

# Lesbian, gay and bisexual citizenship: A case study as represented in a sample of South African Life Orientation textbooks

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*Over the past two decades, sexual citizenship has emerged as a new form of citizenship coupled with increased interest in the challenges to citizenship and social justice faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and, in particular, by sexual minority youth within education systems. In South Africa, the rights of LGBTI people have been institutionalised in legislation, and research has begun to consider how educators may facilitate a more inclusive school environment for LGBTI youth. Given the focus of the Department of Education on social justice, the present study examines how selected Life Orientation (LO) textbooks for Grades 7 to 12 in South African schools represent and construct LGBTI identities. The study generally finds inconsistency in the representation of these identities. Gay male identities are represented in some instances, lesbian and bisexual identities rarely so, and transgender and intersex identities not at all. Two of the four series examined are almost entirely silent about LGBTI identities. This invisibility negates the different ‘ways of knowing’ of LGBTI learners; tends not to facilitate students in critiquing the discrimination, prejudice and social injustices faced by many LGBTI people, and lessens the importance of social justice and citizenship education in this field in South Africa.*

**Keywords:** LGBTI youth, schools, South Africa, sexual citizenship, sexual minorities

## **Introduction**

The South African Constitution has been lauded for recognising the rights of persons to full citizenship irrespective of sexual orientation. In addition, given the fact that civil unions of same-sex persons are recognised in South African law, it could be argued that this is recognition of full citizenship irrespective of sexual orientation. However, given the number of violent crimes against gay and lesbian persons, it is clear that they are not recognised by fellow citizens as having the right to full citizenship. In this instance, we digress and explain briefly how we understand, define and engage with the notion of citizenship. We recognise, as many others do, that notions of citizenship are contested, but recognise that citizenship may “refer to membership of communities, relationships between members of those communities but also to relationships between individuals, communities and nations” (Keet & Carolissen, 2012: 147). In keeping with Lister (1997: 41), we conceptualise citizenship as a status that conveys rights and a practice that encompasses the dual mandate of responsibilities and political involvement. We recognise that “tensions have served to perpetuate women’s exile as a group from full citizenship” (Lister, 1997:90) and make the point that sexual minorities — lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex persons, continue to be exiled as a group, even though legal instruments are in place to provide them with full citizenship rights. Our research focuses on issues related to full citizenship for sexual minorities within the high school South African education system. We use the terms ‘sexual minorities’ and understand minority not in terms of numbers, but in terms of access to rights or full citizenship. This term is commonly used in the literature. We mostly refer to lesbian, gay and bisexual identities, but note that sexual minorities include transgender and intersex identities. We work from the premise that citizenship has to be inclusive (Lister, 2006) and

that excluding or rendering invisible sexual minorities within the educational system or any other societal space amounts to social injustice. Soudien (2012:1) reminds us that the fundamental purpose of education “is to prepare people for full citizenship”. He also points out that a primary goal of education is the ability of people to get to know each other and to become cognisant of both differences and similarities (Soudien 2012). Our conception for this article was thus an outflow of us wondering how and if high school scholars were being educated to ‘know’ persons who define themselves as gay or lesbian and possibly bisexual, transgender and intersex. We were interested to determine whether high school education is preparing all within the system to recognise sexual minorities as having full citizenship.

We were aware that the subject LO was most likely the subject area where learners would engage with the issue. Francis (2012) points out that, in South Africa, issues related to homosexuality and bisexuality fit into the wider outcomes of the LO curriculum and are in keeping with the post-1994 shift to Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). Francis (2012) correctly points out that, in the *Revised National Curriculum Statements LO* (Department of Education, 2002) and *Departmental LO Teacher Guidelines* (Department of Education, 2006), there is a silence on issues which could be labelled ‘sexual diversity’. According to official documents of the South African education department, LO is:

*... aimed at developing and engaging learners in personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic areas, so that they can achieve their full potential in the new democracy of South Africa (Department of Education, 2002; 2003:9).*

The learning area of life skills orientation is intended to promote social justice, human rights and inclusiveness as well as a healthy environment (Department of Education, 2003:5). The *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2002) gives the following purpose for teaching LO in Grades R to 9:

*The Life Orientation Learning Area aims to empower learners to use their talents to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential ... (Department of Education, 2002: 4)*

Given that one of the goals of the LO curriculum is to promote social justice, human rights and inclusiveness, this article aims to determine whether the LO curriculum of South African secondary schools promotes these in terms of sexual minorities. We are of the opinion that the schooling system and, in particular, teachers and curriculum content, have a crucial contribution in nurturing citizens who are committed to social justice. We believe that the curriculum should assist learners to be aware of discrimination and injustices towards all groups of citizens and that it should contribute to an inclusive notion of citizenship which includes groups who have, to a large extent, been ignored by citizenship studies (Lister, 2006).

Seminal work by Francis (2012) and research by, among others, Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma and Klepp (2009), Deacon, Morrell and Prinsloo (1999) as well as Francis and Msibi (2011) point to the general conservatism in teaching and training on sexual diversity. For example, teachers often change the syllabus to avoid challenging sections such as sexuality education, do not challenge existing social norms, view homosexuality as immoral or deviant and, due to religious and cultural beliefs, are reluctant to engage with the topic in the classroom. Francis and Msibi (2011) also point to slow attitudinal shifts among South African in-service teachers who participated in training on heterosexism and education. Francis and Msibi (2011) suggest that teachers often reproduce heterosexism in the classroom despite the post-apartheid rhetoric of tolerance and inclusivity. In a study of teachers’ experiences in 11 Durban schools, Francis (2012) found that sexual diversity issues were mostly ignored or avoided by teachers and that when the topic of homosexuality was introduced in the classroom it was framed in terms of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’.

## **Citizenship of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in the schooling system**

Working within the American context, Russell (2002:260) points out that schools (which we, in this instance, interpret as curriculum) have not been vocal about the potential obstacles which sexual minority youth face. The consequence of this silence is that these youth do not have the space or the opportunity to recognise their marginalised status and the repercussions of this for their rights and responsibilities

as citizens. Essentially, these youth are not prepared for a society that does not always accord sexual minorities full citizenship. The Human Rights Watch (2001) report *Hatred in the hallways: Violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youths in US schools* is overwhelming evidence of this denial of sexual minority citizenship and its consequences. Although school systems have been fairly silent on issues regarding lesbian, gay and other groups of youth who would be classified as sexual minorities, a growing number of researchers have investigated the experiences and representation of sexual minority youth within these systems.

In a study entitled “The ideology of the ‘fag’: the school experiences of gay students”, Smith (1998), showed clearly that anti-gay attitudes and thus discrimination are treated as regular everyday behaviour and thus normalised. In an article entitled “How schools play Smear the Queer”, Loutzenheizer (1996), captures how schools entrench homophobia. Researchers such as Sumara and Davis (1999) and Kumashiro (2002) have clearly outlined how heteronormative curricula normalise heterosexuality and ‘otherise’ homosexuality. They have strongly argued that these heterosexist classroom discourses be challenged. In a study exploring the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in the Republic of Ireland, Reygan (2009) found that these learners experience a homophobic climate and that they are victims of verbal, physical and emotional abuse.

There is, however, limited research both internationally and locally which engages with how sexual minorities are constructed and presented in actual curriculum. However, researchers recognise this invisibility in relation to curriculum. Macintosh (2007:35) states:

*Assumptions of student and teacher identities as heterosexual, examples expressed through heterosexual narrative, and curricula seeped in gender normativity are all characteristic of the ways in which non-normative sexualities are ‘inadvertently’ excluded from curricular agendas and various social justice reforms.*

In South Africa, it is positive that researchers have recently begun to investigate the experiences of gay and lesbian youth within the schooling system. Regarding South African youth, Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher and Astbury (2003) as well as Nel and Judge (2011) have investigated the experiences of gay and lesbian youth and concluded that they are exposed to an environment which does not accord them the status of full citizens. Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2003) have also indicated the consequences of state-sponsored homophobia for all South Africans, including the youth of school-going age. Other South African research, such as that by Nel and Judge (2008) and Wells and Polders (2005), indicates that the commitment that persons of all sexual orientations be treated equally has not materialised in relation to the South African LGBTI community. Another focus of study which also makes a positive contribution is research which explores the content of teaching training courses in higher education. Francis and Msibi (2011), Richardson (2004), as well as Johnson and Potgieter (2012) have all investigated what is included in the content of training courses in relation to challenging heteronormative discourses.

It is not surprising that, in South Africa and internationally, sexual minority youth within the schooling system have been rendered invisible or experienced discrimination, and that sexual citizenship or full citizenship has often been presented in terms of heterosexual coupledom. Richardson (2001:163) states:

*... the construction of the legitimate citizen is related to the institutionalisation of heteronormative forms of social and cultural life. This is evidenced in the limits to full citizenship experienced by lesbian and gay men.*

In terms specifically of curricula, Macintosh (2007:35) states:

*Assumptions of student and teacher identities as heterosexual, examples expressed through heterosexual narrative, and curricula seeped in gender normativity are all characteristic of the ways in which non-normative sexualities are ‘inadvertently’ excluded from curricular agendas and various social justice reforms citizenship experienced by lesbians and gay men ...*

New models of citizenship, including feminist citizenship (Lister, 1997) and sexual citizenship (Evans, 1993; Plummer, 1995; Russell, 2002), have emerged and been recognised for approximately two decades.

Given that researchers have convincingly argued that citizenship is sexualised (Richardson, 2000, 2001, 2004; Reddy, 2010), the logical question is: Why is this commitment to full citizenship not reflected in societal attitudes or in the schooling system? This disjuncture between policy and practice is highlighted and engaged with by Francis and Msibi (2011) who argue that, despite the equality clause [9(3)] of the South African *Constitution* which includes sexual orientation and a discourse of tolerance and inclusion, institutions in South Africa perpetuate heterosexism including in the educational sphere.

## Aim

This study explores if and how sexual and gender minorities are presented and engaged with in the LO learners' textbooks used in Grades 7 to 12 in South African state schools. Just as the post-apartheid South African schooling system is foregrounded within a paradigm of social justice and non-discrimination assurances, the LO curriculum has a specific commitment to social justice. In this regard, we explored whether the curriculum encouraged full citizenship for sexual and gender minorities.

## Method

In order to examine the representation of LGBTI identities in LO textbooks in Grades 7 to 12, we established and confirmed the list of textbooks used by state schools for teaching LO. Interestingly, the list included textbooks from a number of publishers. A number of teachers and/or schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province were contacted in order to find out which of the books are most commonly used in Grades 7 to 12. Individual teachers who teach LO were also contacted in other provinces. Respondents indicated that they used a number of different textbooks, but in KwaZulu-Natal we confirmed that the most popular texts were the *Oxford Successful Life Orientation* series and the *Shuter Life Orientation* series. To determine which series of LO textbooks were most often sold to learners and teachers, we approached Adams bookstores in Durban, one of the main providers of schoolbooks in KwaZulu-Natal. The Grade 7 to 12 LO textbooks most widely bought are the *Oxford Successful Life Orientation* series by Oxford University Press; the *Shuters Life Orientation* series by Shuter and Shooter; the *Spot On Life Orientation* series by Heinemann, and the *Life Orientation Today* series by Maskew Miller Longman. Informed by these enquiries, we decided to focus our analysis on the four LO series listed above. Our analysis of these texts was guided by the following questions:

- Are people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex represented visually in the texts or in the narrative?
- Are they represented or engaged with in a way that is non-discriminatory?
- Are they represented in a way that entrenches/challenges stereotypes in relation to sexual minorities?
- How are issues of race and gender represented and engaged with in terms of sexual minorities?

Bearing the above questions in mind, we read and re-read the textbooks. Our initial overall finding was that, in grades 7 to 12, the South Africa *Bill of Rights* was often cited and sexual orientation would be concurrently mentioned. However, issues relating to gays, lesbians, bisexuals or any other sexual or gender minority were hardly dealt with. Based on this initial finding, we decided to undertake a detailed analysis of the LO texts used in grade 7 classes.

## Results

One of our overall findings was that the term 'lesbian' is never used, although there are images of same-sex couples in the texts. Potgieter (1997) mentions that lesbian relationships were never criminalised in South Africa, the possible reasons being that women were not important or that it was impossible to recognise that women would not be interested in men. Not using the term 'lesbian' is essentially rendering women in same-sex relationships invisible within discourse. Acknowledging 'lesbian' would be disputing an aspect of patriarchy and essentially negating the role of men. The fact that the term is not used, but that

there are pictures of women in same-sex relationships is possibly a reflection of the denial of an identity, but a tentative acceptance of behaviour. The terms ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexual’ were often used and the term ‘bisexuality’ was used once in Shuter and Shooter (p. 63). The fact that the texts are silent regarding transgender and intersex identities is not surprising, given that often the struggle relating to sexual orientation rights has been argued within a discourse of rights for gays and lesbians.

Below are our findings based on the analyses of the four series of LO textbooks, with those which were most inclusive of LGBTI identities presented first and those which were least inclusive texts presented last.

### *Shuters Life Orientation* textbook (Shuter and Shooter)

Chapter 3 of the Grade 7 learner’s textbook in this series includes a section on sexuality, in general, and on homosexuality and bisexuality, in particular (see Figure 1). It reflects some of the anti-oppressive and anti-homophobic pedagogical practices referred to by Francis and Msibi (2011). Given the photograph of a (White) same-sex female couple, the text appears at first sight to be inclusive of both gay and lesbian identities, in particular. Although the term ‘lesbian’ is not used, through visual representation the text pulls aside the ‘veil of universalism’ (Lister, 1997:72) and uncovers the (lesbian) female non-citizen. Closer inspection indicates that the terms ‘homosexual’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’ and ‘sexual preference’ are used throughout. The text on pages 62-63, entitled ‘You and your sexuality’, begins with “Your sexuality includes how you feel about sex, your feelings about being a girl or a boy, your sexual preferences, and your sexual desires and fantasies”.


It is thus broadly inclusive in its use of the term ‘sexual preferences’ in a manner that anticipates the ‘gay-friendly’ stance in the remainder of the text. There are pencil drawings of six youths with attendant speech bubbles and the White girl’s speech bubble reads “I have sex with other girls” (see Figure 1).

The drawing on the bottom left depicts a potentially androgynous youth whose speech bubble reads “I choose to masturbate rather than have sex”. In this sense, the text may be advocating abstinence, but this is uncertain. The text in the lower left corner provides a definition of ‘sexual preference: who you are sexually attracted to’. According to Richardson (2000), citizenship is always sexualised and this Shuter and Shooter definition of sexual preference challenges heteronormativity by including LGB(TI) learners and thus helps to promote an inclusive and non-oppressive pedagogical space. In addition, in Activity 9 below the line drawings, learners are also asked to engage in pair work as far as the issue of sexuality is concerned. In particular, Question B asks, “Which teen do you identify with most?”, thereby giving LGB(TI) learners the opportunity to discuss their sexualities and/or gender identities. The text indicates its inclusiveness on page 63 where the photograph of the female, same-sex couple is presented and where the text defines sexuality as including heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. The text offers the term ‘gay’ as an alternative to ‘homosexual’, an apparent recognition that ‘homosexual’ has negative, clinical connotations for many gay people. In contrast with the other texts examined, the Shuter and Shooter text affirms bisexuality which is often marginalised or ignored in favour of gay and lesbian identities in the literature and in numerous educational material.

In addition to presenting visual and textual representations of LGB identities, the text reinforces its inclusive stance when it states “Our Constitution forbids discrimination against people because of their sexual preference”. The use of ‘our’ underlines the fact that LGB people are part of South African society and challenges the prevalent school-based homophobia recorded in the South African and international literature (Human Rights Watch, 2001, 2003). It also moves in the direction of a form of education that is strongly committed to social justice. In the section on ‘Community norms and values’, the text informs learners that opinions regarding LGB sexualities are relative and differ from culture to culture, but has already taken a clear stance by citing the Constitutional protections afforded sexual orientation. This contrasts with other texts, such as the Heinemann text described below, which are more ambivalent in their approach to sexual orientation rights. It also subtly engages with the topic of sexual citizenship and encourages students to question the conflation of citizenship with heterosexuality.

**You and your sexuality**

Your sexuality includes how you feel about sex, your feelings about being a girl or a boy, your sexual preferences, and your sexual desires and fantasies. For many teens the big question is, "How far should I go?" Whatever you decide, make sure your behaviour matches your values. What you do must feel right for you.



I want to be a virgin until I'm married.


My girlfriend and I have safe sex, but only with each other.

I have sex with other girls.

I choose to masturbate rather than have sex.

My boyfriend and I kiss and touch each other but we have agreed not to sleep together yet.

An important part of your sexuality involves who you are sexually attracted to. Some people are heterosexual – they are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex. Some people are homosexual or gay – they are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Some people are bisexual – they are sexually attracted to both sexes. Our Constitution forbids discrimination against people because of their sexual preference.



**Community norms and values**

Community norms are the values and behaviours that a community thinks are acceptable or unacceptable. These norms differ from one community to another. For example, some communities believe that homosexuality and abortion are wrong. Others believe that using contraception and having sex before marriage are wrong.

**Activity 9** Work in pairs. Use your own language to discuss the above pictures.

- What do you think of each teen's decisions about their sexuality?
- Which teen do you identify with most?
- How far do you think you should go as a teenager? Think about your values and the things that are important to you.

**Activity 10** Work in groups to find out about attitudes to sexuality.

- What is your group's attitude to these issues?

homosexuality	abortion
contraception	sex before marriage
talking about sex with children	

- Ask at least four adults in your community what they think about the issues in a.
- Are the attitudes to these issues the same for adults and adolescents? Try to explain your findings.

**sexual preference**  
 • who you are  
 • sexually attracted  
 • to

Figure 1: Homosexuality and bisexuality in *Shuters Life Orientation*

Overall, the Shuter and Shooter text is notable for its clear visual representations of LGB(TI) identities and for its informed, nuanced and confident treatment of LGB(TI) life. The text provides learners with a succinct introduction to LGB life and asks them to question their opinions. If presented by teachers as it appears in the text, this portrayal of LGB identities could provide young learners with a sense of safety and foster their inclusion in the classroom. The text is also presented in a way that encourages heterosexual learners to accept sexual minorities and to treat them with respect.

*Oxford Successful Life Orientation* textbook (Oxford University Press)

Unit 4 of the *Successful Life Orientation Grade 7* textbook by Oxford University Press is entitled 'Feelings, norms and values, and social pressures associated with sexuality' (pp. 16-19). The text presents gay identities in a predominantly heteronormative framework similar to that of curricula which normalise heterosexuality and 'otherwise' homosexuality. The unit begins promisingly by defining sexuality as "whether we are attracted to people of the opposite or the same sex". However, Group Activity 11 (p. 16) soon reverts to heteronormativity, asking learners to "brainstorm ideas about the things that you think: a. attract the opposite sex; b. that the opposite sex does not like about your sex". The same activity also asks learners "What qualities to you think girls and boys really look for in each other?". Another exercise in the text is entitled 'Factors influencing sexuality'; none of these directly include LGBTI learners.

Nevertheless, the text becomes significantly more inclusive in the section entitled 'Being gay' (see Figure 2 below). This text uses terminology in relation to 'homosexuality' competently and presents the commonly used term 'straight' instead of the more clinical 'heterosexual' and the term 'gay' instead of 'homosexual'. It contributes to fostering sexual equality for minorities and, in so doing, helps reconceptualise the 'good citizen' historically understood by default as heterosexual. The text deals sensitively with the common experience of alienation and rejection felt by many young LGBTI people and, in the box at the end of page 18, presents the 'coming out' story of Steve, a young gay man:

*It was very hard to tell my parents. When I told my mother, she went crazy. My dad supported me. He said I did not have to feel ashamed that I was gay. In my religion there are some gay priests, so I knew the church would still accept me.*

**Messages about sexuality**  
Having sexual feelings is a normal part of everyone's life. How to deal with those feelings in a sensible and responsible way is something that we have to learn. Our families, religions and cultures may give us guidelines for dealing with our sexuality and help us to understand our sexual feelings. But many young people get their messages about sex and sexuality from friends, TV soap operas, magazines and advertisements. These ideas about sexuality are not always correct and they do not always give the right message.

**Formal Assessment Task 1 Part 2: Research and discussion**

**Activity 13 Analyse messages about sexuality**

- Collect articles and advertisements from teen, women's and men's magazines. Look at the articles and advertisements and talk about:
  - the way people dress or behave
  - the message they give you about sexuality
  - whether the message is a positive or negative one
  - whether you agree with the message
- Talk about a soap opera that you watch or know about on TV in the soap opera:
  - How do the characters dress or behave?
  - What message do they give you about sexuality?
  - Do you agree with the message?
- Share your ideas with other groups in a discussion. You will be assessed on your participation in the discussion and the contributions you make.

**Being gay**  
We talk about someone being "straight" if they are attracted to people of the opposite sex. People who are attracted to people of the same sex are called "gay". When you are gay, it can be hard to accept that you are different from your friends. Read Steven's story below.

*I didn't know I was gay. I just thought I wasn't interested in girls. I had lots of girls who were good friends but I was never sexually attracted to them. At night school I was a crush on my Maths teacher. But I know it is normal for teenagers to have crushes on teachers, or sports heroes of the same sex. It was only when I fell in love with André that I realised I was gay.*

*It was very hard to tell my parents. When I told my mother, she went crazy. My dad supported me. He said I did not have to feel ashamed that I was gay. In my religion there are some gay priests, so I knew the church would still accept me.*

*Sometimes people are horrible and call me names like "mother". I try to ignore them. We all have to accept the way we are and parents must love and accept their children.*

**Activity 14 Discuss feelings, attitudes and values about being gay**

In your group, discuss:

- your own feelings about gay people
- your community's attitudes and values regarding gay people
- whether gay people are accepted in society (give a reason for your answer).

**Why is it important to learn about sexuality?**

**Activity 15 Discuss your ideas**

- In your group, discuss ideas about why you think it is important to learn about sexuality. Or if you disagree, discuss why you think young people should not learn about sexuality.
- Record your answers to keep for a class discussion.

Look at what the learners below are saying about why they think they benefit from learning, talking and thinking about sexuality.

*We are able to take control of our lives, develop our own set of moral values and respect ourselves.*

*We are better able to cope with our feelings because we understand that they are normal.*

*We are better protected from being sexually abused or sexually harassing others.*

*We become more confident and learn how to have loving relationships.*

*It's become clear to me that when we don't care so much about our friends, boy or girl.*

*We learn to accept that people may have different sexual values and orientations to our own.*

**Life Orientation (LO): Health promotion, AS: Discuss the personal feelings, community norms and values and social pressures associated with sexuality. LO: Personal development, AS: Evaluate risks and influences on personal lifestyle choices and propose appropriate responses.**

Figure 2: Representations of gay and lesbian identities in *Oxford Successful Life Orientation*

This vignette reflects the experiences of many young people when ‘coming out’, although the text does not introduce this key LGBTI term. The vignette concludes by challenging homophobia and fostering inclusivity: “We all have to accept the way we are and parents must love and accept their children”. The LG(BTI) affirming tone of this text continues on the next page with a well-structured group exercise (Group Activity 14: ‘Discuss feelings, attitudes and values about being gay’) that asks:

In your group, discuss:

1. your own feelings about gay people
2. your community’s attitudes and values regarding gay people
3. whether gay people are accepted in society (give a reason for your answer).

In this instance, learners are asked to examine their attitudes towards gay people and reflect on homophobia in their communities and in society at large. The Oxford text also presents an image of same-sex love (in the top right-hand corner of page 19) where a pencil drawing depicts a young, smiling, Black, female couple (overshadowed in a somewhat unusual manner by a presumably male, same-sex couple). This endorses a citizenship of the Black gay male in contrast with the historical White, male heterosexual citizen. This section of the text concludes with a group activity in which learners are asked to discuss the importance of learning about sexuality and includes a speech bubble that promotes tolerance of diverse sexual orientations.

While the Oxford University Press text provides an affirming and informed perspective on LGB(TI) life in the section entitled 'Being gay', it is also heteronormative in its conflation of sexuality with heterosexuality. This is reflective of the role of the school environment in obstructing the development of full citizenship among sexual minority learners. There is also an absence of representations of LGBTI life in the textbook as a whole, a weakness in all four of the texts analysed. When LGB(TI) life is presented in these texts, it tends to be isolated and fails to inform the surrounding section, chapters or the book as a whole. In addition, it is obvious that gay men are given much more visibility than women of any sexual minority group.

### *Life Orientation Today* textbook (Maskew Miller and Longman)

Heteronormativity characterises school curricula internationally, and LGBTI youth face disruption to schooling as a result of discrimination (Reygan, 2009). The negative psychological dividend of exposure to this violence, as argued by authors such as Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon and Howell (2009), has social justice implications in terms of creating barriers to the development of full citizenship among sexual minority youth. The Maskew Miller Longman *Life Orientation Today Grade 7* textbook does little to ameliorate this situation. For example, in Chapter 9 'Dealing with difficult situations', sexuality is introduced in a chapter on HIV and tuberculosis:

*HIV/AIDS is a big issue in our country because it is a disease that affects millions of peoples' lives and is very frightening to most people. Many people are worried about being **infected** with HIV.*

A definition given in the margin reads '*Infected*: to cause illness'. Given the introduction of homosexuality at this point, the text thus presents the topic in the context of pathology, disease, illness, fear and death. A quiz in Activity 1: HIV/AIDS (p. 99) includes the question "Is it mostly *homosexual* people and drug users who get HIV?". The text in the margin beside this question reads '*Homosexual*: someone who is sexually attracted to a person of the same sex'. In this instance, the text disturbingly conflates homosexuality and HIV/AIDS in a manner reminiscent of the early view of HIV/AIDS as a 'gay plague'. This minimal inclusion of homosexuality in a chapter focused on TB, AIDS and ill health is also reminiscent of the historical pathologising of homosexuality by the state, institutions and mental health disciplines, including psychology and psychiatry. Furthermore, instead of the more commonly used and affirming term 'gay' (for men), the text uses the more clinical term 'homosexual'. The definition of 'homosexual' does little to include real-life gay or lesbian experience, identity and culture, and fails to mention bisexual, transgender and intersex identities. The text does little to foster discussion among learners about diverse sexualities and, in a subsequent section of Chapter 3 entitled 'Thinking about sexuality' (an appropriate place to introduce discussion of LGBTI identities), the text is silent on non-heterosexual sexuality.

Homosexuality appears again in the Maskew Miller Longman series of LO textbooks in Grade 10 (p. 74), where the text presents different types of discrimination including 'sexual orientation discrimination' and states: "For example homophobia, which is prejudice against people who have same sex relationship". The text then provides the following example of homophobia: "Gay men are jailed just because they are gay, for example in Malawi and Uganda". In this instance, the text foregrounds gay identities and homophobia, not only using the term 'homophobia' but providing real-world and current examples of anti-gay discrimination in Africa. However, the potential problem with the latter example is that the 'homophobe' is usually Black. This leads to stigmatisation and the assumption that the White community is not homophobic. Overall, the Maskew Miller Longman texts generally present a pathologised, clinical and abstract figure of the 'homosexual' and do little to challenge stereotypes and discrimination against LGBTI people. They appear oblivious to the emergence of new models of sexual and intimate citizenship and risk aggravating the challenges faced by LGBTI learners in the South African school system (see Butler *et al.*, 2003; Wells & Polders, 2005).



### *Spot On Life Orientation* textbook (Heinemann)

The *Spot On Life Orientation Grade 7* textbook by Heinemann publishers hardly mentions sexual minority identities. In Unit 8 ‘What to expect’ (in Chapter 3 on Personal Health, p. 38), the text states that “some teenagers are not even interested in the opposite sex”, but the reference, in this instance, is not to LGB identities, but to activities such as ‘sport, music or achieving good marks’. In a subsequent activity, learners are asked to ‘Define the meaning of the word “sexuality”’. This task is followed immediately by the question “Have your feelings towards the opposite sex changed since Grade 1?”. The Summary and Assessment section on page 42 includes the statement: “In this module ... you learnt about the importance of understanding sexuality and the changes that take place during puberty ... you learnt how to deal with attractions ...”. This is not the case for learners whose LGBTI identities remain invisible in the text. This promotion of heterosexuality and gender normativity potentially denies young LGBTI learners agency and hope, negates their own ‘ways of knowing’, and reflects the invisibility of these minority learners internationally.

The only other place where gay identities are mentioned is in Chapter 5, in an activity entitled ‘Spot the prejudice’ (p. 65), where a list of statements that learners are asked to discuss includes the following: “Gay men are more likely to abuse children”. In a text devoid of positive treatment of sexual minority identities, the introduction of this homophobic statement is problematic, given the historical and incorrect conflation of paedophilia and homosexuality. It normalises heterosexuality, pathologises the ‘Other’, excludes LGBTI learners from the school curriculum, and misses an opportunity to educate all learners to issues of diverse sexual orientations. Homosexuality appears again in the Heinemann series of LO textbooks in Grade 11 (p. 50), where various social issues are debated. There is a paragraph on same-sex marriage with opinions for and against. The view of the ‘opponents’ pivots on the ‘tradition of man-woman union’ and the ‘proponents’ on ‘individual equality ... as an extension of the rights of all South African citizens’. Given that same-sex unions are legal in South Africa as well as the legislative and constitutional protection of sexual orientation rights, debating this ‘issue’ is problematic. In Grade 11 (p. 86), a text box on the side of the page provides a perfunctory definition of homosexuality: “Homosexuality: Sexual attraction to people of the same sex”. The central text on the page explores issues of intimacy and masculinity and posits that a number of factors interfere with the expression of intimacy by (presumably heterosexual) men, including ‘stereotypes about ‘real men and fear of homosexuality’. In this instance, homosexuality is understood solely in relation to normative, heterosexual masculinity and as an obstacle to the development of full masculinity and, therefore, full citizenship.

Overall, the Heinemann LO texts in Grades 7 and 11 normalise heterosexuality and ‘otherise’ homosexuality. In so doing, they render LGBTI youth invisible and deny these youth voice and recognition. The Heinemann texts also appear oblivious to the importance of social justice and anti-oppressive education in this sphere. Rather than helping to develop full citizenship among sexual minority learners, the texts would appear to create obstacles to citizenship development. They do little to facilitate teaching and learning that encourage all learners to critique injustice, particularly as this relates to gender, sexual minorities, social justice and citizenship.

## Conclusion

Russell (2002) points out that there is a tendency in the literature to focus on the marginalisation and exclusion of sexual minority youth in the school system. In the texts analysed in this article, lesbianism is not mentioned (though female couples are visually portrayed) and the term ‘gay’ (when used) is generally understood to refer to gay male identity. Bisexuality is mentioned once in one of the texts, and transgender and intersex identities are absent. Nevertheless, we found some textual and visual representations of LGB(TI) life that have the potential to foster equality and inclusion in the classroom. The Shuter and Shooter and the Oxford texts re-imagine pedagogical practices in terms of sexual minorities and have the potential to open up new spaces allowing for the development of fully engaged sexual citizenship among LGB(TI) learners. However, while our study has not examined the use of these texts in the classroom, it would appear that there is a disjuncture between policy and practice. Many of the texts

analysed perpetuate the invisibility of LGBTI learners in the classroom by denying these learners visual or textual representation of their LGBTI identities and by stifling any related discussion in the classroom. In addition, the fact that there is a loud silence concerning LGBTI identities in any grade other than grade 7 lessens the possibility of full citizenship development among these learners.

The Heineman and Maskew Miller Longman texts ignore LGBTI youth's particular forms of knowledge and 'ways of knowing', which has implications in terms of access to full citizenship. If these learners and their heterosexual peers are not taught about the constitutional and legislative protection of LGBTI people, it is less likely that future generations will insist on the implementation of these rights. If Richardson (2004) and Seidman (2002) are correct, full citizenship for sexual minorities needs to go beyond a mere tokenism and challenge heterosexism. The literature indicates that an affirming representation and construction of LGBTI identities in school systems facilitates the development of a safe school environment for LGBTI youth (Macintosh, 2007; Russell, 2002). However, in the texts analysed in this article, it appears that post-apartheid goals are not being realised in terms of LGBTI inclusion. While some of the texts attempt to represent and construct LGBTI identities in an affirming way, they generally run the risk on being tokenistic, as happens with LGBTI identities in other arenas such as religion in South Africa (Potgieter & Reygan, 2011).

Our study begins to rectify the knowledge-practice gap identified by Francis (2012) by challenging LGBTI invisibility in curriculum design and in school textbooks. Richardson (2009) also points out that there are impediments to this type of research, as there currently exist no nationwide networks for educators working to combat heterosexism and homophobia. However, a recent colloquium organised by the Gay and Lesbian Archives in Memory (GALA) in Johannesburg indicates that researchers, the National Department of Education and Training and the various teachers unions recognise the importance of including sexual diversity issues in teacher training as well as in the curriculum.

Francis (2012) found four main reasons why teachers avoid teaching about sexual diversity, including the absence of sexual diversity as an LO policy task; a general lack of uniformity in teacher training in this area; the need for teachers to be more self-reflexive and to understand their own backgrounds, beliefs and prejudices, and concerns about lack of support from school management when teaching about sexual diversity. It is hoped that our study will be used as a basis from which to influence both the didactic materials developed for teaching about sexual diversity and the development of teacher training modules on sexual diversity. Our findings highlight the importance of teaching sexual diversity in classrooms, because researchers such as Sears (1991) and Telljohann, Price, Poureslami and Easton (1995) indicate that the better educated educators are in terms of homosexuality, the more positive their attitudes and, crucially, the more likely they are to feel competent and comfortable teaching about homosexuality. Kowen and Davis (2006) argue that LGB learners receive little or no education about their sexual identities in South Africa. Our findings point to the general invisibility of LGBTI identities in LO textbooks and thereby emphasise the real and pressing need for a more inclusive and affirming representation of LGBTI identities in curriculum design and pedagogy.

While social justice education often focuses on discrimination and marginalisation, it also needs to engage with imaginative possibilities in terms of social justice and inclusion. Furthermore, one of the core concerns of social justice education is to facilitate students in learning to critique social injustices in the world. By contrast, the texts analysed in this article, with some exceptions, tend not to facilitate students in critiquing the discrimination, prejudice and social injustices faced by many LGBTI people. While some of the texts present meaningful representations and constructions of LGB(TI) identities, LGBTI invisibility leads others to lessen the importance of social justice and citizenship education in this area. This finding may be of interest to educators and policy makers in education who are focused on facilitating action for change among learners.

The representation of sexual minorities in the textbooks analysed in this article does not realise the commitment and spirit of the *Constitution*. Therefore, we return to an earlier question: Why the disjuncture? Surely, those stakeholders responsible for textbook content and the quality assurers are aware of this commitment? Arguments put forward on 'knowing' and contextualised to issues in South Africa

(Soudien, 2012) provide a way to make sense of this situation. In essence, there are three ways of knowing: the first is an awareness of an issue, but overall ignorance and naivety; the second is a concerted effort to not tell the truth, and the third form of knowing is a ‘switching off’ or ‘blocking out’. This last could be categorised as ‘not wanting to know’ and thus ‘not wanting to act’. Our case study of LO texts is possibly a combination of both ignorance and switching off because, while there is a movement towards LGBTI acknowledgement, there is a subsequent ‘light switched off experience’ throughout the texts. Soudien’s (2012) article, entitled ‘Knowing enough to act: The educational implication of a critical social justice approach to difference’, captures the sentiment that we endorse in terms of engaging the authors of the texts analysed in our article, policy makers, implementers and, most importantly, the National Department of Basic Education.

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