

STYSAV001 HUM-MA Dissertation 2023

# **Staging difficult conversations: Research-based catalyst scripts in educational spaces**

Savannah Steyn STYSAV001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Drama and Theatre Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

April 2024

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## Student Plagiarism Declaration

1. I, Savannah Steyn, know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the UCT Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced. Any section taken from an internet source has been referenced to that source.
3. This dissertation is my own work, and is in my own words (except where I have attributed it to others).
4. I have not paid a third party to complete my work on my behalf. My use of artificial intelligence software has been limited to grammar, spelling and referencing.
5. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
6. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work.

**Signed:**

Signed by candidate
---------------------

**Date:** 12April 2024

### **Acknowledgements**

I've known since an early age that the arts provide creative tools for young people to develop understanding and agency in relation to the realities they encounter. Through my own experience I have discovered a means to reflect and communicate my understanding and feelings on the world around me and its challenges. The need for inquiring minds to have a safe atmosphere in which to study, think, and reflect on their surroundings was the driving force for this research. I want to express my gratitude to the work-study teachers and institutions whose honesty and zeal made this venture possible. A big thank you to the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, that not only supported my master's program but also provided me with opportunities to practice leadership, teamwork, and design thinking over my two years in residence. The organisation offered me a platform to discuss my work with others while fuelling my passion for educational ventures which utilise the arts and innovative techniques. I thank my peers at the MRF and UCT who were interested in my research. They were able to spark discussions about the work's significance while also assisting me in gaining new perspectives and insights into its capabilities. This was thanks to their own skills in their individual fields of interest and willingness to participate in the study. Thank you very much to my family for supporting me when I was feeling discouraged and frustrated. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Dr Veronica Baxter for her guidance in this research.

### **Figures List**

Figure 1 Cycle of Violence (Walker, 2009: 91).

Figure 2 Elements of Drama (O'Toole & Haseman, 1988).

Figure 3 Cycles of critical consciousness development & dimensions of human empowerment (Bosio & Waghid, 2023: 13-18).

Figure 4 The Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020: 120).

Figure 5 Characteristics of a subtle tongue (Neelands, 1984: 33).

Figure 6 Summary of educators interviewed.

**Table of Contents**

Student Plagiarism Declaration	1
Acknowledgements	2
Figures List	3
Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Taboo topics & education	8
Theatre as codes	12
Applied theatre as a research method	16
Contributing Theory	19
Violence & Youth in South Africa	20
Elements of <i>Can't Hold It Any Longer</i>	22
Human Empowerment in <i>Digging up Dessa</i>	24
Ethics & Aesthetics in Research-based Theatre	29
Effective Language	33
Research Methodology & Design	37
Design	38
Method	40
Lived experiences as data and script content	41
Analysing and Representing Real Issues	43
Implementation & Evaluation	44
Analysis	46
Stage 1: Lived Experiences as Content	48
Stage 2: Representing the Real	56
Stage 3: Implementation & Evaluation	63
Conclusion	69
Reference List	74
Addendum A	81
Addendum B	86
Addendum C	87
Addendum D	97
Addendum E	105

## Abstract

I personally feel sometimes uncomfortable even addressing the issue when- if something happens at that moment in time, you don't respond, or you are caught off guard and you don't always go back to address it and do a confrontation and say "look this was uncalled for, or this is a form of"...it's almost as if or as if I would be, not scared but fearful of stepping on toes and labelling it for what it is. So, you just end up walking away. (Participant AA, 2022)

Sensitive issues such as mental, physical and sexual abuse may be difficult to discuss and prove triggering for both youth and adults, due to the nature of the topic. Herein lies the quandary: how might adults engage in these sensitive conversations with young women and men without resorting to narratives that instil fear and judgment? Prevention education in schools may empower learners as well as provide them with the skills to navigate these volatile conversations. The use of innovative tools which promote critical thinking, reflection and empathy, can be achieved through an investigation of the topics as understood and experienced by those in conversation. This research investigates the use of research-based theatre practices and theatrical interventions used in educational spaces, to promote consciousness and advocacy amongst high school learners and educators. The theoretical analysis of these practices is considered alongside the findings of a fieldwork study, which used a research-based catalyst script, *Boundaries*, to create a framework on the topic of abuse, with educators. In considering pedagogical practices which seek to integrate learners' and educators' lived experiences and challenges into the curriculum, it will examine models and theatrical devices to gauge the aesthetic distance needed to ensure the psychological safety of participants, whilst they engage in these difficult conversations.

**Key Words:** Abuse & Gender-Based Violence, Research-based Theatre, Catalyst Scripts, Education, Applied Theatre, Aesthetic Distance, Psychological Safety

## Introduction

I'm scared to say the wrong thing, I'm scared of what my learners will do. Our obligation to our students is that they feel safe in our classrooms. And they can only feel safe if we feel safe, because we're not in a position to make them feel safe when we're feeling unsafe. And so ja, I think measures need to be put in place I think, and I think that also the more teachers that are kind of empowered- the better for the students. (Participant GW, 2022)

The above statement from participant GW a high school teacher, who like the other participants in this study have a duty to inform and protect South Africa's youth, shines a light on the harsh reality of educators being just as vulnerable to difficult conversations as their learners. The age-old habit of avoiding taboo conversations concerning topics such as sex, race, religion, gender and violence has negatively impacted the well-being of educators, as they may expose youth to psychological harm, posing numerous ethical challenges. Research on controversial topics such as gendered violence and its possible prevention through education in South Africa, reveals the numerous obstacles precluding the advent of such conversations (Moult, 2013:70). This poses a problem for stakeholders such as parents, community leaders and educators, who share the responsibility in helping to raise the next generation (Moult, 2013:68). How then can adults converse openly with youth if the topic of conversation is of a sensitive nature? The answer lies in utilising the lived experiences and understanding of those affected by the topic to create a map or “code” (Freire,1972:105) to help stage the difficult conversation.

This research considers the complexities of educators discussing sensitive topics such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV)<sup>1</sup> with learners in schools. It argues for the use of research-based theatrical methodologies as an intervention strategy that offers critical and aesthetic distancing within educational environments. This creates a frame for the educator and learners which allows them to engage the topic in an emotionally safer manner while encouraging critical consciousness. The research, while using critical pedagogical theory to construct its theoretical framework, critically examines a fieldwork study that developed an analogous catalyst script using research-based theatre practices. The analogous catalyst script *Boundaries*, served as an interactive research-based theatre code for high school educators to effectively communicate with learners on the subject of GBV. The field study utilised the

---

<sup>1</sup> GBV: Gender-based Violence

insights and experiences of several high school educators on the topic of GBV to investigate how research-based theatre methodologies are able to help stage difficult conversations when used to build analogous codes and create critical distance. The study includes a comprehensive review, analysis, and evaluation of the research methods and its outcomes.

In this chapter, the socio-political issue of Gender-based violence and its ramifications for the youth within South Africa are delineated. The study's focus leans towards the more common research cases which represent data on heteronormative gender-based violence findings in South Africa. While highlighting the ethical challenges of engaging in difficult conversations with youth, the research notes the limitations of the "prescriptive Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum" (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2013:7) in its ability to engage with controversial topics. The study introduces the use of Freirean codes (Freire, 1972:105) as a novel approach to navigating sensitive topics, such as GBV. A consideration of applied theatre as a research methodology (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:189) and modes to promote critical consciousness (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13), opens up the argument for research-based catalyst scripts.

The second chapter discusses the work of practitioners who use personal narratives (Baim, 2020:80) to explore community concerns and socio-political issues (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Overbeke, 2019; Okello, 2016 & Wales, 2016). While outlining thematic elements (O'Toole, 1992:14) which help represent reality through aesthetic distance in performances, the research notes the benefits of analogous texts as codes to navigate difficult conversations.

The third chapter explains the research's design and methodology. It acknowledges the difficulties encountered during the field study and highlights the changes made to the research design in response. Additionally, it acknowledges the influence of core concepts such as dialogue (Freire, 1972:60) and "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) in the study.

The fourth chapter undertakes an examination of the three-stage procedure employed in the field study. It discusses the process of inquiry through the merger of qualitative research and performance-making practices, specifically focusing on the scripting and implementation of the catalyst script *Boundaries*, and evaluates its overall impact.

Lastly, the fifth chapter summarises the study's success in creating an analogous research-based theatre code to stage a difficult conversation among high school educators. It provides an overview of the research findings, taking into account the extent and constraints of the

study. This chapter examines the potential future ramifications of the research and the application of a catalyst script in educational settings to facilitate challenging talks. The research therefore provides a potential strategy to address participant GW's concern about how educators may help their learners feel empowered, particularly if educators do not feel safe and confident enough to engage in these discussions themselves.

### **Taboo topics & education**

The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) describes GBV as “the most pervasive yet least visible human rights violation in the world” (Okunola, 2021). GBV, which is a global crisis, includes several forms of violence that inflict physical, mental, sexual and economic harm on individuals, subjugating women, children, and non-conforming gender individuals to the mercy of perpetrators (Refugees, 2022). The urgency to educate youth about the manifestations and consequences of GBV, to prevent their future involvement, stems from statistics that indicate that perpetrators of GBV start displaying violent tendencies when they are adolescents (Jewkes et al., 2019:2). This particularly refers to cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)<sup>2</sup> occurring in South Africa.

Youth violence is an increasing social and political concern in South Africa, especially among young people of colour. These youth have inherited the historical legacy of violence as a result of apartheid and its oppression and have often fought back through similar means (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2013:4). As a result, youth in South African townships view violence as a way of life and adopt it as a badge of honour (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:5). Studies have linked notions of masculinity to violent behaviour towards women, especially partners, and have found that sexual, physical and emotional abuse occur frequently in schools (Gevers and Flisher, 2013:182). This ongoing challenge of violence amongst youth as an act of rebellion or means for change indicates the necessity of reconsidering current educational strategies implemented in schools to prevent violence.

Education, while not the complete solution to this critical societal issue, has helped to reduce certain forms of abuse among learners (Jewkes et al., 2019:2). Almansori, Holloway and Vanner argue that discussions on matters that affect learners' lives and motivate them to participate in the amelioration of society, is of great importance (2022:1). These scholars

---

<sup>2</sup> IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

emphasise the need to engage with these issues in schools. The interactions between educators and learners are potentially powerful. If the curriculum covered in classrooms is meant to reflect debates, tensions and dominant social discussions (Almansori, Holloway & Vanner, 2022:2), then the methodology applied to engage with this content should equally promote critical and liberatory thinking for both educators and learners. For prevention education to be effective, the manner in which adults address gender and violence with youth, need to be reconsidered (Moult, 2013:67), whilst taking cognisance of the challenges faced by educators, when attempting to engage in difficult conversations with learners.

These important conversations are difficult because of the ethical challenges they present and serious consideration needs to be given to who initiates and holds the conversations. Research into preventative education<sup>3</sup> in South Africa, reveals a hesitancy in both educators and parents in discussing these sensitive topics, as they fear that it may prompt early engagement in dangerous activities (Moult, 2013:69). There is a strong argument for interventions to be introduced in spaces of learning (Jewkes et al., 2019:2), but systemic challenges within schools prevent such discussions from occurring outside the parameters deemed appropriate by various levels of authority (Buckley-Willemse, 2005:6). When considering the “elementary level” (Buckley-Willemse, 2005:iii) of sexuality education in South Africa’s curriculum (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011:7), of which abuse and GBV form a small part, the question of competency and qualification can be added to the system’s infrastructural challenges, which include the lack of resources for both learners and educators (Moult, 2013:68). While the South African Council for Educators (SACE) code of professional ethics for educators in South Africa outlines their responsibilities within the school context (SACE, 2000), the definition is broad and restrictive, which could subsequently translate into undefined practice.

South African common law recognises educators as being responsible for the wellbeing of learners in educational spaces, in the absence of parents, *in loco parentis*<sup>4</sup> (Oosthuizen & Van der Walt, 1998:89). The argument is that an educator is responsible for the education of

---

<sup>3</sup> Prevention Education: Education which seeks to inform learners about social issues as a means of preventing their involvement with them. Prevention education may include topics such as drugs, GBV, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

<sup>4</sup> In loco parentis refers to the act of taking the place of a parent or guardian in educational spaces. This practice is embedded in the South African common law and is recognized in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)

learners, as well as their physical and emotional wellbeing (Mampane, 2018:183). This responsibility may extend beyond the classroom, thus increasing the role and duties of educators (Oosthuizen & Van der Walt, 1998:92), which raises the important question of what the extent of educators' responsibilities towards learners are. This principle, along with other educational policies, confuses the relationships between educators and learners, as educators are compelled to adopt multiple roles of responsibility, whilst simultaneously attempting to refrain from overstepping boundaries or being negligent in their duties (Mampane, 2018:185). An error in judgement by educators, when engaging in difficult conversations such as GBV, can have serious consequences. This challenges educators to determine the boundaries for appropriate behaviour and conversation with learners, outside of the classroom protocol that is stipulated by the SACE code of professional ethics. The code outlines the appropriate conduct for South African educators within the classroom and provides guidelines for engagements between educators and learners, parents, colleagues, employers, and the council itself (SACE, 2000). Specific attention is drawn to the responsibilities of educators in relation to the South African Constitution, as they have to “uphold and promote basic human rights” (SACE, 2000). GBV is a violation of human rights (Refugees, 2022) and it can thus be argued that educators have a duty to engage in these difficult conversations with learners to align themselves with the South African Constitution. Along with ambiguous guidelines regarding the duties of an educator, transmissive pedagogical practices offer further constraints to engaging in difficult conversations with learners about sensitive yet crucial topics, such as GBV. This is evident when analysing subjects such as Life Orientation (Rooth, 2005:165), where learners may be exposed to and taught about human rights violations like GBV.

An integral part of a learner's education in South Africa, is to become informed about the society they live in and the world around them (Moult, 2013:70). Life Orientation is one of the mandatory subjects that learners need to pass in order to obtain a National Senior Certificate in South Africa (South African. Department of Basic Education, 2011: 9). The subject introduces learners to different aspects of society such as citizenship, the environment, career prospects, sexuality and gender and offers opportunities for skills development (South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2011:8). According to Rooth (2005:170), certain Life Orientation educators in South Africa demonstrate a preference for using a transmissive form of instruction, rather than prioritising learner engagement and incorporating learners' personal experiences, as a foundation for learning. This fact-based or

“banking approach” (Freire, 1972:34) to teaching may be a result of educator training or of educators seeking comfort in the familiar and clear boarded system. The Life Orientation curriculum also teaches learners about constitutional rights and covers issues concerning diversity and the sensitive topics of GBV and abuse (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011:14) but due to the exposure and accessibility that learners have to acts of violence, these topics cannot be restricted to the classroom. In response to what became known as South Africa’s femicide<sup>5</sup>, the Western Cape Education Department urged schools to address the topic of GBV with learners (Pijoos and Njilo, 2019). While many schools supported the battle against GBV, some educators still hesitate to discuss the topic with learners. This could be due to the triggering nature of the topic for both learners and educators but the subject needs to be addressed as it is a human rights violation with links to the concept of citizenship. The word "triggering" is used to describe something that elicits a strong emotional response. Triggering a learner can be a violation of their emotional safety, as it elicits a strong emotional response, potentially causing harm and disregarding concepts related to citizenship.

If adults have a fear of triggering youth by engaging in difficult conversations, then the manner in which these conversations are stated should be considered. The research has highlighted that the violation of human rights and the notion of citizenship in education is a crucial aspect of learning. But with no clear boundaries, the manner in which these subjects are engaged with, can put both educators and learners at risk. Therefore, the use of thematic interventions and innovative tools may provide the critical distance required for educators and learners to engage with these topics in safe and empowering processes.

Ikeno & Watanabe argue that citizenship is closely tied to personal and individual matters and plays a significant role in the public space we live in and can therefore be connected to drama (2019:523). They maintain that drama education goes beyond simply teaching acting skills and instead promotes deep learning (Ikeno & Watanabe, 2019:530). By engaging in the creation of drama, learners are able to navigate between the realms of reality and fiction, as well as between their own perspectives and those of others (Ikeno & Watanabe, 2019:531). This process allows learners to transcend their own knowledge and identities and explore

---

<sup>5</sup> In August of 2019, a total of 31 cases of assault and murdered women were reported. These cases included university student Uyinene Mrwetyana and boxing champion Baby Lee Jegels.

different possibilities and ways of acting. Through drama, learners can make these actions and choices meaningful. The research thus considers the use of research-based catalyst scripts as codes (Freire, 1972:105), to stage difficult conversations.

### **Theatre as codes**

Educators may consider investigative strategies which present the topics in a less realistic or upsetting manner. The use of “critical distance” (Anderson and O’Connor, 2013:193) or “aesthetic distance” (Jackson, 2007:16) is, therefore, a valuable element in the framing of sensitive content when staging a difficult conversation. The research therefore investigates the use of aesthetic distance (Jackson, 2007:18) as a protective psychological barrier that may code reality so that it is easier to engage with. This is evident in the use of Freirean codes (1972:105) which present less emotive means to decode an already harsh reality for individuals experiencing violence in society. Freirian codes are tools which offer individuals “coded existential situations” (Freire, 1972:105). These codes use the abstraction of the presented reality to prompt reflection when analyzed to define meaning (Freire, 1972:106). In a theatrical space, this refers to the representation of the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:14) demonstrated through characters and their specific contexts within the narrative (O’Toole, 1992:16) utilizing "dramatic tension and focus" (O’Toole, 1998:15). By thoroughly examining the circumstances and establishing links between the many components outlined in the code, individuals are capable of undertaking a critical analysis and introspection of the facts that exert influence on their existence (Freire, 1972:105). Upon engaging in introspection into many facets of the circumstance, the individual contemplates the actuality of its impact on both themselves and others, as well as their potential role in addressing the matter.

This was the objective of *the She box* (Steyn, 2020), a theatrical performance addressing IPV and the impact of GBV on women. In 2020, the researcher first attempted to create a catalyst script through the use of a Freirean code. The play created a code using O’Toole's "dramatic tension and focus" (1992:15-17) to represent “the human context” (O’Toole, 1992:14), according to Walker’s (2009) three-stage cycle of abuse. *The cycle of violence* (Walker, 2009) is described as following the stages of “tension-building accompanied with a rising sense of danger, the acute battering incident, and loving contrition” (Walker, 2009:91) which is often repeated.

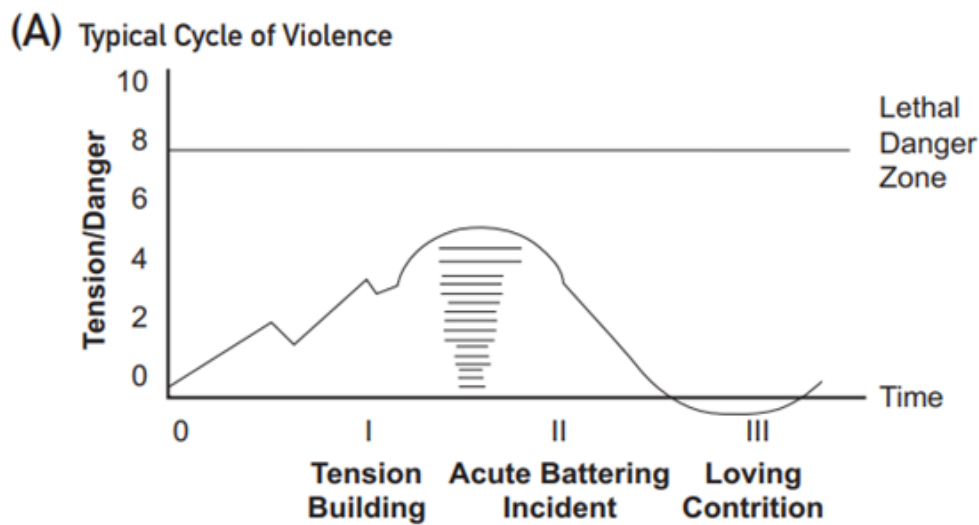


Figure 1 Cycle of Violence (Walker, 2009:91)

Figure 1 shows the connection between the tension experienced by women, the threat of danger and the period of time, whilst identifying each phase of violence (Walker, 2009:91). In the play, the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:14) is depicted through “dramatic focus” (O’Toole, 1992:16) by means of a metaphor, as the women are directly compared to paper dolls. The visual metaphor of the women creating an object which represented their abused selves was inspired by Professor Andrews and Dr J. Lomas’ (2018) theory, which states that the history of women can be represented through objects which illustrate both their challenges from historic patriarchal oppression and their victories for female liberation. The depiction of women through the use of inanimate objects, which each represent a step away from oppression (Andrews & Lomas, 2018:3), offered a “containing metaphor” (Baim, 2020:134) to allow aesthetic distancing for audience members to observe a fragment of reality within a fictional context. This was inspired by Brecht’s *Verfremdung<sup>6</sup> Effect* (1946), a theatrical strategy where playwrights create a heightened presentation of reality. By presenting individuals with characters in a ‘defamiliarized’ setting and context, that alluded to the overarching socio-political concern, Brecht hoped audience members would become more reflexive and critically aware of the social and political issues around them (in Macián, 2016:169). The use of aesthetic distance in theatrical performances as seen in *the She box* (Steyn, 2020) and as further explored in the research, acts as both a safeguarding technique and a strategy to promote critical thinking.

<sup>6</sup> Verfremdung: Defamiliarisation

The play followed the events of a factory with female workers, who made paper boxes to encase the dolls that they sold. The factory manager, Mr Pink, initially kind and charming, became abusive towards many of the workers as the story unfolded. The characters represented archetypes in a nuclear family, to demonstrate how abuse impacts relationships. The roles of mothers, daughters, sisters and friends, sought to illustrate the connections that Walker discusses in the *cycle of violence* (2009:92), as the “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14) used to depict the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:15). The abuse was “symbolized” (O’Toole, 1992:42) through the visual metaphor of papermaking. While papermaking can be dated back to ancient Egypt and the creation of papyrus, it was the history of papermaking as a Chinese invention and its subsequent contribution to human civilization (Pan, 2020:344), that underpinned the concept for this theatrical performance. Pan explains the eight-step process of papermaking and describes it as follows: soaking wet, cutting up, washing, pounding and mashing, pulping, manufacturing with pulp, drying paper and peeling paper (2020:345). In *the She box*, this process was adopted and used to illustrate the cycle of abuse as well as the forms it can take. The women created paper by tearing materials into smaller pieces, boiling them in water, and then beating, drying and cutting the paper into desired shapes. This alludes to abusers who dominate their victims by first breaking them down and then isolating them.

The performance had an open ending, which allowed spectators to decide whether the cycle would continue or if the female characters would confront the antagonist, Mr Pink, who represented abusive oppressors. While the female workers began to realise the negative impact of the abuse on their relationships with each other, the matriarch of the factory hesitated when she had an opportunity to leave. Mr Pink used manipulative tactics to convince her to stay, by reminding her of her duty to the other workers and her role as a mother, and this along with his false reassurances of her importance to him, illustrated the beginning of the cycle resetting itself through “loving contribution” (Walker, 2009:92).

*the She box* (Steyn, 2020) depicted Walker’s cycle (2009) with examples of emotional and psychological abuse through “dramatic tension and focus” (O’Toole, 1992:16) as a code for audience members to engage with the topic of GBV. Using the “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14) which considered the “framing of reality” (O’Toole, 1992:25) within the fictional context, *the She box*, was developed to provide “a relatively safe way to talk back to

power” (Prendergast and Saxton; 2009:7). Through the use of fiction which reflected reality (Freire, 1972:104), the audience was meant to analyze the cycle and its impact on women and reflect on how this resonated with events in their own lives, so that they could talk back to the structures of oppression. But the format of the play problematised the desired outcome and as a code (Freire, 1972:105), *the She box* was not completely successful. While thoughts about abusive relationships were evoked by the play, the question was raised as to whether such intricate metaphors and conceptualizations would be relatable to and understood by all audiences. This was of particular importance for young spectators as high school learners were the intended target audience.

The play presented an abstraction of reality to be decoded (Freire, 1972:106) but it was generated according to the playwright’s perception of reality, as is illustrated by the “dramatic tension” (O’Toole, 1992:18) that develops between characters. While youth could relate to the archetypes of family members, the objectives of the two opposing powers, the matriarch and Mr Pink, may have been difficult for youth to understand and relate to. The antagonist Mr Pink abused the female workers in his quest for power and wealth and while this may have been easy to comprehend, the objectives of the protagonist were possibly more complex and difficult to grasp. The matriarch’s goal to achieve security, love and survival for herself and the other workers, could be understood by youth to a certain extent but when complicated by her role of responsibility in the factory, the concept would be less comprehensible to them. Her actions to achieve her goal, led to the women’s continued abuse and thus became a complex catalyst to de-code (Freire, 1972:105), as the matriarch’s actions were seemingly criticized and the spectators only had two options as an ending: to leave or endure. As a result, the framing of the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:15) made “dramatic meaning” (O’Toole, 1992:17) difficult to discern. True dialogical (Freire, 1972:60) investigation which allows individuals to “talk back to power” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:7) was thus not achieved.

The play was a conventional theatrical performance with a clear division between actors and spectators, meaning that there was also a division between worlds. This posed two challenges with regards to interpretation: spectator misinterpretation and playwright misinterpretation due to a generalization of the reality coded (Freire, 1972:105). The play’s central themes of violent cycles and oppression may have illustrated societal issues present in the spectators’ realities, through the use of story and character (O’Toole, 1992:41), but those realities may

not have been accurately reflected. Although the play was created after extensive research on GBV and abuse, it was not informed by youths' lived experiences and levels of understanding, which prompted the question of how to incorporate their narratives, to portray a "believable representation of the experiences" (Wales, 2016:157). The playwright thus directed the focus towards modes of theatrical interventions that suggested using the "embodied knowledge" (Anderson and O' Connor, 2013:191) of participants to generate "codes" (Freire, 1972:105) as tools, to facilitate discussions on sensitive topics. Consequently, the realm of applied theatre and its capacity as a mode of research was considered.

### **Applied theatre as a research method**

Applied theatre, like "conventional theatre", has the ability to "make thought visible" (Santiago-Jirau & Thompson, 2019:156), as both may present stories about individuals and their challenges. But applied theatre may differ as it aims to reveal the inner workings of the world (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:7). This is accomplished by removing hierarchy and division between spectators and actors and encouraging empowerment through participation. Though not all genres of applied theatre performances adopt the same characteristics, many seek to negotiate power dynamics through the manner in which they design, engage and occupy spaces. Equalising power in this way is similar to Freire's pedagogy (1972), which influenced Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal. In fact, many of the Applied guiding principles discovered and argued by noteworthy practitioners O'Toole, Boal and Gatti on the importance of audience engagement (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009:11), is focused on enabling and empowering the "disinherited class" (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:10). Connections are often made between Boal and Freire and their praxis which promotes "the organisation and articulation of actions" (Vittoria, 2019:85). Freire sought liberation in educational spaces whereas Boal sought liberation in theatrical spaces, but both practitioners shared the common goal of encouraging and equipping individuals to "break the culture of silence and subservience" (Vittoria, 2019:60). During processes of critical reflection, this would be instrumental in shifting power, which would lead to the liberation of individuals but these inclusive tactics alone do not prompt critical thinking in this form of theatre. Chinyowa argues that there is a prevalent inclination in the field of applied theatre and practice within the African context, to employ the Freirean code (Freire, 1972:105) as an educational framework, in the analysis and understanding of their artistic endeavours (2009:331). While Freire's codes abstract reality (1972:105), it cannot be too complex to decipher, as is

demonstrated in *the She box*, in relation to learners and non-theatre goers. Applied theatre as both a form of intervention and a research methodology may then prove to be useful for incorporating an individual's own level of understanding and experience, thus leading to more effective catalyst scripts which are relatable and accurate (McGrath, 2002:138) in its presentation of GBV.

*the She box* (Steyn, 2020) presented a heightened illustration of the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:15) through its use of “dramatic focus” (O’Toole, 1992:18). Though this offered aesthetic distancing for audience members, it did not “negotiate the everyday through the medium of theatre” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:13) due to the single perspective of the playwright. It did not consider the levels of understanding and lived experiences or “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:191) of the individuals it wished to engage.

Applied theatre considers participants to be “integral” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:9) to many of its processes and therefore offers a means for creative investigation, centered around the participants’ experiences and level of understanding. Anderson and O’Connor argue that for these reasons applied theatre is an effective methodology in the field of qualitative research, as it offers a means to investigate and to represent the findings of the research while including its subjects in the decision-making processes (2013:189-192). Similar to the manner in which its theatrical forms changes spectators into participants or “spect-actors” (Boal, 1979:242), it also allows those being researched to have an active role in the research process (Anderson and O’Connor, 2013:192). This may resolve the problem of misinterpreted narratives or the generalization of data. Applied theatre has been strongly recommended as a research methodology, as it “offers a safe and critical distance from a subject” (Anderson and O’Connor, 2013:193), which is important when working with sensitive topics and vulnerable individuals. Henry notes the similarities between drama and qualitative research in learning processes (2000:45) and states that both deal with the everyday of individuals while being “sensitive and self-reflexive in their response to the environment” (2000:51).

A performance which frames the “greater active issues of citizenship” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:13) using the knowledge of those it affects as a primary source, may achieve “true catharsis” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:7). These performances were not intended to

provide clear solutions but rather present a depiction of the forces which oppress them through its arrangement of "dramatic elements" (O'Toole, 1992:14), thereby encouraging opposition and awareness to these societal structures (de Carvalho, 2019:88), and offering a "catharsis of interrogation" (Baim, 2020:184). In doing so, these provide a catalyst or code (Freire, 1972:105) to engage with sensitive topics such as GBV. One might consider how characters, settings and conflicts linked to the realities of societal issues as they are understood and experienced by learners, may be easier to interpret and engage with. A safer and dynamic space is created for educators and learners to engage in sensitive topics, through innovative tools and to help establish boundaries. For this reason, the study's contributing theory, research design, methodology and analysis argue for research-based catalyst scripts to help stage difficult conversations between educators and learners.

The research examines the development an analogous catalyst script using qualitative research and applied theatre practices to stage difficult conversations in high school education. The script, based on Freire's code (1972:105), would be used in participatory workshops with high school learners to evaluate their engagement with the Freirian code and assess the effectiveness of critical consciousness development and human empowerment processes. However, challenges arose due to ethical clearance requirements and the need for psychological support for learners. The project was adapted to involve exclusive collaboration with educators and developed an analogous script. The script was developed through qualitative research and conventional theatre-making practices, but the researcher faced challenges in obtaining ethical clearance from the University of Cape Town's Humanities faculty and the Western Cape Education Department. The script was performed in an online reading event and workshop, allowing educators to critique the scripting of dialogues recorded during interviews. The intended second part of the enquiry with learners could not be implemented. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework which influenced the research design and methodology.

## Contributing Theory

I go home and I just sit on the couch and fall asleep because I'm mentally exhausted. You know, every day there's new challenges. And the kids at our school they come from backgrounds where gangsterism is an everyday thing, where shooting is an everyday thing, where they have to live through these terrible circumstances, and they have to come to school knowing that they're not sure that they're going to get home in the afternoon. We had an incident of a girl – I don't know if you've seen the video going around, that was nearly kidnapped yesterday. (Participant VG, 2022)

Educators, though individuals in roles of authority tasked with helping mould the next generation, are still humans. One may forget that while they are adults they are also vulnerable to triggering topics such as GBV particularly if they are also subject to instances of it in their daily lives. It may be exceedingly difficult for them to then protect and educate learners about society when its dangers encroach on their well-being too.

The socio-political issue of violence as experienced by and engaged in amongst youth in South Africa, is a growing concern. Yet, as indicated in the previous chapter, holding difficult conversations with learners while maintaining and discerning appropriate boundaries is challenging for educators. Learners and educators should be provided with the proper support structures to help maintain appropriate boundaries and safeguard them from feeling emotionally vulnerable. However, a discussion with participants during the field study revealed that not all schools have access to school counsellors. Participant VG stated that certain schools, particularly those in marginalised areas, were appointed counsellors but too few served several schools within a large area.

“Chalk & Talk” educational practices and cryptic educator policies hinder effective talks about matters such as GBV as there is little room for interpretation and reflective discussions. This may result in the spread of fear-mongering and shaming narratives amongst learners. Innovative tools such as research-based analogous catalyst scripts may therefore open lines of communication in a safer, creative and controlled manner for educators and learners.

This chapter discusses evidence of dialogical processes in research-based theatre projects which promoted critical thinking. It considers the issue of violence and its impact on youth in the South African context, highlighting the need for innovative educational tools to help intervene and break inherited cycles of violence (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2013;

Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999; Moulton, 2013). The chapter also explores concepts of citizenship (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019) and global citizenship education (Bosio & Waghid, 2023), arguing for pedagogical practices that encourage critical consciousness. The chapter examines the methods, challenges, and impact of several case studies of research-based theatre (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Okello, 2016; Overbeke, 2019; Wales, 2016), noting the complexity of aesthetic distancing and the representation of lived experiences. The research explores the theatrical devices (O'Toole, 1992) used in script construction and applied theatre spaces that use personal narratives (Baim, 2020), while considering aesthetic and ethical accountability (Conquergood, 1985). Lastly, the chapter notes the importance of effective language (Neelands, 1984) to stimulate critical thinking in the classroom and in the field of research-based theatre when conducting interviews with participants.

The chapter notes the need, characteristics and effects of research-based catalyst scripts as "codes" (Freire, 1972:105) for educators and learners to engage in difficult conversations. It also outlines the key theoretical concepts used to analyze the process and implementation of the catalyst script *Boundaries*.

### **Violence & Youth in South Africa**

Historically, young people of colour can be regarded as subjects of violent oppression as well as violent fighters of oppression. The 1980s was a decade fraught with violent political resistance from the youth of colour, who in turn was met with equally violent retaliation from the apartheid regime and its enforcers (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2013:4). The subsequent emergence of a "culture of violence" is noted by academics and this further ingrained the notion of violence as a means of achieving change in South Africa (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:4). The "culture of violence" embedded in communities as a legacy of apartheid, is evident in South Africa's black townships and this issue, along with the contemporary economic challenges, provides the conditions for violence to take root (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:5). While this does not explain the specific reasons behind acts of violence by youth, it does offer an insight into the current contextual challenges that South Africa faces with regards to this prevalent socio-political issue.

Research shows that cases of sexual violence which occur in schools across the country can be attributed to both educators and learners (Gevers & Flisher, 2013:182) and in cases of

sexual violence and physical and emotional abuse, researchers have highlighted the connection between masculinity and acts of violence against women, particularly the partner of the perpetrator (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:14). It has been shown that learners in townships regard violence as “an accepted part of masculinity” (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:34), and many scholars have highlighted the “problematic gender construction that informs the notion of male superiority” (Terblanche and Van der Walt, 2023:200).

This literature highlights three key problems that need to be addressed with youth when considering preventative education programmes. The first is the notion that violence is an effective vehicle for change (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:4). The second is the acceptance of violence as an accepted way of life (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:5) and the third is the idea that violence, particularly sexual violence, is a sign of masculinity (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:34) and a means to affirm power. Jewkes et al (2019:2) argue that education has proven to be effective in lowering the rate of IPV experienced by young women and helps to reduce the physical acts of abusive behaviour engaged in by young men. However, it can be argued that these models of education should not only focus on the expected norms of society but should include the development of individuals so that they can help create a better society. If South African youth have inherited and accepted violence as an aspect of life and a means of claiming back or obtaining power (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999:35), then one might consider intervention methods that allow for equal reflection and action (Freire, 1972:60).

Freire argues that true and effective dialogue for the liberation of the oppressed requires both action and reflection (1972:110). Reflection without action only leads to talk of change and prevents individuals from achieving transformation (Freire, 1972:88). On the other hand, action alone may lead to militancy as it lacks critical reflection (Freire, 1972:88). In the cycle of critical consciousness development (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13), there are three key stages: gaining knowledge about inequity, developing a sense of power or capability, and committing to proactive action against oppressive conditions (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:110).

O’Toole notes that drama presents individuals with a model of the world and its reality (1992:14), as the characters and setting of a drama may reflect reality but do not exist outside of the play (1992:15). The drama thus creates vessels of understanding to enable the audience to negotiate meaning (O’Toole, 1992:43). Through dramatic elements, one can determine the purpose of the play beyond the fictional context, such as the play perhaps being an expression

of matters that concern communities (O'Toole, 1992:22). Theatrical practices which utilise the lived experiences of individuals to create and arrange dramatic elements (O'Toole, 1992:14) could be beneficial when considering performance as a Freirean code (1972:105) to engage in difficult conversations. It can thus be argued that research-based theatre practices need to be considered as a means of intervention, as they illustrate the benefits of merging qualitative research and theatrical practices to generate Freirean codes (1972:105).

### Elements of *Can't Hold It Any Longer*

It could be argued that due to the link between the fictional and real worlds, the "elements of drama" (O'Toole, 1992:14) may prove valuable in both the construction of Freirean codes and their deciphering. The following figure illustrates the "process of dramatic meaning" making (O'Toole and Haseman, 1988) while considering the various dramatic elements and their function in representing the "human context" (O'Toole, 1992:17).

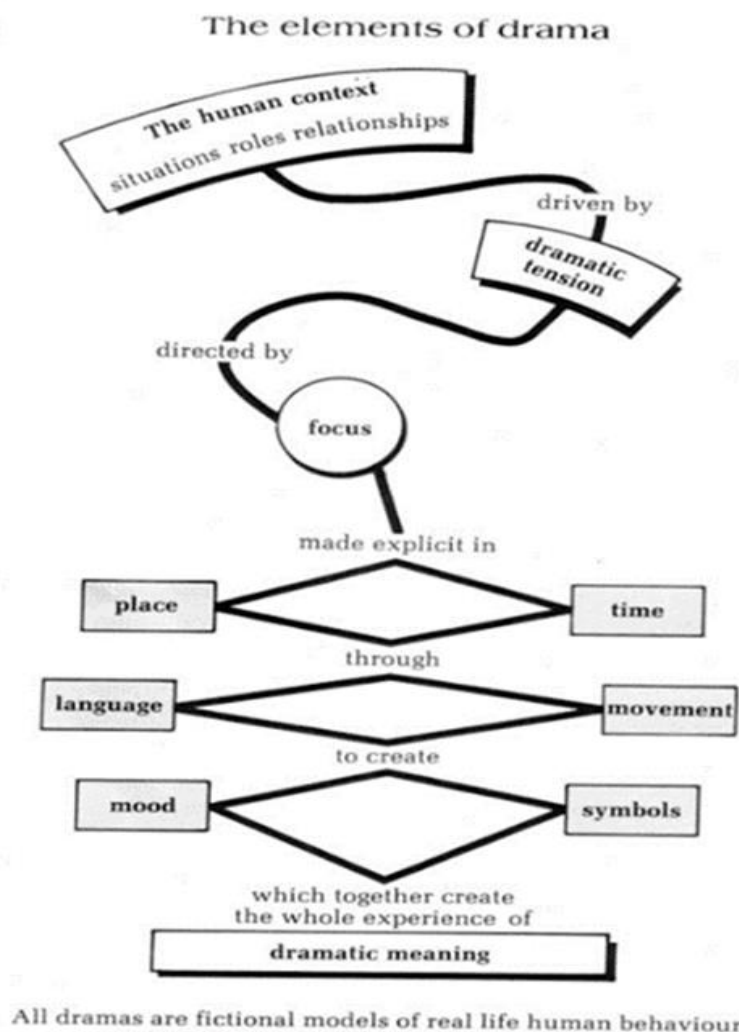


Figure 2 Elements of Drama (O'Toole & Haseman, 1988)

Okello writes about creating dialogical processes through research-based theatre practices with learners from the Imani Art School in Kenya (2016:37). *Can't Hold It Any Longer* was a performance devised and written by Okello and the learners through collaborative theatre techniques (2016:29). The study's exploration of collaborative research-based theatre processes which utilise the perspectives and experiences of youth, illustrates how a catalyst script may help stage conversations between youth and adults. For the learners of the Imani Art School, *Can't Hold It Any Longer* acts as a "code" (Freire, 1972:105) for the youth to voice their passion and belief in art's cultural and social value (Okello, 2016:35). The performance demonstrated how these elements may depict "the human context" (O'Toole, 1992:15) through the characters' "situations, relationships, and roles" (O'Toole, 1992:16). The story is about Miruka, who is determined to become a writer despite the wishes of his family, who much like society the art school learners lived in, believed that art and writing were trivial (Okello, 2016:31). The performance was written by the learners after a series of workshops that implemented theatrical and creative writing techniques led by Okello (2016:39).

Okello mentions that the performance seemed to reflect the realities that the learners desired for themselves (2016:38). She claims that during the collaborative processes which led to the performance text, she was able to discern how the learners "perceived their lives and what they valued and what they wished they could change" (2016:39). This is demonstrated in the "dramatic tension" (O'Toole, 1992:15) being resolved as the protagonist can change his family's opinion of the arts, which remains a difficulty for the learners who created the play (Okello, 2016:40). O'Toole states that "dramatic tension" can be further divided into several categories, such as the "tension between relationships" (1992:28–29) as seen in *Can't Hold It Any Longer* (Okello, 2016).

The tension between relationships may include "conflict, dilemma, and misunderstanding" (O'Toole, 1992:29) and these three tension categories provide the means to understand the motivations behind a character's actions. *Conflict* is understood to arise from one character's behaviour towards another due to their differing objectives (O'Toole, 1992:29). This allows individuals to consider the actions of characters in isolation from each other and may prompt reflection when considering their own actions. *Dilemma* is important when considering the circumstances that characters find themselves in (O'Toole, 1992:29), as it allows individuals to consider the consequences of choices and actions as defined by characters. The third

relationship tension, *Misunderstanding*, can occur in relation to the characters' behaviours or circumstances. The arrangement of O'Toole's "elements of drama" (1992:14) offers individuals the means to create and "de-code" (Freire, 1972:105) research-based catalyst scripts, as seen in the work of Okello (2016).

Okello's work (2016) offers an example of cycles of critical consciousness development (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) in research-based theatre practices. As the learners were able to *critically analyse* their realities and the challenges that they faced through discussion and workshops, they developed *agency*, which manifested in their scripting process and arrangement of "dramatic elements" (O'Toole, 1992:14), which pointed towards *critical action* (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13). The learners had effectively presented their challenges and their ambitions as artists in a society that they hoped to improve while expressing a community concern (O'Toole, 1992:22) through a theatrical representation of their lived experiences.

The performance was created to challenge stereotypes of youth as troublesome and idle and to promote "youth agency" (Okello, 2016:36). The learners expressed disappointment in the community's theatre-producing plays that perpetuated these narratives (Okello, 2016: 36). They wanted to create complex characters that challenged common misconceptions of youth (Okello, 2016:39). This case study provided the research with insight into devising workshops with learners in Cape Town to create a research-based catalyst script. The researcher noted the relevance of learners' input in the arrangement of "dramatic elements" (O'Toole, 1992:14) that would represent not only their reality but also their desires. This would allow for a dialogical process that encouraged critical thinking among youth to occur, prompting their capacity to grow as citizens.

### **Human Empowerment in *Digging up Dessa***

Overbeke provides another example of how research-based theatre practices may empower youth through processes that encourage critical consciousness development (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and through theatrical processes seeking to explore and address socio-political challenges in society. The performance *Digging Up Dessa* (Schellhardt, 2019) emerged from a need to create a female protagonist based on the responses of young girls during the research process (Overbeke, 2019:29). Schellhardt and the TYA aimed to correct the overwhelming favouritism of male protagonists in plays for young audiences (Overbeke,

2019:30). In considering the testimonies of young girls, Overbeke notes that the process became one of a dialogical nature (2019:29), with an equal exchange between the participants and the researcher. The study's review of incorporating individuals' lived experiences to generate a performance that addressed a concern in society, which was faced by those interviewed, points to cycles of critical consciousness development (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) in research-based theatre processes. The play follows the events of the young protagonist, Dessa, who is determined to prove the bias towards men and the poor recognition of women in fields of expertise, due to sexism (Overbeke, 2019:2). The performance opens conversations about inequalities and societal "contradictions" (Freire, 1972:78) through the use of characters and plot generated through research-based theatre practices.

Education plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for their place in society and teaching them about citizenship (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019:2). Citizenship is defined as an individual's identity as a member of a nation, acquired through birth, but it should also be understood as an active role which contributes towards the shaping society (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019:14). Global citizenship education requires cognitive engagement, awareness of membership and responsibility within a community, and a willingness to promote social justice and the well-being of others (Terblanche & Van der Walt, 2013:199–200). *Critically democratic citizenship* prioritises social involvement and autonomy as educational goals, aiming for critical engagement for the betterment of society while allowing for personal articulation (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019:19). This type of citizenship aligns with the practices and ideologies of Freire, emphasising critical reflection, problem-posing education, and genuine dialogue (Freire, 1972:60). It promotes the development of critical consciousness (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and collective problem-solving, facilitating transformative change and the restoration of human dignity (Freire, 1972:68). By recognising and challenging societal divisions and limits, individuals can liberate themselves from oppressive circumstances (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:12). *Digging up Dessa* (Schellhardt, 2019) addressed the societal limits imposed upon young girls, not only in the lack of important female representation in performance texts but in the authentic representation of young women through a consideration of their challenges and capabilities.

The girls who participated in the research-based theatre process offered their insights and observations after being caught up in a period of "men's rights movements" (Overbeke, 2019:31) after the 2016 US elections, which revealed their rising awareness of gender

discrimination, harassment, and inequality (Overbeke, 2019:32). This was illustrated in the central themes that emerged from the girls' responses to being treated differently: gendered expectations, clothing regulations, and the impact of microaggressions (Overbeke, 2019:31). Overbeke suggests that through the active consideration of "Gen Z girls" to create a female protagonist, Schellhardt created a character that accurately reflected the girls' values (2019:38). The theorist also notes the importance of incorporating the thoughts of young audience members into creative processes, as it allows the performance to be both relatable and relevant (Overbeke, 2019:39). This echoes McGrath's argument on the "prosocial aspects of theatre" (2002:138), while corroborating the theories of both Okello (2016) and Freire (1972). Reality is not static (Freire, 1972:33) and theatre as a means to represent and question it (Okello, 2016:37), should not be static either. The challenges of one generation may not be the same for another. Overbeke notes that the "gap" (2019:39) between playwrights and young audience members may lead to an underestimation of youths' capacity and argues that girls are politically aware and that this should be acknowledged in the theatre created for them (2019:40).

Ikeno and Watanabe's theory which maintains that drama education facilitates a process of critical consciousness through the creative exploration of fictional worlds which reflect society and its challenges (2018:530), echoes Freire's "cycle of critical consciousness development" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and the "three-dimensional process of empowering humanity" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18). These dimensions overlap and aim to help individuals become empathetic and contribute to a fair society. Bosio and Waghid argue that Freire's critical development process has an impact on these dimensions (2023:12). The diagram provided illustrates the "cycle of critical consciousness development" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and the achievement of the "dimensions of human empowerment" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18).

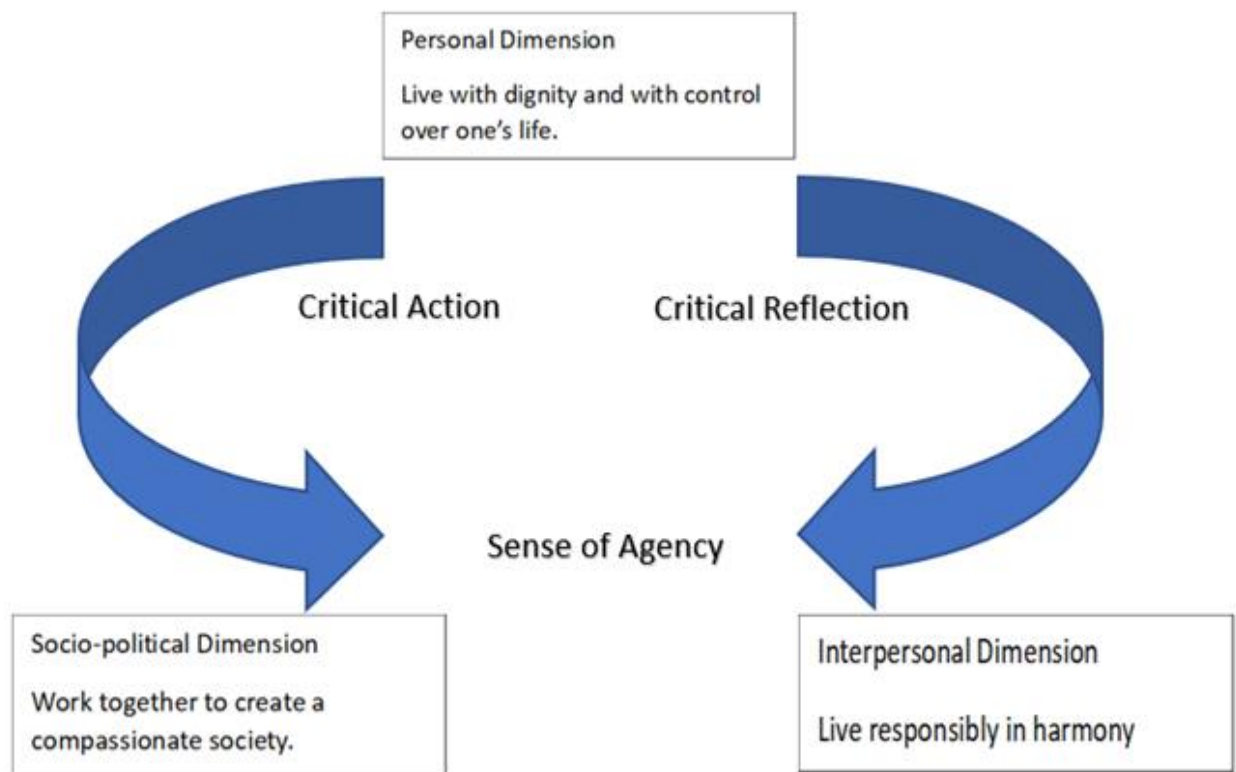


Figure 3 Cycles of critical consciousness development & dimensions of human empowerment (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13-18)

Freire emphasises that liberation is a continuous dialogue and not a “static” process (1972:71). Once the “socio-political dimension” is achieved through “critical agency”, individuals may start the cycle again to maintain control of their lives (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13). Education plays a crucial role in youth development, and their participation in school, family, and community promotes prosocial values (Panday et al., 2013:102). True dialogue in education can equip individuals with the skills and means to liberate themselves as citizens (Freire, 1972:87). One could argue that the research-based theatre process of *Digging up Dessa* (Schellhardt, 2019) allowed for the overlapping “cycles of critical consciousness development” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and “human empowerment” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) to occur for both the participants and the researchers.

A consideration of the girls' lived experiences and their representation in performance texts prior to the process allowed for a "critical reflection" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) of the "personal dimension" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) to occur. The researchers and participants enter a dialogical process whereby they consider the role of girls in society: how society

perceives them and how to challenge these misconceptions. During the scripting of the performance and the arrangement of elements to depict the "human context" (O'Toole, 1992:14), the group developed "a sense of agency" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13), which led to the "codification" (Freire, 1972:105) of the bias towards men in fields of expertise, such as science (Overbeke, 2019:3). This demonstrated the achievement of the "interpersonal dimension" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18), indicating that the individuals take on the role of living in society with others, responsibly. Lastly, a review of the audience's reception of the performance marks the achievement of the "personal dimension" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) through "critical action" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13). Overbeke notes that the young audience vocalised their approval and identification with the themes within the story (2019:8). Many of these spectators were young girls, and their response to the performance indicated an opportunity for action that would lead them to take control of their lives with a new sense of empowerment and dignity (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18). This may be due to the performance's capacity to represent "accurate and relevant narratives" (McGrath, 2002:138).

O'Connor draws on the writings of McGrath (2002) who argues for the truth to be a crucial aspect in prosocial theatre. McGrath's notion of a "learning pedia" identifies two features: accuracy and relevance (2002:138). Accuracy refers to the spectator's ability to relate to the subject matter of the performance and relevancy requires the subject matter to be a reality (social, moral, political, emotional or individual) that the spectator can identify with (McGrath, 2002:138). *Digging up Dessa* (Schellhardt, 2019), succeeded in implementing these concepts as the characters, plot and overall themes were relatable and relevant to the audience members.

Overbeke's work (2019) helped the researcher to identify important processes for the study's participants to undergo, to enable the catalyst script to be successful as an educational tool. It demonstrated how theatre processes that utilise the insights and experiences of others may lead to "cycles of critical consciousness development" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and "human empowerment" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18). It is important to note here that the ethical challenges of scripting the lived experiences of individuals and the aesthetic distance needed to safeguard them when engaging in difficult conversations, needs serious consideration.

## **Ethics & Aesthetics in Research-based Theatre**

Research-based theatre as a methodology and practice creates processes whereby both the researcher and audience/participants may engage in “critical and empathetic explorations” (Lea and Belliveau, 2016:3), which observes aspects of the human condition (Saldana, 2011:13). Although research-based theatre models may illustrate a direct translation from interview to dialogue, not all characters and situations (O’Toole, 1992:15) directly reflect the participants and data gathered. Some may represent them through fictional settings and characters, due to the aspect of fiction that provides a safe lens for participants to engage with the model presented to them. This may be crucial to creating research-based catalyst scripts that aim to engage with sensitive topics such as GBV, while using the lived experiences and levels of understanding of individuals, particularly youth. Dell’Angelo (2021) and Wales (2016), consider the aesthetics of difficult conversations and the ethical challenges of adapting personal narratives (Baim, 2020; Conquergood, 1985) for theatrical representation.

Baim cautions practitioners on the ethical challenges and implications of using personal narratives in participatory theatre (2020:5) and states that although theatre that incorporates individuals' experiences has many benefits, practitioners must consider the psychological safety and ethics in theatre-making (Baim, 2020:6). Ignoring these processes may inflict harm upon participants (Baim, 2020:5) and the trauma of an individual may be appropriated or exploited (Baim, 2020:69), which in turn, may perpetuate cycles of trauma and abuse, as the participant’s pain is reenacted for them and others to observe. This is a crucial consideration when intending to engage with an individual’s lived experiences or exposure to sensitive matters such as GBV and boundaries therefore need to be set to avoid harmful and triggering outcomes. Carefully focusing on a research-based theatre performance’s style and purpose (Wales, 2016:157) can help establish such boundaries and guidelines.

In her text *Home Truths* (2016), Wales explores the challenges and abuse faced by foreign helpers (2016:147). The narrative of the play recounted the dispute between the character of Malia, a domestic worker, and her employer (Wales, 2016:148). The performance was generated through interviews between the researcher and domestic workers in Singapore along with secondary materials such as articles, information packages, and websites (Wales, 2016: 149). Wales explains the complexities of arranging dramatic elements (O’Toole:1992:14) to create an accurate and relevant (McGrath, 2002:138) fictional framework to protect those who helped create the performance, while still exploring the

uncomfortable topic of power dynamics in the workspace (2016:157). In cases such as these, practitioners may consider Baim’s techniques for ethical practice when using personal narratives (2020:115).

Baim proposes a tool to help practitioners gauge the “aesthetic abstraction” (2020:105) needed when working with the experiences of others. The Drama Spiral, as seen in Figure 4 below, is a model that “maps out the processes involved in participatory theatre practices” (Baim, 2020:119). The model consists of six rings which may spiral in or out (Baim, 2020:118) and indicate various thematic techniques and strategies suitable for particular cases. The rings of the spiral closest to the centre indicate that the stories being shared are of a deeply personal nature and should be approached with care (Baim, 2020:121).

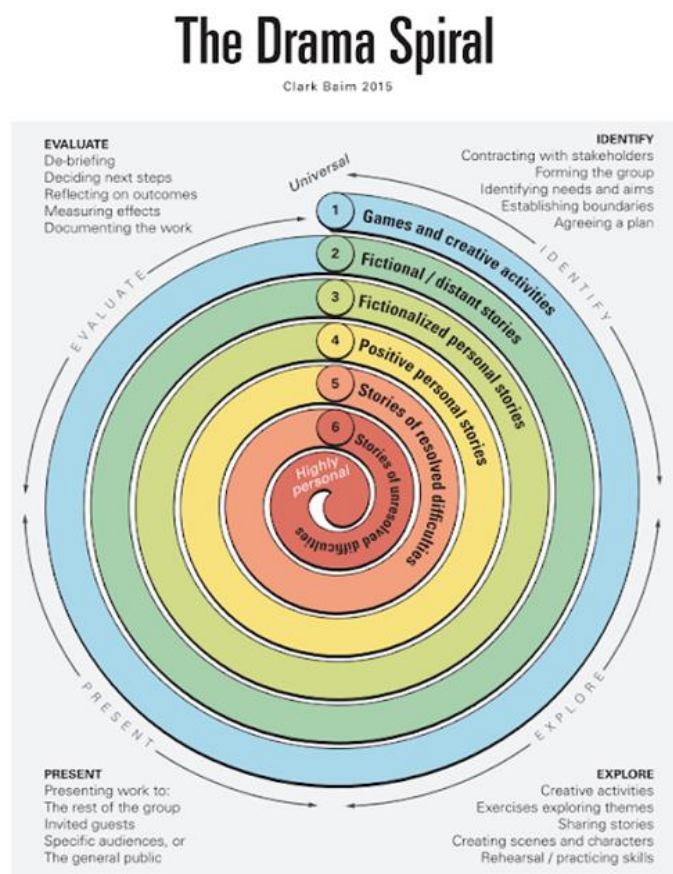


Figure 4 The Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:120)

Baim’s Drama Spiral (2020:120) offers a means to represent the stories shared in participatory theatre through applied and research-based theatre processes. The strategies suggested at each level offer a means to engage with stories depending on their level of psychological caution (Baim, 2020:158). As a decision-making tool (Baim, 2020:122), the

Drama Spiral incorporates aspects that consider elements that help to offer method, pragmatize, simplify, summarise, visualise, and organise (Baim, 2020:123). Baim suggests that the tool assists practitioners and participants in decision-making and in facilitating drama-based processes (2020:123). It allows complex concepts to be condensed while providing a visual means to organise and also offers a method for making theatrical decisions (Baim, 2020:124). This tool can be used outside of workshops with participants as well. It can be argued that this decision-making tool, which seeks to gauge how realistically a representation of an individual's experiences can be represented, may be applicable in scripting processes as well.

*In Home Truths* (Wales, 2016), the performance initially had a didactic approach, with the findings included in the dialogue rather than expressed through dramatic elements (Wales, 2016:158). However, as seen in the spiral's sixth ring (Baim, 2020:118), such direct recounts of abusive experiences may prove emotionally volatile for participants in research-based theatre processes. Therefore, one might consider how to abstract these narratives through the use of dramatic elements (O'Toole, 1992:14) to create a code (Freire, 1972:105) that speaks to the central issue from a safe distance. Theatrical tactics found in the outer rings are therefore more appropriate to represent such narratives (Baim, 2020:122). An analysis of the final draft of the performance indicates that Wales' decision to represent the research in a fictional context aligns with the second ring (Baim, 2020:119). The use of a fictional framework allowed for the depiction of power structures (Wales, 2016:160) and illustrated the cycles of abuse (2016:162). The "dramatic elements" (O'Toole, 1992:14) used in the performance heightened the representation of social life (Saldana, 2011:15). Wales argues that this style was appropriate for the purpose of the performance, which was to engage in conversations about the power dynamics that domestic workers face (2016:158). The research thus needs to consider how to balance aesthetics with the "relevance and accuracy" (McGrath, 2002:138) of the performance in order to fulfil its purpose (Wales, 2016:158).

Conquergood (1985) writes about the dimensions of ethics in ethnographic performance processes. Conquergood's "four ethical pitfalls" (1985:400) in ethnographic performances, helps to establish an ethical praxis when engaging in research-based theatre processes, which assists in setting boundaries. *The Custodian's Rip-off* refers to cases where practitioners fail to consider participants, sites of research, and overall ethics in the pursuit of a performance (Conquergood, 1985:402). *The Enthusiast's Infatuation* refers to practitioners who create

superficial performances that overgeneralize the information (Conquergood, 1985:403). *The Curator's Exhibitionism* alludes to cases where practitioners seek to shock audience members and garner a reaction rather than achieve a deeper sense of understanding in relation to the participants and data (Conquergood, 1985:405). Lastly, *The Skeptic's Cop-out* refers to instances where practitioners hesitate or refuse to take risks in the process and performance, effectively denying further dialogue (Conquergood, 1985:406). Sallis notes that these categories help to balance the pressures of taking on multiple roles in research-based theatre processes (1985:279), as he often finds himself in the dual role of researcher and playwright. Conquergood's pitfalls (1985:400) helps to gauge the effect of research-based performances and their processes and notes the challenge of balancing aesthetics in research-based theatre practices, as noted in Dell'Angelo's work (2021).

The ethnodrama *Down the Rabbit Hole* (Dell'Angelo, 2021) used oral testimonies and imagery from *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865) to create an empathetic performance and track the emotional landscape of new educators as they transformed into self-realised educators (Dell'Angelo, 2021:82), through the challenges of teaching in disadvantaged areas. While conducting interviews with inexperienced educators in school districts that underperform and are inadequately resourced (Dell'Angelo, 2021:77), the practitioner created a performance that considers the identity of educators (Dell'Angelo, 2021:82). Through an analysis of the stylistic choices and representation of the narratives collected and Dell'Angelo's creative influence as a playwright, one is able to discern how easy it is for research-based theatre practitioners to fall into these pitfalls (Conquergood, 1985:400). The research called for several drafts of the text to ensure a balance between the writer's and participants' voices (Dell'Angelo, 2021:78).

Dell'Angelo argues that the use of words and imagery inspired by the surreal children's tale allowed for the data to be condensed (2021:83), creating a performance that conveyed the surreal feelings that newly appointed educators experienced (Dell'Angelo, 2021:77). The transcripts of interviewees who had graduated from an urban-located educator programme (Dell'Angelo, 2021:83), were used to create the protagonist, Ms. Lambert. Characters such as the learner and principal in the performance were directly compared to the eccentric characters (the pigeon and Tweedledum) that Alice met on her journey in Wonderland (Dell'Angelo, 2021:84). The pigeon was chosen to represent the clash that occurs between educators and learners who consider the educators to be "outsiders" (Dell'Angelo, 2021:84),

as the original character referred to Alice as a serpent. The interaction between Ms. Lambert and the pigeon-like learner illustrated the complexities of working in communities that are wary of newcomers. The interaction also represented the difficulties of earning a learner's trust (Dell'Angelo, 2021:83), which was a common theme in the play and one that was a key challenge for the educators that it served to represent. In the performance, Principal Tweedle also alluded to the mistrust that may occur between colleagues. Dell'Angelo notes that upon review of the initial script and follow-ups with the educators interviewed, the performance had lost its authenticity in the framing of the characters (2021:83). This is arguably an example of *The Enthusiast's Infatuation* (Conquergood, 1985:400), as the performance began to simplify the individuals that the characters served to represent. The arrangement of the dramatic elements (O'Toole, 1992:14) served to entertain rather than prompt thought about the realities of those interviewed.

Dell'Angelo (2021) and Wales (2016) provide examples of research-based theatre processes that used fictional contexts to address sensitive topics. Baim (2020) and Conquergood (1985) note the challenges of engaging and representing personal narratives in research-based theatre practices. Their tools offer practitioners a means to engage in ethical practice that respects and safeguards the participants involved. These works inspired the use of an analogy in the research-based catalyst script *Boundaries* to act as a code (Freire, 1972:105) for educators and learners to discuss the topic of abuse. While the previous literature notes the need, benefits and challenges of research-based theatre processes, one must consider how to conduct respectful questioning when inquiring into the lived experiences of others. Neelands' writing (1984) provides effective strategies which promote critical thinking and true dialogue (Freire, 1972:60) in both classrooms with learners and in interview processes with participants.

### **Effective Language**

Research-based theatre practices which utilise the insights and experiences of individuals and are expressed through performance, may benefit from such a tool. But the method of inquiry and the framing of questions, also need to be considered when seeking to gain insight into individual experiences and personal narratives. Neelands advises on the framing of questions (1984: 36) and writes about incorporating drama techniques in classrooms with young learners and about the value of drama as a way of learning and teaching (1984:24). The theorist suggests that "forms of negotiation" (1984:33) allow educators to engage with

learners constructively in discussions. This is due to the effective language used and the skills applied when questioning learners in order to gain opinions and responses that are well thought through and reflective in nature (Neelands, 1984:37). While Neelands uses this theory in relation to educators and young learners between the ages of 8 to 14 (1984:1), it is applicable in this research. Like Freire (1972) and Anderson and O'Connor (2013), Neelands bases his theoretical writing on the understanding that “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:191) is of value and should be recognised in learning processes. It can thus be argued that these “forms of negotiation” (Neelands, 1984:33) may be used in research-based theatre practices or applied theatre as research practices, as it uses the insights of participants and focuses on them as a source of research (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:193). Neelands' concept of a “subtle tongue” (1984:33) is therefore applicable for both educators and researchers.

As is illustrated in the table below, to employ this skill, the following language and behavioural attributes are preferable when conducting questions.

Delicate	Language that grows confidence in those questioned which encouraging thought.
Not Obvious	Language which does not suggest the teachers (researcher's) opinion or feelings on the topic. Therefore, avoids implicating a “correct” answer.
Elusive	Language and or attitude which avoids giving an answer. Therefore, allows individuals to think and learn for themselves.
Keenly Intelligent or Perceptive	Language which is easily understood by individuals while prompting thought to deeper meaning.
Cunning	Language which introduces new perspective or ideas to individuals. Thereby allowing means of tackling and considering problems to emerge.

Figure 5 Characteristics of a *subtle tongue* (Neelands, 1984:33)

Neelands argues that drama is an explorative form which prompts thought about the lives of humans through the use of questions which act as both its “material and negotiating medium” (1984:36). It is, therefore, a suitable means to present collected data that relates to the “facets

of the human condition” (Saldana, 2011:15). Drama or theatrical techniques and strategies in learning processes, may be beneficial due to their ability to provoke constructive engagement and to pose questions (Neelands, 1984:36). Neelands argues that these questions are of an “open-ended, consequential” (1984:37) nature and emerges from inquiries about individuals' environments and the environments of others (1984:37). These types of questions thus prove to be useful in processes that investigate the experiences of individuals, particularly if they are to be explored further and expressed through theatrical processes.

Neelands identifies the following seven types of questions which are used to develop and explore a drama.

- Seeking information
- Containing information
- Provoking research
- Controlling
- Branching
- Seeking opinion
- Encouraging reflection

(Neelands, 1984:37-39)

Many of these questions allow educators to hold effective discussions with learners while provoking them to think critically and to formulate answers and opinions to questions in their own words (Neelands, 1984:39). Such inquisitive language and negotiating forms (Neelands, 1984:33), may be beneficial in research-based theatre practices for two reasons. Firstly, as noted by Dell’Angelo, 2021, Wales, 2016 and Okello, 2016, research-based theatre is a challenging form and process, as the researcher/playwright may present the data collected based on their own interpretation. An effective language of inquiry such as the use of a subtle tongue (Neelands, 1984:33) and different types of questions (Neelands, 1984:37), may prevent the researcher’s bias or own perspective from becoming dominant. Secondly, inquiries about the experiences of individuals require the researcher to have an empathetic and responsible attitude. Reckless questioning on sensitive topics and their effect on individuals may be psychologically harmful. Researchers and practitioners should therefore show appreciation, respect and humility and engage in consistent questioning (Baim, 2020:98) in such processes. A careful consideration of how a question is phrased would allow

individuals to feel safe and free to answer without judgment, thereby allowing more honest responses to be used in the artistic exploration and representation of the realities of individuals. This is noted in the analysis of the research-based theatre process that led to the creation of the catalyst script *Boundaries*.

The literature has argued for the use of research-based catalyst scripts to engage learners and educators in difficult conversations concerning the sensitive topic of GBV safely. While acknowledging the need for alternative methods of empowerment and resistance amongst South African youth (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2013; Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999; Moul, 2013), the dialogical processes that encourage citizenship pedagogical processes have also been noted (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019). These processes are demonstrated in research-based theatre processes, as seen in the work of Okello (2016) and Overbeke (2021). The literature has also highlighted the challenges of ethical representation (Conquergood, 1985) and aesthetic distance when utilising personal narratives (Baim, 2020). Lastly, it has pointed towards existing spaces in the South African education system that intend to promote transactive thinking and have linked dramatic practices (Neelands, 1984), which may achieve this. These core concepts are used to analyse the method and findings of the field study that led to the creation of *Boundaries*. They will identify the catalyst script's ability to engage educators in a conversation about GBV through a process of "de-codification" (Freire, 1972:104) and the participants' responses to the script.

## Research Methodology & Design

But in informal conversations there's no policy in how to address the idea of abuse in class. It goes more about, everything in our school is about our values. So it's about am I being respectful, do I show integrity. If I, for instance, start a conversation – I'm babbling – if I start a conversation in class or someone asks a question about something to do within the gender-based space – because we do discuss, in history we discuss it often. As I said we discuss just the idea of how people act and, I think a big part of what we do in history is teaching emotional intelligence, which means that you need to understand how this works, you know. (Participant SVW, 2022)

While educators are tasked with covering certain content in the subjects they teach, they are also meant to draw learners' attention to the fundamental skills needed to apply this knowledge. By doing so, an educator might consider how the knowledge they attempt to imbue in learners may be applicable in a learner's everyday life, in various instances, settings and particularly in connection to others. Therefore, teachers and their practices do not merely instruct but attempt to grow and nurture skills in learners such as “emotional intelligence” (Participant SVW, 2022) and critical consciousness (Freire, 1972:23).

Education prepares learners “for living in society” (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019:2), by teaching them about citizenship. It has been suggested that learners should understand citizenship as an active role they need to play, to help shape their society through transactive learning methods. *Banking education* (Freire, 1972:49), is a transmissive and fact-based teaching practice where learners mechanically absorb information. It thereby limits consciousness and partnership between educators and learners (Freire, 1972:49). Freire encourages a pedagogy that rejects prescriptive learning and behaviour, which leads to conformity and dehumanization (1972:44). He argues for teaching liberation by acknowledging oppression and promoting critical consciousness (Freire, 1972:23). Such practices promote the growth of a learner's identity that is linked to citizenship, which is deeply rooted in social justice and consciousness. One may argue that the transmissive form of education is evident in the current implementation of the South African CAPS Curriculum by educators. Educators and learners are therefore limited in their ability to converse freely and engage in discussions about topics such as GBV due to “banking education” (Freire, 1972:49). Engaging with topics that reflect dominant social discourses and developing skills to analyze and discuss them, can promote change (Almansori, Holloway, & Vanner, 2022:1). O'Connor suggests that drama education enables critical consciousness to develop,

as youth are able to analyse issues and find solutions to them through fictional worlds, which may reflect their reality (2010:xxiii). This literature supports the need for innovative tools that utilise research-based theatre practices to stage difficult conversations between educators and learners. The link between drama and citizenship points towards a methodology which may empower and promote critical consciousness in educational spaces, adhering to the objectives of the CAPS Curriculum.

This chapter outlines the design and methodology of the research and the events of the three-stage field study, which combined qualitative research and performance-making practices to generate the catalyst script *Boundaries*. The initial intent and methodology of the study is discussed along with the obstacles encountered and the shift in focus is explained. It also notes the impact of being unable to hold workshops with learners as a part of applied theatre research practices, resulting in the research only considering the “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:191) of educators. Factors that limited the scope of the research and resulted in conventional script-writing processes being implemented in the second stage of the study are also highlighted. Lastly, the method of analysis that is applied in the analysis chapter is discussed.

### **Design**

Engaging learners in critical consciousness and socio-political issues can foster a sense of citizenship and communal action for social justice (El-Amin et al., 2017:20). It is important to approach difficult conversations about sensitive topics with critical self-reflection and an understanding of oppression and injustices (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13). This type of learning can be beneficial for prevention education and discussions on discrimination and oppressive histories related to race, class, gender, and sexuality. By incorporating “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:189) into teaching, educators can help learners develop a sense of communal action for social justice (El-Amin et al., 2017:20).

Understanding the reality of oppression can provide insight into the importance of promoting critical consciousness. Educators who are aware of their learners' lived realities can teach relevant and meaningful topics. However, this approach does not mean abandoning discipline or other pedagogical practices. Instead, it emphasizes the need to integrate citizenship and critical consciousness into teaching. Freire criticizes the static nature of narrating in education, suggesting that difficult topics should be represented and engaged with using innovative techniques to foster meaningful conversations (1972:45).

The researcher noted that the performance of *the She box* (Steyn, 2020), did not incorporate the “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:189) of youth in its attempt to act as a catalyst for discussion about GBV and abuse. The performance fell into the trap of overgeneralization in the narratives it portrayed, leaving little room for interpretation. Therefore, the research considered the use of a catalyst script generated through qualitative research and applied theatre practices. The research-based catalyst script would serve as a Freirean code (1972:105) for high school educators and learners as a means of staging difficult conversations. The research therefore utilised qualitative research through the insights and experiences of individuals affected by a particular issue, GBV. Research-based theatre processes which used the lived experiences of individuals to address communal and societal issues (Dell’Angelo, 2021; Overbeke, 2019; Okello, 2016 and Wales, 2016), influenced the design of the research and its methodology. The study was practice informed as it drew influence from research-based theatre and applied theatre practices and theoretical and critical pedagogical practices. The interviews conducted in the initial phase of the field study helped generate an analogous catalyst script which was used for an interactive staged script reading held online with some of the educators interviewed.

Through interviews conducted with several high school educators and drama-based workshops with high school learners, the data collected would have led to the creation of “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:96). These themes would help to decide which “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14) would successfully illustrate the results of the participants’ responses, through a theatrical representation. Using the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:120) as a guideline, would identify the aesthetic distance needed for the “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:96) and the “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14) that would depict them in the performance text. The text would then be used in participatory workshops with high school learners using applied theatre techniques, such as Image Theatre and the hot seating of characters. These workshops would evaluate the learners’ engagement with the Freirian code (1972:105) generated through their own and their educators’ insights and experiences. The evaluation would also gauge whether the learners were able to express themselves and offer their opinions on the text, in a safe and controlled space. Finally, the evaluation would determine if cycles of “critical consciousness development” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and “human empowerment processes” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) were achieved, thereby promoting the engagement of the topic as a concept of citizenship education.

Obstacles faced during the implementation of the field study regarding the ethical clearance needed to engage with learners, prevented their participation in the study. To be able to engage with learners in schools, the researcher needed ethical clearance from the University of Cape Town's Centre for Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies' faculty and the Western Cape Education Department. According to the University, addressing GBV directly with learners carries a significant level of risk. Consequently, the researcher found it necessary to have the support of a psychologist during this process in order to effectively handle any potential emotional challenges that learners may encounter. Despite implementing safeguarding measures in applied theatrical processes, such as the creation of parallel circumstances, these activities were considered to pose a significant risk for learners. The outcome resulted in the project being adapted, to enable exclusive collaboration with educators and developing a script that employed an analogous delineation. The script was created through qualitative research and conventional theatre-making practices, as drama-based workshops were not held. This was due to the absence of learners and the time constraints of the study, as the process of obtaining ethical clearance from the faculty was prolonged. As a result, the researcher was unable to obtain permission from the Western Cape Education Department, even though the schools were enthusiastic to participate in the study. This severely restricted the time frame within which the researcher could implement the project. The researcher therefore used the interview responses of several high school educators to identify the "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96) explored in the script, by means of the "dramatic elements" (O'Toole, 1992:14). The script's different analogous forms were influenced by gauging the level of the personal narratives on the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:120) while avoiding Conquergood's "pitfalls" (1985:400). After finalising the style of the script, it was performed in an online reading event and workshop. This was due to the end of year pressures of exams for educators, which affected their availability. Several of the educators interviewed in the initial stage of the field study, were invited to the event to engage with the catalyst script and offer an evaluation. This allowed principal ideologies concerning the central focus of participants in both applied theatre (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009) and applied theatre research practices (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013) to be utilised, as the educators were able to criticise the scripting of the dialogues recorded during interviews.

### **Method**

Qualitative research and performance-making practices were merged in the field study to generate a catalyst script using the interview responses of high school educators. The aim of

the interviews was to gain insight on educators' perceptions and thoughts about engaging with learners on topics of abuse and GBV. This was largely inspired by the case studies previously discussed in the contributing theory chapter, as these practitioners used the lived experiences of others to address a socio-political concern, as experienced by their participants. The study led to the creation of a catalyst script, *Boundaries*. There were three key stages in the study:

1. The collection of data for content
2. The analysis, interpretation and scripting of the play
3. The implementation of the catalyst script with educators

The three stages of the field study are analysed in conjunction with the supporting literature discussed in the previous chapter. This outlines the objective of the research which argues that research-based catalyst scripts are valuable tools for staging difficult conversations between learners and educators.

### **Lived experiences as data and script content**

After carefully considering case studies and literature on research-based theatre (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Overbeke, 2019; Okello, 2016 and Wales, 2016), the research began by using the collection of lived experiences as content for the catalyst script. During the first stage, fourteen Western Cape high school educators were interviewed over a period of five months as sources of "embodied knowledge" (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:191), as per their experiences of engaging with the topic as educators. The data was collected through conventional ethnographic data collection strategies such as interviews and field notes (Saldana, 2011:5). The researcher inquired about the formal and informal methods used by educators to engage with learners on the topics of abuse and GBV. This referred to organised lesson plans, school assemblies or comments and discussions which emerged from events in the news or incidents inside and outside of the classroom. Questions about how these topics were framed in the prescribed literature of subjects such as life orientation, languages, arts and social sciences, were also included. The objective of the interviews was to obtain answers to the following questions:

- How did the educators define abuse?
- Did the educators ever engage with learners on the topic of abuse and what may have prompted these discussions?
- Did engaging in the topic ever make the educators feel uncomfortable?

- Were there policies or codes of ethics to use as a guide when having these discussions?

The participants for these interviews were selected through two methods of inquiry (Flick, 2011), influenced by “extractive research approaches and research networking approaches” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:194). For the first method, formal invitations were sent to several Cape Town high schools to invite educators to participate in the field study. These invitations encouraged the participation of educators as well as other academic and supporting staff. The intention of the researcher was to gain a broad perspective of how the central topic is engaged with at different levels in schools. The second method used pre-existing networks, formed by educators who showed an interest in advocating for learners’ rights and GBV preventative education. Educators were invited to nominate colleagues who shared an interest in the research topic, to be interviewed as well. This “research network” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:194) method proved to be beneficial as many of the educators located through this method, suggested secondary resources to further the research.

The researcher structured the interviews to be inclusive of all genders, to gain a holistic understanding of the various perspectives and challenges faced by those engaging in these difficult conversations in educational spaces. This would ensure that both perspectives, male, female and non-binary, were considered in the scripting process and would avoid any bias in the construction of “the human context” (O’Toole, 1992:15). The participants interviewed were further classified by their experience in teaching, the subjects taught and the gender base of the schools they were employed at. (See table below).

Participant	Gender	Subject	Experience	School
CJ	Female	English	18 years	Co-Ed
TB	Female	English	7 years	Co-Ed
AA	Female	Dance, History, Social Science	20 Years	Co-Ed
ADB	Male	English	10 years	Co-Ed
AW	Female	History, LO, Geography	5 years	All Girls
DB	Female	Drama and Creative Arts	3 years	Co-Ed
GW	Female	Social Justice, English, Visual Arts	14 years	All Girls
NK	Female	Music	24 years	All Boys
SJ	Female	English	1,5 years	All Girls
SL	Male	History	26 years	Co-Ed
SP	Female	Geography, LO	26 years	All Girls
SVW	Female	History, Maths, Art	30 years	All Girls
VG	Female	LO	22 years	Co-Ed
NB	Male	Maths	5 years	All Girls

Figure 6 Summary of Educators Interviewed

These factors were considered to help the researcher identify the various points of tension that may arise in conversations about topics of abuse: between educators and learners and between educators from different backgrounds. Stage one of the field study began with the interviews of two high school educators, using an interview schedule (Addendum A), which was compiled without applying Neelands' "negotiating forms" (1984:33) theory. In an analysis of the interviews, the researcher noted how the ineffectively structured language of the inquiry and the framing of questions influenced the two educator's responses. It can thus be argued that "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) need to be incorporated in research-based theatre practices, which highlights the change in the power dynamics between researcher and participants.

### **Analysing and Representing Real Issues**

Stage two of the field study focused on the analysis of the twelve interviews held using the second interview schedule, (Addendum B), and the objective was to achieve dialogical processes as seen in Okello's work (2016:37). Both reflection and action (Freire, 1972:60)

were noticeably present in the educator's responses due to the "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) used to create the interview schedule. The dialogue (Freire, 1972:61) which occurred between the researcher and participants allowed for "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96) to emerge, although the research does note the absence of the learners' perspectives. The educator's responses indicate a mature and adult perspective which influences the "adaptation of the primary material" (Saldana, 2011:15). The analysis of the data identified three central points of tension:

- The definition of abuse
- Engaging in conversations about the topic
- The level of training and/or qualifications that educators need to engage in discussions concerning this topic

The "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96) that emerged from the dialogue with educators, required careful consideration when framed within the catalyst script, and when deciding on the arrangement of the "elements of drama" (O'Toole, 1992:14) using Baim's third ring on the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:133). These were used to represent the narratives which emerged from the interviews. While identifying the "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96), variations of the catalyst script are considered in the research: (Addendums C, D and E).

### **Implementation & Evaluation**

The fieldwork study ended with an online, staged reading of the script. The analogous script followed the events of a land dispute between two neighbours in a gated community. The characters Oliver Monroe, Janice Smith, Mrs Hendricks and her assistant William, were created to address the generative themes (Freire, 1972:96) which emerged from the interviews with the educators. The three-scene short play, focused on the power dynamics expressed by the characters in their interactions with one another. This served to represent an abuse of power and disregard for boundaries, both literally and metaphorically. The performance used a minimal number of props, sets and costumes, to illustrate the ease with which it could be read or performed in classrooms for learners to engage with. Several educators who had been interviewed, were invited to the online event to act as participants in its implementation. They evaluated the script while considering the "thematic devices" (Baim, 2020:161) used to illustrate the "human context" (O'Toole, 1992:15) in the code (Freire, 1972:105). The educators also evaluated whether the focus on power dynamics

proved to be an effective “contradiction” (Freire, 1972:33) to engage with, as a means to discuss abuse and GBV from a safe distance. The session allowed them to view the performance of the script and witness strategies that enabled them to “de-code” (Freire, 1972:116) the script and “make thought visible” (Santiago-Jirau & Thompson, 2019:156). This was achieved by using techniques such as Image Theatre (Santiago-Jirau & Thompson, 2019:157) and the hot seating of characters (Neelands & Goode, 1990:33). Image theatre is a Theatre of the Oppressed technique, where individuals make shapes or depict images with their bodies (Santiago- Jiau & Thompson, 2019:159). Boal intended this to be one in a variation of theatrical techniques and strategies of a “liberatory theatrical vocabulary” (Santiago- Jirau & Thompson, 2019:158). The practitioner intended for a new language to emerge, which allowed “spect-actors” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:13) to vocalise their thoughts and emotions on social issues through their bodies. The theatrical strategy of hot seating characters is when participants may ask characters within a performance or still image (tableau) questions (Neelands & Goode, 1990:33). Neelands & Goode note that this particular strategy is beneficial in discovering the motivations behind characters' actions and responses (1990:33). These techniques therefore offered a means to creatively interrogate the research-based catalyst script and the arrangement of its “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14) while engaging with participants. The event also incorporated interactive software tools such as polls, for participants to fill in. The polls used the question prompts from each scene of the final script.

Stage three of the field study is analysed by considering the educators’ evaluation of the catalyst script, in conjunction with the key theoretical concepts of Freirean codes (1972:105), the “cycles of critical consciousness development” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and “dimensions of human empowerment” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18), to gauge the successes and failures of *Boundaries*.

## Analysis

And then drama we – there's a space in the curriculum that allows us to talk about social issues when it pertains to the improvisations in terms of puppetry or when they are learning to make a dramatic sketch for the first time. So they have to use something that has affected them perhaps, or that they know of that is important to them. So I always motivate there that they take some sort of ( their own lived experience) and then we have the discussions of obviously what's important to them. And sometimes abuse does come up. Like drug abuse comes up, and then gender-based violence comes up because it's quite a big topic at the moment in the media. (Participant DB, 2022)

Though there is little of it, there is space within the CAPS curriculum for learners and educators to engage with the topic of human rights violations such as GBV as noted by participant DB (2022). However, though the topics are listed in the curriculum, the manner in which they are engaged with are either very rigid or are given “vague instructions” (Participant GW, 2022). The current South African education system has been designed to address the inequalities of the past (Ajani, 2021:78) while attempting to secure an open and democratic society (South Africa. Department of Education, 2011:2). The curriculum has been reformed from the Outcomes Based Education of ‘Curriculum 2005’ to the current Curriculum and Policy Statement [CAPS] (Elliott, 2016:57). This curriculum was designed to include the values of the South African Constitution which focuses on the growth of citizenship in a democratic society, protecting human rights and encouraging social justice (South Africa. Department of Education, 2011:3). An analysis of the CAPS principles and aims is indicative of a desire to educate youth through methods that arguably echo the objective of Freire’s (1972) pedagogy. CAPS emphasises the need to promote critical learning which focuses on the importance of environmental and social justice, inclusivity and human rights while incorporating the knowledge of indigenous systems (South Africa. Department of Education, 2011:5). Innovative tools which utilise the “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:189) of educators may help them find new ways to engage with learners to achieve these goals. Educators may find that dialogical processes through the use of catalysts, can offer them the means to stage difficult conversations with learners in a creative and controlled environment. Thereby offering them a tool to help them engage with sensitive topics and be confident in maintaining boundaries. While the study was unable to incorporate the participation of high school learners, it demonstrated how educators could converse with each other on sensitive topics through the use of a catalyst script generated

through research-based theatre processes, which led to “cycles of critical consciousness development” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and “human empowerment” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18).

This chapter analyses the methodology and findings of the fieldwork study which generated the research-based catalyst script *Boundaries*. It considers the merging of qualitative research practices (Flick, 2011) with theatrical and pedagogical practices, deemed to empower learners (Freire, 1972; Neelands, 1984). The merger of these practices illustrates the process of inquiry using dialogical (Freire, 1972:60) and “negotiating forms” (Neelands, 1984:33) to identify “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69) for the use of catalyst scripts.

The first stage compares the language and techniques used to construct the two interview schedules, Addendums A and B, at the beginning of the field study. While considering the absence of a “subtle tongue” and “negotiating forms” (Neelands, 1984:33-34), the research argues for the use of pedagogical practices in qualitative research processes. These illustrate the benefits and ethics of framing questions to acquire “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:191) for theatrical presentation.

The second stage analyses “the adaptation” (Saldana, 2011:17) of the data into a theatrical script after identifying “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69) from the first stage, using the second interview schedule. An analysis of the three drafts of the catalyst script, Addendums C, D and E, indicates the variations of the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:14) depicted in the “code” (Freire, 1972:105), using different elements (O’Toole, 1992:15). The “thematic elements” (Baim, 2020:161) used to create a catalyst script are considered in conjunction with the script’s “style and purpose” (Wales, 2016:158).

Lastly, the catalyst script *Boundaries* will be evaluated while analysing the critiques of two educators who observed and engaged in an online performance of the script. The research notes the “relevance and accuracy” (McGrath, 2002:138) achieved in the script and its ability to encourage “cycles of critical consciousness development” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and “dimensions of human empowerment” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) through applied theatre strategies. The chapter demonstrates the challenges, processes and ethics of presenting “personal narratives” (Baim, 2020:81) in a theatrical form, as an innovative tool as is noted in the generating of the catalyst script, *Boundaries*.

### **Stage 1: Lived Experiences as Content**

The research acknowledges the challenges educators face in engaging in difficult conversations due to ambiguous guidelines and policies (SACE, 2011) which have set unclear boundaries. As seen in Dell'Angelo's work, the use of research-based theatre practices may help to raise awareness of the challenges faced by educators, to improve the understanding of concepts and occurrences that are frequently assumed to be universally comprehended (2021:83). Therefore, the field study began with a process of inquiry (Flick, 2011:3) to gain insight on the manner in which GBV and abuse were engaged with in high schools, both formally and informally. The researcher interviewed high school educators, hoping that they would verbally express their experiences and reflections (Flick, 2011:5). Over a period of five months, fourteen educators were asked a series of questions relating to the topic, to identify "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:69) that occurred during their interviews. The interview responses were analysed through group-orientated comparisons and characteristics that informed "subgroups" (Flick, 2011:5). These characteristics included the educators' gender, years of experience, the subjects they taught and the gendered nature of the schools where they were employed. Comparisons were also made of their responses (Flick, 2011:5) to identify different "narratives" (Baim, 2020:198).

The first two interviews of the study were discarded as the language of enquiry of the first interview schedule (Addendum A) proved to be ineffective. The second interview series was more effective in collecting responses from the next twelve respondents, offering several "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:69). These themes informed the "elements of drama" (O'Toole, 1992:14) within the catalyst script. The themes and elements provided a catalyst for the final stage of engagement as it displayed the guiding pro-social pedagogical principles: "accuracy and relevance" (McGrath, 2002:138). These principles were able to be applied during the creation of the catalyst script, due to "true dialogue" (Freire, 1972:60) and "forms of negotiation" (Neelands, 1984:33) being practised when interviewing the educators. A comparative analysis of these interview schedules and their responses demonstrates the impact of applying theatrical and pedagogical practices to an interview process.

### **Framing Questions**

While it was intended that the interviews merge the classic and narrative styles of interviews (Flick, 2011:2), many of the questions were designed to obtain answers that would demonstrate the "dimensions of dialogue" (Freire, 1972:60). The interviews were therefore conducted in a conventional method, while field observations were used as a second method

of qualitative research. The incorporation of both “action and reflection” (Freire, 1972:60) in the answers would illustrate critical thinking and produce “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69). These themes would be represented through the use of “drama elements” (O’Toole, 1992:14) and literary or thematic elements (Baim, 2020:160).

The first interview schedule, Addendum A, was ineffective due to the language used in the questions (Neelands, 1984:39), which failed to encourage “critical consideration of reality” (Freire, 1972:48). The questions had the characteristics of a “banking approach” (Freire, 1972:48) that sought simple answers to complex human questions. This occurred due to the absence of a “subtle tongue” (Neelands, 1984:33) which is recognised to help those being questioned, traditionally learners, articulate answers based on their own understanding.

The list of questions used to interview the first two high school educators, CJ and TB, was divided into two sections. The intent of these two sections was to obtain responses informed by the interviewees' experiences and thoughts, in their capacity as both educators and citizens. In this instance, citizen refers to the individual’s position as a member of society who is affected by its socio-political challenges. The first section, structured to obtain the respondent's responses as an educator, had fifteen questions. These questions, while inquiring into the identifying factors which formed a comparative base for the research, included references to news articles covering the events of the SA Femicide in 2019. A link to the articles as well as a summary of their contents was attached to the interview schedule. Both CJ and TB were female high school educators who taught English at a co-educational and all-girls high school, respectively.

When analysing the questions asked in the first section, the following characteristics are identified in the language and structure. Excluding questions 1 to 3, which establish the identifying factors of the “subgroups” (Flick, 2011:5) that the research established for comparison, many of the questions are not “open-ended” (Neelands, 1984:36-37). The questions therefore only seem to have two possible answers: yes or no. This proved to be ineffective as the responses consisted of short answers which lacked critical thinking due to an imbalance of action as well as reflection (Freire, 1972:60). For example, question 4 in the interview schedule asks:

Do you know if sensitive topics such as Gender-Based Violence are covered in the Life Orientation syllabus for your learners?

While this may be categorised as a “provoking research question” (Neelands, 1984:37), it demonstrates an interrogative attitude rather than that of a conventional inquiry (Flick, 2011: 2). The language and framing of the question suggest “dominance” (Freire, 1972:61) and does not provide enough room for the respondents to share their own “narrative” (Baim, 2020:198). The structure of the question suggested that the researcher was judging or criticising the interviewee if they were unsure whether the topic was included in the Life Orientation syllabus. Both CJ and TB confirmed that the topic was included but disclosed that they were unfamiliar with the subject.

I know it must be, I’m not sure on the specifics though cause it’s not what I trained or have experience in so I’m not an expert. I know it will be because it’s important, it’s obviously really important but yeah ...sorry I don’t know the specifics.

(Participant CJ, 2022).

This question was also unnecessary as the field study included educators who taught different subjects rather than only those who taught Life Orientation. This was used as a feature within the “subgroups” (Flick, 2011:5). The question thus alienated respondents rather than allowing a comparison of the group, as intended. This illustrated the “anti-dialogical banking educator” (Freire, 1972:65) position that was adopted by the researcher, as the questions focused on the researcher’s perspective and interest in the topic. For example:

When addressing the topic of GBV in the classroom what is the outcome you seek? Is it purely prevention or is there an element of support for those who could possibly be experiencing this in their lives?

This question forgoes any chance of “keen intelligence” (Neelands, 1984:34) as it incorporates the answer and opinions of the researcher into the question and simultaneously denies the respondents the opportunity to provide their own insights, perspectives and understanding of the topic that framed the question. Rather than “subtly coaxing” (Neelands, 1984:34), the question points to an “obvious” (Neelands, 1984:33) answer while also leading the respondent to a less obvious one. This again demonstrates how the language used to frame the questions (Neelands, 1984:39) was not carefully considered to prevent an outcome where respondents felt entrapped and intimidated. While some of these closed questions were followed by questions elaborating on the respondent's answer (questions 6 to 8), other questions that incorporated an event in society to evoke commentary and reflection from the respondents, were restrictive in their wording. For example, question 9 asks:

In August 2019, during what was called the SA Femicide, what was it like for you as an educator? What was your experience in the classroom? Did you feel prompted to engage with the learners in the classroom about the ongoing horrific events occurring in the country at that time? If so, how?

These questions seemed to have an answer already embedded in them due to the language used and encouraged a “consuming of ideas” (Freire, 1972:61) in the interview, preventing any true dialogue. The first part of the question allows for a “narrative” (Flick, 2011:5) response which could incorporate both action and reflection (Freire, 1972:60), as the educators recounted their experiences as individuals of authority, managing the topic in a designated space, their classroom. The descriptive word and title of *educator* in this part of the question also relates to the respondent's experience amongst others of a “similar situation” (Flick, 2011:2), which refers to other educators and members of staff, while still focusing on the respondent's personal experience. A “shared curiosity about one’s immediate environment and other environments which are beyond their actual experiences” (Neelands, 1984:36-37) is demonstrated within the question, offering possibilities for the detection of “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69).

Well, it was tough. I mean, I'd drive to work and hear it on the news and its dark out cause it's early. Then I'm thinking shoo...are those girls gonna get to school okay? The ones who take taxis or walk. And then you hear people talking about it in the staff room. More the men I think at one point while the women, maybe its shock or just like I suppose gross- disgust at the details of how the girl died. How the body was abandoned or or left, you know like the state-agh. So, yeah see its uncomfortable right so ...hmm it was a while ago and I'm not sure but I think, for me. I was cautious that's all I can say. The classroom, the kids, I was cautious.

(Participant TB, 2022)

While TB offered recollections of their experience of that reality and reflected upon it (Freire, 1972:60), CJ appeared to affirm the facts and actions taken (Freire, 1972:60).

We would definitely have had an assembly. I'm sure back then we also had a silent protest where kids and teachers lined up outside with posters. They made them in class I think and then there were pictures taken of them, us, outside the school gates. There were a few schools I think that did this. Yeah, and then I suppose next would be some literature given out in classes or in meetings with grade heads. Trying to think of what else would have happened...me? I would probably have spoken about it but only in connection to a particular

incident under my watch or in connection to a setwork. Our school is very strict on how you deal with these things.

(Participants CJ, 2022)

Freire argues that “unauthentic” (1972:60) words used in dialogue between individuals struggle to “transform reality” (1972:60) and therefore prevents “true education” (1972:65), due to its inability to provoke communication. A dialogue which is characterised by its ability to generate critical thinking (Freire, 1972:65) must incorporate a balance of reflection and action (Freire, 1972:60) in order to accomplish change. In other words, the responses of the high school educators would offer greater possibilities as content for the catalyst script, if they were designed with a consideration of the topic, in relation to themselves and to others. The verbal data (Flick, 2011:2) collected, would identify “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69) obtained through the true dialogical (Freire, 1972:60) responses provided by the respondents. The “dominance” (Freire, 1972:61) while influencing the nature of the responses due to their “seeking information and controlling type questions” (Neelands, 1984:37) also placed the interviewer in a seemingly judgmental position of power. Rather than using “expert questions” (Flick, 2011:2) familiar to the respondents, which may have been possible through the use of “branching questions” (Neelands, 1984:37) in a true form of dialogue (Freire, 1972:60), the emotive language presented an “obvious” (Neelands, 1984:33) answer. This is demonstrated in question 11, when the researcher inquired about the objective of the respondent and the manner that may have been used, to engage with the topic in a classroom setting.

When addressing the topic of GBV in the classroom what is the outcome you seek? Is it purely prevention or is there an element of support for those who could possibly be experiencing this in their lives?

The responses to this question confirmed this “dominance” (Freire, 1972:61) as the respondents' struggled to answer this question effectively, as it automatically assumed that some form of engagement or discussion around the topic had taken place. This becomes evident from CJ's response.

Well, like I said we're very strict on discussing these sorts of things. Not because we don't want to inform but we also have responsibilities and expectations. The school and parents expect us to teach the children what we were trained in...not to offer ill-informed advice or counselling without a qualification. Especially since, there's always that chance...you're

generalising but someone there is actually dealing with it. You would have to generalise right cause it's not out in the open. And it does more harm if it is. For that person. So, I'd say I don't address it in the classroom. I might um, explain or suggest a definition and impact of abuse when discussing it as a theme in a book, poem or you know.

(Participant CJ, 2022)

This response also indicates that another assumption was made and that further criticism of the respondent was embedded in the question. Question 11 assumes that the educator is aware of learners' experiences of the topic and also suggests that educators should be involved in these particular instances. While the second interview schedule and the final script touches on the process and ethics of intervention and engagement with the topic, question 11 does not "provoke research" (Neelands, 1984:37) as it does not encourage reflection and action (Freire, 1972:60). It is rather the responses of the respondents that incorporate these challenges in relation to the research topic. The second section of the interview schedule which sought the perspectives of the respondents as individuals, proved to be ineffective due to repetition and provoking questions about personal feelings.

Questions 1, 2 and 7 of the second section of the first interview schedule, sought the definition, effects and suggestions of the respondents in connection to the research topic. Questions 1 and 7 used effective language in their framing as they were "open and consequential" (Neelands, 1984:33) and encouraged critical thinking, which allowed for effective responses from the participants. Question 2 presented a challenge as it interrogated the respondents on the impact of GBV in their own lives, which may possibly have discouraged a true dialogue (Freire, 1972:60). The question provoked reflection rather than encouraging it and although the respondents were given the option to maintain their privacy and not divulge personal details, the nature of the question was triggering.

Many of the questions in this section invited the respondents to offer their opinions (Neelands, 1984:38) on an article covering a case of GBV, but these questions were controlling and restrictive (Neelands, 1984:37-38) which influenced the responses due to the language that was used. As noted in the analysis of the questions in the first section, "dominance" (Freire, 1972:61) was evident when the interview questions contained or suggested an "obvious answer" (Neelands, 1984:33) and criticism, if the respondent could not answer or was unfamiliar with the topic. Questions 4, 5 and 6 sought responses to articles about two female victims of GBV and the male perpetrator. The language used to frame the

questions and describe aspects of the case was intended to stimulate a “generative theme” (Freire, 1972:69) but resulted in the responses being limited. The questions may also have been challenging for male educators. They were structured in such a way as to imply bias and empathy towards women and the persecution of men, which would have challenged them to respond to the female researcher with honesty and without feeling pressured or victimised.

Question 4 asked:

Uyinene was a young university student who was brutally raped and murdered in the middle of the day in the Claremont area. What do you think or feel when considering this violence occurring in a well-known residential area?

Both CJ and TB noted how the pervasive fear of unsafe spaces for women, often influences their movements and activities.

It makes me scared for me and my family. I’m more reluctant to let my daughter go out at night and even nervous of her driving alone. That means same for me. That’s hard cause then I’m letting that fear keep us both captive. That’s like right here for me you know and then it was in the middle of the day. Makes a woman feel like she needs to see all men as a possible threat which is ...of course wrong. I mean maybe when I was your age it was still okay to be trusting, now. No. No, it’s all too much. (Participant CJ, 2022)

A similar response was noted in TB’s answer to question 5, concerning female boxer Baby Lee Jegels, who was shot and killed by her boyfriend, a police officer. The question portrayed the boxer as a role model for young women and asked the respondents what they thought of her “intimidation and death by the hands of an official who was meant to protect the public against assailants?” (Question 5).

I think it shows no one’s safe. No woman. There’s no us and them in this because it’s not a problem specific to an area, class...you know things others may think as differences amongst people. (Participant TB, 2022)

These answers, while reflective, offered troubling perspectives and a lack of “hope” (Freire, 1972:65) for generating content for the catalyst script. While different perspectives on the societal issue would be needed for the catalyst script to act as an effective lens (O’Connor, 2010:143), incorporating these responses into the script would offer little opportunity for critical thinking. Rather it would instil fear in female audience members and follow the pattern of “narrative” (Freire, 1972:71) teaching strategies in preventative education. This type of strategy might also encourage judgement to be passed on male adolescents. This was

the case for question 6 as well, when respondents were asked to give their opinion on the “consequences” for public figures and celebrities who are being covered in the media for being perpetrators of abuse.

Aaron Mokena presents another public figure who may be considered an icon. However, in recent news, he has been accused of abusing his girlfriend. There are many cases where celebrities and public figures have been accused and found guilty of abusing their partners. Do you think there are consequences to this?

The phrasing “do you think there are consequences” did offer an open question (Neelands, 1984:37), but the case referred to in the media, also drew attention to the generalisation of men as perpetrators. While all the articles used in the questions focus on GBV in South Africa, the scope was limited as the assumption was that all the respondents had knowledge of the cases. Both respondents were unaware of the South African footballer or his case but were able to offer comments on the case of international celebrities, Amber Heard and Johnny Depp. Using this case would have been more effective as it illustrated a toxic, abusive relationship where both the wife and husband were perpetrators. Another respondent also referred to this case during the second set of interviews in the revised interview schedule, (see Addendum B), although there was no mention of public cases in the questions. But certain respondents were able to make connections to cases of abuse in the media without being prompted. This illustrated how true dialogue (Freire, 1972:60) is stimulated by effective questions, as the respondent was able to critically reflect, by considering their own environment and those of others who had no connection to them (Neelands, 1984:36). This demonstrates that Neelands' (1984) writing is applicable to learners in classrooms and during interviews with educators in research-based theatre processes.

The themes derived from a compare and contrast analysis of the interview responses (Flick, 2011:5), identified “significant realities of the individual’s contextual reality” (Freire, 1972:76). The responses of educators in the second interview schedule revealed their own concerns about abuse and GBV. These themes, generated through a “thematic investigation” (Freire, 1972:76), demonstrated a “man-world relationship [sic]” (Freire, 1972:74) which stemmed from the educators' “embodied knowledge” (Anderson & O’Connor, 2013:189) and not the bias or dominant (Freire, 1972:61) position of the researcher. The researcher obtained personal narratives (Baim, 2020:89) and “stark realities” (Saldana, 2011:15) from the participants, which enabled the creation of an effective theatrical catalyst, while considering the “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14). This allowed the conventional “banking”

(Freire, 1972:72) strategies which lack relevance and accuracy (McGrath, 2002:138), to be abandoned as a prosocial educational tool. The second stage of the field study focused on the adaptation of the interviews (Saldana, 2011:17) into a thematic script, while considering the representation, style and purpose (Wales, 2016:157) of the script.

The language used in the second interview schedule, (see Addendum B) was effective, as it allowed for action and reflection (Freire, 1972:60) in the responses to the six questions that were asked. Twelve high school educators, three males and nine females, were interviewed using these questions. Only three of the respondents taught Life Orientation while the others taught languages, arts, social sciences and mathematics. While the first interview schedule used “seeking information, controlling and provoking research questions” (Neelands, 1984:37-38), the second interview schedule included “encouraging reflection and branching questions” (Neelands, 1984:37-38). These types of questions (Neelands, 1984:36) not only provoked critical thinking but also allowed for “narrative interview responses” (Flick, 2011:5). In the responses, experiences relating to the topic were shared, without a distinction being drawn between those made by the respondents in their capacity as educators or individuals. The respondents were able to formulate answers by considering their roles as educators, as a part of their identities. This stripped away any sense of hierarchy within the narratives and allowed the respondents to be viewed as individuals who are subjected to similar “narrative teaching” (Freire, 1972:33) constraints as that of the learners in the classroom.

### **Stage 2: Representing the Real**

Overbeke states that in Schellhardt’s attempts to address the lack of female representation in theatre for young audiences, she valued the insights of the young women she aimed to represent through the shaping of authentic characters from a dialogical research-based theatre process (Overbeke, 2019:9). This was the intention of the research in the second phase of the field study. The researcher observed that the first interview schedule restricted the answers of educators and in doing so, ultimately staged a difficult conversation with them which worked against the study’s goal. The second interview schedule which used Neelands’ “Negotiating Forms” (1984:33), provided the researcher with questions that allowed for more effective dialogue (Freire, 1972:60). The six questions in the second interview schedule, Addendum B, focused on four central points of interest relating to the research topic of abuse and GBV: the definition of abuse, their experience in engagement with the topic, their feelings when engaging with the topic and policies or rules that influenced their engagement. The responses

to these central points helped to identify “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:69) and were considered in conjunction with the “elements of drama” (O’Toole, 1992:14). These elements along with a “fictional framework” (Wales, 2016:158) and thematic devices (Baim, 2020:161), helped to shape the code (Freire, 1972:105) in *Boundaries*.

#### Scripting generative themes

Asking the educators to define abuse enabled a critical analysis of a “human-world relationship” (Freire, 1972:97) which would influence the “human context” (O’Toole, 1992:15) demonstrated in the script. When the responses of both the subgroups (Flick, 2011:5) and individual interviews were compared, the researcher identified verbs and adjectives to create concepts from the “generative themes” (Freire, 1972:60). The verbs and adjectives which stood out in responses would show the researcher a connection between action and reflection (Freire, 1972:60) when creating the script as they formed central images. These central images were influenced by the literary devices within the “third ring” of the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:133).

While analysing the respondents' definitions of abuse, the researcher found that the phrases “intent to harm, inflict damage and degrading behaviour towards another” (Participant DB, 2022), were commonly used. The responses collected from this question were all “actions” (Freire, 1972:60) portraying violence with little consideration to its cause or consequences. The researcher then considered the imagery and adjectives used in the respondents' definitions, to identify points of “reflection” (Freire, 1972:60). While many educators described abuse in terms of physical and sexual harm, others referred to verbal and psychological abuse, all of which drew attention to the everyday lived reality of individuals. A female high school educator, GW, referred to the term abuse as being “very broad” (Participant GW, 2022) and alluded to the misconception of it being defined by intense physical harm alone and not the process of degradation that accompanies abuse.

I think the term 'abuse' is an incredibly broad term and I think it starts with degrading comments. I think with sexist comments of any nature I would say that's the start of it. I think that then it obviously escalates and can include either extreme misogyny and/or sexual violence against women.

(Participant GW, 2022)

This response emphasised the need for the research to consider an “authentic and believable representation” (Wales, 2016:157) of the topic and its connection to the respondent's and

their learners. During the interviews and informal discussions, educators mentioned instances of blatant and public misogyny and of sexual harassment experienced by themselves or learners. But few mentioned the reality of learners whose lived experiences outside of the school grounds included violence, where they were either the victims or the perpetrators. In these instances, the educators were tasked with supporting or disciplining learners as appointed guardians. GW's responses while offering an inclusive "generative theme" (Freire, 1972:69) because it encouraged a critical analysis of that theme (Freire, 1972:60) in everyday life, also provided a means to analyse the research topic from a safer perspective. The "degrading comments" that "escalate" (Participant GW, 2022) and is identified as the start of abuse, offered a point of critical analysis on microaggressions. Rather than writing an explicitly violent and potentially triggering event to act as a catalyst, the script explored the consequences of an act and its escalation. The "dramatic meaning" (O'Toole, 1992:26) would be achieved in the decoding (Freire, 1972:79) of this theme, through the "focus" (O'Toole, 1992:30) illustrated through the other elements. While this achieved the action part of the dialogue (Freire, 1972:60) to be staged, the reflection would be achieved through the analysis of individuals and their connection to the topic. The "reflection" (Freire, 1972:60) was identified in one of the male educators' responses when defining abuse. ADB stated that when considering abuse in connection to gender, his thoughts shifted towards the notion of power.

I guess if I am thinking about abuse in terms of gender, I would consider obviously different kinds of abuse, so physical, emotional, verbal abuse, but also in specific gender abuse I would be thinking about power. So, I would be using a conceptualisation of abuse that centres on the ways it's enacted in the three categories that I gave, but also considers power and who has power in the scenario that we either reading about or discussing, and how that power is enacted in terms of the abuse. (Participant ADB, 2022)

This response offered a point of reflection (Freire, 1972:60), as it referred to an aspect of abuse that learners and educators may interrogate through literal and metaphorical analysis. The concept of power and microaggressions (Participant ADB, 2022) formed the opening point of the "dialogue" (Freire, 1972:60) that would be used in the catalyst script's first and second scene.

The script worked within the "third ring" of the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:133) to ensure distance from the research conducted in the classrooms with educators, during the initial stage of the field study. Similar to Wales, when contemplating the "style" of *Home Truths*

(2016:158), the researcher found that fictionalised personal stories which highlighted the generative themes (Freire, 1972:69) drawn from effective dialogue (Freire, 1972:60), ensured the safety of participants. While the identities of respondents were protected, details within their narrative responses (Flick, 2011:8) offered challenges for two reasons. There was the possibility of the respondents who had offered their personal stories, being re-traumatised and punished (Wales, 2016:158) if their narratives were directly quoted or illustrated within the performance. Similar to the complexities of having open discussions on sensitive topics in schools, the script required aesthetic distance to safeguard the educators who helped to generate it and the learners who would engage with it. The image of “space, lines and boundaries” (Participant DB, 2022) helped inform the analogous concept of the catalyst script when considering the generalisation of the interview responses. These responses alluded to imagery by defining abuse as an act of encroachment or invasion of space and security. This “symbol” (O’Toole, 1992:46) which participants described in dialogue (Freire, 1972:60) with the researcher, was translated into dramatic text through the use of visual and conceptual metaphor. The metaphor offered distance from the direct words transcribed during interviews while holding onto the “powerful themes” (Baim, 2020:133) that arose from them.

*Boundaries*, follows a dispute between neighbours Janice Smith and Oliver Monroe. The two live side by side in a gated community where their property line is marked by a small white fence. In the first draft of the catalyst script, Addendum C, Oliver nails signs onto the fence without his neighbour’s permission. It causes damage to her side of the fence, which causes an argument.

*Oliver then picks up a nail, hammer, and a sign. He pummels the sign into the fence with his hammer loudly.*

*Janice jumps up enraged.*

**Janice:** What are you doing?

**Oliver:** I’m putting up signs. People are always walking on my grass.

**Janice:** But you can’t do that. This is my fence too.

*Oliver wields his hammer with new-found rigour and as he does, Janice becomes increasingly uncomfortable.*

**Janice:** Oliver please stop.

*But Oliver does not cease. Instead, he increases the pace of his pummelling.*

**Janice:** I said stop.

**Oliver:** What’s all the fuss about?

**Janice:** I didn't say you could do that!

**Oliver:** hmmm... but its on my side.

**Janice:** We share the fence. It's as much mine as it's yours. And the nails are sticking out the other side now. Look.

*Oliver takes a glance but isn't concerned.*

**Oliver:** Oh, just paint over it. You can always patch stuff like that up.

**Janice:** No! That's easy for you to say. Even if it's painted over, those marks will remain. You can't just cover things up. You shouldn't have done it in the first place. You didn't ask. You had no right.

While the characters illustrate a point of conflict between a man and a woman regarding a property line, the roles which are further defined by the personal and social characteristics (O'Toole, 1992:18-19), help to establish their "purpose" (O'Toole, 1992:21) and the context of the catalyst script. The characters are representations of a victim and an abuser, demonstrating the "escalation" (Participant GW, 2022) of actions which respondents in the interviews identified as the beginning of abuse. While the act of moving the fence follows the principle of "creating safe distance" (Baim, 2020:133) due to the use of a thematic device (Baim, 2020:161), the "dramatic meaning" (O'Toole, 1992:26) is achieved through the "symbolism" (O'Toole, 1992:42) of the fence. The fence and its importance is made clear through the use of language (O'Toole, 1992:40) which establishes the "relationship tension" (O'Toole, 1992:29) between the two characters and thereby the "mood" (O'Toole, 1992:41).

In the first script, Janice admonishes Oliver for damaging her side of the fence. She claims that "painting over the damage will not undo what has been done", and that he should not have hung up the signs after she said no the first time. This alluded to the emotional and psychological harm that abuse inflicts on individuals that was mentioned by educators during the interviews. Using an object to represent the individual's sense of security, the language used to describe the action taken against it, reinforced the gravity of the situation. The "mood" (O'Toole, 1992:41) created through the language and tension (O'Toole, 1992:27) between the two characters, helped to affirm the fence's meaning as a symbol. But while these elements (O'Toole, 1992:14) helped to explain the meaning of the code (Freire, 1972:105), the researcher changed the dramatic action which then centred the drama on Oliver moving the fence. Moving a physical boundary and thereby encroaching on another individual's space without consent, served as a better code (Freire, 1972:105) that reflected the "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96) that emerged from the educators.

Scene one in the catalyst script provided an example of abuse connected to power dynamics. This was influenced by the understandings and insights that educators shared in the initial phase of the field study. Another "generative theme" (Freire, 1972:96) that emerged was the concept of how to address abuse from a position of authority, as this was particularly challenging for educators as many stated that they were afraid to overstep boundaries. Some educators indicated that they were overwhelmed because they cared about their learners, while others felt uncomfortable addressing matters that they believed were best left to parents (Participant VG, 2022). This was explored in the catalyst script through the characters of Mrs Hendricks and her assistant William.

Mrs Hendricks is the managing agent for the property and is called in to investigate the dispute between the two neighbours. After being criticised by Mr Monroe for trying to hear Janice's case, she is told to bring in an expert as she seems "unqualified" to handle the dispute at the end of scene two. The scene was constructed through the use of a relationship tension, dilemma (O'Toole, 1992:29). The excerpt below is taken from the second draft of the catalyst script. Mrs Hendricks and William are back at the office and are at odds over how to proceed with the dispute.

**William:** I've seen plenty of people like Mr Monroe try pull stuff like this before. But well...I guess not enough experience to be the one sitting in that chair.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Well, what would you do?

**William:** Just move on. He's moved the fence. Nothing to be done about it really.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But what about Miss Smith

**William:** You're getting emotionally invested. We have enough to deal with around here. As you can see...This paperwork needs managing, Miss Manager.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But, well what if we call in an expert like Mr Monroe suggested.

**William:** Oh sure. Bring in someone from the outside. Have them tell us how to sort out our filing cabinet. Ha. You think the higher ups are going to like that?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Well, I can't just leave it. I have a responsibility to those tenets, don't I?

The characters of Mrs Hendricks and William offer an opportunity to consider the "human context" (O'Toole, 1992:15) and the "contradictions that occur in reality" (Freire, 1972:55). The characters' relationships and role (O'Toole, 1992:17) alludes to the power dynamics

created through "task tensions" (O'Toole, 1992:24), as Mrs Hendricks is determined to resolve the conflict between the characters of Mr Monroe and Miss Smith and this is amplified by a "relationship tension" (O'Toole, 1992:29) between her and her assistant William. The tension is made apparent through a combination of personal and social characteristics (O'Toole, 1992:18-19) illustrated by certain aspects of their relationship (O'Toole, 1992:19). William's attitude towards Mrs Hendrick's in a "closed interaction" (O'Toole, 1992:16) is driven by his personal characteristics and motivation (O'Toole, 1992:19), which is in clear opposition to Mrs Hendricks's social characteristics which expresses her moral and ethical motivations (O'Toole, 1992:18) for wanting to resolve the dispute. These "social characteristics" (O'Toole, 1992:18) represent the internal conflicts that educators alluded to in their interviews.

Much like Mrs Hendricks, the educators found themselves faced with an external conflict which then manifested as an internal one. In an interview with a male high school educator who was the grade head of a co-educational school, he mentioned that when trying to resolve matters concerning harassment between learners, where parents were also involved, a situation (O'Toole, 1992:14) similar to the one between Mrs Hendrick and William was imminent. The parents, principal and school governing body members, as well as the code of ethics and protocols, presented obstacles for educators. These obstacles, which created "conflict" in their relationship (O'Toole, 1992:29), are noted in William's dialogue with Mrs Hendricks. Much like the other characters who explored ethics and conflict within a working environment (Wales, 2016), the characters of Mrs Hendricks and William allude to an internal conflict while trying to resolve an external conflict. The use of mood and language (O'Toole, 1992:41) helped to establish meaning in the characters' interactions and their "purpose beyond the fictional context" (O'Toole, 1992:22).

The catalyst script was adapted once more to shift the power dynamic between Mrs Hendricks and William. In the previous extract William's attitude to Mrs Hendricks was derogatory, which is motivated (O'Toole, 1992:17) by the grudge he holds for being passed over for a promotion. The character however, fell into a similar trap of stereotyping and generalisation as was noted in *the She box* (Steyn, 2020). Both "antagonists" in the script were male and therefore the script appeared biased. This may have occurred due to the large number of female educators interviewed. But after analysing the data again, the researcher adapted the character of William, to represent the "perpetuated cycles of microaggressions"

(Participant GW, 2022). The following extract is taken from the third scene in the final version of *Boundaries*.

**William:** Copies of the tenant policies and contracts, bylaws and legislations dating 2019 till today.

*Mrs Hendricks sighs while skimming through pages.*

**Mrs Hendricks:** It's a lot to get through. Did you summarise them all?

**William:** Summarize ...

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes, William summarize. What? Is that too hard for you? I'm supposed to go through all this myself, am I?

**William:** Well ...I just thought...

**Mrs Hendricks:** Assistant, William. The key word being assist.

**William:** I'll get right on it Ma'am. *(He starts to lift the piles as if to carry them all back to his desk at once)*

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes, and some coffee while you're at it, hmmm. Two sugars and milk.

In this scene, Mrs Hendricks is seen as the character with a derogatory attitude towards her colleague. This was to allow readers and spectators to focus on the theme of power dynamics rather than gender stereotypes in a different "framing of reality" (O'Toole, 1992:25). Mrs Hendricks' language and behavioural patterns established her relationship with William (O'Toole, 1992:17). In scene two Mr Monroe ridicules Mrs Hendricks and deems her "unqualified" to handle the matter of the fence, (See Addendum E), whereas in scene three, Mrs Hendricks is the one ridiculing William. This allowed for the notion of "perpetuated cycles" to be explored through the dramatic elements of role and relationship (O'Toole, 1992:14). While Mrs Hendricks' authority (O'Toole, 1992:15) as the managing agent could be seen as the motivation behind her behaviour towards William, indicating a misuse of power, the idea of subjecting others to the same treatment that you have experienced, also offered a point of dialogue (Freire, 1972:60). An educator noted that learners who bullied others at school were often bullied at home (Participant SL, 2022). Again, this allowed the idea of "escalation" (Participant GW, 2022) to be explored, and to consider how bullying intensifies into more serious forms of abuse and why it may be defined differently.

### **Stage 3: Implementation & Evaluation**

Wales' use of fiction helped her to create a protective framework for the data she collected during her research-based theatre process, as the dramatic tension was emphasised by the framework, which also provided a means to represent the foreign domestics worker's

narratives in a sensitive manner (2016:159). This influenced the researcher's use of Baim's third ring in the Drama Spiral (2020:133) to create *Boundaries*. The final stage of the fieldwork study was an online, staged reading of *Boundaries*, using the existing pool of educators as participants. The educators were asked to critique the catalyst script, in an attempt to evaluate it as a potential tool for educators to use for effective engagement with learners on the topic of abuse. The educators had to evaluate the analogy used in the script, as well as the settings, the characters, the storyline and focus on the power dynamics. The session would not only allow them to view the performance of the script but also to witness strategies that would help them to discuss themes in the script through a theatrical lens. This was done using techniques such as Image Theatre (Santiago-Jirau & Thompson, 2019:157), the hot seating of characters (Neelands & Goode, 1990:33) and polls embedded in the meeting for participants to complete.

Of the twelve educators interviewed, six were invited to the staged reading but due to availability and rolling blackouts<sup>7</sup>, as well as technical issues, only two educators were present for the reading and the one was only able to join during the third scene. The participants decided to use the pseudonyms of Alex and Jemma to log into the online staged reading and offered a male and female educator's perspective in the evaluation of the catalyst script.

### **Critique and Evaluation**

The online session ended with a thirty-minute discussion critiquing the catalyst script. The discussion was led by a third party who was informed on the intent of the research but had no biases regarding the outcome and was unknown to the educators. This was to ensure that the participants offered an honest and constructive critique of the script. The central point of the discussion was the analogy used in the script and whether the participants believed that it would stimulate learners to think about similar experiences that they may have had. This was debated because the analogy used in the three scenes was a dispute about land. Jemma stated that high school learners may be able to understand the metaphor but not relate to it or draw on similar experiences. Alex agreed with Jemma, noting that the script may be more appropriate for an older audience such as parents or guardians of learners or for other educators. Both stated that the notion of personal space being encroached on would be easily

---

<sup>7</sup> Rolling blackouts or loadshedding is scheduled periods of time where power is cut off from areas in the country in an attempt to help in South Africa's energy crisis.

comprehended by senior learners, suggesting that the analogy in *Boundaries* was able to help raise awareness on the concept of consent.

During the online reading both participants noted that gender was a strong theme throughout the scene, with regards to stereotypes, and that it also played a role in the power dynamics that emerged. They were asked whether they thought that learners would recognize these aspects in the script. Jemma stated that due to teaching at an all-girls school, where the topic of gender was often discussed, her learners would be able to identify with these aspects but would struggle to relate to the analogy of property as a metaphor. Jemma's point was an example of "critical reflection" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) within the "personal dimension" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18). She was able to reflect on the topic of gender inequality as a societal structure that oppressed her and her female learners, which may in turn lead to a growing "sense of agency" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13).

It was noted that the notion of space and property may refer to a specific class in society, which raised the question of whether the analogy was suitable for a particular type of space and whether residents of townships would be excluded by not being able to relate to the analogy. This motivated Jemma to discuss the connection between space in relation to South African history, as she believed that it was a concept that many South Africans could relate to. She pointed out that learners would understand the idea of using an object, whether it was something tangible like property or intangible like a sense of safety, due to their knowledge of discrimination. Jemma's next point reiterated the purpose and conceptualisation of this script using aesthetic distance to frame and engage with difficult conversations. Jemma mentioned that while learners may not be able to relate to the analogy of property, the power relations in the script would resonate with them and that this could create an opportunity for them to engage with an unfamiliar topic. The analogy of the fence may encourage conversation due to participants being able to project meaning onto it. Both Jemma and Alex stated that questions about their understanding of what the fence represented, opened up many possibilities that could be as simple or as complex as they wished. As stated in the second stage of the research fieldwork, the use of an act that could be escalated allowed participants to freely interpret the scenario, and to project an understanding of violence that they found safe to deal with. Jemma noted that the image of an object being used to demonstrate power over an individual or violate their space worked and was an analogy that could be understood. This confirmed that the first scene which dealt with the dispute of the

fence could effectively act as a catalyst to discuss the idea of boundaries and power relations in connection to abuse.

The participants discussed the potential of the second scene of the script, particularly in relation to conflict resolution. Alex stated that individuals could reflect on the scene while considering their own experiences and further noted that the scene would be relevant in different situations of conflict including those between friends, colleagues and peers. This confirmed that the second scene offered different perspectives which could be internalised. Alex also mentioned that when teaching history, he often discussed how evil existed because good people were inclined not to take action. This scene allowed individuals to consider how they would react if placed in the same position of conflict as the character, or even if they themselves were in a similar situation and importantly, whether they would be silent bystanders or take action and intervene. Jemma furthered the discussion by pointing out how, in an attempt to help in similar circumstances, one may cause harm by appearing dominating or intimidating and inadvertently silencing the person. This suggested that a theme on both communication and navigating conflict could be generated for discussions in the classroom. It was noted by the researcher that the responses indicated that the participants had achieved a “sense of agency” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) within the “interpersonal dimension” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18). A consideration of societal structures which oppresses others denotes a desire to live in harmony with others (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) and prompts “critical action” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13).

When the participants analysed the third scene, they discussed how it could be engaged with in classrooms. According to the participants, the scene provoked thought about power relations and hierarchies in classroom settings. Jemma noted that the scene illustrated how power relations sometimes shifted in certain settings when individuals attempted to act outside of their designated roles, which sometimes occurred in classroom settings. The character of Mrs Hendricks trying to maintain her dominance, reminded Jemma of the position that educators sometimes found themselves in, in relation to hierarchy in the classroom. Alex agreed with her and mentioned the difficulty of seeming to be too friendly with learners and stated that he had to assume the role of a disciplinarian to maintain clear boundaries when engaging with learners. Both claimed that while giving learners the opportunity to express themselves was important, some learners may use these opportunities to try and dominate their educators. This point prompted further thought on the rights of

educators and the strategies they employ to keep themselves safe in classroom settings, while engaging in difficult conversations, as learners may appear to have more power when given the opportunity to vocalise their thoughts. This point will be further elaborated on when considering the need for strategies to help contain conversations about sensitive topics and to create safe spaces. Jemma indicated that she would encourage learners to comment on the scene and in particular Mrs Hendricks' behaviour towards her assistant William. Alex agreed and suggested that all three scenes did in fact allow for a deeper conversation about power relations. He noted that power relation struggles and conflict manifest in many social circles and stated that group work settings for learners was one of the areas where this occurs. He explained that in group work there was often one learner who would take the lead on the project and attempt to dominate the others in the group. This is a clear example of positions of power, authority and superiority in even the most mundane of settings. Scene three would thus also offer opportunities to consider “critical action” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13), as individuals would be encouraged to work with each other to right these wrongs in an attempt to create a better society within the “socio-political dimension” (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18).

The general consensus of the participants was that the catalyst script could be effective as a means to frame difficult conversations. They considered the analogy appropriate for senior learners in grades 10 to 12, and for adults and school faculty members. This was helpful to the study as the topics of abuse, gender equality and relationships are included in the grade 10 Life Orientation CAPS Curriculum (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011:9). This indicates that there is a space in education for the performance and further research studies to be conducted in the future.

When the participants were asked to offer their overall perspectives on the session, the responses referred to the importance and complexities of power relations (Participant Jemma, 2022). It can be concluded that the catalyst script was effective as it enabled a difficult conversation on the sensitive topic of GBV to be staged with educators. The responses of the educators were informed by their lived experiences as men and women within the field of education and they noted that the example of power relations depicted in the play, would be comprehensible to senior learners from grades 10 to 12. Both Alex and Jemma agreed that the concept of property ownership may need to be explained to learners but also mentioned its potential impact in the classroom, as the analogy offered the opportunity to project meaning and provoke discussion within a safe frame. The use of fiction within the research-based

performance frame, thus still allowed for truth to emerge (Sinclair and Harris; 2016:74). Baim's Drama Spiral (2020:120) helped to gauge an appropriate theatrical form for the catalyst script whilst drawing on the "embodied knowledge" (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:189) of educators.

## Conclusion

We don't talk about it too much. Well, as of late it's becoming a topic of conversation. But it's become a – it's become a topic of conversation because of what's happening to female teachers, you know, but usually when we talk about this, there's not a professional talking about these issues, you know. Maybe something has happened and we're speaking about it in hushed tones or even gossiping about it, you know. But yes, it's not an out-there topic. It's not part of our general discourse. (Participant SL, 2022)

The above comment from participant SL suggests that they, and possibly other teachers, are aware of when boundaries are crossed. However, in instances where they are aware, they may often hesitate to outwardly address them. This is true for both boundaries crossed by learners and by fellow colleagues, making the crossing of boundaries an ever-present example of violence in the everyday lives of individuals. The lack of professional discussion on the intrusion of boundaries and what they mean may contribute to the secrecy and gossip surrounding it. This suggests a need for more open dialogue and awareness around the issues faced by educators, particularly women as tensions between them and male learners rise in today's troubled society.

Despite the controversy on including GBV in the current curricula, as seen in chapter two's delineation of the topic amongst South Africa's youth and in the school syllabus, it remains a crucial topic and its inclusion is endorsed by the South African education system (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011:10), due to its connection to active citizenship in society, which enables individuals to recognise the oppression and injustices that are present in their environments. Advising and supporting educators on how to handle discussions around GBV sensitively and effectively could help create a safe space for learners to critically reflect and engage with the topic. By normalizing conversations around GBV in educational settings, we can work towards breaking the stigma and silence that often surrounds it. Although educators do have a duty to teach learners about topics of this nature, they also have the right to do so in a manner that can protect and empower them. Therefore, the research on creative investigative strategies which may promote critical consciousness from a safe distance is needed.

The catalyst script *Boundaries* shows the escalation of tension caused by the characters transgressing personal and professional boundaries in a housing conflict. From this simple story, the educators can discuss the violation of human rights through varying degrees of

aggression, in different settings and in different relationships. The objective of this discussion would be to prevent the normalization of abusive behaviour. Through this analogous script and the theoretical framework and research-based methodology from which it was constructed, the research has considered the potential for educators to engage with learners in difficult conversations through such analogous and catalyst scripts. While acknowledging the difficulties and ethical considerations associated with participating in these conversations (Oosthuizen & van der Walt, 1998:89), the study has identified the need for innovative tools to be introduced into the CAPS Curriculum (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011:12), that would allow for dynamic engagement and the safeguarding of both educators and learners, through their "embodied knowledge" (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:189). While identifying the distinctions between "banking education and dialogical education" (Freire, 1972:47), the research noted the fundamental concepts of "liberating pedagogical practices" (Freire, 1972:33), citizenship education (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019:2) and the use of drama, to achieve the objectives of the study (Ikeno & Watanabe, 2019:530). The research thus focused on establishing a tool to create educational settings that foster "cycles of critical consciousness development" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and "human empowerment" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) through theatrical application of Freirian Codes (1972:105). This was investigated through qualitative research and performance-making practices as research concepts, and a methodology was employed to assess the validity of using research-based catalyst scripts and their processes to stage difficult conversations between educators and learners. The research demonstrated these practices through the generative process and implementation of the catalyst script *Boundaries*.

*Boundaries* explores the complex dynamics of power and the escalation of abusive behaviour as understood and experienced by high school educators when engaging learners in the topic. The catalyst script operated within the "third ring" of the Drama Spiral (Baim, 2020:133), with the intention of acting as a catalyst or code (Freire, 1972:105) for educators and learners to engage with. The arrangement of the "elements of drama" (O'Toole, 1992:14) allowed for an analysis of the "human context" (O'Toole, 1992: 15) through the use of "dramatic tension" (O'Toole, 1992:16), inspired by the "embodied knowledge" (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:189) of the participants. The three-phase process reviewed in the study, notes the steps that were taken to create a dialogical process (Freire, 1972:65) influenced by the literature and case studies, that highlighted the challenges and benefits of research-based theatre practices.

The initial phase of the field study encompassed an analysis of the linguistic components and procedures employed in the creation of two interview schedules. The study acknowledged the use of "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) and their consequent effects in the context of structured inquiries. These illustrate the differences in the interaction dynamics between researchers and participants. The incorporation of "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) in research-based theatrical methodologies, facilitated authentic dialogue (Freire, 1972:60). This deepened the understanding of the underlying tensions between educators and learners when addressing the subject of abuse, as was demonstrated in the analysis of the catalyst scripting process.

The analysis of the twelve interviews conducted with educators, led to the development of a systematic process of reflection and subsequent action (Freire, 1972:60). Through the collaboration between the researcher and participants, "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:67) emerged: the conceptualization of abuse, the initiation of a discourse on the subject of abuse, and the identification of the qualifications and credentials required to enable instructors to engage in these discussions effectively. These themes were represented through "elements of drama" (O'Toole, 1992:14) which helped to decipher the abstracted conflicts (Freire, 1972:100) whilst allowing critical distancing. The distance was considered through an analysis of the various drafts of *Boundaries* and the arrangement of the dramatic elements according to Baim's Drama Spiral (2020:120). The assessment of the thematic components (Baim, 2020:182) integrated into the construction of a catalyst script, was carried out together with an analysis of the script's purpose and style (Wales, 2016:157).

The virtual workshop and presentation of *Boundaries*, was carefully organised, involving participants in a rigorous process of critical evaluation. The participants evaluated both the script and its use of power dynamics in facilitating discussions on abuse and GBV, within a framework that prioritised emotional security. The critique and evaluation of the catalyst script by the educators who participated in the study and contributed to the content of the script, acknowledged the effect of dialogical processes in research-based theatre practices (Okello, 2016:34). The dialogue between the researcher and educators helped to construct the "generative themes" (Freire, 1972:96) which shaped the performance, while highlighting the concerns, challenges, and experiences of educators in relation to the topic. This process was implemented after considering the work of other practitioners, who used the insights and perspectives of individuals to address societal concerns (Overbeke, 2021; Dell'Angelo, 2019;

Okello, 2016; Wales, 2016). This study offers a complete examination of the obstacles, methodologies, and ethical considerations associated with the use of "embodied knowledge" (Anderson & O'Connor, 2013:189) as a means of creating Freirean codes (1972:105).

The research identifies the opportunities for "cycles of critical consciousness development" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:13) and "human empowerment" (Bosio & Waghid, 2023:18) for educators, which was noted in the decoding (Freire, 1972:105) of the script. *Boundaries* confirms the effectiveness of research-based theatre processes in generating catalyst scripts that offer a "catharsis of investigation" (Baim, 2020:184) in educational spaces. *Boundaries* did not provide the educators with a solution to the abuse of power but presented an analogous scenario that allowed them to critically reflect on the topic, and their own experiences when engaging with learners on the topic. Incorporating the educators' insights and perspectives rather than the CAPS curriculum's definitions and explanations, allowed the critically reflective process to occur when evaluating the script's ability to act as an innovative tool to stage difficult conversations with learners. The participants Jemma & Alex, believed that the analogous catalyst script could be used with senior learners in grades 10 to 12, who engage with the topic in the classroom but also suggested that it would be appropriate and beneficial when engaging with the adults in their lives. This indicated that the device could be used in discussions with stakeholders such as parents and educators.

The three-phase process of the study highlights the challenges and benefits of research-based theatre practices that incorporate examples of "negotiating forms" (Neelands, 1984:33) and facilitating authentic dialogue between educators and learners. The process of creating and performing *Boundaries* deepens the understanding of the underlying tensions between educators and learners and the topic being addressed. By incorporating creative investigative strategies like a catalyst script, educators can create a safer space for learners to be taught about and engage with the topic of GBV, breaking the stigma and silence surrounding it. This approach not only enhances the educational experience for learners but also empowers them to become advocates for change in their communities. Through research-based theatre practices, educators can effectively address sensitive topics like gender-based violence and promote a culture of empathy and respect among high school learners. The dialogue between the researcher and educators helped construct the generative themes, highlighting the concerns, challenges, and experiences of educators in relation to the topic. Facilitating conversations about gender-based violence is crucial for educators and learners. This

approach encourages deeper understanding and action against such issues. The catalyst script *Boundaries*' effectiveness in facilitating difficult conversations has been confirmed, and further development could involve interviews or workshops with high school learners to ensure creative, controlled, and safe engagement.

## Reference List

- Ajani, O.A. 2021. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Caps) Document: The Challenges and Limitations to Its Effectiveness in South African Schools. *African Journal of Development Studies (AJDS)*. 11(3):77–100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2021/v11n3a4>.
- Anderson, M. & O'Connor, P. 2013. Applied theatre as research: Provoking the possibilities. *Applied Theatre Research*. 1(2):189–202. DOI: 10.1386/atr.1.2.189\_1.
- Andrews, M. & Lomas, J. 2018. *A History of Women in 100 Objects*. London, UK: The History Press.
- Baim, C. 2020. *Staging the Personal: A Guide to Safe and Ethical Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-46555-1.
- Belliveau, G. & Graham, L. 2016. Introduction. In *Research-Based Theatre: An Artistic methodology*. G. Belliveau & L. Graham, Eds. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books. 3–12.
- Brecht, B. 1964. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. S. Giles, Ed. Translated by John Willett. Hill & Wang. DOI: 10.1604/9780809005420.
- eBuckley-Willemse, B. 2005. *Sexuality education and life-skills acquisition in secondary schools: Guidelines for the establishment of health promoting schools*. dissertation. North-West University.
- Carroll, L. 1865. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. 1st ed. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Chinyowa, K.C. 2009. Emerging paradigms for applied drama and theatre practice in African contexts. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 14(3):329–346. DOI: 10.1080/13569780903072117.
- Conquergood, D. 1985. Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. *Literature in Performance*. 5(2):1–13. DOI: 10.1080/10462938509391578.
- Dell'Angelo, T. 2021. Down the Rabbit Hole: An Ethnodrama to Explore a Fantastical First Year of Teaching. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 27(1):77–84. DOI: 10.1177/1077800419879192.

- de Carvalho, S. 2019. Contradictions of Theatre of the Oppressed. In *The Routledge companion to theatre of the oppressed*. In *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*. K. Howe & J. Boal, Eds. London, UK: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 86-93.
- Department of Basic Education (South Africa). 2011. *National Curriculum Statement: Further Education and Training Document Grade 10-12*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education
- El-Amin, A., Seider, S., Graves, D., Tamerat, J., Clark, S., Soutter, M., Johannsen, J. & Malhotra, S. 2017. Critical consciousness. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 98(5):18–23. DOI: 10.1177/0031721717690360.
- Elliott, T.A. 2016. An overview of education and drama in South Africa. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 21(1):57–59. DOI: 10.1080/13569783.2015.1127150.
- Emiliano & Waghid, Y. 2023. Global Citizenship Education for Critical Consciousness Development: The Four Pillars of De-colonialism, Caring Ethics, Eco-critical Views, and Humanity Empowerment. In *Global Citizenship Education in the Global South: Educators' perceptions and practices*. Vol. 21. E. Bosio & Y. Waghid, Eds. Leiden, Boston, Netherlands: Brill. 11–23.
- Felem, A.F. 2019. *SA boxing champ's cop boyfriend due in court for her murder*. Available at: <https://ewn.co.za/2019/09/02/sa-boxing-champ-s-cop-boyfriend-due-in-court-for-her-murder> [2022, April 27].
- Flick, U. 2011. *Designing Qualitative Research*. New York, US: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London, UK: Penguin Education.
- Foster, D. 2013. Gender, Class, “Race” and Violence. In *Youth violence sources and solutions in South Africa*. C. L., Ward, A, der Merwe, & A. Dawes. Eds. Cape Town, Western Cape: UCT Press. 23–52.
- Gevers, A. & Flisher, A. J. 2013. School-Based Youth Violence Prevention Interventions. In *Youth violence sources and solutions in South Africa*. C. L, Ward., A, van der Merwe, & A. Dawes. Eds. Cape Town, Western Cape: UCT Press. 175–212.

Henry, M. 2000. Drama's Ways of Learning. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 5(1):45–62. DOI: 10.1080/135697800114195.

Ikeno, N. & Watanabe, J. 2019. Drama Education and Global Citizenship and Education. In *Palgrave Handbook of Global Citizenship and Education*. 1st ed. I. Davies, L.-C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, & Y. Waghid, Eds. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 523–538.

Iavan Pijoos, N. 2019. *Schools across SA wear black in United stance against Gender Violence, TimesLIVE*. Available at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-09-06-schools-across-sa-wear-black-in-united-stance-against-gender-violence/> [2022, August 31].

Jackson, A. 2007. Theatre, Learning and the Aesthetic Dimension Preliminary perspectives. In. *Theatre, education and the making of meanings Art or instrument?* London, UK: Manchester University Press.14–41.

Jewkes, R., Gevers, A., Chirwa, E., Mahlangu, P., Shamu, S., Shai, N. & Lombard, C. 2019. RCT evaluation of Skhokho: A holistic school intervention to prevent gender-based violence among South African Grade 8s. *PLOS ONE*. 14(10): e0223562. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0223562.

Macián, J. 2016. Brecht on Theatre by Bertolt Brecht, and: Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks . *The Drama Review*. 60(4):169–172.

Mampane. S.T. 2018. Exploring the Practice of In Loco Parentis in Public Schools. In *Education in Modern Society*.(16): 183-188. ISBN 978-619-7326-03-1

Matthews, I., Griggs, R. and Caine, G. 1999. THE EXPERIENCE REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS AND PROGRAMMES DEALING WITH YOUTH VIOLENCE IN URBAN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA. Independent Trust Projects.1-52.<http://www.ipt.co.za/results.asp?terms=the&boolean=AND&selSearchWhere=&lf=%2FARNOGO%2EHTM&myCounter=11>

McGrath, J. 2002. Theatre and Democracy. *New Theatre Quarterly*. 18(2):133–139. DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x02000222.

Morais, S. 2019. *Man who shot and killed Boxing Champion Leighandre Jegels dies in hospital*, News24. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/news24/breaking-man-who-shot-and-killed-boxing-champion-leighandre-jegels-dies-in-hospital-20190902> [2022, November 31].

Moult, K. 2013. Talking taboos: Teaching and learning about sexuality, gender and violence in Western Cape schools. *Agenda*. 27(3):67–76. DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2013.843893.

Mthethwa, C. 2001. *Ex-Bafana Bafana captain Aaron Mokoena arrested for allegedly assaulting partner* / News24. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/ex-bafana-bafana-captain-aaron-mokoena-arrested-for-allegedly-assaulting-partner-20220425>. [2022, May 15].

Neelands, J. 1984. *Making Sense of Drama: A Guide to Classroom Practice*. Heinemann International Inc. DOI: 10.1604/9780435186586.

Neelands, J. & Goode, T. 1990. *Structuring Drama Work: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama*. DOI: 10.1604/9780521376358.

News, E. 2021. *Bheki Cele concedes police officers aren't fully equipped to handle GBV*. Available at: <https://ewn.co.za/2021/02/21/bheki-cele-concedes-police-officers-aren-t-fully-equipped-to-handle-gbv>. [ 2022, May 08].

Ngatane, N. 2021. *Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation marches to Parliament, calls for end to GBV*. Available at: <https://ewn.co.za/2021/08/28/uyinene-mrwetyana-foundation-marches-to-parliament-calls-for-end-to-gbv>. [2022, May 16].

O'Connor, P. Ed. 2010. *Creating Democratic Citizenship Through Drama Education: The Writings of Jonathan Neelands*. London, UK: Trentham Books Limited.

Okello, B.F. 2016. The Ink Murderers Can't Hold It Any Longer. In *Research-Based Theatre: An Artistic methodology*. G. Belliveau & L. Graham, Eds. Bristol, UK: Intellect. 29–41.

Okunola, A.2021. *Gender-based violence: Everything to know*, Global Citizen. Available at: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/gender-based-violence-everything-to-know/> [2022, June 28].

Oosthuizen, I.J. & Van der Walt, J.L. 1998. A legal and philosophical perspective on the in loco parentis position of teachers. *Koers - Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*. 63(1/2). DOI: 10.4102/koers.v63i1/2.524.

O'Toole, J. 1992. *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*. Michigan, US. Routledge. DOI: 10.1604/9780415082440.

Overbeke, G.K. 2019. Listening to the Girls of Generation Z: Using Ethnographic Dramaturgy in Laura Schellhardt's Digging Up Dessa. *Theatre Topics*. 29(1):29–41. DOI: 10.1353/tt.2019.0003.

Pan, J. 2019. Papermaking, in *The Four great inventions of ancient China: Their origin, development, spread and influence in the world*. Tidmarsh, UK: Paths International Ltd. 343–385.

Panday, S., Ranchod, C., Ngcaweni, B. & Seedat, S. 2013. The Situation of the Youth in South Africa. In *Youth violence sources and solutions in South Africa*. C. L. Ward, A. van der Merwe, & A. Dawes, Eds. Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press. 95–140.

Prendergast, M. & Saxton, J. Eds. 2009. *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice*. Bristol: UK. Intellect

Ramatlapana, K. & Makonye, J.P. 2013. From too much freedom to too much restriction: The case of teacher autonomy from National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to Curriculum and Assessment Statement (CAPS). *Africa Education Review*. 9(sup1):S7–S25. DOI: 10.1080/18146627.2012.753185.

Rooth, E. 2005. *An Investigation of the Status and Practice of Life Orientation in South African Schools in Two Provinces*. dissertation. University of the Western Cape.

SACE. 2011. *Redefining Role and Functions of the South African Council for Educators (SACE)*. South African Council for Educators, 1-40.

Saldaña, J. 2011. *Ethnotheatre: Research from Page to Stage*. New York, US: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Santiago-Jirau, A., Thompson, L. & Soeiro, J. 2019. Image Theatre: a liberatory practice for “making thought visible.” In *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*. K. Howe & J. Boal, Eds. London, UK: Routledge. 156–161.

Sinclair, C. & Harris, A.W. 2016. Critical plays: An Exploration in Truth and Verisimilitude. In *Research-Based Theatre: An Artistic methodology*. G. Belliveau & L. Grahams, Eds. Bristol, UK: Intellect. 60–74.

South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Curriculum and policy statement: English Home Language: Grades 10- 12*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.education.gov.za>

South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Curriculum and policy statement: Dramatic Arts: Grades 10- 12*. [Online] Available at: [https:// www.education.gov.za](https://www.education.gov.za).

South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Curriculum and policy statement: Life Orientation: Grades 10- 12*. [Online] Available at: [https:// www.education.gov.za](https://www.education.gov.za).

Terblanche, J. and van der Walt, C. 2023. Towards Global Citizenship Education in South Africa: Cultivating Deliberative Encounters in the Context of Gender-based Violence. In *Global Citizenship Education in the Global South: Educators’ perceptions and practices*. Vol. 21. E. Bosio & Y. Waghid, Eds. Leiden, Boston, Netherlands: Brill. 198–222.

Theletsane, W. 2019. *Some of the femicide cases that made headlines in 2019*, *Eyewitness News*. Available at: <https://ewn.co.za/2020/01/02/femicide-cases-that-made-headlines-in-2019> [2022, September 04].

The UN Refugee Agency .2019. *Gender-based violence, UNHCR*. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence> [2022, September 04].

Vanner, C., Holloway, A. & Almansori, S. 2022. Teaching and learning with power and privilege: Student and teacher identity in education about gender-based violence. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 116:103755. DOI: 10.1016/j.tate.2022.103755.

Veugelers, W. & de Groot, I. 2019. Theory and Practice of Citizenship Education. In *Education for Democratic Intercultural Citizenship*. W. Veugelers, Ed. Bristol, Netherlands: Brill. 14–41.

Vittoria, P. 2019. Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal: Praxis, poetry, and utopia. In *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*. K. Howe & J. Boal, Eds. London, UK: Routledge. 58-65.

Wales, P. 2016. Temporarily Yours: Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore, in *Research-Based Theatre: An Artistic methodology*. G. Belliveau & L. Graham, Eds. Bristol, UK: Intellect. 149–161.

Walker, E. A. L. 2009. *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. 3rd ed. New York, US: Springer Publishing Company.

Ward, C.L., Dawes, A. and Matzopoulos, R. 2013. Youth Violence in South Africa: Setting the Scene. In *Youth violence sources and solutions in South Africa*. C.L,Ward., A, der Merwe, & A, Dawes. Eds. Cape Town, Western Cape: UCT Press. 1–20.

## **Addendum A**

### **Savannah Steyn Fieldwork Research**

#### **TDP5016H**

#### **Staging Difficult Conversations: The Striking of a rock in 2022**

#### **Interview Schedule on Teachers engaging with the Topic of GBV with Learners in High Schools**

##### Leighandre “Baby Lee” Jegels (25)

A multi-talented athlete who excelled in power sports such as boxing and karate, Jegels, was shot and killed by an estranged boyfriend and laid to rest at the age of 25 in 2019. A boxing champion and role model for young women, she had been crowned as the South African Junior Bantamweight Champion in 2016. Three years later after nine consecutive victories in the ring and before returning to the Bantamweight clash, she was shot and killed by a former boyfriend in a domestic dispute in the Eastern Cape. The partner was in fact a police officer and was suspected of using an off-duty weapon. During the case of the young athlete, there were rumours of Jegels having a protection order against the suspect.

**Articles:** <https://ewn.co.za/2019/09/02/sa-boxing-champ-s-cop-boyfriend-due-in-court-for-her-murder>

##### Uyinene Mrwetyana (19)

Many know the name in connection with the outcry against GBV and femicide in 2019. A 19-year-old university student with a bright future was raped and murdered in Claremont after being lured to the post office by one of its employees. Mrwetyana’s assault and murder took place in the southern suburbs, a residential area and growing development considered to have a majority of white residents, partially due to the removal of coloured people during the apartheid era. With its booming commercial development and many shopping areas, it is considered an affluent area. Many people were shocked to hear of such a violent and appalling crime occurring in a residential area. When Mrwetyana’s murderer confessed, he explained how he had stored her body at the post office and then later moved it to a field, where he burned it. Her body was discovered days later in West Khayelitsha.

**Articles:** <https://ewn.co.za/2021/08/28/uyinene-mrwetyana-foundation-marches-to-parliament-calls-for-end-to-gbv>

### Public Figures & Perpetrators of GBV

There have been many instances where public figures such as celebrities, athletes, and even public officials have been called out as perpetrators of GBV. These cases are often vastly covered in media outlets and offer concern as the youth of today see many figures who may serve as role models and are often admired by others who are revealed to be abusers. Particularly abusive towards their partners. Intimate partner violence can take on many forms, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, and occurs between an abuser and an individual with whom they are in a relationship. It can be ongoing and often occurs in cycles where there is temporary peace between the two and then moments of anger result in abusive outbursts.

#### Aaron Mokoena (41):

Ex-Bafana Bafana Captain Aaron Mokoena was recently arrested for allegedly assaulting his partner. The 41-year-old is a former South African footballer who currently works in Cape Town as an assistant coach. He had been known both in the local and international fields. He was the youngest ever to represent South Africa (18–19 years old) in the 2000 Summer Olympics. Though the case was withdrawn due to a lack of evidence, the victim, Mokoena's girlfriend, claimed a long period of abuse that had left her with bruises and injuries while the suspect was highly intoxicated. It is the second time the former footballer has been accused of abusing a partner. Though the case has been dropped, one cannot ignore the weight of a public figure and icon being accused of abuse and the implications for imperishable youth.

**Articles:** <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/ex-bafana-bafana-captain-aaron-mokoena-arrested-for-allegedly-assaulting-partner-20220425>

#### Police Minister Bheki Cele

In 2021, in Johannesburg, while accepting over 50 new motor vehicles for the SAPS patrol unit, Police Minister Bheki Cele addressed the issue of how members of the police department are not equipped to handle the ever-growing issue of GBV. Cele spoke of how the cars should aid in their plan to fight against GBV. While raising awareness to the fact that

between the months of October and December of the previous year, over 12 000 women had been raped. What was most remarkable was how the minister of police stated that they should have dedicated police officers trained to carefully handle these sensitive cases. As many officers who do respond are not equipped to handle the emotions of victims.

**Articles:** <https://ewn.co.za/2021/02/21/bheki-cele-concedes-police-officers-aren-t-fully-equipped-to-handle-gbv>

### **Breakdown of the Interview:**

For this study, I will be focusing on gender-based violence in the forms of mental, physical, and sexual abuse. I will be investigating how teachers may engage with the topic of GBV with learners, if at all. There is no judgement on teachers who do not speak about sensitive topics with their students. Rather, I wish to understand the complexities of being an appointed guardian who oversees a learner's education and how a matter such as GBV may affect interviewees as educators and as individuals (female, male, or other identifying). to understand why it may also be difficult to have conversations around this matter. If schools and teachers are hesitant to do so out of fear of triggering students. If it is left to certain individuals at the school, such as life orientation teachers or perhaps the school counsellor or principal? The interview will make reference to some cases of GBV that have received news coverage and will ask questions about the engagement of GBV as a topic in the classroom, schools, and curriculum and how so.

### **Questions for the Educator:**

1. Which grade and subject do you teach?
2. Is the school that you teach at co-ed?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. Do you know if sensitive topics such as Gender-Based Violence are covered in the Life Orientation syllabus for your students?
5. What is your school's policy on engaging with learners on the topic of violence and abuse?
6. Have you ever engaged with your students in a classroom setting on matters such as violence and abuse?

7. If not, is there perhaps a reason why?
8. If yes, was there a particular incident that prompted you?
9. In August 2019, during what was called the SA Femicide, what was it like for you as an educator? What was your experience in the classroom? Did you feel prompted to engage with the learners in the classroom about the ongoing horrific events occurring in the country at that time? If so, how?
10. Did the school encourage teachers such as yourself back then to speak to students in connection with the many cases of GBV?
11. When addressing the topic of GBV in the classroom what is the outcome you seek? Is it purely prevention or is there an element of support for those who could possibly be experiencing this in their lives?
  - 11.1 Girls- If there's support, what does it look like?
  - 11.2 Boys- If there's support, what does that look like?
  - 11.3 Co-ed- If there's support, what does that look like and is it done together or separately?
12. With regards to boys' education, is the topic of toxic masculinity addressed? If so, how? If not, why?
13. In a speech made back in 2021, Police Minister Bheki Cele spoke of how the members of SAPS were not equipped to handle GBV. This was made in reference to the training of officers to be more equipped in safeguarding the emotions of victims of abuse when first reporting their case. Do you think that teachers are equipped to handle GBV or might you share the Police Minister's sentiments with regards to other stakeholders and appointed guardians in SA's society?

**Questions for the Individual:**

1. What is your understanding of the term Gender-Based Violence?
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how close is the topic of GBV to you? 1 being personally affected and 5 being it is purely a point of concern. You need not divulge personal details.
3. Uyinene Mrwetyana and Leighandre Jegels, are you familiar with these cases?

4. Uyinene was a young university student who was brutally raped and murdered in the middle of the day in the Claremont area. What do you think or feel when considering this violence occurring in a well-known residential area?
5. Jegels filed for a protection order against her former boyfriend and murderer who was a police officer. Considering Jegels as a possible icon for young women due to her status as a professional boxing champion, what do you think of her intimidation and death by the hands of an official meant to protect against assailants?
6. Aaron Mokena presents another public figure who may be considered an icon. However, in recent news, he has been accused of abusing his girlfriend. There are many cases where celebrities and public figures have been accused and found guilty of abusing their partners. Do you think there are consequences to this?
7. What do you think should be done about the pressing matter of GBV in this country?

## **Addendum B**

### **Interview Schedule for Educators**

#### **Staging Difficult Conversations TDP5016H**

**Researcher: Savannah Steyn**

#### **Interview Brief:**

The aim of the interview is to gain insight into the educators' perspective on the topic of abuse (mental, physical, or sexual) and how they may formally and informally engage with it and learners. Looking at it in connection to the life orientation curriculum, set work texts, and everyday issues and forms of abuse that learners may struggle with and exhibit, e.g., bullying, harmful gender-based language such as slut shaming, and forms of toxic masculinity. It will also consider the highly saturated media coverage of high-profile cases of abuse and the implications of these stories for learners. All interviews will be recorded audibly with the participants' consent. A participant consent form and the interview schedule will be distributed beforehand. Personal information, such as interviewee names and schools of employment, shall be kept confidential and known only to the researcher and supervisor.

#### **Questions**

1. How long have you been teaching, and which grade and subject do you teach?
2. Could you please define in your own words what you think the term abuse means?
3. Have you or your school ever engaged with the topic of abuse with learners? This may have been in connection to the curriculum, media coverage or instances in or outside the classroom.
4. How do you navigate that engagement? Is there a school policy you must follow or is there space for your own feelings on the topic?
5. How does the topic make you feel when engaging with it with learners?
6. Have you ever received any sort of training for how to engage with the topic of abuse? If so, how?

## Addendum C

### Boundaries Draft 1

#### Scene One: The Incident

*A small white picket fence divides a man and a woman sharing lawn in a Suburban area. The man is busy sorting signs that instruct others not to step on the grass. The woman who is quite content basking in the sunshine, lounges outside reading a book. These neighbours, Janice, and Oliver are 22 and 35 respectively.*

**Oliver:** Good morning, Jan. What's that you're reading?

**Janice:** hmmm... Hi Oliver

**Oliver:** I've told you. You can call me Ollie, Jan.

**Janice:** Janice. Yes, lovely weather today.

**Oliver:** (*irritated*) I asked, what you're reading. You always have your nose in a book. You never talk to those around you.

**Janice:** *Fighting Words*

**Oliver:** (*startled*) I'm not fighting you're just being anti-social.

**Janice:** The book. It's called *Fighting Words*.

**Oliver:** What a title. What's it about?

**Janice:** Sensitive stuff.

**Oliver:** Oh...(mumbling) Isn't it always that way with your type?

*Janice notes his comment but decides to disengage.*

*Oliver then picks up a nail, hammer, and a sign. He pummels the sign into the fence with his hammer loudly.*

*Janice jumps up enraged.*

**Janice:** What are you doing?

**Oliver:** I'm putting up signs. People are always walking on my grass.

**Janice:** But you can't do that. This is my fence too.

*Oliver wields his hammer with new-found rigour and as he does, Janice becomes increasingly uncomfortable.*

**Janice:** Oliver please stop.

*But Oliver does not cease. Instead, he increases the pace of his pummelling.*

**Janice:** I said stop.

**Oliver:** What's all the fuss about?

**Janice:** I didn't say you could do that!

**Oliver:** hmmm... but its on my side.

**Janice:** We share the fence. It's as much mine as it's yours. And the nails are sticking out the other side now. Look.

*Oliver takes a glance but isn't concerned.*

**Oliver:** Oh, just paint over it. You can always patch stuff like that up.

**Janice:** No! That's easy for you to say. *(She is now very upset)* Even if it's painted over, those marks will remain. You can't just cover things up. You shouldn't have done it in the first place. You didn't ask. You had no right.

*Oliver glares at Janice from over the fence while her distress intensifies. She crosses her arms over her chest.*

## **Scene Two: The lines**

*Janice and Oliver are seated on two chairs facing a woman, the chairman of the body corporate Mrs Hendrick.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** All right. Now let's try to look at the facts before we consider anyone's feelings. I'm aware that this is upsetting for those involved but I would like to come at this from a calm level-headed point of view before I make a judgement.

**Oliver:** Honestly, this is being blown out of proportion here. She's crying over nothing.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Oliver please. We can't have you dismissing other's feelings. Particularly after you've done something to upset them. Whether you can or can't see fault now is not what I wish to discuss. I want to discuss facts first before emotions.

**Janice:** That's cold ma'am.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Perhaps and I'm sorry if it seems that way. But I can't crucify and condemn before it's all been laid out. I'm in a tough spot here too.

**Janice:** He ruined something that belong to me. He hammered nails in the fence to hang up signs.

*Mrs Hendrick takes notes.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** Hmm, Oliver. What were the signs for.

**Janice:** How is that relevant?

**Mrs Hendrick:** One moment Janice please.

**Oliver:** I was trying to tell Jan.

**Janice:** Janice!

**Oliver:** Janny really now? I'm not a monster.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Please. Oliver what were the signs for?

**Oliver:** People have been stepping on my lawn. I was hanging up signs so that they wouldn't do that.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Your lawn? Okay. I see.

**Oliver:** Exactly

**Mrs Hendrick:** So, you were hanging up signs asking people to not disrespect your property.

**Oliver:** Yes.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Because it upsets you.

**Oliver:** Yes.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But you did that to Janice.

**Janice:** Yes.

**Oliver:** What?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Please bring in exhibit A

*The posters with the words of warning emblazoned are brought in by an assistant. The assistant holds the sign up.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** Here we clearly see you demanding respect from others in the community. You said in your signs: “Do Not Step on the Grass!” and It’s very clear...maybe even a little threatening.

**Oliver:** Well, I’ve said it enough blooming times haven’t I?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Exhibit B, please.

*Assistant brings in the fence. Janice cringes.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** Here we have the fence in question. As you can see there seem to be little to no damages really...

**Oliver:** Exactly. Where are the marks. Show them to me! I want proof.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Oliver please. Just because you can’t see them doesn’t make what you did acceptable. As Janice has told me. Painting over what has been done doesn’t resolve the problem. It really shouldn’t have happened in the first place.

*Assistant brings fence closer to them.*

**Oliver:** This is just because a guy can't even sneeze in front of her these days. Any of them. Anything a man does these days is ...upsetting?

**Janice:** problematic.

**Oliver:** There it is. You heard her. Bombs away. Everyone duck and cover.

*Assistant moves fence closer.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** Oliver, really.

**Oliver:** I want a professional opinion. Bring in an expert. Have them come address this issue.

**Janice:** Why?

**Oliver:** I don't think she's equipped to discuss this matter.

### **Scene 3: Qualifications**

*Mrs Hendrick is sitting in front of a large pile of documents at her desk. Her assistant William comes in carrying another large stack of documents. She takes off her spectacles and is about to say something, but William puts the pile down and holds up one finger. He leaves and returns with a larger pile. Again, Mrs Hendricks tries to interject to no success. William proceeds to place the towers of paper on her desk wedging them between the pre-existing paper structures. Defeated, Mrs Hendrick sighs and holds up her hands in futile protest. But just as she collapses back in her chair, her jaw drops as William carries in yet another pile larger than the last.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** No, no. Are you serious? Did Murphy make me the punchline to a cosmic joke? This can't all be-

**William:** Issues. Complaints. Matters that need your attention and signature urgently.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Oh (begins to fan herself) I can't even remember which pile is which. They're all blending.

**William:** I think this is the complaints pile...

**Mrs Hendrick:** No, no that's the issues pile. Not that I can tell the difference anymore.

**William:** Complaints need to be added to the agenda and addressed in the weekly meeting

**Mrs Hendrick:** And the matters that need attending.

**William:** Need to be added to the minutes and addressed in the daily meetings.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Then what about those that need signatures?

**William:** New policies... which need to be added to the minutes of the quarterly meetings.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Oh dear.

**William:** Oh, that reminds me Ma'am you have a meeting in about 5 minutes.

**Mrs Hendrick:** With who?

**William:** One of the tenets on the board.

**Mrs Hendrick:** About what?

**William:** About there being too many meetings Ma'am.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Oh!

**William:** Ma'am... your blood pressure (not looking at her but rather at a document).

**Mrs Hendrick:** The walls are caving in. It's all too much. William, it's all too much.

**William:** (Accustomed to the dramatics) There, there Ma 'am (he consoles). It'll all be alright.

**Mrs Hendrick:** (Peeking from under her hand) Not a lick of sympathy from you I see!

*William looks up.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** And now Oliver wants an expert opinion on the fence matter. A lot of good that may do (she rolls her eyes). I see no reason to have someone come in and tell me how to pack my pantry!

**William:** Perhaps its important ma'am. Maybe he will listen to the expert.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But not to me?

**William:** Well maybe you could have someone else- another male from the community address the matter with Oliver.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Another man?

**William:** Yes. That way it's not having an outsider coming to speak to him about the matter but someone from within. It may be a good teaching point for all the rest.

**Mrs Hendrick:** The rest...

**William:** Well honestly ma 'am ... we have had a large number of complaints about others in the community. If we have one of our own investigate wrongdoing, then we would seem like a united front. The men may learn from each other.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But how is that any better than Oliver not hearing how it was a problem when Janice said so. Or me from that matter?

**William:** I see your point.

**Mrs Hendrick:** And what's this about others? What are the complaints about?

**William:** Some of the youth in the neighborhood... Mouthing off to the older members of the community.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Is that all?

**William:** Ma 'am it is a problem.

**Mrs Hendrick:** It's the age. Its rebelliousness. Youth being youth.

**William:** Maybe...or maybe it's the beginning of a much larger issue which needs to be nipped in the bud. Right now, its young people showing off. But what about when they're of legal age?

*Mrs Hendrick looks up and there's a pause.*

**William:** When they get older there are far more serious repercussions. And if they don't see the harm they are doing, they will continue to do so. Maybe worse as time passes. I've seen some painting graffiti on the walls of poor Miss Crowley's house.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Excuse me?

**William:** Exactly, Neon orange all over her back wall. She was so upset. They did it while she was sleeping. Caught completely unawares.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Horrible. Oh, that poor woman. Look I hear you William but well ... it's uncomfortable. I feel uncomfortable. We all know each other and those who you don't really know you still see around here. It's a community. We share a space and I'm not saying don't address it. If there's a fly in the cream tell me before I use it on my scone but really ... the easiest thing to discuss in some of these meetings is sports. You can't upset anyone when you talk about sports.

**William:** But you must have an opinion ma'am. Your own thoughts?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Of course, I do but I'm a figure head. I want to open my mouth and say something but I'm responsible for others well- being around here. It's a constant battle really. If I do state, my stance on the matter it may lead to others becoming silent. Of course, we know wrong is wrong and right is right... on some matters that's just fact. Plain and simple like green or chamomile tea. No sugar, creamer or milk. You have your teabag, and you have your hot water. Done.

*William rolls his eyes.*

**William:** And when it comes to a mocha ice coffee?

*Mrs Hendricks purses her lips*

**Mrs Hendricks:** Then I go back to the handbook. I look at the guidelines for board members and if things escalate, I ask for help. If you, as a board member of this community responsible for the safety and well-being of its tenets are unsure of what to do, look it up. There are always guidelines available, whether you find advice in a handbook or code of conduct. But to be clear, the minute I hear some of those buzz words it isn't pleasant. When personal experiences come out of the woodwork ... its process and protocol need to prevail.

**William:** Ma'am?

**Mrs Hendrick:** If I hear there's an issue. Say it comes up in a conversation, in a letter whatever the case may be. I need to turn it over to someone qualified in the department, from management. We are lucky here in our community. Not all places have the wonderful resources – angels I call them- that we have. Some have over 1000 tenets and maybe 2 management officers. Then you have tenets who wait or have one session. What they feel comfortable talking about in that session depends and then ... referral. Is there a follow up? Difficult to say since there's 999 other tenets to see to.

**William:** So, you can't intervene.

**Mrs Hendrick:** You can always want to help. But to what cost to your own health William? And I may just do harm to them and myself. I'm not saying we leave them out in the cold. We can give them information and resources to handle the matter. We can guide them but... I was never given training in that.

**William:** Hmmm, I did a few short courses recently but yeah, I guess you're right. It is frustrating not being able to do more.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But you can listen ...and read the paperwork, Speaking of which...

*They both look around at all the documents and sigh*

**END**

## Addendum D

### Boundaries Draft 2

#### Characters:

**Oliver Monroe:** 50-year-old man, Janice's next-door neighbour and a member of the body corporate.

**Janice Smith:** 22-year-old woman, Oliver's next-door neighbour and English grad student.

**Mrs Hendricks:** 40-year-old woman and Managing Agent for Priority Properties Agency

**William:** 40-year-old man and Mrs Hendricks Assistant, was passed over for position.

#### Scene One

*A small picket fence divides a man and a woman sharing lawn in a Suburban area. The man is busy measuring the fence and the space around it. The woman who is quite content basking in the sunshine, lounges outside reading a book. These neighbours, Janice, and Oliver are 22 and 50 respectively.*

**Oliver:** Good morning, Jan.

**Janice:** Good morning, Mr Monroe.

**Oliver:** I've told you. You can call me Ollie, Jan. *(leans on the fence)* What's that your reading?

**Janice:** *(doesn't look up from her book)* Janice.

**Oliver:** *(irritated)* I asked, what you're reading. You always have your nose in a book.

**Janice:** *(mumbles)* Fighting Words

**Oliver:** *(startled)* Excuse me.

**Janice:** The book. It's called *Fighting Words*.

**Oliver:** What a title. What's it about?

**Janice:** child abuse and trauma

**Oliver:** Why on earth would you want to read something like that?

*Janice does not reply*

**Oliver:** Well, I guess you would read something depressing like that.

**Janice:** Sorry sir... what does that mean?

**Oliver:** Well... if its about something as upsetting as that then you lot find it to be brilliant. Those ... what was it, tear-jerkers. (*continues to measure and then puts down the tape*)

**Janice:** Sorry sir

**Oliver:** Ollie

**Janice:** Yes Olli- what are you doing?

**Oliver:** Oh nothing you need to worry about. I'm just planning to move this fence a bit to make space for some new seeds I'd like to plant.

**Janice:** Move the fence?

**Oliver:** Yes I need about 15 centimetres I'd say.

*Oliver starts to move the fence*

**Janice:** Wait. You can't do that.

*Oliver looks shocked*

**Janice:** You didn't ask. You need my permission to do so.

**Oliver:** Excuse me? I've been living here for almost twenty years. Who do you think you are?

**Janice:** That's irrelevant Oliver

**Oliver:** Hey, that's Mr Monroe to you. Now I don't know why you're getting so emotional.

**Janice:** You are moving a division without prior consent. And you are encroaching on my property. You can't do that. There are rules to this.

**Oliver:** All right know see here missy. I sit on the board of trustees. I think I know the rules better than you. You know what...just let me go speak to your husband. Someone sensible and who isn't hysterical.

**Janice:** I'm not married. This is my property

**Oliver:** Huh... So that chap I see around here?

**Janice:** That is my boyfriend and once again that is irrelevant! *(Takes a breath)*

**Oliver:** Yes, breathe stop getting so hysterical.

**Janice:** I'm calling my agent right now. You have no right to do this.

## Questions

1. How, if at all, does this remind you of abuse? If so, what kind?
2. What key themes do you emerge from this scene?
3. Give this scene a title

## Scene Two

*Janice and Oliver stand glaring at each other from either side of the fence. Mrs Hendricks the Managing Agent stands with documents in her hands while her assistant, William, looks bored and takes pictures with his cellphone.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** All right. I'm aware that this is upsetting for those involved but I would like to come at this from a calm level-headed point of view before I make a judgement.

**Oliver:** Honestly, this is being blown out of proportion here. She's crying over nothing.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Mr Monroe please. We can't have you dismissing other's feelings. Particularly after you've done something to upset them. Whether you can or can't see fault now is not what I wish to discuss.

**William:** We need to make this snappy. They are waiting for us at the office...Ma'am  
*(sarcastic)*

**Janice:** He did not have my consent. He is forcing his will on someone else. Look at what he's done to my lawn. Its ruined!

**Oliver:** Don't be so dramatic! Its 15 centimetres. Do you really need it?

**Janice:** Its my property, my space. That shouldn't matter.

**William:** Do you intend to do anything with that section of lawn?

**Mrs Hendricks:** William, please.

**Janice:** Why should that matter. Its mine. He has no right-

**Oliver:** I'm improving the property and therefore this is for the good the community.

**Janice:** Rubbish

**William:** Keeping the outside interior of the property is important. Else the market value of the area will decrease. It's one of the bylaws in your agreement

*Janice lets out an exasperated groan*

**Oliver:** I know that. I'm a member of the body corporate and a respected member of this community who has lived here for a good many years.

**William:** Yes, of course sir.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Mr Monroe I will have to look of the legislatives and guidelines to confirm...

**Oliver:** What?

**Mrs Hendrick:** I will need to review the facts of the case Miss Smith is making.

**Oliver:** Review? Case? What the hell are you on about

**Mrs Hendrick:** Sir, please-

**Oliver:** You're making it sound like I'm some monster.

**Mrs Hendrick:** No but there is reason for Miss Smith to be upset.

**Oliver:** This is just because a guy can't even sneeze in front of her these days. Any of them. Anything a man does these days is ...upsetting?

*(William laughs)*

**Janice:** problematic.

**Oliver:** There it is. You heard her. Bombs away. Everyone duck and cover.

*(William laughs again)*

**Mrs Hendrick:** Mr Monroe-

**Oliver:** I want a professional opinion. Bring in an expert. Have them come address this issue.

**Janice:** Why?

**Oliver:** I don't think she's equipped to discuss this matter.

Questions:

1. What does the fence and the moving of it symbolise?
2. Comment on the power dynamics between the characters Mrs Hendricks and William.

### Scene 3

*Mrs Hendrick is sitting in front of a large pile of documents at her desk. Her assistant William comes in carrying another large stack of documents. She takes off her spectacles and is about to say something, but William puts the pile down and holds up one finger. He leaves and returns with a larger pile. Again, Mrs Hendricks tries to interject to no success. William proceeds to place the towers of paper on her desk wedging them between the pre-existing paper structures. Defeated, Mrs Hendrick sighs and holds up her hands in futile protest. But just as she collapses back in her chair, her jaw drops as William carries in yet another pile larger than the last.*

**Mrs Hendrick:** No, no. Are you serious? Did Murphy make me the punchline to a cosmic joke? This can't all be-

**William:** Copies of the tenet policies and contracts, bylaws and legislations dating 2019 til today

*Mrs Hendricks sighs while skimming through pages*

**William:** What's the matter? Too much for you to cope?

**Mrs Hendrick:** It's a lot to get through.

**William:** Well good thing you're the managing agent.

**Mrs Hendrick:** William you've dealt with disputes like this before?

**William:** hmmm yes. Actually pretty common.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Really?

**William:** I've seen plenty of people like Mr Monroe try pull stuff like this before. But well...I guess not enough experience to be the one sitting in that chair.

**Mrs Hendrick:** Well what would you do?

**William:** Just move on. He's moved the fence. Nothing to be done about it really.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But what about Miss Smith

**William:** You're getting emotionally invested. We have enough to deal with around here. As you can see... This paper work needs manging Miss Manager.

**Mrs Hendrick:** But, well what if we call in an expert like Mr Monroe suggested.

**William:** Oh sure. Bring in someone from the outside. Have them tell us how to sort out our filing cabinet. Ha. You think the higher ups are gonna like that?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Well, I can't just leave it. I have a responsibility to those tenets, don't I?

**William:** Careful your blood pressure (*not looking at her but rather at a document*).

**Mrs Hendrick:** William

**William:** Lord, what?

**Mrs Hendrick:** Zero sympathy from you I see. You don't find it a gross injustice? This man aggressively invaded Miss Smith's space.

**William:** Yes, and she filed a complaint and its sitting here somewhere on this desk. Amongst other matters that need tending to.

**Mrs Hendricks:** You didn't even say anything when we were at the site... You could have spoken to Oliver. Man to man.

**William:** Why would I do that?

**Mrs Hendricks:** Because as you've said there are a lot of cases like this. So maybe if other men talked to such individuals it would seem like a united front. Since he clearly didn't want to listen to me.

**William:** I didn't say anything because its not my job. This goes beyond my paygrade.

**Mrs Hendrick:** It's not exactly part of my job description either... And I don't want to get involved in matters like this. I feel uncomfortable... I want to open my mouth and say something but I'm responsible for others well- being around here too. I don't want to stir up trouble.

**William:** Then don't.

## Addendum E

### Boundaries

#### Characters:

**Oliver Monroe:** 50-year-old man, Janice's next-door neighbour and a member of the body corporate.

**Janice Smith:** 29-year-old woman, Oliver's next-door neighbour and teacher.

**Mrs Hendricks:** 40-year-old woman and Managing Agent for Priority Properties Agency

**William:** 40-year-old man and Mrs Hendricks Assistant, was passed over for position.

**Scene One** *A small picket fence divides a man and a woman sharing lawn in a Suburban area. The man is busy measuring the fence and the space around it. The woman who is quite content basking in the sunshine, lounges outside reading a book. These neighbours, Janice, and Oliver are 22 and 50 respectively.*

**Janice:** Good morning, Mr Monroe.

**Oliver:** I've told you. You can call me Ollie, Jan. *(leans on the fence)* What's that your reading?

**Janice:** *(doesn't look up from her book)* Janice.

**Oliver:** *(irritated)* I asked, what you're reading. You always have your nose in a book.

**Janice:** *(mumbles)* *Fighting Words*

**Oliver:** *(startled)* Excuse me.

**Janice:** The book. It's called *Fighting Words*.

**Oliver:** What a title. What's it about?

**Janice:** child abuse and trauma

**Oliver:** Why on earth would you want to read something like that?

*Janice does not reply*

**Oliver:** Well, I guess you would read something depressing like that.

**Janice:** Sorry sir... what does that mean?

**Oliver:** Well... if its about something as upsetting as that then you lot find it to be brilliant. Those ... what was it, tear-jerkers. *(Continues to measure and then puts down the tape)*

**Janice:** Sorry sir

**Oliver:** Ollie

**Janice:** Yes Olli- what are you doing?

**Oliver:** Oh, nothing you need to worry about. I'm just planning to move this fence a bit to make space for some new seeds I'd like to plant.

**Janice:** Move the fence?

**Oliver:** Yes, I need about 15 centimetres I'd say.

*Oliver starts to move the fence*

**Janice:** Wait. You can't do that.

*Oliver looks shocked*

**Oliver:** Excuse me?

**Janice:** You didn't ask. You need my permission to do so.

**Oliver:** I've been living here for almost twenty years. Who do you think you are?

**Janice:** That's irrelevant Oliver

**Oliver:** Hey, that's Mr Monroe to you. Now I don't know why you're getting so emotional.

**Janice:** You are moving a division without prior consent. And you are encroaching on my property. You can't do that. There are rules to this.

**Oliver:** All right know see here missy. I sit on the board of trustees. I think I know the rules better than you. You know what...just let me go speak to your husband.

**Janice:** What?

**Oliver:** Your husband. I'd like to discuss the matter with someone isn't so worked up

**Janice:** I'm not married. This is my property

**Oliver:** Huh... So that chap I see around here?

**Janice:** That is my boyfriend and once again that is irrelevant! (*Takes a breath*)

**Oliver:** Yes, breathe stop getting so worked up.

**Janice:** I'm calling my agent right now. You have no right to do this.

### Questions

1. Does this scene have any characteristics of abuse?
2. If so, what?

**Scene Two**

*Janice and Oliver stand glaring at each other from either side of the fence. Mrs Hendricks the Managing Agent stands with documents in her hands while her assistant, William, takes pictures with his cell phone.*

**Mrs Hendricks:** All right. I'm aware that this is upsetting for those involved but I would like to come at this from a calm level-headed point of view before I make a judgement.

**Oliver:** Honestly, this is being blown out of proportion here. She's crying over nothing.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Mr Monroe please. We can't have you dismissing other's feelings. Particularly after you've done something to upset them.

**Janice:** I am more than upset!

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes of course.

**Oliver:** This is hardly necessary I don't see the need for all this.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Mr Monroe whether you can or can't see fault now is not what I wish to discuss.

**Janice:** He did not have my consent. He is forcing his will on someone else. Look at what he's done to my lawn. Its ruined!

**Oliver:** Don't be so dramatic! Its 15 centimetres. Do you really need it?

**William:** Do you intend to do anything with that section of lawn?

**Mrs Hendricks:** William, please.

**Janice:** It's my property, my space. That shouldn't matter. He has no right-

**Oliver:** I'm improving the property and therefore this is for the good the community.

**Janice:** Rubbish

**William:** Keeping the outside interior of the property is important. Else the market value of the area will decrease. It's one of the bylaws in your agreement.

*Janice lets out an exasperated groan*

**Oliver:** I know that. I'm a member of the body corporate and a respected member of this community who has lived here for a good many years.

**William:** Yes, of course sir.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Mr Monroe I will have to look of the legislatives and guidelines to confirm...

**Oliver:** What?

**Mrs Hendricks:** I will need to review the facts of the case Miss Smith is making.

**Oliver:** Review? Case? What the hell are you on about

**Mrs Hendricks:** Sir, please-

**Oliver:** You're making it sound like I'm some monster.

**Mrs Hendricks:** No but there is reason for Miss Smith to be upset.

**Oliver:** Who are you to judge? I suppose anything a man says to you women is "triggering."

**Janice:** Could you be anymore patronising?

**Oliver:** There it is. You heard her. Bombs away. Everyone duck and cover.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Mr Monroe-

**Oliver:** I believe this is an enormous waste of my time. I don't have to listen to this woman and her nonsense.

**Mrs Hendricks:** There is evident damage to Miss Smith's property.

**Oliver:** What the grass, is that what you're worrying about? (*laughs*) Grass grows back

*Mrs Hendricks takes a deep breathe*

**Janice:** I'm worried about the fact that you stole my property!

**Mrs Hendricks:** I suggest that-

**Oliver:** (*To William*) I suggest that we bring in a professional.

**William:** A professional sir?

**Oliver:** Yes, bring in an expert. Have them come address this issue.

**Janice:** Why?

**Oliver:** (*points to Mrs Hendricks*) I don't think she's equipped to discuss this matter.

### Questions:

1. Give this scene a title
2. In this scene how would you describe the characters and their attitudes towards each other?

### **Scene 3**

*Mrs Hendricks is sitting in front of a large pile of documents at her desk. Her assistant William comes in carrying another large stack of documents. She takes off her spectacles and is about to say something, but William puts the pile down and holds up one finger. He leaves and returns with a larger pile. Again, Mrs Hendricks tries to interject to no success. William proceeds to place the towers of paper on her*

*desk wedging them between the pre-existing paper structures. Defeated, Mrs Hendricks sighs and holds up her hands in futile protest. But just as she collapses back in her chair, her jaw drops as William carries in yet another pile larger than the last.*

**Mrs Hendricks:** No, no. Are you serious? Did Murphy make me the punchline to a cosmic joke? This can't all be-

**William:** Copies of the tenant policies and contracts, bylaws and legislations dating 2019 till today.

*Mrs Hendricks sighs while skimming through pages*

**Mrs Hendricks:** It's a lot to get through. Did you summarise them all?

**William:** Summarize ...

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes, William summarize. What? Is that too hard for you? I'm supposed to go through all this myself, am I?

**William:** Well ...I just thought...

**Mrs Hendricks:** Assistant, William. The key word being assist.

**William:** I'll get right on it Ma'am. *(He starts to lift the piles as if to carry them all back to his desk at once)*

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes, and some coffee while you're at it, hmmm. Two sugars and milk.

**William:** Yes... I'll get right on it Ma'am.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Then once you've summarised those documents go and see Miss Smith will you. It's been a few days so I'm sure she's settled a bit. Good time to go give her the heads up.

**William:** Sorry Ma'am? I don't understand.

**Mrs Hendricks:** What part was difficult? You'll apologize and say there's nothing more we can do for her.

**William:** But ... there may be something we could do.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Snowball's chance.

**William:** We really won't intervene?

**Mrs Hendricks:** And do what? He's already moved the fence. What's done is done.

**William:** It seems wrong not to take the matter further.

**Mrs Hendricks:** And have my head serve up on a silver platter to the higher ups! Don't be ridiculous, honestly use that mount on top of your shoulders will you. For once.

**William:** What if I went back and spoke to Mr Monroe myself...man to man.

*Mrs Hendricks narrows her eyes at him and bristles*

**Mrs Hendricks:** Oh, I'm sorry William. Did I miss the part where you suddenly run this show?

**William:** No, I only meant ...

**Mrs Hendricks:** So just because you wear pants and I wear a skirt you're... what more equipped'?"

**William:** No, no of course not Ma'am. I only meant.

**Mrs Hendricks:** I'd be very very careful William. Something like that...to your superior no less. Honestly, you should count yourself lucky I don't take offense to a stupid comment like that.

**William:** I only meant that, well... perhaps Mr Monroe may listen if it were another man. It would seem like a united front ...a leading example.

**Mrs Hendricks:** You think he's really going to listen to you. Rubbish. Just let it go and move on. There's plenty more paperwork for you to manage.

**William:** Well, then perhaps Ma'am we could bring someone in. An expert like Mr Monroe suggested.

**Mrs Hendricks:** And have someone tell me how to keep my filing cabinet in order. Absolutely not. Matters such as this should be dealt with, in house.

**William:** But we can't just leave things as they are, can we?

**Mrs Hendricks:** William, you are being irritating. Disputes such as this are tiresome, you know why? Ask me why.

**William:** (*Hesitant*) Why Ma'am?

**Mrs Hendricks:** Because of protocol. Because the minute that you are called in to do anything other than what your job entails...the waters get muddy.

**William:** But Ma'am

**Mrs Hendricks:** Miss Smith may as well have announced a bomb there in between her tulips!

**William:** Because she filed a complaint... she has a right to-

**Mrs Hendricks:** Yes, she filed a complaint. She accused her neighbour of stealing her property. Of doing so aggressively and without her written or verbal consent to do so.

**William:** Which he did...

**Mrs Hendricks:** It's a recipe for disaster William. It means I'm left in a kitchen filled with smoke because the oven is on fire!

**William:** So, you really will do nothing ?

**Mrs Hendricks:** Nothing! I'm doing my job. As you should to. Why is that so difficult for you to grasp?

**William:** I'm not looking to start any trouble Ma'am.

**Mrs Hendricks:** Then don't.

Questions:

1. What do you believe the fence to represent in this play?
2. Why might Mrs Hendricks be acting this way towards William?