America (USA) have recently adopted an anti-LGBTIQA+ bill, noticeably 'Don't

1 Parliament of the Republic of Uganda (30 May 2023). *President assents to Anti-Homosexuality Act*. Available at https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/6737/president-assents-anti-homosexuality-act

Say Gay' bill, that is meant to restrict classroom discussions of and about LGBTIQA+ experiences, and thus 'deter developmentally inappropriate classroom discussion of gender identity and sexual orientation', especially for primary school learners (Migdon 2022: n.p.). Opponents of the bill have since argued that beyond what is taught in the classroom, the bill also limits LGBTIQA+ learners and persons in general from accessing gender-affirming care (Williams 2023). Furthermore, findings from the 2019 Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)[2] National School Climate Survey Report revealed how LGBTIQA+ learners were not safe in USA schools, especially in the State of Georgia (GLSEN 2019). The same report also highlights how LGBTIQA+ learners in Georgian schools 'did not have access to important school resources, such as Gender and Sexuality Alliances/Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or similar student clubs and were not protected by supportive and inclusive school policies' (GLSEN 2019: 1). Similar trends of the continued marginalisation of LGBTIQA+ persons also find expression across Europe, the Middle East, as well as Asia.[3] This results in a global climate where being LGBTIQA+ is equated with deviancy and furthers the oppression of LGBTIQA+ people, furthering marginalising, and othering them.

The struggle for basic human rights and visibility led by the LGBTIQA+ community

Throughout human history, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities have existed in all parts of the world. However, due to discrimination, stigma, and violence, the LGBTIQA+ community in particular has been dehumanised in many ways (Motimele and Hlasane 2024). That is why during the twentieth century we witnessed a growing number of global LGBTIQA+ rights movements that sought to challenge the violence and injustices that they faced by advocating for their humanity to be acknowledged and affirmed through equality, acceptance, and legal protections.

2 GLSEN is an American education organisation that aims to contribute towards the end of discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and to promote LGBTIQA+ cultural inclusion and awareness in schools.

3 See: The Danish Institute for Human Rights Report (no date). *Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Sociological Report: Russian Federation*. Available at https://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/RussiaSociological_E.pdf; United Nations Development Programme Report 2016. *Being LGBTI in China – A National Survey on Social Attitudes towards Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression*. Available at https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cn/UNDP-CH-PEG-Being-LGBT-in-China_EN.pdf

In South Africa, these movements include the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) of 1980, the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) of 1988, and many others (Bilchitz 2015). Simon Tseko Nkoli (1957-1998) and his longtime friend and confidante Beverly Palesa Ditsie (1971) were the co-founders and leaders of the GLOW after Simon left GASA due to its refusal to support him in his legal battles as a result of his participation in struggle activities against the apartheid regime. GASA was a predominantly white, middle-class, lesbian and gay movement which constantly refused to recognise and engage in an intersectional struggle that acknowledged that the LGBTIQA+ struggle was part of a broader struggle for basic human rights for all and against the apartheid regime (Pakade 2024). However, unlike GASA, GLOW deployed an intersectional approach to the liberation struggle, which saw it not only fight for LGBTIQA+ rehumanisation, visibility, and basic human rights, but also wedged a war against the apartheid regime, other forms of oppression that affected South Africans in general, and Africans in particular (Bhardwaj 2023; Pakade 2024).

Given Simon and Beverly's struggle credentials, we wonder as to why then their contributions to the broader liberation struggle for human rights, against apartheid and other forms of oppression and violence, do not form part of the post-apartheid school history textbooks much the same way as those of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Oliver Reginald Kaizana Tambo, and others? Is it because their inclusion into these school history textbooks as part of the LGBTIQA+ community would be disruptive to the dominant heteronormative narratives that continue to safeguard such spaces for those who identify within cisgender identities, and thus in the process continue to marginalise those who identify outside those cisgender identities? We ask these difficult questions because Simon himself started his activism within the youth movement of the African National Congress, which was the first sole governing party of democratic South Africa for the past thirty years. We equally ask these pertinent questions because post-apartheid South Africa adopted a new constitution on 8 May 1996, which contains the Bill of Rights that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual difference or orientation. However, despite this, LGBTIQA+ persons in South Africa continue to be subjected to different forms of violence (Muholi 2004; Martin et al. 2009; Sopitshi 2016), and in the context of this study, this violence is both epistemic and ontological.

Other global LGBTIQA+ rights movements included the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) which was formed in Europe and had different LGBTIQA+ rights movements from across the world as members (Rydstrom 2005). It deployed inter– and transnational approach to advancing the struggle of LGBTIQA+ persons around the world.

That is why, when GASA refused to link its struggle in apartheid South Africa to the broader struggle against apartheid itself and the rehumanisation of the oppressed majority in the country, the ILGA leadership decided to remove GASA as a member of the association leading to its dissolution in 1987 (Rydstrom 2005).

In other parts of the African continent, we have witnessed many organisations and movements being formed in recent years to contribute to the fight against the dehumanisation, discrimination, stigmatisation, and marginalisation of LGBTIQA+ persons across the continent. For instance, in 2006, Acção Humana (Human Action), a nongovernmental organisation, was established in Angola to assist in developing an educational programme meant to educate the LGBTIQA+ community in the country about sexual transmittable diseases and how those could be prevented, as well as combating discrimination against LGBTIQA+ persons by advocating for LGBTIQA+ basic human rights (Dionne, Dulani and Chunga 2014). In 2010, LGBTIQA+ activists from across the African continent and the diaspora gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, and declared, 'As long as African LGBTIQA+ people are oppressed, the whole of Africa is oppressed.'[4] The *African Queer Manifesto/Declaration* which emerged from that gathering was explicit in how the oppressive powers continue to imagine LGBTIQA+ lives through and within neo-colonial categories of identity and power. This imagination has continued to frame the LGBTIQA+ as people without agency, courage, creativity, cultural, socioeconomic, and political authority. Thus, the gathering also concluded that there was a need to work towards reimagining and reframing LGBTIQA+ lives outside these violent categories.

The politics of school history textbooks

In order to appreciate how LGBTIQA+ figures continue to be excluded in post-apartheid school history textbooks, and how this situation could be addressed, it is important that we first understand the nature of these textbooks and the politics that underpin them (Maluleka 2018). This is because school history textbooks tend to be nuanced and complex as they are underpinned by many conflicting and contradictory pressures in the process of their conceptualisation, production, reproduction, and use (Apple and Christian-Smith 1991; Foster and Crawford 2006; Chiponda 2014). This process is often an epistemically, educationally, ideologically, ontologically, and politically contentious activity (Crawford

4 Queer African Manifesto/Declaration: *Nairobi, Kenya, April 8, 2010. Black Camera 13*(1), 263-264. https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/839627

2004; Bertram and Wassermann 2015). Some scholars of school history textbooks have since raised numerous issues about them (Seroto 2015), especially since they carry with them 'immutable authority' (Morgan 2010: 301). This 'immutable authority' is in turn used to impart dominant cultural, epistemic, ideological, and political views in society aimed at socialising the youth (Chiponda and Wassermann 2011a and b). Some of these issues include, among others, (mis)interpretations and (mis)representations of the past, (de)legitimisation of historical experiences and knowers, epistemic deafness and erasure, political biases, and lack of sourcing (Apple 2001; Afflerbach and Van Sledright 2001; Alridge 2006).

To make the connection with the erasure of LGBTIQA+ people in textbooks, we turn to another sphere of exclusion of an 'other': women. Recently, 'much has been written over the past several decades about the visual portrayal of women in textbooks in general and in history textbooks specifically' (Chiponda and Wassermann 2011b: 210). Part of the reason behind this has been the pushback from feminist scholars challenging the continued underrepresentation of women histories and experiences in school history curriculum and its textbooks, and thus calling for the re-interpretation, re-inclusion, re-theorisation, re-centering, and re-presentation of women histories and experiences in school history curricula and their textbooks (Wills 2016). Similarly, significant progress has been made around the re-theorisations of LGBTIQA+ experiences, past and present, especially in a South African context (Bhana 2012, 2014a and b, 2022; Francis 2019; Francis and Reygan 2016; Msibi 2012, 2014).

However, little progress, if any, has been made where the re-theorisation of LGBTIQA+ histories and experiences are then included, centred, and represented in the curriculum knowledge that underpins post-apartheid school history and its textbooks. In the light of the HMTT Report (DBE 2018), some scholars have since called for gender history to be proposed in the new school history curriculum for South Africa, and to be broadened to include historical experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities, among other histories (Maluleka 2021; Maluleka and Ramoupi 2022; Maluleka and Ledwaba 2023). If this is to be realised, then LGBTIQA+ figures will be re-included, re-centered, and represented in the post-apartheid school history textbooks.

Theoretical influences: Abyssal and post-abyssal epistemology

In this article we use a tension-based theory, drawing on both abyssal and post-abyssal

epistemology. Abyssal epistemology refers to Euro-western knowledge hegemony (Santos 2007). Santos argues that

> *Modern [Euro-western] thinking is abyssal thinking. It consists of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of 'this side of the line' [Euro-western epistemology] and the realm of 'the other side of the line' [Othered epistemology]. The division is such that 'the other side of the line' vanishes as reality becomes non-existent. Non-existent means not existing in any comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other.* (Santos 2014: 1)

Santos argues that the continued legitimisation of abyssal epistemology can be attributed to its ability to construct other knowledge forms as invisible. This invisibility then results in the epistemological marginalisation of othered knowledges and experiences, especially in formalised spaces such as the school, history curriculum, and textbooks (Maluleka 2023). This was the case during colonial and apartheid South Africa where the LGBTIQA+ community and their histories were discursively marginalised and erased in scholarly historical debates underpinning the school history textbooks of those periods. This continues to be the case with post-apartheid school history textbooks, where epistemologies are not sufficiently divorced from abyssal thinking, where the 'other' are not only racialised beings, but beings coded as other through different social norms. Hence, LGBTIQA+ community continues to suffer from cognitive, existential, ontological, and social harm. Thus, we use abyssal epistemology as one aspect of our theoretical framing in order to explore how LGBTIQA+ figures continue to be othered and invisibilised in post-apartheid school history textbooks despite the HMTT Report (DBE, 2018) calling for the CAPS school history curriculum to be decolonised and strengthened in order to recentre othered knowledges, histories, and experiences. Even in this call for decolonisation, LGBTIQA+ people are invisible—thus abyssal thinking gives us a rationale for understanding the depth of the erasure.

We also make use of post-abyssal epistemology, in order to draw on the tension between the two (Santos 2007). Post-abyssal epistemology is, as may be assumed, the opposite of abyssal epistemology. It is to re-centre from the abyss, to undo the othering. This is an epistemological approach that seeks to establish spaces for the pluralisation, critical recentring, and inclusion of othered knowledges and experiences such as those of the LGBTIQA+ community (Fataar and Subreenduth 2015). This is similar to Connell's

concept of 'mosaic epistemology', that is, 'separate knowledge systems sit beside each other like tiles in a mosaic, each based on a specific culture or historical experience' (Connell 2018: 404). Therefore, post-abyssal epistemology, like mosaic epistemology, offers 'a clear alternative to northern hegemony and global inequality, replacing the priority of one knowledge system with respectful relations among many' (Connell 2018: 404). This is done with the view of challenging, dismantling, and transcending cognitive, epistemic, existential, ontological, and social ills reproduced by abyssal epistemology. It can be argued that post-abyssal epistemology is underpinned by an all-inclusive ecologies of knowledge approach, based on a trans-modern pluriversal view (Maluleka and Mathebula 2022). We use post-abyssal epistemology to justify the need to recentre and include LGBTIQA+ figures and their histories in school history textbooks of post-apartheid South Africa, where they have previously been relegated into a zone of non-existence and non-humanity.

Research methodology

In this research, we drew on four post-apartheid (currently used) textbooks and used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse specific content sections for the inclusion, or absence of, LGBTIQA+ people. We chose topics where queer people would have been relevant to include but had not been included. We used purposive sampling in our selection of four post-apartheid school history textbooks because of their relevance and availability for this study. These are DBE-approved textbooks used across four grades, which are grades 9, 10, 11, and 12,[5] in the Senior and Further Education and Training Phase, both of which are the final compulsory basic schooling phases, in post-apartheid South Africa. Beyond the purposive sampling, we also selected these textbooks because they cover a range of specific topics concerning South African struggle history that we believe could be broadened in the future to include histories and experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities. The textbooks, as our unit of analysis, are:

5 It is noteworthy that textbooks can be DBE approved and still be exclusionary because the curriculum itself is approved and still exclusionary: this, framed by our abyssal and post-abyssal approach, shows the power relations contained in abyssal epistemology, and their continued reach into our education systems.

Book 1: Ranby, P. and Johannesson, B. 2013. *Platinum Social Sciences Grade 9 Learner's Book*. Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman.
Book 2: Stephenson, C., Sikhakhane, L., Frank, F., Hlongwane, J., Subramony, R., Virasamy, C., Collier, C., Govender, K. and Mbansini, T. 2012. *New Generation History. Grade 10 Learner's Book*. Durban: New Generation Publishers.
Book 3: Fernandez, M., Friedman, M., Jacobs, M., Johannesson, B. and Wesson, J. 2012. *Focus: History. Grade 11 Learner's Book*. Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman.
Book 4: Angier, K.L., Hobbs, J.T., Horner, E.A., Maraschin, J.L. and Mowatt, R.L. 2012. *Viva History Grade 12 Learner's Book*. Johannesburg: Via Afrika Publishers

The data for our study was both generated and collected. It was generated by the publishers who produced the textbooks, following the CAPS school history curriculum and with a range of history education officials, and collected by us the researchers who borrowed the textbooks from our University Library. In agreeing with Nicholls (2003) and Chiponda and Wassermann (2011b), we wish to also confirm that any research undertaken concerning textbooks is not easy because methodologies for analysis are not always well articulated.

We opted to employ CDA to investigate the representation, or the absence thereof, of LGBTIQA+ figures in the post-apartheid South Africa's school history textbooks. We did this because any absence, hard to read with CDA, would underscore our theoretical framework (i.e., abyssal and post-abyssal framing) that we have articulated above. We used CDA to analyse the said textbooks in order to ascertain whether LGBTIQA+ figures, histories, and experiences are represented or not in post-apartheid South Africa's school history textbooks in both written and visual texts. This reading means CDA was used in a particular way: CDA is usually the precise analysis of text, to read the varied and layered meanings contained therein (Anthonissen 2006). However, our reading involved reading for absence: looking for what is not there, and, to an extent, imagining what could be there. This enabled us to better understand ways in which exclusionary hegemonic historical narratives and representations are situated, maintained, reproduced, and transmitted in school textbooks. All of this was possible to achieve because CDA is 'fundamentally interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language' (Martin and Wodak 2003: 6).

CDA is in line with our theoretical framing because it is also concerned with relations between hegemonic discourses, power, dominance that in turn re-construct and re-

produce cognitive, epistemic, ontological, political, and social inequalities or harm (for an elucidation of this see Gramsci 1971). CDA also proved useful to this study because of its three processes of analysis, that is, (1) the object of analysis (verbal, visual, or verbal and visual texts); (2) the process by which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects; and (3) the socio-cultural conditions which govern these processes (see Fairclough 1989). These processes are not only interrelated but are dialectical and intersectional too; they also are governed by different types of analysis which are: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation) (see Fairclough 1989).

The four textbooks were read, and the following topics were identified as possible topics most appropriate to also cover histories and experiences of LGBTIQA+ communities in the South African context:

- **Book 1:** (i) Turning points in South African history 1948 and 1950s; (ii) Turning points in South African history 1960, 1976 and 1994;
- **Book 2:** (iii) The South African War and Union;
- **Book 3:** (iv) Apartheid in South Africa 1940s to 1960s;
- **Book 4:** (v) Civil resistance 1970s to 1980s in South Africa; (vi) The coming of democracy in South Africa and coming to terms with the past.

This is not to say that other historical periods covered in the CAPS school history curriculum do not include experiences and histories of LGBTIQA+ communities. We specifically chose to focus on these topics because they cover a long history of South Africa across different historical moments that are taught in different grades, which we believe could be a site where LGBTIQA+ histories and experiences could be productively and meaningfully re-interpreted, re-theorised, re-centred, and re-presented within the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum and its textbooks.

Data presentation and findings

In the four reviewed school history textbooks, not a single one of them re-interprets, re-theorises, re-centres, and re-presents LGBTIQA+ figures, their histories, and experiences in both written or visual texts. Firstly, this, we believe, has to do with a post-apartheid school history curriculum that continues to be underpinned and characterised by abyssal epistemologies, that, in turn, occlude, ignore, marginalise, deny, and erase histories and experiences of the LGBTIQA+ communities from its knowledge base and textbooks.

It also has to do with the favouring of 'big men' histories in our school history

curriculum and its textbooks over other histories (see Naidoo 2014), which has led, for instance, to mere mentioning of women histories and experiences. Hence, Wills has since argued that mere mentioning of women in the official curriculum '… is not a radical enough move towards conceptualising women and representing gendered historical concepts in ways which do not re-inscribe a practice of epistemic erasure or the textual inscription of damaging stereotypes and ideologies' (Wills 2016: 24–25). This shows the intersectionality of oppressions that continue to exist in school history textbooks. While curricula have been changed in post-apartheid South Africa to address immediate racial disparities, and there have been moves to address gender disparities, abyssal thinking which encompasses oppressions of being beyond these spheres persists. The absence of queer histories demonstrates this.

This means the teaching of *dishonest history*[6] officialised by the national curriculum, continues uninterrupted unless both history teachers and learners during their lessons are able to interrupt these dishonest histories. However, if these histories continue to be taught, that is, they are not interrupted in one way or the other, it means LGBTIQA+ history teachers and learners will continue not to *see themselves and feel themselves* more in the work they do in the classroom (Godsell 2019). Because of this, we are convinced that this symbolises and constitutes yet another colonising act of the LGBTIQA+ group of people that is epistemic, existential, and ontological in nature. Moreover, this may contribute to a situation whereby cisgender heterosexual history educators and learners are denied the opportunity to engage with and learn from alternative historical narratives that challenge the portrayal of LGBTIQA+ people as historically unimportant, incapable, and contributing little to society. It can also contribute to re-enforcing a false image of a "cis-world", with anyone else as an outsider, leading to the deepening of homophobic, transphobic, and queerphobic acts of violence against LGBTIQA+ people (Ubisi 2021).

Another reason why abyssal epistemologies are still prevalent in the post-apartheid school history curriculum and its textbooks is because the democratic state underestimated the amount of work needed to dismantle colonial and apartheid legacies that characterise the education system and rebuild something new (Maluleka and Ramoupi 2022). This is not to

6 Drawing from Godsell's (2019: 2) conceptualisation of 'honest histories', we use the phrase 'dishonest histories' to denote the opposite of what Godsell meant about 'honest histories'. This makes 'dishonest histories', histories that do not attempt to represent the past to its fullest. In other words, these are histories that deliberately exclude our experiences often for political expediency and other nativist agendas.

say that there has not been attempts on the part of the democratic state to Ukuhlambulula[7] or cleanse the school history curriculum and its textbooks from their colonial and apartheid past that is informed by abyssal epistemologies. There have been numerous attempts, the latest being the appointment of the HMTT in 2015 (DBE 2015), which has since released its Report in 2018 (DBE 2018). The HMTT Report calls for a school history curriculum and textbooks that are 'cleansed' from their abyssal epistemologies and are decolonised, in that they are for a pluralised re-interpretation, re-theorisation, and re-presentation of the past (see Maluleka 2021; Maluleka and Ledwaba 2023). The report does not, in any way, mention the need to re-interpret, re-theorise, re-centre, and re-present LGBTIQA+ histories and experiences in its proposed school history curriculum and textbooks that would replace the CAPS school history curriculum and its textbooks that are currently in use. For Maluleka and Ledwaba, whom we agree with, this symbolises a missed opportunity

> *… to broaden and include, in our official school history curriculum, other histories of marginalised groups beyond women, such as the LGBTIQA+ communities. This would further strengthen the intersectionality approach [sic], which we so desperately need in our official school history curriculum. Here we are thinking about the meaningful inclusion of histories of people such as Nkoli Tseko Simon (1957–1998), the founder of South Africa's African gay movement who embodied its link with the anti-apartheid struggle (Pettis 2015). This way, history educators and learners will be engaged in the study of the past that is not devoid of the gender-and-other lens or gazes.* (Maluleka and Ledwaba 2023: 93)

From this, it is clear that there is a need to advocate for a school history curriculum and its textbooks that resemble a mosaic when it comes to re-interpretation, re-theorisation, and re-presenting of the past. We make the case for this in the next section.

Towards school history textbooks that are mosaic-like in the representations of the past

Textbooks play a central role in constituting the bases of specialised school knowledge and making sure that meaningful teaching and learning occur in most history classrooms in post-apartheid South Africa, especially since many history teachers and their learners do

7 Tisani conceptualises ukuhlambulula as a process of cleansing, which entails 'cleansing – inside and outside, touching the seen and unseen, screening the conscious and unconscious. This includes healing of the body and making whole the inner person, because in African thinking 'there is an interconnectedness of all things (Thabede 2008: 238)' (Tisani2018: 18).

not have access to other teaching and learning materials. It has become vital to make sure that school history textbooks are reflective of the diverse past that characterises this 'nation' we call South Africa.

We are for school history textbooks that are underpinned by post-abyssal epistemologies and are mosaic-like in their re-interpretation, re-theorisation, and representations of the past. In the case of LGBTIQA+ persons, this means the re-interpretation, re-theorisation, re-centring and representations of their histories and experiences in school history textbooks too—so that they can also form part of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991), and 'ideal' citizen as envisioned by the democratic constitution of 1996. This would render school history textbooks as sites where 'honest histories about the past and present realities' are taught and learnt in ways that enable LGBTIQA+ history teachers and learners to also feel like they belong. It would also foster historical consciousness in both history teachers and their learners, which entails 'individuals and collectives, more or less conscious, [experiencing] mental connection between interpretation of the past, understanding of the present and expectations of the future' (Anderson 1991: 38). Historical consciousness can be understood as an interpretation of the past with the hope of understanding the present and the consideration of the future (Charland 2003; Rüsen 2004; Seixas 2006; Maluleka 2023).

History textbooks must also be spaces of humanisation: of attempting to push back against the exclusivity with which coloniality created the category of the human (Wynter 2003). History is fundamentally about exploring our humanity: in the past, the present, and the future. Textbooks, as the materials through which history is taught in the majority of South African classrooms, have a responsibility to further this humanisation which pushes back against the coloniality of being (Mignolo, 2009). The responsibility cannot lie with history teachers to affirm the humanity of the LGBTIQA+ in our history lessons: the materials with which they are supplied need to address the full humanity and full histories—pushing against local and global erasures of the queer communities.

Conclusions

In this article, we have investigated and examined, through abyssal and post-abyssal epistemology as our theoretical lens and CDA as our method of analysis, how LGBTIQA+ figures and their histories and experiences continue to be marginalised and excluded in both written and visual texts that make up the post-apartheid school history curriculum and its textbooks. This absence was a result of the legacies of colonialism and apartheid

underpinned by abyssal epistemologies. Because of this, we have also concluded that the continued peripheralisation of LGBTIQA+ histories and experiences from the post-apartheid school history curriculum and its textbooks can contribute to the continued marginalisation of LGBTIQA+ people, including queerphobic acts of violence that are already unprecedented, as well as bolster the false image of a 'cis-world' that already exists, with anyone else as a foreigner. We argue that this is both a social justice and historical accuracy issue: it is against the exclusion of LGBTIQA+ persons and toward a history made of up a more accurate array of stories of those who fought against apartheid and have existed and resisted in the apartheid world. While we have presented particular people as examples here, we encourage this thread to be taken up to include recovering LGBTIQA+ histories from different South African historical periods, towards filling in these erased histories.

We also employed post-abyssal epistemology as another aspect of our theoretical framing to make a case for the re-interpretation, re-theorisation, and re-presentation of LGBTIQA+ persons and their histories and experiences with the view of contributing to creating school history textbooks that are sites where a pluralised past is embraced for LGBTIQA+ history educators and learners to also have a sense of belonging, and where cisgender heterosexual history educators and learners are afforded the opportunity to engage with and learn from alternative historical narratives that challenge the portrayal of LGBTIQA+ people as historically unimportant, incapable, and contributing little to society.

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