Knock Knock: An Exploration of Diverse Student Identities in a South African Design Classroom

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Abstract

Incorporating socially just concepts into classrooms means students' needs are considered and pedagogic activities recognise everyone and make sure that student voices are heard, acknowledged and affirmed. Art has historically provided alternative ways of making sense of our worlds, commenting on them, questioning practices and structures, and voicing our feelings and experiences. In the context of the volatile South African higher education landscape, diverse student populations, widespread calls for decolonisation and social justice, arts-based enquiry as a method provides a view into the ineffable experiences of students. This article explores collage as a conduit for design students to engage with their designer identities, experiences of higher education and personal narratives. The research documents students' liminal experiences at the start of their journey as extended curriculum design students and uses collage as a form of elicitation, a reflective process and a way of conceptualising ideas as an attempt at restoring justice in an African (design) classroom.

Keywords: arts-based enquiry; diversity; social justice; design education

Introduction

> To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks 1994, 13)

Historically, the didactic nature of design education in South Africa meant that the design classroom often neglected to acknowledge the voices of its students (Menon 2003). Design education and its inherent practices privileged those with knowledge of the accepted (largely European) conventions and excluded students who did not come with any "classical" (Menon 2003) art or design background. Garuba's article (2015) in the *Mail & Guardian* asserts that "curriculum assigns value to its objects of study and determines academic formation". This means that the curriculum impresses "particular ways of thinking about particular subjects" (Garuba 2015). This particular framing of the power of curriculum is what makes it a good place to plant seeds of transformation.

With a view to the Africanisation of education in South Africa and the call to take the African reality seriously (Louw 2010), Garuba (2015) recommends that in addition to the physical liberty that South Africans received at the abolishment of apartheid, we should also embrace contrapuntal pedagogies and thinking in higher education in order to effectively transform our curricula. Contrapuntal pedagogies encourage comparison and juxtaposition of curricular content and allow students to form their own critical views on topics. Contrapuntal pedagogies recognise that these views may be influenced by students' culture, history, life experiences and positionality, a key tenet of humanising pedagogies. Design studies should embrace a humanising pedagogy to create inclusive learning environments and help design students develop critical "academic and social resiliency" (Salazar 2013, 124), which they may not have had the opportunity to do at school level. Academic resilience in South Africa is often linked to the socio-economic backgrounds of students (Wills and Hofmeyr 2019), and the legacy of apartheid basic education is one of the main contributors to the difference in the academic performance of students in South Africa (Shepherd 2016).

Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) are an initiative by the National Department of Higher Education in South Africa that aims to address the academic inequalities of South Africa's apartheid past and constitute anywhere between 15–30% of South African universities' first-year intake. ECPs offer previously marginalised South African students transitional spaces in which they may establish academic foundations that assist in reaching equality of outcomes as they progress through their academic journeys. ECPs invite students to find their way, agency and voice in higher education and to acquire ways and means to cope with the demands tertiary study places on them. There is a very clear social justice agenda in ECPs, and this is supported by special government funding and resources. I work in and have conducted my study in an ECP in design. It is an ideal environment for humanising pedagogies to be employed contrapuntally, as humanising pedagogies are not imposed or imparted (as is design

education's largely didactic tradition); rather they engage the "oppressed" in their own "transformation" and "liberation" (Salazar 2013, 126).

As a humanising pedagogic response to the Africanisation of design education, in this study I explore the use of collage portraits in my design ECP classroom to create an inclusive and socially just learning environment that invites students to explore their identities as individuals who are at university studying design. I provide a visual analysis of the collages created by students about their identities as individuals, as students in higher education, and as designers to establish whether the perceived individual identities of students are inflected in their seeing of themselves at university and as designers.

Key Concepts

Art and Design Education: Traditions, Norms and Challenges

Art and design as a field of practice and education has historically been very exclusive (Menon 2003), and the standard of what is considered "art" has been subject to artists and designers alike conforming to "classic", largely Western traditions and norms (Menon 2003, 200). The norms in art and design privilege the "artistic genius" (Biscombe et al. 2017, 6) that has been accredited to the West. Using the "accepted Western norms" as the standard in art and design education and as evaluative tools (Biscombe et al. 2017, 15), art and design education has "othered" and cultivated an inferior view of anything different from the Western norm.

This has meant the privileging of a particular aesthetic and a judgement of the aesthetic of the "inferior" (Menon 2003, 199). The challenge exists for those of us in art and design education to challenge ourselves, as "colonisers" of sorts, to shift our gaze to the art less observed.

Africanisation

In South Africa, with its diversity of cultures, languages and histories, the call for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum, especially in higher education, has urged universities to do introspection. This attempt at introspection at an institutional level in South African universities has led to the formation of structures such as transformation committees and task teams to effect change (Garuba 2015). However, what this "committee"-driven approach risks is the "slow and deliberative death" (Garuba 2015) of discussions and action around the change that is needed in the curriculum and pedagogies of those involved in the academic project at South African universities. Affective change is urgently needed and yet is slow at ground zero.

The Africanisation of the curriculum, according to Garuba (2015), recognises the knowledge of previously devalued groups of people and recognises their cultural and scientific production. It is the process of liberating those who have been oppressed by colonial domination through a "continuous demand for freedom for Africans to

experience the true humanity found in an African conceptualisation of Ubuntu" (Garuba 2015).

Humanising Pedagogies

Students of colour at higher education institutions have been intentionally and unintentionally inundated with messages of inferiority through a hidden curriculum (Salazar 2013, 122) that coerces students to assimilate into Western academic culture. This hidden coercion presents to them a choice between assimilation for the sake of feeling less "othered" (Biscombe et al. 2017, 5) or remaining on the periphery of learning environments while maintaining their "peculiarities" (Salazar 2013, 141).

Humanising pedagogies have at their heart Freire's notion that humans are motivated by a need to reason and engage in the process of becoming (Salazar 2013). Humanisation, according to Freire (2000 cited in Salazar 2013, 126), is the process of "becoming more fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world". Salazar (2013) suggests that a pedagogy for the oppressed is created "with" students and not for students to regain their "humanity".

In a similar vein, Salazar (2013, 128) lists five key tenets that are "requisite for the pursuit of one's full humanity through a humanizing pedagogy":

1. The full development of the person is essential for humanization.
2. To deny someone else's humanization is also to deny one's own.
3. The journey for humanisation is an individual and collective endeavor toward critical consciousness.
4. Critical reflection and action can transform structures that impede our own and others' humanness, thus facilitating liberation for all.
5. Educators are responsible for promoting a more fully human world through their pedagogical principles and practices.

Social Justice in Higher Education

> All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions—and society—so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom. (hooks 1994, 34)

"Education can change lives" (Rowan 2019, 2), but education is not a "neutral act" (Rowan 2019). It can bring about conformity and make students invisible or it can be the practice of freedom (Freire 2000, 34). hooks (1994, 14) claims that in order for education to be liberatory, it should incite "mutual labour" in knowledge generation. This means that students should form part of knowledge building and creation instead of using a "banking system" (Freire 2000, 138; hooks 1994, 5) where knowledge building is a one-way street and only imparted by the knowledgeable other. Students

should be presented with and challenged to pursue contrapuntal, critical activities that help them make meaning.

Zembylas (2017) discusses the concept of higher education as a public good and questions what this public good looks like in societies where gross inequalities exist/have existed. He uses the idea of curricular justice (Connell 1994), which emphasises not only the development of knowledge through the recognition of the interests of the least advantaged but also how this knowledge may be critical and useful to the communities of people that higher education institutions (HEI) seek to address. For social justice to be realised in higher education, it is vital to become critically aware (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2012) of who the real communities of people that higher education serves are and to make sure that their voices are heard, acknowledged and affirmed in their classrooms. This does not equate to equality but rather equity of access to systems and structures that are inherently unjust (Furlong and Cartmel 2009). These unjust systems exercise unequal social power at both micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2012), and for any person to engage in social justice they have to recognise this. It is imperative at a macro level that universities implement policies and systems that promote equity (Furlong and Cartmel 2009) rather than equality, and at a micro level that pedagogy and curriculum facilitate equitable participation in knowledge formation.

ECP as Research Site

South Africa's apartheid education system, its associated pedagogies and the constraints these imposed on black South Africans pre-1994 are the antithesis of how Freire (2000) conceptualises a humanising process or pedagogy. The racially segregated school system of apartheid denied black South Africans the opportunity to participate "in and with the world" (Freire 2000, 43) by giving them inferior basic education and denying them access to higher education. Post 1994 saw freedom of physical movement and residence in addition to many other liberations of black South Africans. However, the legacy of "gutter education" (Bigelow 1987, 120) is still very apparent in higher education. Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) are an attempt to address and redress these legacy inequalities by providing specially funded programmes that are well-resourced, and that give extended time to complete qualifications and provide curricular support in order to allow participants to participate, as Freire (2000) puts it, in and with the world of higher education.

hooks (1994) suggests that we respect and care for the souls of our students and in so doing provide conditions where learning starts deeply and intimately. Our Extended Curriculum Programme in Design, which is the site of this research, is a space where deep intimate learning can take place because the programme is guided by the national imperative of social justice, additional curricular support and extended time on tasks. Students in this programme typically do not have a "classical" (Menon 2003, 200) art and design background. They come largely from rural and public schools, and because of South Africa's history, and more poignantly its educationally segregated history, they

do not have "adequate background knowledge" (Furlong and Cartmel 2009, 110) to engage in mainstream studies yet. These students, who often are English second- or third-language speakers, are offered an additional year of study (before starting their mainstream diploma) and are to be prepared for engagement with the established mainstream design curriculum.

Biscombe et al. (2017) reference language as a way in which supremacy and symbolic racism are upheld in universities. When students are not able to confidently participate in the discussions that form part of the knowledge-building activities, particularly because of a language difference, they are "othered" (Biscombe et al. 2017, 5), and the environment becomes unjust for them. In the design ECP the language of instruction is English even though roughly 80% of the students are not English first-language speakers. It would seem, then, that finding a "language" that transcends language would be key in establishing communication and relational justice (Zembylas 2017, 39). As Eisner asserts,

> it has become increasingly clear since the latter half of the 20th century that knowledge or understanding is not always reducible to language. … Thus not only does knowledge come in different forms, the forms of its creation differ. The idea of ineffable knowledge is not an oxymoron. (Eisner 2008, 5)

Collage as Arts-Based Enquiry

Collage is a means to include/hear marginalised voices and encourage language-based, visual/textural and non-verbal representations. Collages provide an alternative way to articulate authentic lived experiences (Gerstenblatt 2013). They also present a method of enquiry and analysis (Gerstenblatt 2013).

The term "collage" originates from the French word *collé*, which means glued. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque used collage as a cubist technique and in so doing disrupted the notion that a painting represents a "uniform reality" (Gerstenblatt 2013). Collage "fragments space and repurposes objects to contextualise multiple realities" (Gerstenblatt 2013, 295), and because of this it is a good way to create inclusive ways to communicate, learn about or elicit the different experiences of different people who find themselves in the same context. Collage, because of its non-linguistic nature, often allows for narratives that are silenced by "textual and linguistic data collection" (Gerstenblatt 2013, 295) to emerge.

In arts-based research/enquiry, the researcher can be actively involved in creating the artwork that will become part of the data, or the researcher can act as observer in the art-making process, with the artworks then being the data. In the case of my research, the latter is the case.

Methodology

Collage as an enquiry method provides a socially just tool for the humanising of ECP practices and pedagogy and can provide valuable information that can help with the development of a pedagogic response to Africanisation in our classrooms.

The research was done in an ECP design classroom in a university of technology in South Africa. There were approximately 40 graphic design students involved, of whom 21 signed consent forms and their work has been included in this article. Ethics clearance for this project was obtained as part of a larger project, the Research and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (RITAL) initiative at the university.

In the second semester of their ECP foundation year and as a prologue to a photography project where the students would be working with portraiture, they were asked to assemble three collages. They were each given:

- a collection of random magazines from which they could cut and paste images;

- markers, pens and pencils they could use to draw on the collage;

- a template of a body on A3 paper (Figure 1) on which they were to create their collages.

Based on the notion that transitions are socially structured (Breeze, Johnson, and Uytman 2020) and irreducible to individual-level phenomena, I wanted to understand the positionality of the students. If I am to be human in my approach to learning and develop strategies and curricula that are inclusive, I need to be aware of what they bring with them to the transition into higher and design education. Using collage as a way for students to explore or express their positionality as it pertains to the questions posed to them helps them situate themselves in the university and the design classroom. An awareness of what students bring with them and making their narratives explicit in a non-verbal way connect their worlds with that of the university and design studies.
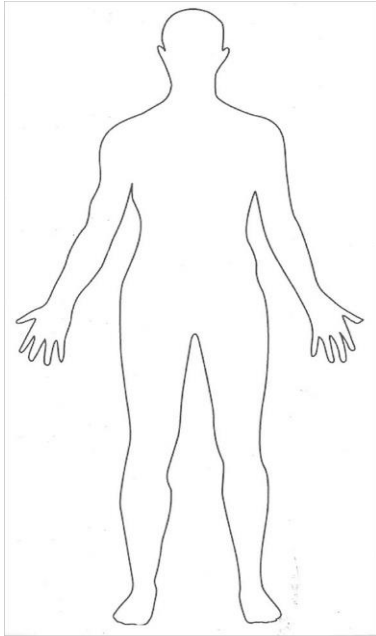
Figure 1: The body template students were issued

Breeze, Johnson, and Uytman (2020) note that students who are part of widening participation initiatives in the United Kingdom, similar to ECPs in South Africa, find it difficult to adjust and find their place in universities where "a middle-class student body has existed as the unmarked norm for generations" (2020, 20). So in order to "listen visually" (Butler-Kisber 2008) and to conceptualise students' experiences of their transition into higher education and design studies, I asked my students to create three collages, exploring:

1. *How they see themselves* (the individual), including things they like to do and how they often feel;

2. *How they see themselves as university students*, including their life since they have been at university; and

3. How they see themselves as designers.

These three collage portraits were specifically chosen as illustrative of a student's transition from the periphery of their studies at higher education to the centre of the community of practice, which in this case would be being a designer. It is premised on the idea that when students present themselves at university, they bring all of themselves (the individual) with them. Their individual identity includes culture, family relationships and embodied knowledge acquired in their life thus far. Once they are at university, students have to adapt to the "culture" (Breeze, Johnson, and Uytman 2020,

21) of the university (seeing themselves as higher education students). In addition to finding ways to navigate university systems, students also have to engage the disciplinary culture in their design studies. The complexity of the landscape that students have to navigate when they get to higher education necessitates the investigation of tools that can provide lecturers with equitable insight into the experiences of students. In this study I wanted to establish whether, through the use of collage, which "enables meaning to travel in ways words cannot" (Butler-Kisber 2008, 270), students would visually conceptualise their identity(ies) and values and whether they inflected their perception of their embodied identities as individuals on their "newly acquired" identities as higher education participants and design students. Do students see themselves and who they are as part of their university/design student identities, or are they feeling like "fish out of water" (Breeze, Johnson, and Uytman 2020)?

Mullen (1999, 150) says "identity is like a cultural collage, variously arranged and glued together". The three collages students were asked to make are a visual deconstruction of the *forged* identity students are expected to have once they are at university. This *forged* university identity ignores the complexity of students' identities and is an "impossible harmony" (Freire 2000, 145) preached by those who want to maintain the status quo of assimilation and erasure of individual identity in order to "save themselves" (Freire 2000, 145).

Creating the three separate collages makes the aspects of their identity that students have to navigate while studying at university explicit to the lecturer and also creates an opportunity for the student, who may not necessarily be prepared for university, to conceptualise where the disparity between their identity(ies) (if any) lies.

Students were given 20 minutes to create each of the collages in class and once they had finished all three collages, they were asked to write a short paragraph about what they had done in their collages. This article only focuses on a visual analysis of the collages.

Analysis

Semiology (Rose 2016, 119), which is a critical visual methodology, was employed in the analysis of the collages. Semiology, also known as semiotics (Figure 2), is the reading or analysis of "signs" in order to make meaning. First introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure in the 20th century (Krampen 1987), semiology uses at its first level analysis "iconic" signs (Rose 2016) to make meaning of images. This means interpreting the image used at face value. At its second level semiology looks at the "indexical" (Rose 2016, 120) signs in an image to find inherent meaning by looking at what the objects/images used in the work are generally associated with. At the third level, connotative signs have "higher level" (Rose 2016, 145) meaning and are often used to elicit the (un)intended, "hidden" (Butler-Kisber 2008, 9) messages in images. Semiology "provides a precise and rich vocabulary for understanding how the structure of images produces cultural meaning" (Rose 2016, 145). In my research, it helped me to identify key themes in the collages and to make meaning of these themes as they

pertain to students' perceptions of their identities in my classroom. It is worth mentioning that the relationship between viewer, image and meaning is complex and that the meaning we find in images is often influenced by culture and society (Curtin 2006, 54), but it is also worth noting that "we can gain information about the signified by looking at the sign".

Sadly, the analytical tools used for this study stem from the white patriarchy and it must be mentioned that the semiotic lens in the viewing/analysis of the collages is that of a female of colour. As a black female graphic designer in academia, I acknowledge that I am influenced by the profession in which I practise as well as my life experiences as a person of colour moving through academia in a plural manner. It is widely accepted in semiotics that you cannot divorce meaning-making from the viewer, their culture and history, and all interpretation of visual data is subjective. Generally accepted signifiers have been established globally over time, but even these are based on a largely Eurocentric view of the world and privilege this way of seeing.
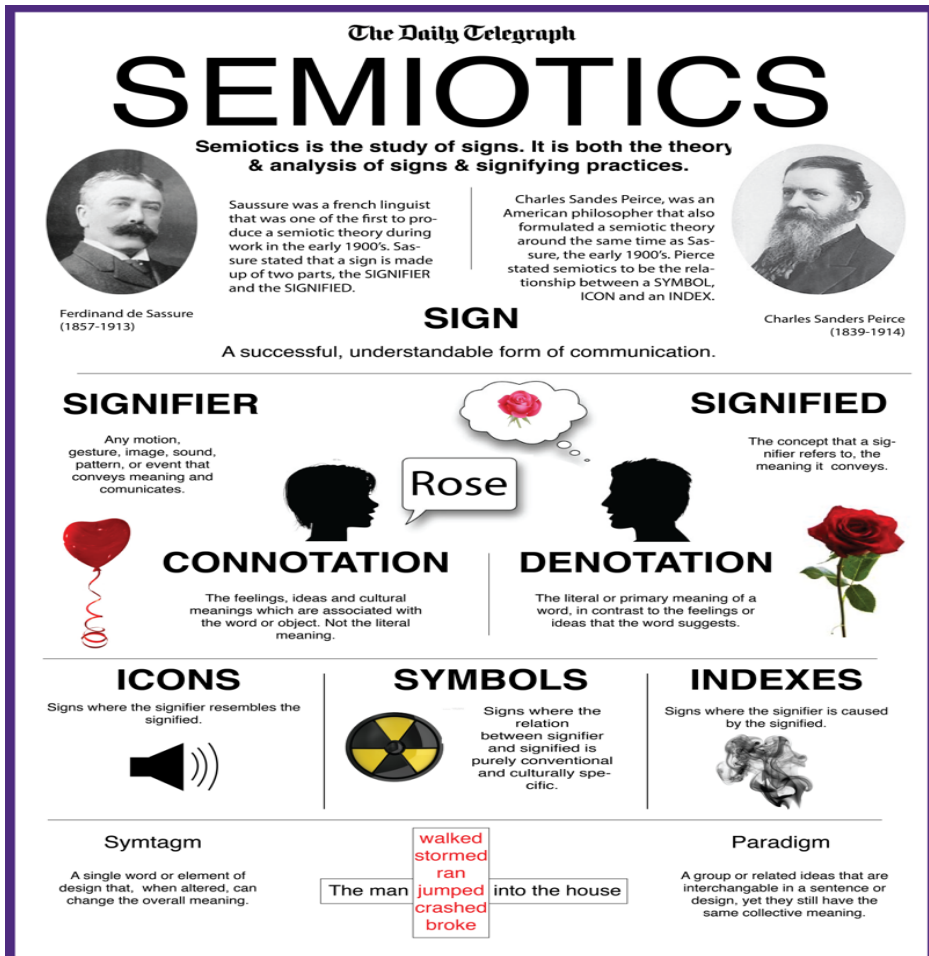


Figure 2: Semiotics infographic

In my analysis of the collages created by students I attempt to answer three questions linked to what Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) identify as the three contributions of collage to qualitative research:

1. *Collage as a form of elicitation for writing*—what are students' collages saying about their identities?

2. *Collage as a reflective process*—what are the similarities, recurring themes or links (if any) between individuals' collages and what do they mean?

3. *Collage as a way of conceptualising ideas*—what are students' aspirations around their deconstructed identities and how can this feed into curriculum and pedagogy?

Butler-Kisber (2008) suggests an iterative analysis process of viewing, discussing and writing in order to distil similarities and differences across collages to reveal a "kaleidoscopic representation". The process of viewing, discussing and writing should help to reveal meaning that would not emerge otherwise.

Students who participated were anonymised; the 21 students were named S1–S21, that is, student one to student 21. Each student's three collages were grouped together on one page. An initial analysis of the 21 sets of collages was performed, looking for signifiers that occurred multiple times throughout all the collages. Figure 3 shows a screenshot of this process. Four signifiers were identified using this method:

1. Food

2. The colour red

3. Personification of the template (specifically giving it a face)

4. Body parts
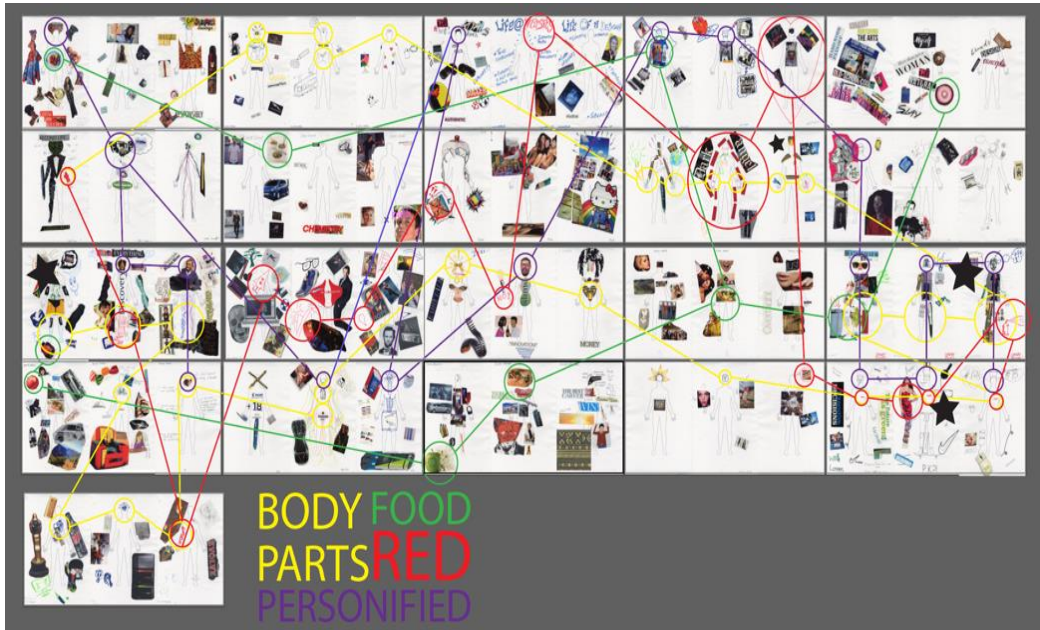
Figure 3: Recurring signifiers identified

Using the web created by joining up all the signifiers (which were circled), the collage sets with the highest frequency of the range of signifiers were selected for analysis in this article. Figure 4 is a screenshot of this process. The black stars mark the pages with the highest frequency of the identified signifiers. They were S9, S11, S15 and S20.
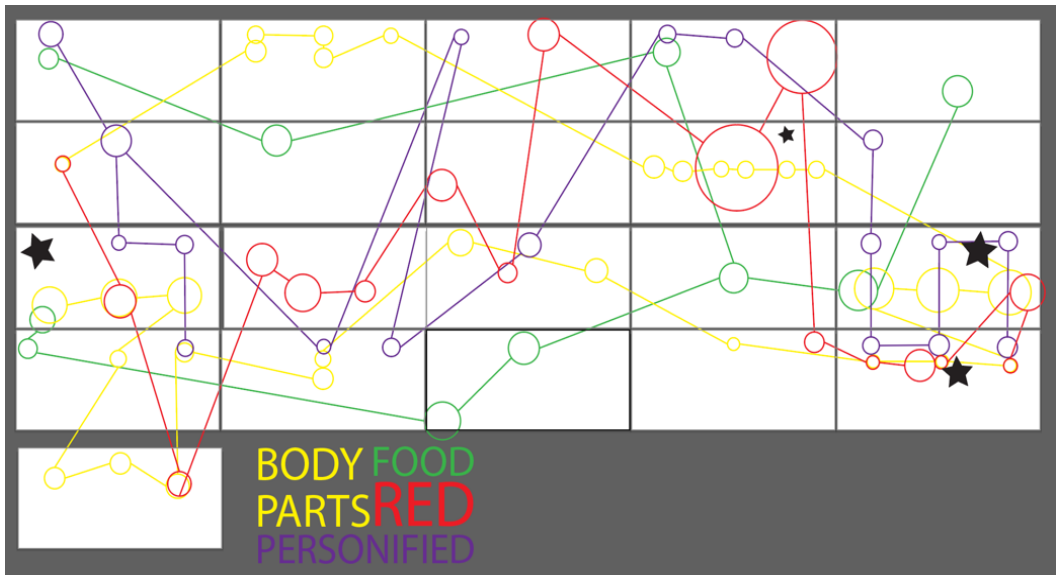
Figure 4: Collage sets with the highest frequency of signifiers identified

These four sets of collages were examined in further detail (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The four selected collage sets

Findings

S9

Figure 6: S9's collages

From left to right is the university, individual and then the designer identity collages. At an iconic level, the signifiers in the university collage show that S9 has ideas and a keen knowledge of the world and history that enables him to do things. This is based on the linking of the globe and lightbulb directly to his hands. In addition to these iconic signifiers, S9 has symbolically used exclamation marks around his head, which is another signifier for ideas/thinking. At a connotative level, the pen in the leg seems to refer to being mobilised by university studies.

In S9's individual identity collage, the most striking iconic signifier is the colour red. Its iconic link is to danger, blood and emergency, and its placement on the wrists confirms possible dark tendencies. The signifier receives anchorage from the text "Dark Angel" arranged around a scattering of red rectangles that surround the body. The drawings of the game controller, scarf and glasses in different colours are symbolic signifiers of hope—things that keep the danger and darkness at bay.

The designer identity collage's iconic signifiers are the regal epaulettes, headdress and belt. They are signifiers of a distinguished nature and S9 seems empowered as a designer. Symbolic signifiers in his hands show empowerment and ability, and the earth in the bottom right-hand corner by his feet assumes a connotative signifier, which shows dominance. The exclamation mark appears again, however this time there is only one and it is in a thought bubble, showing clarity of thought and ideas.

The hands are significant in all three collages and the exclamation mark signifier is featured in both the university and designer collages. A clear link exists between these two collages and even the cut paper used on these two are the same. It is striking how much red was used in the individual collage and yet no red was used in the university or designer collage. S9 did not include any of the signifiers of his individual collage in the other two, and it seems this exclusion of the dark self from university and life as a design student can be seen as a paradigmatic sign of his liberation.

S11

Figure 7: S11's collages

In Figure 7, from left to right appear S11's individual, university and designer identity collages. S11 is one of the students who have all the signifiers present in their collages. Iconic signifiers in the individual collage are the praying hands signifying spirituality.

The location is symbolic in its position at the centre of the figure and signifies the centrality of her faith. The words "art" and "games" are placed at the centre of both arms and "shopping" and "music" on the legs as if to signify activities she often engages in. The word "food" is placed on her head and it seems to be central to her well-being. The use of the peace dove combined with the South African flag, the word "good" and the word "meaningful" create a syntagmatic sign that she is patriotic and loves her country. The colour blue is in the dove, the word good, the expressive cartoon-like drawings as well as in the marks she has drawn on her legs. Again, syntagmatically these signifiers point to the good she sees in herself as a person and her peaceful nature. The individual collage's face, unlike the other two, is not personified but is adjacent to the face of a white woman. On a symbolic level, the white woman seems to present an aspiration but at the same time seemingly erases the person of S11.

In her university collage, the red books are an iconic signifier of the importance of her studies. The fact that they reside at her feet gives anchorage to this signifier. S11 uses many words in her collage, with "Discovery" at the centre of her being. Above her head, as if to symbolically signify exclusion, she has placed the words "guess everything". She has personalised the face on this figure, and it is shouting, giving anchorage to the idea that university has not been an easy environment to navigate. This is confirmed by the image of a man using a loud hailer.

In S11's designer collage, she draws what seems to be a hybrid of the individual and university collages, with characteristics of the markings in her legs as well as the blue of the individual collage and the red of the previous two collages being mixed. These symbolic signifiers indicate a coming together of the two individual and university identities and how it strengthens her in the journey to becoming a designer. The curvy red lines on the legs continue into the hands, signifying that she is able to use her previous learning experiences (the red specifically referring to the university identity) and apply them to her journey as a designer. S11 has her "dream" at her feet and this is a symbolic signifier of her confidence in her design abilities and studies. She personifies her designer identity, but this time uses a black man, which signifies the connotative transformation from the individual aspirations to a renewed thinking and seeing of the self.

S15
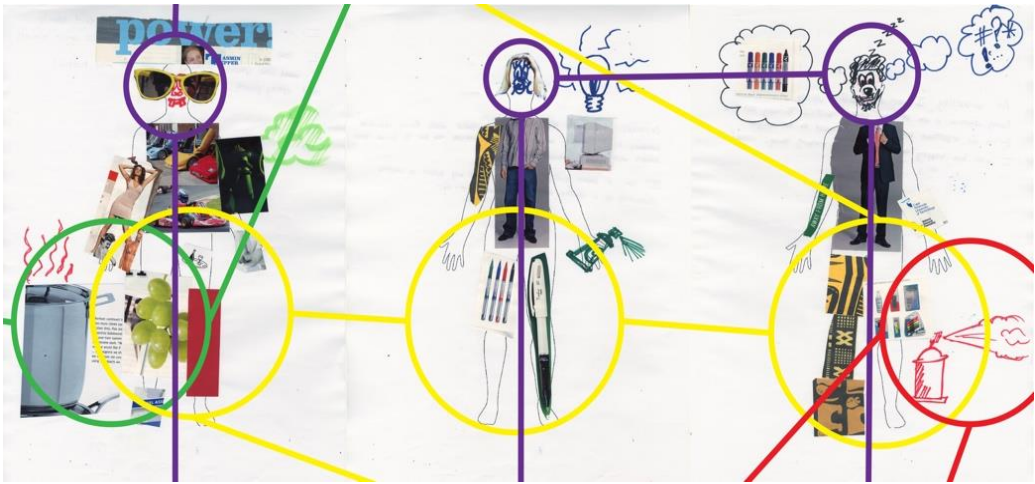
Figure 8: S15's collages

S15 is another student who presents all four signifiers in his collages. Figure 8 shows, from left to right, his individual collage, designer collage and then the university student collage. S15 worked extensively with his own drawings, and this in itself is a signifier of confidence in his ability to communicate visually. S15 works with found pictures richly in his individual collage. A significant signifier in his individual collage is the word "power" above his head, which signals the importance of power as it is placed above everything in the collage. Oversized sunglasses on his comically drawn-in face signify a sense of humour or playfulness in his personal character. There is transference of meaning in the individual collage with red moving between the face, cars, food pot and S15's leg, which has a significant amount of red covering it. There is picture of a spray can as an iconic signifier linked to S15's love for and practice of graffiti. The spray can appears in all three collages. In the designer collage, the spray can is in hand whereas in the university collage the signifier is next to the figure, larger than all the others and also in red. The size and placement signify at a connotative level that graffiti is a big part of S15's life, but does not fit into the university environment.

In the designer collage, S15 has a pen as a signifier of his design work. Pictures of pens are placed on his legs and represent being grounded in design. The designer's face is personified in a comical manner and again shows the playfulness of S15. The lightbulb next to the head of the designer collage signifies conceptual ability. The designer collage is different from the other two collages in that it has not been worked on as extensively as the university or individual collages. As a paradigmatic sign, this shows less confidence and that S15 has not yet established what his identity as a designer is.

S15 has grappled extensively with the university identity in the third collage. The red spray, although on the periphery of the university identity, gives anchorage to S15's

love of graffiti, which is also evident in the abundant images of markers and pens both in the right leg and as a thought in a bubble above the head. The diegesis of these pens and exaggerated spray can and the love and attention given to them is in contrast to the Zs that appear above the head. Some punctuation marks in the right speech bubble are used as iconic signifiers of expletives, which symbolically indicate frustration with higher education. The signifier on the left arm using the words "away from home" is a syntagmatic sign of the disconnect between S15's home life and life at university. This is given anchorage by the image of a man in a suit on the torso of the body, which is in contrast to the comical personifications on all the collages' faces.

S20
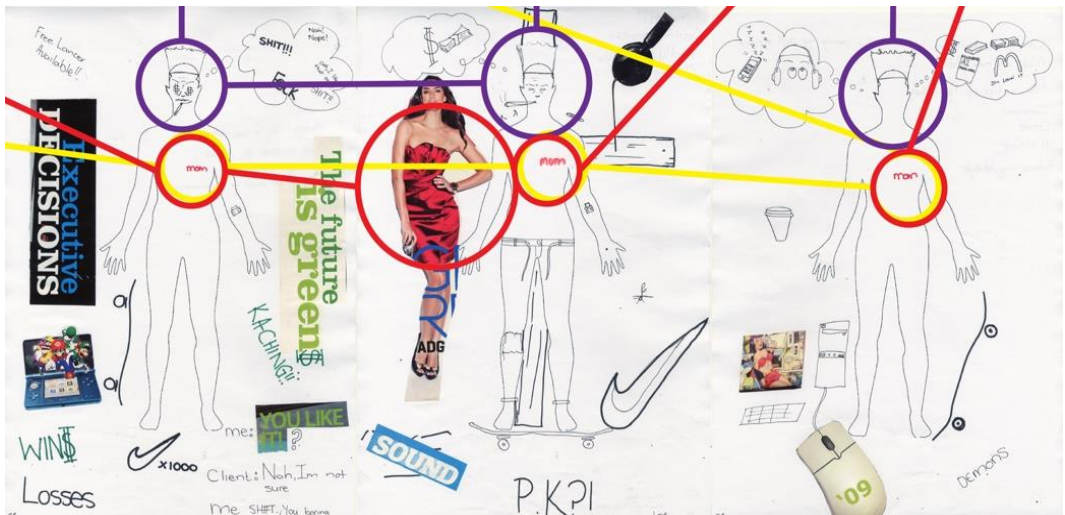
Figure 9: S20's collages

Figure 9 shows, from left to right, S20's designer collage, individual collage, and university collage. A striking signifier that can be read as iconic but also connotative is the word "mom" that appears on all three collages in red at the physiological position of the heart, which is noted as a special place. This red signifier is transferred to the lady on the left of the individual collage. She is a signifier of the perfect woman, which gives anchorage to S20's special place for his mother. The designer and the individual collages have facial features, whereas the university collage's personification only has hair but no facial features. This signifier shows a loss of identity at university and is given anchorage by the skateboard, which again is present in all the collages, being at an angle away from the body.

The skateboard in the designer collage is also removed from the body, but rather than angled away, it is parallel to the body. In the individual collage the body is riding the skateboard, and this gives anchorage to the iconic sign, showing skater culture as part of S20's identity.

Dollar symbols and stacks of money drawn onto the collages signify the aspiration for financial stability in the future, which is given anchorage by the use of words such a "kaching!" and "win$" and the dollar signs as eyes for the designer body. There are many connections between the designer and individual identities, but fewer in the university identity collage. The individual collage is the only one where the body is clothed. This signifies the secureness of S20 in his personal identity and serves as a paradigmatic sign of the nakedness he feels as a designer and university student. There is a link made between the designer and individual identity in the iconic radio tattooed on the right forearm. This is paradigmatically contrasted with the thought bubble on the left of the university collage, which contains earphones and music playing from a phone. These signifiers have similar meaning to the radio, but are not shown as an integral part of the body; rather, they are depicted as a thought external to the university body. On the university collage, very little is shown as part of the body except for "mom". This is also the case in the designer collage, where the signifiers are around the body rather than part of or on it.

General Findings

In their collage portraits of themselves as individuals, students portray the diversity I often observe in my classroom. Their depictions of themselves are detailed and sketch a very vivid portrait of whom they are as individuals. Here, they are dealing with the familiar and known and confidently portray themselves in their individual collages. For three of the four discussed collage sets, the portrait of themselves as individuals is the most detailed out of the three. S11 is the only one who has put the same amount of detail and visual expression into all three collages.

What is most striking in their portrayals of themselves as university students are the similarities in the iconic symbols they use. The lightbulb, exclamation and thought bubbles are present in some way or another in all the collages where they had to depict themselves as university students and seem to allude to the idea of the university as a place of thought, conscious decision-making and conceptualisation. Students seem to be grappling with the connection between head (thinking) and hands (doing) in their university collages, as they all have worked extensively around the head and shoulders of their figures.

In the designer collages, similar to the individual identity collages, there seems to be more engagement. There is a definite move away from the less detailed university collages to a more engaged and integrated way of seeing the self. Many of the students inflected some aspects of their individual collages in their designer collage, but S11 is the only one who seems to have fully merged the different aspects of her individual and university collages in the designer collage.

It is worth noting that the personification of the template, especially in terms of adding facial features (hair etc.), could be an allusion to students' need to regain their humanness at university and in design studies, advocating that the university and its

curricula and participants are not faceless and without identity, but human with histories, cultures and stories to tell.

Discussion

The data in the four collages that have been examined confirm Breeze, Johnson, and Uytman's (2020) call for the need for socially structured transitions that do not happen individually but are linked to interactions with spaces, people and things. The four students' collage sets show a richness of data that I believe would not be achievable within the limitations of the text and language used in interviews and questionnaires. Both the intended and unintended meanings that students create by repurposing images, texts and drawings make for rich portraits of student transitions into university and design studies and have the potential to help educators understand the complexities that students experience in transitioning into both the university and design studies.

In the analysis of the four sets of collages it becomes clear that collage portraits can be used as a pedagogic response to the Africanisation of design education as it allows for an expression of identity that is inclusive and brings the whole identity of a student into the classroom. This type of pedagogic response, however, is not limited to the design classroom. It can assist many other fields of study in understanding the journeys students are on and to make space for the practice of transformational learning and deep intimate interactions with the people and the spaces we find ourselves in.

To work towards the restoration of social justice in the South African design classroom, educators have to recognise the diversity in the classroom in a way that transcends language. Collage provides a rich listening opportunity that transcends the language barrier that many of my ECP students experience when they reach higher education and the medium of instruction is English only. Providing opportunities for engaging students on a level where they feel they are being heard and seen makes it easier for students to engage and value their own voice in an environment that would otherwise seem extremely unsafe, threatening and unwelcoming.

Conclusion

Collage as a tool for conceptualising, eliciting information and reflection created opportunities for my students to contribute to my awareness of what their experiences in the liminal spaces in the extended curriculum programme and higher education are. I often wonder how I can help my students transition into university and design studies without losing their individuality and a sense of the value of their identity and pride in their history. Instead of them adopting a forged identity I am always looking for ways in which I can encourage them to include their individuality in their journey of knowledge building and meaning-making. Many times, in this pursuit I experienced communication challenges and language constraints. Collage allowed students to express themselves in a way that transcended these language and verbal constraints and to visualise this transitional time in their higher education journey.

When we try to create inclusive curricula, practise socially just pedagogies and design inclusive teaching and learning we often use language-based methods only. In this study we see a glimpse of the potential of arts-based enquiry, and particularly collage, to give much greater insight into "who" is in the classroom. Collage has the potential to provide a talking point to discuss the transitions and the challenges that ECP students experience. Both the intended and unintended meaning created in a collage makes for rich data that can help us design higher education curricula for the public good and where the voices of the historically inferior are heard and affirmed.

Going forward this study would have to be replicated in order to establish its reliability in showing the true experiences of students transitioning into higher education and in this case design studies. It would be useful to investigate the availability of an African semiotic lens that allows for a more local view of the symbolism used in the students' collages. It would also be worthwhile to do a further detailed analysis of the text students wrote after creating their collages and juxtaposing it with the visual representations in the collages.

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