

**TEACHERS' STORIES OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT IN DIVERSE  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF. DAISY PILLAY**

*The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF*

## Researchers' Declaration

**I, Ireshni Khiali, declare that:**

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain others' data, tables, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledge as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

Signed.....

## **Supervisor's Declaration**

This dissertation is submitted with / without my approval.

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11 January 2019

Mrs Ireshni Khiali 9039704  
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Dear Mrs Khiali

Reference number: HSS/2015/018M

Project title: Teachers' stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools.

**Full approval - Change of project title**

Your application dated 10 January 2019, in connection with the above the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the application and the research protocol has been granted **Full Approval**.

- **Change in project title** from: Teachers' stories of girl leadership empowerment in diverse primary schools: A Narrative Inquiry.
- **New project title:** Teachers' stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Prof S Singh

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my two sisters, Thiruneedhi Naicker and Vineshni Pillay, and every other girl who has faced adversity and struggled to be educated.

**“Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.”**

**Malala Yousafzai**

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- My children *Hivash, Reshika and Ghivarn*, for allowing me the time to complete this work.
- My paternal family: I am the woman today because of you. Words cannot express my gratitude.
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## ABSTRACT

*This study, “Teachers’ stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools”, underscores teachers’ lives as powerful sites for girl empowerment. This thesis, explores the lived stories of teachers in the context of their lives and teaching experiences with girl learners in primary schools. Four composed stories of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan, span their childhood, their experiences as learners and their current teaching practices.*

*This is a qualitative study located in the interpretative paradigm. Drawing on a narrative inquiry approach, I utilized a range of methods for data generation: collage inquiry, artefact retrieval, photovoice and metaphor analogy. These arts-based methods were useful in responding to my three critical research questions. Guided by the work of Connelly and Clandinin, I created four rich stories around my participants’ personal lives and their personal and professional experiences of girl empowerment. My four participants, three female and one male live and work in KwaZulu-Natal. My participants teach in diverse primary schools within different contexts in the historically divided educational landscape of South Africa. Lyn and Irene teach at an ex-model C school, Sanelisiwe teaches at a rural school and Selvan teaches at an ex-HOD school.*

*To analyse data, I employed the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky and Rowland’s Empowerment/Leadership Framework. Using a socio-cultural theoretical lens, I was able to elicit critical moments in the lives of my participants that shaped and continue to shape their understanding of girl empowerment. Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan had to negotiate very conservative and contradictory positions within their social contexts, to acquire agency and voice. From their personal experiences teachers obtain meanings of girl empowerment which influence their professional lives as teachers. These teachers use their subjects, personal interest and extra-mural activities to enact practices, formal and informal, that build self-confidence and self-esteem in girl learners.*

*This study highlights the emotional care, love, inspiration and support teachers provide to girl learners which enable the development of ‘self.’ This in turn facilitates empowerment. My study illuminates the influence and the vital role teachers play in empowering girl learners in primary schools.*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa
B.Ed. Hons	Bachelor of Education Honours
BA Admin	Bachelor of Administration
CARE	Cooperative Assistance and Relief Everywhere
DoE	Department of Education
Former HOD	House of Delegates Schools
Former model C	Former schools for whites only
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualification
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
P.E	Physical Education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SMT	School Management Team
TDS	Teacher Development Studies
UDW	University of Durban Westville
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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## CHAPTER ONE

### EXPLORING TEACHERS' LIVES FOR GIRL EMPOWERMENT

#### **Introduction**

This study focuses on teachers lived stories and their teaching experiences which serve as powerful sites for girl empowerment. This study delves into how teachers' personal experiences and meanings of girl empowerment influences their professional lives and everyday practices. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to explore and highlight the significant role teacher's play in girl empowerment in diverse primary schools.

#### **Can teachers empower girl learners in diverse primary schools?**

*“For every one of us that succeeds, it’s because there’s somebody there to show you the way out. The light doesn’t always necessarily have to be in your family; for me it was teachers and school” (Oprah Winfrey).*

These words of Oprah Winfrey resonate in my story which I penned in 2014 for a module in the Bachelor of Education Honours programme, Personal and Professional Identity in Teaching, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My story responded to the second assignment I needed to complete, which was, “How can teacher inquiry into their personal and professional selves contribute to their teacher development?” I am a teacher and exploring teachers' lives is exploring my own.

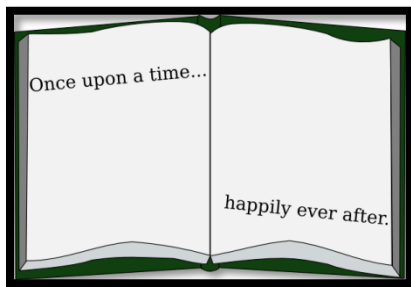
#### **Personal Rationale: My story**

##### *Growing up as a conservative girl*

*My childhood was marred with trials and tribulations. Things were quite bleak on the home front. My mum abandoned my little sister and me. This left me emotionally scared. I was 5 years old and my little sister was 3 years old. A year later, my formal schooling would begin. Although my dad had custody of us, he did not have the energy nor the instincts to bring up two little girls. As a result, we were brought up by my extended family. As the eldest I often had to play mum to my little sister.*

*Dad showed little interest in my school work. However, I fondly, remember him teaching me two things: how to cover my school books and how to tell time. That was it! I had to force my dad to attend parent meetings so that he could hear my teachers praise me.*

*I loved to read. I read voraciously. I loved reading anything from Hans Christian Anderson fairy tales to mysteries like Nancy Drew or The Famous Five. Reading was a form of escapism from my troubled childhood. However, my extended family felt that girls belonged in the kitchen. I was constantly disturbed with some household chore or the other. I soon realized that if I wanted a “happily ever after,” I had to be the heroine in my own story, like in my fairytale and mystery stories.*



**Figure 1.1: My fairytale book**

As I reflect on my story, I realized how strongly my family reinforced conservative, dominant ways of being for an Indian girl. They strongly believed that girls needed domestic skills. Many of my family female role models were housewives. This is not unusual in a patriarchal society. Kangethe, Lyria and Nyamanga (2014) claim that, “the gender socialization process occurs in multiple social institutions including the family” (p.280). They further assert that gender conditioning messages and stereotyping are reproduced through noticeable distribution of roles, at the family level. Similarly, at that stage of my life I expected to marry and live happily ever after. My schooling was just as conservative as my home life, I attended the traditional schools, known as “former HOD schools” (House of Delegates schools), meaning that these were historical designated for Indians only in South Africa, at the time.

### ***Alternate versions of being women***

*I attended school during the apartheid era (1976–1987). We associated only with Indian teachers and learners. All my teachers throughout my schooling career were dedicated and pushed us academically. My teachers instilled in me good work ethics and encouraged me to become a better*

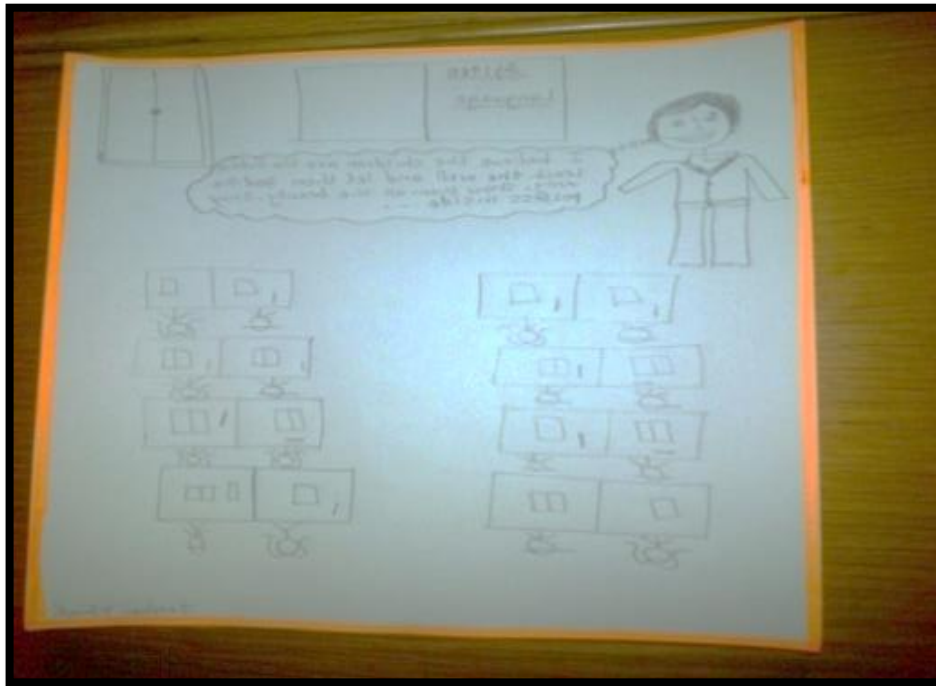
*learner. No one teacher made a particular impact on me; I feel that they collectively moulded me into the learner I am today. Yet, if you ask me who stands out for me about my teachers, it would be the female teachers. I admired the way my female teachers carried themselves, their immaculate dressing and their sense of independence. I remember Mrs. Singh, clad in beautiful saris every day, and the first Indian female I knew who smoked. This was quite shocking! Mrs. William, who was my grade one and two teacher, always shared her personal life with us. She was a single mom to two girls; her husband had passed away. I have the most vivid memory of her coming late one morning in 1976, the whole class quietly waiting for her. She finally arrived in a 'huff' telling us that her idol Elvis Presley had just passed away, and that was why she was late.*

While my schooling was conservative, it offered me glimpses of an alternate version of being a girl because of some of the teachers I came face to face with. As a typical girl, I was mesmerized by my female teachers. They were beautiful, well-dressed and epitomized independence; their independence oozed power in my eyes. School and teachers provided me with an alternate version of woman. This inspired me, as I realized there were possibilities for me after school. Similarly, Kangethe et al. (2014) allege that gender socialization at school occurs through much interaction with teachers, peers, and the curriculum. King and Winthrop (2015) note that girl learner's "observations of female role models can help provide an alternative vision for their future compared to the dominant cultural discourse" (p.47). I realized that it was through certain female teachers in primary school that my passion for learning was instilled. I wanted to emulate their dress, their independence and have the same power that they seemed to have.

### ***Becoming a teacher***

*While, my high school teachers were very aloof, they encouraged me to persevere with my studies and built a sense of confidence in me. Mrs. Cassim, my grade eight English teacher, always encouraged me to answer questions in English literature and she praised my creative writing efforts. She once commented that she could always rely on me to answer questions in her lessons. Mr. Harris, my grade twelve English teacher, loved my prepared speeches. Mr. Pather, my grade ten English teacher, rendered the liveliest lessons. Once, after reading Shakespeare, he broke out into the famous song, 'The greatest love of all,' which inspired me too (see Figure 1.2 for my drawing of my first educative moment in becoming a teacher). At that moment, I knew I wanted to finish school*

*and become a dynamic teacher just like Mr. Pather. Listening to him, I wanted deliver exciting and lively lessons, just like him.*



**Figure 1.2: My drawing of my first educative moment in becoming a teacher**

*Although I was accepted at the University of Durban-Westville for a teaching degree, finance was a problem. Shortly thereafter I married and I was fortunate that my husband supported my dream. He financed my studies and hence I embarked on attaining my teaching degree.*

Wolhuter, van der Walt and Potgieter (2012), in their study of the source of inspiration for student teachers entering the teaching profession, found that their main influence was teachers or lecturers. Likewise, it was my teachers who planted a seed in me to break through the conservative, dominant ways of being woman. In parts of my life, I was complicit in reinforcing the dominant ways of being a woman. It is very clear that my teachers, throughout my schooling years, played an influential role collectively in driving me to succeed professionally. They fueled my passion to succeed in the professional world.

My composed story for the Honours module, Personal and Professional Identity in Teaching, contributed much to this study. Parts of this assignment forced me to look at my teachers and feeling their influence on my professional self. The meaning for me in being a teacher and empowered was derived from my teachers. Now, I ask myself, as a female primary school teacher, what is my

responsibility to my learners? I am curious about what other primary school teachers think, feel and do as their responsibility in girl learner empowerment during their formal schooling years.

### **Professional Rationale: Are teachers empowering girl learners?**

#### ***Becoming a teacher researcher***

While still reflecting on my own teaching practice, I was invited to a Teacher Development Studies (TDS) Masters research support group meeting in February 2016, and I was encouraged to bring an artefact. My supervisor persuaded me to share with the TDS support group my artefact's cultural significance and symbolic meaning. After giving this much thought, I chose my scroll (Figure 1.3) which held my degree certificate. To enhance my presentation, I wrote a narrative for my artefact retrieval. In the narrative, I emphasized the many connotative meanings my artefact held for me (Riggins, 1994). The scroll was a representation of a better life for my family and me. It was a representation of personal achievement against all odds. Moreover, it represented my independence and empowerment as a woman.



**Figure 1.3: My artefact, my scroll**

After my presentation, my supervisor urged me to draw from my narrative important words and phrases to create a poem. Using these words and phrases, I composed a poem using the French Malaysian Pantoum format. The format allows for the use of “repetitive lines for the salient or emotionally evocative themes” (Furman, Lietz and Langer, 2006, p. 28). As I read the poem (Figure 1.4) aloud, I became aware of the fact that this poem mapped my life as a woman. The scroll evoked my personal achievement and values. After much introspection, I asked myself what this means for me as a teacher and a teacher researcher.

A brainstorming session with my peers and supervisor underscored my interest in girl learners. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out that by exploring past and present experiences, our meaning-making continually shifts and redefines who we are and how we make sense of our lives as teachers. Likewise, Polkinghorne (1995) asserts that what we do as teachers, “is the outcome of the interaction of a person’s previous learning and experiences” (p.11). My introspection on my teaching practice reinforced my earlier thoughts and questioning. I continued to scrutinize my own teaching with regard to girl learners. Do I influence my girl learners, like my teachers did? Do I empower and motivate self-belief in girl learners?

***Not Just a Scroll***  
The Scroll, a roll of paper  
Personal achievement  
Deep sense of pride  
Empowered  
  
Personal achievement  
Motivate self-belief  
Empowered  
Make a difference  
  
Motivate self-belief  
Deep sense of pride  
Make a difference  
The Scroll, a roll of paper

**Figure 1.4: My pantoum poem**

A culmination of events and objects; the Personal and Professional Identity in Teaching Honours module; my self-reflection of my teaching, and engaging with discussions in my research support meetings, all sparked my curiosity in teachers and girl learners. Now, as a teacher researcher, I want to know more about what other teachers envision their responsibility with girl learners to be. Since my poem alerted me to an issue that past experiences in one’s personal life shape the professional life of a teacher, I want to know more about how teachers’ personal and professional lives influence

their work with girl learners. Hence, my study will be foregrounding two key dimensions: teachers' work and girl leadership empowerment.

From my own story, it is clear that this study for me is more than just a research study. It is an opportunity for me to examine teachers' stories of girl empowerment and to explore the role teachers play in girl empowerment. From a sociocultural lens, I present an understanding of teachers' stories of girl empowerment.

### **Contextual rationale: Teachers are key role players in girl empowerment**

The foundations of a democratic, transforming South Africa lie in its Constitution (1996), and The Bill of Rights, which clearly declares its goal, namely, "the creation of a non-racial and non-sexist, egalitarian society underpinned by human dignity." The principles of the South African Constitution were created to address the divisions of the apartheid system. Schools under the apartheid system were de-segregated according to race, class, gender, economic status and culture, and this practice still continues, despite democracy (Jansen, 2004). Much work still needs to be done for transformation. In keeping with transformation, schools and teachers need to cultivate and develop values that are in line with the South African Constitution (Pillay, 2017). Furthermore, the South African Council for Educators' Code of Professional Ethics (SACE) compels teachers to, "acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa" (p.2). The Department of Education (DoE) also highlights the fundamentals of the South African Constitution in policy implementation.

The Minimum requirement for Teacher Education Qualification (MRTEQ) document, under Appendix A, stipulates the collective roles of teachers in a school. It is required of teachers to develop in seven appropriate roles and one being the community, citizenship and pastoral role.

#### *Community, citizenship and pastoral role*

"The educator will practice and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the Constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a



supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators. Furthermore, the educator will develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organisations based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues. One critical dimension of this role is HIV/AIDS education” (MRTEQ, 2011, p.50).

The MRTEQ (2011) document clearly draws to attention the multiple roles and responsibility of a teacher. Teachers have the ethical responsibility to contribute in some way to the moral purpose of our Constitution. Furthermore, this policy speaks of the need for teachers to adopt a pastoral role towards learners. Pastoral care is a concept integrated to meet the personal, social and academic needs of a learner. This policy advocates for a supportive and empowering environment that promotes moral democratic values. These facets allude to teachers having the ethical responsibility to enact practices of girl empowerment. In essence, I want to find out more specifically, about the teacher’s role in empowering girl learners given that the Bill of Rights makes serious the issue of Gender Equality. Jansen (2001) claims teachers need to constantly negotiate their personal, professional and emotional identities to meet the demands of policy. For these reasons, within the body of teachers’ work, this study examines how teachers’ personal and professional meanings contribute to girl empowerment.

### **Discourse of Teachers’ Work in Girl Empowerment**

Teachers work has become multiple and complex within the context of school. Teachers’ traditional role of ‘chalk and talk’ has changed teaching and learning due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the poor socio-economic conditions of many communities in South Africa. By the same token, Van den Berg and Schulze (2014) contend that formal training, subject matter competence, large classes, discipline, the demands of learner achievement and the loss of caregivers from HIV/AIDS affect the professional and emotional identities of teachers in South Africa. Similarly, teachers’ work can be considered to be an ‘emotional labour’ as they attempt to manage the challenges facing them (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Day & Gu, 2010). Day and Gu (2010) claim that over and above teachers’ work being emotional labour, it is defined by a moral purpose.

For teachers to have a moral purpose and to be effectual agents of change, it is essential that they know ‘who they are’ and have a “clear vision of why they are teachers” (Pillay, 2017, p.2). Additionally, Pillay (2017) argues that teachers need to have a sense of agency in order to cultivate the values of the South African Constitution. It is quite clear that teachers’ work is driven by their sense of ‘self’ and their agency. Rodgers and Scott (2008) allege that the ‘core self’ assimilates the beliefs, values and attitudes that define us and it is the meaning-maker of our daily experiences. Teacher agency is the capacity to ‘act,’ which includes the values and goals one tends to uphold (Day, Kington & Sammons, 2006). In essence, teachers’ sense of ‘self’ and agency lay the foundation for teachers’ capacity to empower girl learners. Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE, 2009) highlight the importance for teachers to empower adolescent (10-13 year-old) girl learners. Studies have shown that the adolescent stage signifies the critical years of the development of the ‘self.’ As their moral and ethical obligation, teachers ought to create an environment where learners feel cared for, needed and empowered.

The South Africa Constitution and various policies drive teachers’ work and empowerment. Studies have shown that teachers play a key role in empowering learners and their lives are therefore critical to empowering girl learners. Teachers’ lives are powerful sites for exploring meanings of girl empowerment. Thus, this study delves into key aspects of teachers’ personal and professional lives, and the meanings they attribute to girl leadership empowerment, within the body of teacher work.

This study utilizes a sociocultural theoretical lens to explore how teachers acquire their meanings of girl empowerment from their personal and professional lives as teachers. Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory proposes that human development is dependent on the social interaction of people and the cultural tools that assist them to form their own view of the world. In this study, I look at how social and cultural structures influence teachers’ personal and professional meanings of girl empowerment. Since, this theoretical framing prompts a methodology that will generate rich, thick data of a person’s world, narrative inquiry is most suitable as an overall approach. In addition, I drew on Rowlands’ (1997) Empowerment/Leadership Framework to analyse teachers’ enacted practices of girl empowerment. Rowlands’ Empowerment/Leadership Framework is based on the foundation that power manifests in four forms (power within; power to; power over and power with) and these forms of power are experienced through three dimensions (relational level, personal level and collective level). I employed this framework to gauge how teachers influence girl learners

(power over) and how teachers build girl learners self-esteem (power within) within the school environment.

### **Critical key questions that steer my study**

The main research question guiding this study is: *How do the lived stories of teachers in the context of their lives and teaching experiences influence girl empowerment in diverse primary schools?*

Three critical sub-questions steer this study.

1. *What are teachers' stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools?*

In answering this question in particular, I will obtain a general idea of the role teachers play in girl empowerment in diverse primary schools.

2. *What personal and professional meanings shape teachers understanding of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools?*

An exploration of this question will allow me to gauge how teachers negotiate their personal and professional meanings. Teachers' meanings inform their understanding of girl leadership empowerment in diverse primary schools. Furthermore, I will discern the knowledge, values and beliefs teachers draw on to empower girl learners.

3. *How do teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools?*

By responding to this question, I will be able to establish how teachers enact practices of girl empowerment in diverse schools.

These three critical questions propose a meaningful understanding of the lived stories of teachers empowering girl learners. Moreover, these questions illuminate the role and influence teachers exert in empowering girl learners.

I have chosen the narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2010) for my study, because "Narrative inquiry has an underlying philosophy and access that

enables the illumination of real people in real settings through the ‘painting’ of their stories” (Wang & Geale, 2015, p.196). Narrative inquiry will illuminate my participants’ stories of how they empower girl learners in diverse schools. Guided by the dimensions of time, space and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I have socialized with my participants over time to tell, relive and retell their stories of experience with girl learners. By being an insider researcher, I have thus created a bond of trust with my participants to enable open dialogue. Artefact retrieval, metaphor analogy, collage inquiry, photo voice and group discussions were used in this process to generate data for this study.

This is a qualitative study which is located in an interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research is characterized by its intention to understand aspects of social life. According to Oyetunji (2006), the aim of a qualitative researcher is to seek and acquire an understanding of individuals in their real-life settings. This study explores the lived stories of teachers and their role in enacting girl leadership empowerment. Moen (2006) points out that “storytelling is a natural way of recounting experience, a practical solution to fundamental problem in life, creating reasonable order out of experience” (p.56). I make use of my participants’ stories to look at how teachers negotiate their own personal and professional meanings, their values and beliefs to empower girl learners, in the different spaces within the school environment. According to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative inquiry constitutes “subsets of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe humans’ action” (p.5).

## **Outline of my study**

**Chapter One** offers the background and context of this study. This chapter sets the context for the exploration of teachers lives as powerful sites for girl empowerment. In addition, I have highlighted my three critical research questions and my methodological approach. I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of my thesis.

**Chapter Two**, centres on relevant literature pertaining to my research study. I present scholarly dialogue, debates and discussions about teachers and girl empowerment in significant themes. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framing for my study.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the research methodology employed in this study. I elaborate on the use of narrative inquiry and its suitability for this study. I provide details on the research setting, the selection of my participants, the methods of data production and the techniques used for the analysis of data. I explain the use of the metaphor analogy as a ‘device’ to explain the self, to analyse the self and to interpret the self. Furthermore, I reflect on issues of trustworthiness and ethics as a narrative researcher. I also discuss the analytical framing used in this study.

In **Chapter Four**, I respond to my first research question. I represent the rich, textured lived stories of four teachers. In this chapter, I use the metaphor analogy to narrate the self. From these stories, we acquire glimpses of their lived experiences as learners and teachers, and their work with girl learners.

**Chapter Five** responds to my second research question, when, through an analysis of the narratives, I extract critical nodal moments from their personal and professional lives that highlight how teachers acquire their meaning of girl empowerment. I use vignettes to emphasize how teachers’ personal and professional meanings shape their understanding of girl empowerment. To deepen my analysis, I make use of a metaphorical analogy that runs as a common thread through my analysis. In this chapter, the metaphor analogy is used to analyse meanings of self.

In **Chapter Six**, I present the enacted practices of teachers empowering girl learners. This chapter addresses my third research question. I utilize Rowlands’ Empowerment/Leadership framework as my analytical tool to highlight the role teachers play in empowering girl learners. Again, I draw on a metaphorical analogy which allows for the interpretation of the self. I use a thematic analysis to answer this question.

Finally, in **Chapter Seven** I conclude this study with my own learning on how practicing teachers draw their meanings of girl empowerment from their personal lives and this ultimately influences their professional lives. Additionally, I provide recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SCHOLARLY CONVERSATIONS ON TEACHERS' LIVES AND GIRL EMPOWERMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented a detailed account of the focus and purpose of this research study. This study delves into the stories of teachers empowering girl learners in diverse primary schools. In this chapter, I take a comprehensive look at related national and international literature associated with teachers' personal and professional lives, girl empowerment and teachers' practices of girl empowerment.

Through a review of debates conducted locally and internationally, I offer a conceptual understanding of what girl empowerment and the roles teachers play in their enactment of girl empowerment. Furthermore, I take a closer look at what personal and professional meanings teachers draw on to empower girl learners. For the purposes of this study, I am assuming a sociocultural lens and Rowlands Empowerment/Leadership Framework, to understand how teachers' personal and professional meanings influence their enactment of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools.

This chapter has been divided into three sections.

- **SECTION A: TEACHERS PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MEANINGS OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT-** This section elucidates the meanings teachers derive from their personal and professional lives. I examine current literature to understand and clarify the notion of teachers' meaning-making in their personal and professional lives.
- **SECTION B: TEACHERS PRACTICES IN GIRL EMPOWERMENT-** Here I appraise literature globally to establish an understanding of girl empowerment. In addition, I look at literature that validates the role teachers and schools play in cultivating and empowering girl learners.

- **SECTION C: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK-** In this section, I explain Sociocultural Theory and its appropriateness for this study. Furthermore, I detail the aptness of Rowlands' Empowerment/Leadership Framework for my study.

## **SECTION A**

### **TEACHERS' PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MEANINGS OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT**

Researchers and philosophers have striven to understand the role of meaning in human life. According to Krauss (2005), humans have an intense desire to comprehend and make meaning of their lives and experiences; sometimes, they draw from meanings, or give meanings to events and experiences. The notion of meaning and meaning-making is sustained through continuous interaction and examination of thoughts, actions and knowledge. Black (2014) claims that teachers' "meaning-making efforts are numerous as they contextualise knowledge, (de)/ (re)construct personal and professional meanings and (re)interpret teaching experiences" (p.4). Seemingly then, if meanings move freely from the personal and professional lives of teachers into other spheres of life, they have the potential to shape teachers' understanding of girl empowerment.

There exists a growing body of literature that emphasizes that teachers acquire their meaning from their experiences, from their personal and professional lives (Black, 2002; 2014; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Carter and Doyle cited in Rodgers and Scott (2008), explain that "the process of learning to teach, the act of teaching and teachers' experiences and choices are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to their identity and life story" (p.732). Likewise, Day and Gu (2010) echo that the performance of teachers is linked to their experience in their personal lives. This study in particular seeks to highlight how teachers make meaning of girl empowerment from their experiences in their personal and professional lives.

Soreide (2006) asserts that teachers are active agents and the creators of their own meaning. Teachers' creation of meaning is dynamic and constantly changing through reflection of their experiences. Black (2002) clarifies that teacher meaning-making is entrenched in what teachers do.

The concept of teacher meaning-making must be recognized and appreciated by education and research, as issues which influence their practice, their personal and professional knowledge, and their experience (Black, 2014). It is for this reason that I examine teachers' lives. Equally, I examine how teachers' meanings of girl empowerment influence their daily enacted practices in diverse schools.

Additionally, Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue that the 'self' is the meaning-maker while a teachers' "identity as the meaning made, even as the self and identity evolve and transform over time" (p.739). They further allege that meaning is made through reflection of one's experience and how one makes sense of this experience. By the same token, Kelchtermans (2005) professes that meaning-making comes from self-understanding, which can be explained as "both the understanding one has of one's 'self' at a certain moment in time (*product*), as well as to the fact that this product results from an ongoing *process* of making sense of one's experiences and their impact on the 'self'" (p.1000). This study looks at how teachers developed their meaning of girl empowerment from childhood to adult teachers.

In this section, I briefly outlined the notion of teachers' meaning in their personal and professional lives. Teachers' meaning-making is constructed and reconstructed through making sense of experiences within their personal and professional lives.

Section B below highlights teachers' practices in girl empowerment, highlighting issues on gender roles.

## **SECTION B**

### **TEACHERS PRACTICES IN GIRL EMPOWERMENT**

#### ***The role of the school in empowerment***

Schools are considered to be the 'window' of society. Schools are, therefore, responsible for the holistic development of learners. Shah (2011) maintains that schools can be a typical space that augments intrinsic empowerment, through which the learner builds self-confidence and an awareness of the self. Studies emphasize the benefits of girl empowerment as it facilitates a better



society in all respects. It is quite imperative then that schools take cognisance of girl empowerment and ensure that there are policies in place, both formal and informal to address these issues. CARE (2009) has revealed that leadership programmes instituted in schools support girl learner empowerment. According to Kober (2016), “schools can promote beliefs, values and expectations that equip students to take on leadership roles in the future or provide training by appointing pupils to positions of student leadership” (p.43). Schools play an important role in assisting and sustaining girls as effective collaborators. There exists a vast amount of literature that underscores girl learning and the empowerment of girl learners (Kober, 2016; Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013; Lloyd, 2013; Glennerster & Takavarasha, 2010; Care, 2009; Postles, 2013). These authors highlight the importance of school and investing in girls’ education.

All these studies note the positive benefits of girl education, for economic empowerment and, a healthier society. Wilmot (2016) asserts that women play a significant role in transforming society. Similarly, Verveer (2011) maintains that girls who are educated, fuel development in society. Murphy-Graham (2012) points out that by equipping girls with a set of competencies, skills and social behaviour, they function as productive citizens. This in turn improves economic development, lowers poverty and improves lives (Kober, 2016). For these reasons, teachers and schools have a huge responsibility in cultivating empowered girl learners. Likewise, Kober (2016) declares that “teachers need to demonstrate and teach gender-equality, they need to provide girls with female mentors and role models, and they need to strengthen girl’s negotiation and decision-making skills” (p.31). Teacher role models and cognitive skills development in schools benefit girl empowerment.

A research study compiled by The World Bank (2014) proclaims that,

“Social norm influence textbooks, curricular choices, the redistribution of teachers and administrators, teachers’ attitudes and behaviour, classroom and discipline practices, and the presence of violence-all of which shape opportunities for boys and girls. National curricula reinforce existing social and gender inequalities by implicitly upholding traditional gender stereotypes or by disregarding the diversity of learning needs and learning styles among girls and boys. At the same time, schools have the enormous potential to effect social change and to transform gender relations by expanding the range of possibilities for both boys and girls” (p.45).

However, there still exist a negative stereotypical dialogue on the girl learners' capability to do well at school, and this continues to impact on their opportunities as learners. Practices on a daily basis at school influence and discourage girls from following and continuing with subjects in Mathematics and Technology (Ifegbesan, 2010; Postles, 2013; Kangethe, 2014). The gendered norm is that girls are encouraged to take the softer subjects like English and Social Sciences. A study conducted by The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in 2002, revealed several challenges for the girl learner in Science and Technology subjects. According to ASSAf, there are a few female teachers and a lack of female role models in Science and Technology. In addition, there are many social and cultural factors restricting girl learners' entry into Science and Technology subjects, and the textbooks utilized in these subjects are not engaging enough for girls (ASSAf, 2002). These stereotypical gendered norms predominantly exclude girl learners from Science and Technology and result in girl learners performing poorly and dropping out of school (Mahlomaholo, 2011).

The 'hidden curriculum' promotes the disempowerment of the female voice in the classroom. Inadvertently teachers afford more time to male learners and they often present examples of men's success (Bonnet, 2015; Postels, 2013). In addition, much of the domestic and physical labour of keeping the classroom clean is given to girl learners. Gender bias continues to be present in curricular materials like charts and textbooks. These curricular materials depict men and women in gender stereotypical roles and occupations (Mutekwe & Modiba, 2012). Glennerster and Takavarasha (2010) argue that teachers must be accountable and they must teach subjects like Mathematics and Science at the appropriate level of girls. In view of these issues, in this study I take a closer look at how teachers negotiate the 'hidden curriculum,' in their daily practice to reduce gender stereotypical thinking and behaviour.

### ***Teachers' roles in empowering girl learners***

Teachers are active agents of girl empowerment. What is girl empowerment? CARE (2009) claims that girl empowerment is affording girls the chance to actively take part in school activities and make decisions that will have an effect on their lives, their families and their peers' lives. McCracken et al. (2015) assert that empowerment is associated with ensuring the dignity of girls and teachers' attitude towards gender roles and how they reinforce gender roles. Empowerment for learners, according to Cowdery (2006), is the ability to take control of their learning; it is a process of feeling

confident about making decisions, feeling safe, valued and accepted. He professes that “teachers can play an important role in building this self-esteem and creating an [empowering] environment” (Cowdery, 2006, p.1). The school, teachers and girl learners need to be active partners to enable true girl empowerment.

Postels (2013) asserts that teachers play an influential role in shaping learners’ understanding of gender roles. She adds that teachers can neither contribute to maintaining or breaking gender stereotypes within school environment. In addition, Postels (2013) suggests that female teachers encourage girl learners to remain in school. Likewise, Shahidul and Karim (2015) maintain that female teachers have a positive influence on girl learners. Exposure to female teachers and role models aids in changing the aspirations of girl learners with regard to jobs, marriage and stereotypical perceptions (Glennerster & Takavarasha, 2010).

Teachers have the ability and authority to create an empowered environment where girl learners can feel cared for and needed. Teachers have the power to encourage and support girl learners inside and outside the classroom, to do more than they ever believed possible. Mahlomaholo (2011) states that teachers must be more firm in including girl learners as participants in classroom discussions; they should encourage girl learners to undertake technical subjects with boys and must be positive role models to them. Learner empowerment starts with recognition and encouragement from teachers.

## **SECTION C**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

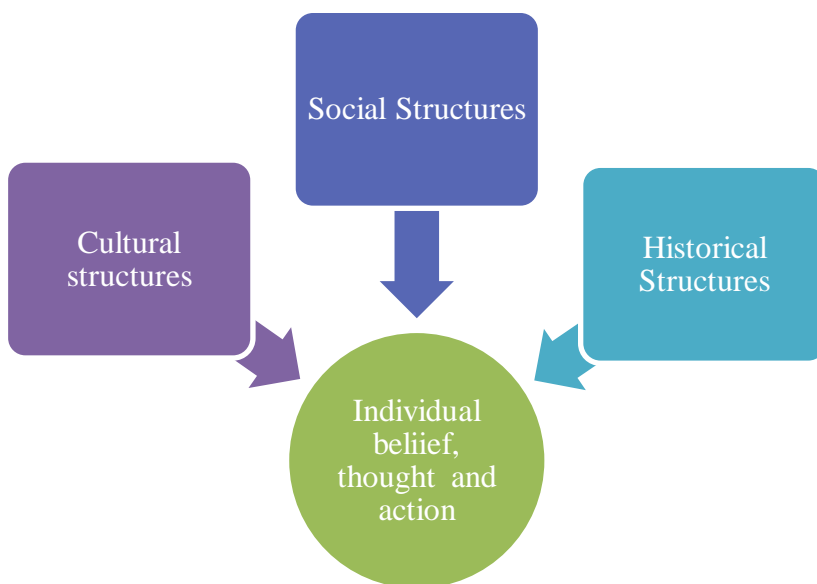
The reasoning underlying my research study is that teachers acquire certain meanings of girl empowerment from their personal and professional lives. These meanings strongly influence or inform their enacted practices of girl empowerment. Section C, therefore, covers two key frameworks most appropriate for this study. The Sociocultural Theoretical Framework which will allow me to understand the various personal and professional meanings teachers hold on girl

leadership empowerment. In addition, Rowlands (1997) Empowerment/Leadership Framework will be employed as an analytical framework to highlight the role of teachers in girl empowerment.

### **Sociocultural Theoretical Framework**

The work of Vygotsky has laid the foundations for Sociocultural Theory, which is established on the social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism regards knowledge as being constructed socially through interaction that is shared by people (Wang, Bruce & Hughes, 2011). Essentially, Sociocultural Theory argues that one’s cognitive development is connected to the cultural, institutional and historical context (Wang et al., 2011; Scott, 2013; Zhou & Brown, 2017). Piaget and Bandura highlight the social influences on cognitive development; however, Vygotsky lays emphasis on one’s development being integrated in social, cultural and historical structures (Zhou & Brown, 2017).

This study draws much from Lasky (2005), who uses Sociocultural Theory to understand teacher identity. “What individuals believe, and how individuals think and act is always shaped by cultural, historical and social structures” (Lasky, 2005, p.900). My study looks at teachers’ lives which give us glimpses of their experiences. These experiences are dependent on social, cultural and historical structures. Also, teachers’ experiences become sites for meaning-making, and meaning-making is made visible through practice.

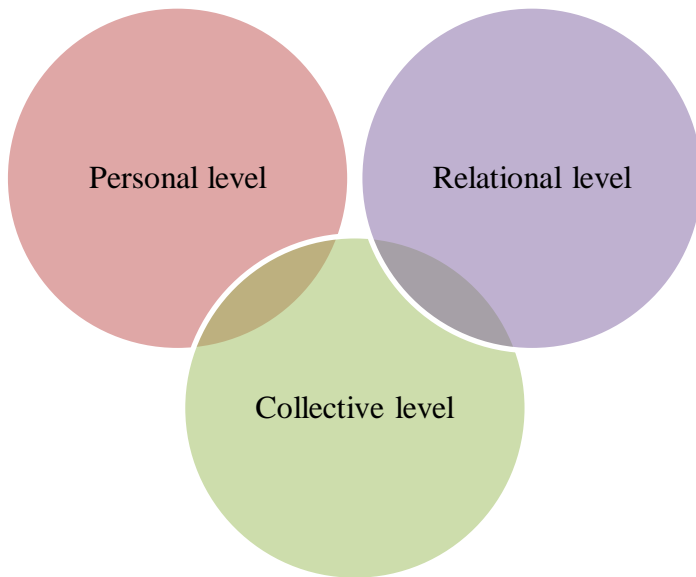


**Figure 2.1: Lasky (2005) Sociocultural Theory of teacher identity**

In addition, Lasky (2005) asserts that social context and cultural tools influence the growth of human belief, values and ways of acting. Ways of acting are how teachers make meaning. Teachers' enacted practices hold their beliefs and values. An underlying factor underpinning Sociocultural Theory is that social interaction leads to continuous change in one's thought and behaviour. The meanings teachers acquire from their experiences are fluid and constantly changing. Rodgers and Scott (2008) maintain that meaning is made through reflection of one's experiences and how one makes sense of experience over time. In this study, I utilize Sociocultural Theory to underscore how teachers derive their meaning of girl empowerment from their experiences in their personal and professional lives.

### **Rowlands Empowerment/Leadership Framework**

According to Rowlands' (1997) Empowerment/ Leadership Framework, in order to comprehend the process of empowerment, there is a need to be conscious that power can take many forms. The Empowerment/Leadership Framework presents four forms of power: 1. Power within, which deals with cognitive change and self-belief; 2. Power to, this focuses on the change in behaviour; 3. Power over, which is the ability one has to influence and coerce others and 4. Power with, which is how one acts with others to confront discriminatory behaviour. Additionally, Rowlands forms of power are experienced and manifested through three dimensions of empowerment, "a personal level (developing a sense of self and individual confidence); a relational level (developing the ability to negotiate and influence others) and a collective level (individuals working together to achieve a greater impact)" (1997, p.15).



**Figure 2.2: Rowlands (1997) three dimensions of empowerment**

Kober (2016) highlights how education or schooling provides girl learners with what Rowlands (1997) terms the ‘power within’ and the ‘power with.’ Schooling creates opportunities, raises girl learners’ confidence and self-esteem, increases their willingness to take responsibility and encourages their collective and individual initiative. Teachers organise speech contests, debates, school concerts and various sporting codes. The influence of the teacher can be found in all three dimensions of empowerment. Teachers are role models that influence girl learners in a particular school setting (relational level). Teachers develop and build girl learners’ self-confidence and awareness (person level). Teachers uses various safe spaces within the school environment to build the ‘self.’ Likewise, Care (2009) claim that “education, combined with exercises that develop self-awareness and confidence, gives girls tools with which they can seek gainful employment and become productive members of society” (p.25).

There are key features in the Sociocultural Theory and Rowlands Empowerment/Leadership Framework that illustrate how teachers’ personal and professional lived stories, experiences and practices serve as powerful sites for empowerment of girl learners. By using the Sociocultural Theory, I was able to elucidate how social and cultural structures influence teachers’ personal and professional meanings of girl empowerment. Additionally, I was able to examine how teachers negotiated conservative and contradictory positions in diverse social contexts to exercise agency and voice. I utilized Rowlands Empowerment/Leadership Framework to look at how teachers’ experiences and meanings shape their enacted practices inside and outside the classroom. More

specifically this theory assists me to explain how these practices are enacted within the personal, relational and collective levels in developing girl learner empowerment. Teacher's enacted practices within the three levels of empowerment create a platform for girl learners to attain voice and agency. The Sociocultural Theory and Rowlands Empowerment/Leadership Framework underscores the critical and significant role of teachers in girl empowerment in primary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I examined literature delineating the key issues on teachers' personal and professional meanings in empowerment. In addition, I explored literature globally to acquire a conceptual understanding of teachers' practices and empowerment, zoning in on the gender discourse. I outlined the theoretical framework for this study. The next chapter explains the methodological perspectives of this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GENERATING STORIES OF TEACHERS' LIVES IN GIRL EMPOWERMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, I explored current literature available on teachers' personal and professional lives, girl leadership empowerment and the influence and practices of teachers in girl leadership empowerment. In addition, I elaborated more on the theoretical framework underpinning my study. The purpose of this study is to retell the lived stories of teachers empowering girl learners, between the ages of 10-13 (adolescents), in diverse primary schools.

The adolescent years are critical for the development of the 'self'. As one moves from childhood to adulthood, gender roles become more defined (Warner, Malhotra & McGonagle, 2012). From these lived stories, I want to understand what personal and professional meanings teachers draw on, to enact practices of girl empowerment.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In Section A, I explain in detail my research design, which includes my preference for narrative inquiry as a methodology; the research design plan and paradigm; my selection of participants, and the research setting. Section B details the data production methods which comprise metaphor analogy, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval, photo voice and my role as researcher. Section C clarifies the analytical framing and the arts-based tools used for data analysis. I had to make sure that the research methodology I chose was most fitting in terms of responding to my three research questions.

#### SECTION A

##### **Narrative as a methodology**

##### *Why narrative inquiry?*

I have chosen to use narrative inquiry as my research methodology. My understanding of narrative inquiry is entrenched in the works of Clandinin (2013); Yang (2011); Clandinin and Huber (2010);



Knight (2009) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Collectively, these researchers define narrative inquiry as the manner in which humans experience the world and how they make sense of their experience by continuously telling and retelling the story simultaneously, while refiguring the past and creating purpose in the future. Narrative inquiry involves people telling stories in addition to the acquisition, reporting, and understanding of those stories, which constructs the narratives of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Likewise, Wang and Geale (2015) assert that narrative inquiry allows for “the illumination of real people in real setting through the painting of their stories” (p.196). Furthermore, Yang (2011) maintains that narrative inquiry asks probing questions in order to acquire a deeper understanding of certain aspects of life experiences. Given that this study will focus on the teachers’ lived stories of girl empowerment, this methodology is most apt. I therefore use narrative inquiry as methodology to understand the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of teachers empower girl learners.

Clandinin and Huber (2010) claim that there are three ordinary places for narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality and space, which act as a conceptual framework. Temporality directs the researcher towards the past, present and future of peoples’ lives and these experiences are consistently transforming (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Sociality takes into account the significant relationship between researcher and participant. While place can be described as “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of place where the inquiry and events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.480). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) further explain that our identities are in accordance with our experiences at a specific place or places and with the stories we share of these experiences. As a narrative inquirer, I needed to take cognisance of the notion of *time; space and place* and create a distinct bond with my participants where trust plays an essential role.

### ***What is narrative inquiry?***

Various dictionaries define a narrative as a story or tale or an account of events. Many research studies claim that a story and a narrative are ‘two sides of the same coin.’ However, Dwyer and Emerald (2017) draw from research studies to make a distinction between a narrative and a story. A story can be defined as a manner in which people communicate experience or events or retell past experiences. Stories provide meaning for past experiences. A narrative, on the other hand, is a term

used by people to provide meaning to their experience. Story-telling is a uniquely human trait and it is a way we make sense of the world (Dwyer & Emerald, 2017). Clandinin (2015) maintains that teachers are ‘free’ to live out stories of their practice in their classrooms which forms a safe space for this. Additionally, Yang (2011) confirms that “the ultimate goal of using story-telling as a vehicle in teacher education is to develop inquiring teachers who engage in critical reflection, by themselves and with others, so as to seek their ongoing personal and professional growth” (p.233).

### ***Stories***

Since the dawn of mankind, humans have lived out, narrated and passed on stories through pictures and then words. Aristotle claimed that stories make it possible for us to share our world. Clandinin and Rosiek, (2007) profoundly claim that the “lived and told stories and the talk about stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities” (p. 35). Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) assert that people’s daily lives are shaped by stories of themselves and others around them and they are able to use these stories to interpret the past. Pillay (2014) agrees that “stories not only help to make sense of experiences but they also help to build connections with prior knowledge and improve memory” (p.29). In using narrative inquiry as a methodology, I explore how teachers make sense of their personal and professional lives. I use the retold narratives to highlight the manner in which teachers draw meanings from their personal and professional lives to inform their enacted practices of girl empowerment.

### **The Research Process**

#### ***Research Design***

This is a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is typified by its intent to understand the social world and the process to produce words rather than numbers (Brikci & Green, 2007). Oyetunji (2006) points out that the aim of a qualitative researcher is to seek and develop an understanding of individuals in their real-life settings. Cohen and Morrison (2000) assert that a qualitative approach is employed when a comprehensive inquiry is required. Furthermore, a qualitative researcher wants to know what happens, how does it happen and why it happens in this manner. The qualitative

approach permitted me to acquire a better understanding of how teachers influence and empower girl learners in diverse primary schools.

### ***Research Paradigm***

This qualitative research design is located in the interpretivist paradigm. Tuli (2010) maintains that the foundations of the interpretive paradigm lie in a qualitative approach. Cohen et al. (2007) affirm that the interpretive paradigm endeavours to understand human experience within the social world. They further allege that the aim of an interpretive researcher is “to understand their interpretations of the world around them” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.23). In the same manner, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) posit that an interpretive researcher attempts to “make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the natural world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting” (p.127). Since the phenomena under study here entail understanding people in real-life settings the qualitative approach allowed me to collect in-depth data from my participants. Within the interpretive paradigm I was able to understand and analyse the way teachers’ personal and professional lives influenced their enacted practices of girl empowerment.

### ***Selection of participants***

In qualitative research, purposive sampling is most appropriate (Brikci & Green, 2007). Additionally, a small sample is required within narrative inquiry as it captures rich, thick data. My study is conducted on a small scale which focuses on teachers’ enacted practices and girl empowerment. For these reasons, I used purposive sampling to select my participants. I enlisted four teachers from diverse primary schools. I selected teachers who are teaching grade seven girl learners, as girl learners in grade seven will be on the onset of adolescence or adolescents themselves. Care (2009) claims that adolescent girls develop a sense of ‘self’ thus cultivating empowering skills is imperative at this age.

For my study, I used one male teacher and three female teachers. The three female teachers varied in age, race and culture. One male participant was used to acquire a male perspective, since much of my study deals with girls. I was most interested to note how a male teacher influences and

empower girl learners. I also used my own narrative. By using various combinations of variables within my study, I ensured credibility (Brikci & Green, 2007). The names of my participants were changed to ensure anonymity. Below (Table 3.1) is a detailed profile of the teachers used in this study.

**Table 3.1: Profile of Participants**

<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years of teaching experience</b>
Lyn	Female	Indian	Christian	49	15
Sanelisiwe	Female	Black	Christian	43	10
Irene	Female	Coloured	Christian	53	33
Selvan	Male	Indian	Hindu	47	24

### ***Research Setting***

This study has been conducted in diverse primary schools in the greater Durban region. Three different schools were used. The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) place public schools in South Africa into five groups (quintiles). Schools are placed in their respective quintiles based on the poverty level of the community surrounding the school. Quintile 1 schools are ranked as very poor, quintile 2 schools as poor, quintile 3 schools as average, quintile 4 schools as fairly well off and quintile 5 schools as well off. Although some of these schools are ranked as quintile 5 schools, there is an influx of poor socio-economic learners who come from ‘out of area’ in search of a better education.

Two of these three schools in the study are classified as quintile 5 schools while one school is ranked as quintile 3.

The schools can be further organized by their history. Sunview Primary is an ex-Model C school, as a school that was historically constructed for whites only during the apartheid era. This school is an urban area and is well-resourced school; it has a fully functional Media Centre with computers, swimming pool, two huge playing fields and specialist classrooms. There is much emphasis on

academics and sport. Many of the learners attending this school come from the outer lying Durban South areas. Lyn and Irene are teachers at Sunview Primary.

School Rustview is an ex-HOD school, a school historically set aside for Indians only in the apartheid era. This school has limited resources; it has one huge playing field and small Media Centre with no computers and no specialist rooms. Still, many learners come from the outer lying suburbs. Selvan teaches at Rustview Primary.

School Mornview is situated in a rural area. This school has moderate resources; they have a big quad area, some specialist rooms like a library, a Science room and a Team-teaching room. The learners that attend this school are from the area and from a poor socio-economic background. Sanelisiwe is a teacher at Mornview Primary.

### ***Research setting for data collection***

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) highlight the notion of space in narrative inquiry. For this reason, I selected a place and space that would make my participants feel comfortable and safe. My school had a functional seminar room in the Media Centre with ample parking space. I hoped the space I chose would be quiet and favourable for dialogue and encourage my participants to be responsive to my data collection methods. I acknowledged that meeting at my school would be a challenge. My participants lived far away from this area; however, in speaking to them about the venue, they were quite happy to meet at my school. Some participants were curious and wanted to see the school set-up.

Another challenge was time constraints; the collage inquiry, metaphor analogy, artefact retrieval and group discussions required time. I did not want to meet after school, as teachers would be tired and not give me a good response. I endeavoured to set up the first group meeting during the weekend or school holiday. This proved to be very trying.

#### **Reflections from my journal, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

*OMG!!! I am ever going get my participant together.*

**Take 1:** *Set up group meeting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April. Sanelisiwe cancelled. She is graduating. She needs time to plan and make party arrangements. Cancel with other participants.*

**Take 2:** *Set up group meeting for the 7<sup>th</sup> of April. Everyone agreed to meet. Hooray!!!*

*Oh! No. I have to cancel. Strike action.*

**Take 3:** *Crossing my fingers, third time lucky. It is the Easter holidays. Can we meet?*

*Everyone agrees. Group meeting set up for Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of April.*

*What a relief! First group is really materializing*

**The day finally arrives:** *So nervous, butterflies in my stomach. Hope everyone arrives. Hope the male participant does not feel uncomfortable. What do I do to make him feel comfortable? We started with tea when everyone finally arrived. I do feel guilty I am taking time from their holiday. We introduced ourselves with an ice-breaker. This is the metaphor analogy.*

*I will start to make participants feel comfortable and they understand what is to be done.*

During the initial meeting I reiterated to my participants that their participation was voluntary and they could leave at any given time. I also outlined my research study and data collection methods.

## **SECTION B**

### **Data generation methods**

Arts-based methods weave magic and give meaning (Greenwood, 2012). A number of arts-based methods have been used to collect data in this research. Arts-based inquiry is based on the work of Eisner (1998), who maintains that knowledge is formulated and not discovered, and that a study is more comprehensive if researchers use several ways in which they examine, explain and understand the world (Greenwood, 2012). The arts-based methods used for this study is metaphor analogy, a collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo voice.

### ***Metaphor Analogy***

Metaphor analogy involves using an object to juxtapose it to another, for its similarities, as a figure of speech. Metaphor analogies can prove to be an important way for the mind to model and for the “reification of prior experience” (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011, p.763). Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) conducted studies which highlight how people use metaphors to make meaning of their lives and to understand their experiences. According to Thomas and Beauchamp (2011, p.763),

“metaphors can provide insight into ways in which people conceptualise experience, they are also culturally bound, which can limit meaning and interpretation, rendering the accompanying explanation crucial” (p.763).

The metaphor analogy was done as an ice-breaker during our initial meeting. In a group setting, my participants and I picked out a charm from a South African board game which included a car, top-hat, boot, wheel barrow and a puppy. As we introduced ourselves to the research group, we also spoke of how this particular charm can be associated with our lives in general. I went first so my participants were aware of the expectations of this activity (see text-box below). I listened intently with interest, allowing the participants to speak without interrupting, and endeavoured to be non-judgemental. The data captured during the metaphor analogy allowed me to elicit profound meanings from my participants’ personal and professional lives.

Furthermore, to bring the data alive I used the metaphor analogy as a device to explain the self, to analyse the self and to interpret the self. In Chapter 4, I used the metaphor to narrate the self (descriptive tale), in Chapter 5 the metaphor was used to analyse meanings of self (analytical tale) and in Chapter 6 the metaphor was used to interpret how the self plays itself out (interpretive tale). The metaphor analogy provided a powerful tool to highlight how teachers acquired meanings of girl empowerment from their personal lives which influenced their professional lives.

***Researcher***

*If I look at this boot here, I think I can associate it with my personal life. It stood the test of time, it stands for endurance, it is right at the bottom of feet and it endured so much of hardship and so much of joy. Yet when look at it, it still looks glossy, like when it was new. It has so much of experience with it as well. It has got older and older, but it has got a lot of experience, this shoe. As I said, it endured a lot; it endured good weather, bad weather... So I can associate myself with this boot. 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Transcript of first group meeting*

***Collage Inquiry***

Simmons & Daley (2013) draw on the words of Aristotle, “the soul never thinks without an image,” to explain the essence of collage inquiry. Collage inquiry can be described as a method of cutting pictures from any type of media source, like magazines or the newspaper, and sticking these pictures

on a piece of cardboard to tell a story. Gerstenblatt (2013) claims that collage inquiry conveys stories by weaving together images and words. Furthermore, collage inquiry allows for the use of expressive communication to explain the question under examination (Russo-Zimet, 2016). Collage inquiry creates a platform for participants and researchers to use images to engage in discussion around sensitive issues that may be difficult to articulate (Gerstenblatt, 2013). I used collage inquiry as a data source to highlight my participants' daily enacted practices with girl learners.

In our second group meeting, my participants and I undertook the collage activity collaboratively. I provided each participant with a piece of colourful A4 cardboard, some magazines, scissors, and glue. I explained the activity in detail. Prior to this, I had interacted with collage inquiry and I thoroughly enjoyed this creative arts space. I showed my participants the collage I produced to explain my research topic to my Teacher Development Studies (TDS) support group members. I also gave my participants a prompt (see Appendix 1): "What are my everyday experiences with girl learners?" This question gave them clear direction to create their collage. My participants gave me an indication they knew what to do. As the day progressed, I could see some of participants getting tired and frustrated.

Sanelisiwe asked, *"Don't you have any other magazines besides YOU."*

I quickly had to find other magazines. Luckily, the collage activity was done at my schools Media Centre so there were other magazines available.



**Figure 3.1: My Collage inquiry on teachers empowering girl learners**



After my participants completed their collage, each came out and discussed their collage with the group. According to Cohen et al. (2007), group discussions produce a broad range of responses and permit talk to develop and thrive with ease. Collage inquiry helped me to create a rich and colourful narrative and reduced the effect of a linear narrative (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). The collage inquiry activity was multi-faceted; it created insight into how teachers empower girl learners in diverse primary schools and it also allowed a glimpse of the participants' personal lives.

### ***Artefact Retrieval***

Riggins (1994) points out that objects or artefacts provide a person with personal identity and create stability in their lives. He further explains that artefacts are “social accessories of institutions and everyday life that are imbued with history and with meanings” (p. 36). Likewise, Pillay (2014) notes that “artefacts retrieval is an instrument that when used assists us in evoking memories about our past” (p.39). Artefacts, therefore, have a symbolic meaning that incites positive emotions and negative emotions. I used the artefact retrieval activity to gauge what personal and professional meanings inform and shape teachers' understanding of girl empowerment.

For the purposes of this study, I asked my participants to bring in an artefact that exemplifies who they are as a teacher. I also emailed some questions that outlined how to explain their artefact retrieval (see Appendix 1). This was also done as a group activity. I shared with the group my artefact (see Figure 3.2), a teddy bear given to me by one of my girl learners. Each participant, using my emailed outline, shared their meanings of this artefact in an oral presentation. This activity generated data on my participants' personal and professional lives, highlighting their values and beliefs.



**Figure 3.2: My artefact**

## *Photovoice*

Booth and Booth (2003) describe photovoice as using photographs to gain entry into people's lives and for others to gain access. Photovoice is a tool used by research participants to identify, epitomize and develop their community by using the technique of photography (Wang, 1999). Oliver, Wood and de Lange (2009) assert that photovoice is a creative way in which participants can be involved in recognizing and dealing with issues in the community. In addition, they claim that photovoice incites dialogue about vital issues affecting the community. Similarly, Booth and Booth (2003) point out that photovoice helps participants who lack the vocabulary to articulate their feelings and makes them feel like capable participants in the research study. I employed the photovoice activity to acquire an understanding of teachers' enacted practices with girl learners.

Since photovoice was a new concept to me, I had to first read more about it (Wang, 1999; Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009; Booth & Booth, 2003; Mitchell, Weber & Pithouse, 2009). I then drew from the work of Oliver, Wood and de Lange (2009) and followed the guidelines provided, to draw up an outline for my participants to follow. In administering the photovoice activity with my participants, I explained in detail what was expected. I also showed them an example I compiled (see Figure 3.3). I further explained the ethical issues that needed to be considered. No pictures of learners' face or logos are to be taken; I suggested they could take out pictures of the backs of learners or blur their faces. I gave my participants a prompt (see Appendix 1): "take photos of the different spaces in school that help you promote girl empowerment." I asked them to use their cell-phones to take the pictures and gave them a one- week time frame. I made arrangements for my participants to email these photos to me and I met them individually, where they explained the significance of each photo. Photovoice activity allowed the participants freedom of choice; therefore, data collected is their 'voice.'

The process of photo voice proved to be fruitful in the construction of the participants' narratives. It also created dialogue on the issue of teachers' influence on girl empowerment.



**Figure 3.3: An example of my photo voice**

### *Role of the researcher*

Yang (2011) affirms that narrative inquiry, like other qualitative methods, relies on validity, reliability and generalisability. To address these issues, I used multiple data sources like the metaphor analogy, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo voice in this study. The various data collection methods aided me in cross-checking my data findings (Russo- Zimet, 2016). As an insider and outsider researcher, I had to be as objective as possible in the analysis of the data collected. I had to ensure that I did not write over the voice of my participant and use their actual words (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The categories of analysis were derived from data, and the actual data was used as evidence in the analysis, rather than my interpretation of the data. To ensure validity and rigor, I listened to the tape recording of the group discussions several times and transcribed them, to ensure that I used the participants' own words (Gerstenblatt, 2013).

The ethical standards of this research study were maintained through ensuring the anonymity of the participants, by using pseudonyms. I acquired consent from the various gatekeepers. At the outset, participants were made aware that they were free to leave the research study at anytime they wished. Non-maleficence, or doing no harm to the participants, was ensured. I was an empathic listener and was not judgmental towards my participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). I endeavoured to create a bond of mutual trust and respect. The information given by the participants remained confidential.

As a narrative researcher, I acknowledged my own bias and endeavoured to be reflexive by taking the role of an observer or outsider in the data collection (Koski, 2011).

The ethical issues surrounding the use of visual data was quite challenging. The essential ethical issues concerning the use of visual data are informed consent and anonymity. While it was particularly challenging to acquire informed consent from all concerned (parents and learners) when using photographs for the photovoice, I obtained informed consent from the principals of the schools where my participants taught. I also advised my participants to capture photos that learners were comfortable with taking. To ensure the anonymity, I instructed my participants to capture photos of learners with their backs facing the camera or an aerial view of the activity learners were engaged in.

I followed the ethical considerations highlighted by Oliver, Wood and de Lange (2009). I provided my participants with a training session. I conducted a photovoice of my girl learners. I used this as an example to explain to my participants that logos and learners' faces had to be obscured. While my participants tried very hard to follow my example, in some photos girl learners' faces were visible. I selected some of these photos as my data source for my analysis however I edited these photos by blurring and obscuring the faces of these girl learners. Furthermore, I had to ensure that the pictures taken from magazines to create the collages did not infringe on any copyright.

**Table 3.2: Method of data collection and analysis in relation to the research question**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data generation method</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Research Context</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
1. What are teachers' stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools?	Collage Inquiry	Four teachers	Primary schools in urban areas	Teachers' Collage	1 hour-making collages 1 hour oral presentations
2. What personal and professional meanings shape teachers understanding of girl empowerment?	Artefact Retrieval	Four teachers	Primary schools in urban areas	Artefact: the meanings the artefact has for the participant	20 min per participants
3. How do teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools?	Photo Voice	Three teachers and researcher	Primary schools in urban areas	Teachers' photos	2 x 1 hour sessions

## SECTION C

### Interpretation of Data

#### *Narrative Analysis*

An inductive process of data analysis has been utilized for this study. Inductive reasoning operates from specific observations to broader generalisations. Clandinin and Huber (2010) state that knowledge developed from narrative inquiry leads to less generalization and certainties and towards wondering or imagining other possibilities.

Within the narrative inquiry framework, Polkinghorne (1995) points out that “narrative analysis is the procedure through which the researcher organizes the data elements into a coherent developmental account” (p.15). Hence, I extracted from the raw data emerging themes to construct my participants’ story. The researcher must create a plot and the produced story around the plot is the analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). The data from the metaphor analogy, artefact retrieval, collage inquiry and photo voice, helped in constructing a plot and the story itself. In Chapter Four, I report on the analysis of the data which was done by reconstructing four rich textured stories around teachers empowering girl learners.

To add to the authenticity of this study, the reconstructed story was given back to the participants for member checking. This adds to the believability and credibility of the data. Cohen et al. (2007) claim that member checking helps to correct errors, and gives participants the chance to include more information, adding to the sufficiency of the analysis. I remember my participant Lyn complaining, “*My gran did missionary work- she was not a missionary and lived in Shallcross not Chatsworth*”.

I made sure my participants felt comfortable about the inferences I made about their lives. The rigour of this study lies in the different levels of analysis. The narratives were reconstructed in the first person to allow the reader to become emotionally connected; I used vignettes to give my version of the narrative and used themes to create the narrative. The theoretical framing guided me in forming the themes.

## **Analysis of Narratives**

### ***Vignettes***

Vignettes were used to acquire meaning of the four teachers' story. Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney and Neale (2010) explain vignettes as, "snapshot scenario or story that unfolds through a series of stages" (p.176). The vignette assisted me in highlighting the one personal meaning that informed the participants' professional meaning of girl empowerment. Pillay (2003) claims that vignettes offer the researcher a space to "provide a critical perspective in the interpretation, through a process of excavating and making visible those subtle silences and muted experiences embedded in the life story, that have shaped, and continue to shape teachers' lives" (p.81). I used vignettes to focus on one of the teachers' personal and professional meaning that shapes and continues to shape their understanding of girl empowerment.

### ***Thematic Analysis***

Thematic analysis is used to explain and interpret the four reconstructed narratives of teachers empowering girl learners with leadership skills. Boyatzis (1998) and Clandinin and Huber (2010) affirm that thematic analysis is the simplest form of analysing qualitative data. They further claim that thematic analysis is a good way for the researcher to become intimate with the data collected and to develop a deeper understanding of the data. Themes present the means whereby opinions and ideas are grouped together, and differences are connected within the data. The theoretical framework guided the themes in this study. Themes were used to respond to research questions one and three.

### **Interacting with data**

I started my data collection during the Easter holidays in 2017. I initiated two group sessions and met individually with my participants on one occasion. While it was difficult to organise the group sessions, they went off well. My participants thoroughly enjoyed the arts-based methods of data collection and engaged well with the collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and metaphor analogy. It gave me great pleasure to meet my participants individually, as I got to focus on them personally. I gained much data on their personal life. I realise my participants might not have shared some sensitive information of their personal life in the group sessions.

While the data collection was pleasing, I found interacting with the data quite difficult. Listening to the tapes and transcribing data proved to be time-consuming. I found it a challenge, with my family life, to find a quiet place to listen and transcribe. It therefore took a long time. However, I persevered and by constantly listening to the tapes and transcribing *verbatim*, it allowed me the opportunity to acquire a better understanding of my participants. In reading the transcripts over and over again, I could see common ground and was able to link data that was similar, together.

Creswell (1998) highlights the importance of representing and interpreting data carefully. I must admit that although I knew the data well and I could see the common threads and themes, I struggled to put ‘pen to paper.’ I relied on the support of my supervisor and TDS support group peers. My supervisor encouraged me to present my analysis to the group; their feedback helped me to make meaning of the data (see figure 3.4). I gained further meaning from using arts-based methods (collage portraiture, object-map and pantoum poems) in conjunction with my analytical framing to analyse data.

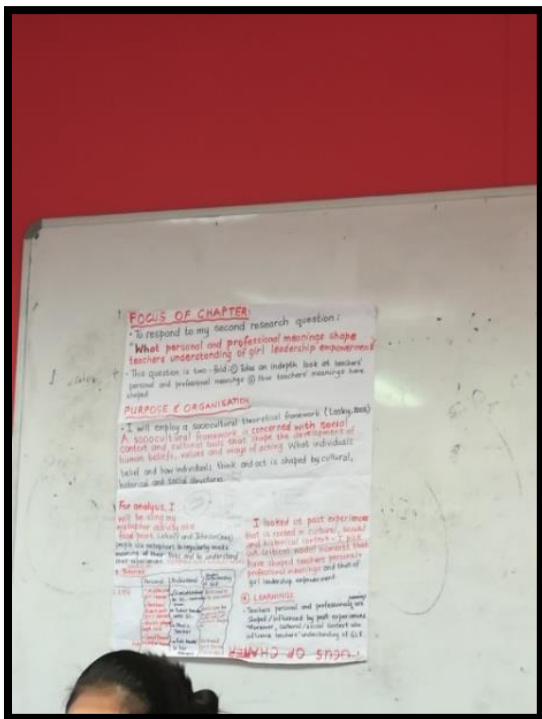


Figure 3.4: Presenting data analysis for Chapter Five



## **Analytical framing**

I employed two analytical frames to analyse data. For the analysis in Chapter Five, I drew on the Sociocultural Theoretical Framework and for the analysis in Chapter Six I used Rowlands' (1997) Empowerment/Leadership Framework.

### ***The Sociocultural Theory***

I found using the Sociocultural Theoretical framing most apt for my study to elucidate and deepen my understanding of how teachers' personal and professional meaning shape their understanding of girl empowerment. The foundations of the Sociocultural Theory lie in the work of Vygotsky, who believed parents, caregivers, peers and cultural tools, were responsible for developing higher order functions. Subsequently, Lasky (2005) drew on the Sociocultural Theory to understand teacher identity. Lasky (2005) believed that social context and cultural tools influence the growth of human belief, values and ways of acting. For this study, I draw much from Lasky (2005) Sociocultural Theory of Teacher Identity. I used the sociocultural lens to analyse how cultural, historical and social structures shaped teachers' understanding of girl empowerment.

The social structures took into account the teacher's family structures, and within the cultural structures, I looked religion and social practices and the historical structures looked at the political situation of a particular time in a teacher life. I analyzed how these structures (social, cultural and historical) influenced teachers' personal meanings and how this affected their professional meanings. Simultaneously, I analysed how these personal and professional meanings shaped teachers' understanding of girl empowerment.

### ***Rowlands Empowerment/ Leadership Framework***

In addition, I employed Rowland's (1997) Empowerment/Leadership framework to analyse teachers' enacted practices of girl leadership empowerment in diverse primary schools. This framework is most apt as it includes the notion of empowerment and leadership. Rowlands' (1997, p. 13) Empowerment/Leadership framework is based on the premise that power manifests in four forms: power within (which deals with cognitive change and self-belief); power to (which focuses

on change in behaviour); power over (which is the ability one has to influence and coerce others), and power with (which is how one acts with others to confront discriminatory behaviour). Furthermore, Rowlands' forms of power are experienced and visible through three dimensions of empowerment. Empowerment then is experienced on a personal level (which entails developing a sense of self and individual confidence); a relational level (developing the ability to negotiate and influence others), and a collective level (which involves individuals working together to achieve a greater impact).

I utilize this framework to look at how teachers themselves influence (power over) girl learners in their enacted practices within the relational level of empowerment. Furthermore, I analyse how teachers develop and build girl learners' self-esteem and self-confidence (power within) in their enacted practices within the personal level of empowerment. Within the collective level of empowerment, I analyse how teachers use the various forms of power in safe spaces, within the school environment, to cultivate empowerment skills in girl learners.

For me to make meaning of the data and most importantly to bring the data alive I used various forms of arts-based data analysis methods. In the section below, I describe these methods: collage portraiture, object-map and pantoum poems.

## **Data analysis methods**

### ***Collage Portraiture***

I utilize collage portraiture in Chapter Four to help me construct a nuanced narrative of my participants' stories. My understanding of collage portraits is acquired from the work of Gerstenblatt (2013). She maintains that collage portraits offer the qualitative researcher an alternate method to gain "a deeper and authentic understanding of individuals and their challenges within cultural, political and social contexts" (p.304). Since this study makes use of Sociocultural Theory to analyse data of teachers' personal and professional lives within their social, cultural and historical contexts, collage portraits were most beneficial. Additionally, Gerstenblatt (2013) points out that the process of making collage portraits offers "another layer of vision," allowing collage portraits to convey stories by weaving together words and images"

(p.304). By creating a collage portrait for my participants, I was able to get a better understanding of who they were as individuals. I allowed the pictures and words to guide my plot of the narrative.

### ***Object-map***

To analyse Chapter Five, I used object-maps which I drew from the ideology body mapping (Gastaldo, Rivas-Quarneti & Magalhaes, 2018). According to Gastaldo et al. (2018), body mapping is an arts-based method used to “visually represent aspects of peoples’ lives, their bodies and the world they live in” (p.3). This is done by drawing or painting a picture representing the person, then writing out pertinent aspects of their lives. To create my object-maps for my participants, I drew the objects used in the metaphor analogy: car, top-hat, wheel barrow and puppy, and mapped around these objects certain critical moments that shaped their personal and professional lives to inform their understanding of girl empowerment. Using themes from the object-map, I created vignettes.

### ***Pantoum poems***

Again, to bring the data alive, I used pantoum poems to analyse teachers’ enacted practices with girl learners. To create pantoum poems for my participants, I used the French Malaysian Pantoum format with its “repetitive lines [that allow] for the salient or emotionally evocative themes” (Furman, Lietz & Langer, 2006, p. 28). I extracted six phrases from a visual collage that depicted teachers’ enacted practices with girl learners. I then utilized these phrases to form the pantoums poems (see below for the format of pantoum poem). I used the phrases from the poem to create themes. These themes revolve around teachers’ enacted practices of girl empowerment.

### ***Format of pantoum poem***

*Stanza 1:*

*Line 1*

*Line 2*

*Line 3*

*Line 4*

*Stanza2:*

*Line 5 (repeat of line 2)*

*Line 6*

*Line 7 (repeat of line 4)*

*Line 8*

*Stanza 3:*

*Line 9 (repeat of line 6)*

*Line 10 (repeat of line 3)*

*Line 11 (repeat of line 8)*

*Line 12 (repeat of line 1)*

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I explained in detail the methodology driving my study. I clarified my research design, the data production methods and the analytical framing used in this study. I also described the challenges I encountered in working with the data and how I overcame them by using arts-based methods as a tool to make meaning of data. This helped me to analyse how teachers empower girl learners with empowering skills in diverse primary schools. In the next chapter, I present the re-told stories of four teachers empowering girl learners.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RE-TELLING TEACHERS' STORIES OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has elaborated on the methodology and research design that was used to generate data for the stories told in this chapter. Chapter Four responds to my first research question, *“What are teachers’ stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools?”*

Thus, in this chapter, I present four retold teachers’ stories. To create a nuanced textured story, I crafted a collage portrait for each of my participants. The collage portrait guided me in creating an evocative story line. Collage portraiture is an arts-based method of analysis that supports narrative thematic analysis (Gerstenblatt, 2013). In constructing the collage portrait, I followed some of the steps advised by Gerstenblatt (2013): listen to interviews, transcribe, highlight words/phrases from transcripts, cut out portions of texts and images, arrange on page and identify themes. Using themes that emerged, I recreated the stories of my participants.

These stories give me glimpses of my participants’ personal and professional lives. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of my participants. In this chapter, you will be introduced to Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan.

#### LYN’S STORY

##### **Becoming the driver of my life**

*During the past 11 years, after the death of my husband I had to do nothing else but take the driver’s seat. And I had to take the steering wheel. And steer my life and that of my son. It has been a struggle. This car has broken down many times. If you are not in the right environment, this car can stay in one place and rust.*



**Figure 4.1: Lyn's collage portrait**

***Growing up in a devout Christian family***

I am the third child born in the late sixties. I lived in the outskirts of Chatsworth (an Indian area) in a place called Shallcross. My parents treasured me. I have one brother and two sisters. We are a devout Christian family. My family was very involved in the church. Dad sometimes preached. My dad was also a teacher, like his whole family. My grandfather was a principal and many of my aunts and uncles were teachers.

***My grandmother and mom, my role models***

My grandmother made a huge impact on my life and on others around her. I was especially proud of grandmother, as she was a teacher. It was rare for Indian women to be educated in her time. She was a strong female who stood out in a male-dominated world. She served many communities with her social work. Today her picture and memory lives on in the Pinetown Municipal library, due to her contribution to the area. My mom, on the other hand, was a housewife. She was a beautiful woman who wanted to be a nurse. I don't know why my dad did not encourage this; nevertheless, she also made an impact on my life. She ensured we dressed conservatively, wore our frilly dresses with stockings and had our hair tied neatly. We had to sit quietly in church or deal with mom's wrath.

Mum was the perfect housewife and the perfect partner to my dad. Sadly, she died of cancer. At her funeral, I was amazed at the tributes people gave. I did not know that she did so much community work. But at her funeral, I learnt of how she walked to people's homes giving them groceries, praying and encouraging them to attend church.

### ***Dad my teacher***

I started primary school in 1975. It was an Indian school for only Indians with Indian teachers. I went to the same primary school where my dad taught. It was difficult being a teacher's daughter. Perfection was expected. My dad played a vital role in laying the foundation for my learning. In fact, I write so neatly because of him. He has the most meticulous writing. In Standard 5, my dad taught my class English. My friends and I always wanted him to read stories, as he made them come alive. However, when it came to academics, my dad focused his attention and energy more on my two elder siblings. I do not think this was intentional but I felt he did not motivate me to achieve. This led me to compete with my other two siblings. I wanted always to be better than them. While dad did not push me to be great, he did plant the seed in me to make an impact on others.

### ***My teachers had low expectations of us girl learners***

I found that most of my teachers had low expectations of us girl learners. They failed to motivate us. Moreover, apartheid limited our career choices; we could be teachers, nurses, doctors and lawyers, but not air-hostesses or scientists and so on. My teachers never encouraged me to dream big or think 'out of the box'. Now I wonder how different my life would have been if I had been pushed beyond my limits.

### ***'Music united me with children'***

Music was my strength. I was not given much choice of career. My eldest two siblings were already in university when I started studying. This created a financial strain on my family as only dad worked. My parents asked me to study teaching as bursaries were offered. I did not mind choosing teaching, as long as I could do music. With an 'A' in music in matric, it was easy to get into college. I was accepted at Springfield Teachers Training College. Music paved the way forward in my life.

My interest in music started at church with my dad. We were lucky to have a piano. I loved our piano, it was my best friend. When I was sad, happy, excited, I would play my music. I did my practicals in piano up to Grade 7 through Trinity College of Music, London. I played the recorder at school. I was top of the class in instrument and theory of music. I still have my tambourine which my dad bought for me. Thus, the choice of the tambourine is reflective of how I got into teaching. Because of church, my entire family is musically inclined, and we participated in praise and worship. Music is still important. It unites me with children. It is a language that I can speak with them.



**Figure4. 2: Lyn's artefact a tambourine**

### *Being a role model to my girl learners*

I currently teach in a very dynamic ex-Model C school. The staff is friendly and very supportive. The School Management Team (SMT) motivates and challenges us to take leading roles in the school environment. I head the Cultural Committee in school, which is responsible for concerts and assemblies. I head the Dance and Drama Club. And I am responsible for the school's choir, as there is no music teacher.

I am a very motivated and dedicated teacher. I expect the same dedication from my learners. Whatever work they hand in for assessment must be of a high standard. I always tell them to give a hundred and ten percent. I endeavour to be a role model to my learners. I firmly believe in lifelong learning. To exemplify this, I have just completed my B.Ed (Honours) cum laude.



## *My everyday experiences with girl learners*



**Figure 4.3: A collage of my everyday experiences with girl learners**

My girl learners are special. I see myself in every girl that I teach. I want them to know that the world is their ‘oyster.’ They must not be limited to just one career choice. I constantly speak to my girl learners about their behaviour as young ladies: “You need to dress appropriately. Just a simple thing how you dress will determine your behaviour as well. Your dressing skimpily means people will not take you seriously”. I always want my girls to be like queens, to dress like royalty and feel like royalty. I use various spaces within my school to encourage my girl learners to be the best they can be.

### ***My Classroom***

In my classroom, I encourage girls to answer questions. I give them the opportunity to be part of the class discussion and voice their opinions and feelings. I encourage them to do their best in their class work. I speak to my girl learners about being resilient and independent, and I tell them it pays to persevere. I motivate girls to compete with boys academically. In 2014, there was a girl learner in my class who always took second position in the grade. I worked with her, motivated her and eventually she got the Dux award, which is for first in grade. That was one of my proudest moments as a teacher.

Every year I help girls enter the Oprah Winfrey Leadership School. I help them to fill out the forms and submit them for the girls. Two of the girls in my class were successful, Sthembile and Amile. Just by giving in their application, I may have done just a little bit in making them successful leaders for the future.



**Figure 4.4: My classroom and the school hall**

### *The Hall*

The hall, specifically the stage, is used during my dance and drama lessons. In this space, the girls are carefree, happy and creative. There are girls who are very confident, and in contrast, some who use this class as a means of developing confidence. They learn to express themselves through dance. Confidence grows as they learn skills on how to deliver speeches, to participate in play acting and team building exercises. Most importantly though, the girls choreograph their own dances and are given a chance to lead the lessons. This gives them a sense of achievement, which builds their self-esteem. I also have my choir training at the hall. Many of the choir members are girls. They love singing gospel, love songs and inspirational songs. Music unites us. It's a relaxed atmosphere. The girls often perform solos and group items. They are so keen to show off their talent. Those with talent are encouraged to go for voice training classes, to take part in church choirs, and to work up to the point of entering competitions, especially Pop Idol, the national talent show that is televised. These girls feed off encouragement and are so eager to please.

### *The Technology room*

The tech room is a place for creativity. Girls tend to show hatred for this subject, they dislike the drawings and building of models. I team girls up and through guidance, enable them to create the models all on their own. I love seeing their eyes light up when they solve their own building problem. They always tend to start off in a negative mind-frame, moaning at the lack of boys in the group. But the competition that builds between teams motivates them to achieve, and it is good for them just to say, “Hey, girls built this!” The message given during these lessons is that engineering is not specifically for boys, as both boys and girls can excel in this field.



**Figure 4.5: The technology room and the school ground**

### *The School Grounds*

The school ground is an excellent environment for my one-on-one chats with the girls. While on duty, I approach the girls and chat with them about projects they have done, where they can improve etc. I also instill a competitive spirit within them by motivating them to work towards upcoming goals e.g. the prestigious Orator’s trophy. The break time is also when I am often approached and asked for advice on relationships, domestic issues and so forth, because of the non-threatening space on the ground, as opposed to the classroom.

## SANELISIWE'S STORY

### Wearing the top hat with care

I have the top hat. This top hat symbolizes, you know, when you put the hat here [the head], it symbolizes intelligence. As I just graduated last Tuesday with my Masters, the base of the top hat represents the mortar board of a graduation cap. I like learning, and learning new things. And this hat also represents me as a teacher.



Figure 4.6: Sanelisiwe's collage portrait

### *My family dynamics*

I am Sanelisiwe Mthembu but I am called Sane by my friends and family. I was born in the late 70s in the deep rural area of Ixopo. My father, who was the *induna* or the chief in this area, had three wives and twenty-one children. I am the sixth and last-born child for my father's third wife. Growing up in this family dynamics had many challenges. My siblings and I always fought for my father's attention. This made my father unhappy; however, we cared for each other. We were one big happy family, after all. I was close to my dad and he made a great impact on my life. He always stressed the importance of education. He said that education was the key to success. In fact, it was my dad who encouraged me to continue with my studies. My dad had hope for me. He said I will be like Miss. Khumalo, a teacher living in our rural community. Her family was rich because she was working. He promised to slaughter a cow when I finished matric.

### *My life as a traditional Zulu girl*

I faced many challenges as a girl growing up in a traditional Zulu family. It was the girl's responsibility to take care of the huge herd of cattle my father had. Besides herding the cattle, we had to fetch water from the river. We also had to help my father with his vegetable garden. Another responsibility my sisters and I had was to collect firewood. After all of these chores, I had to cook for the whole family. My brothers, on the other hand, did not help with household chores. They were much bigger and went in search of jobs in the mines.

### *Rural schooling*

My schooling career began in 1984. The school was very close to home. It was a school built by the community. My father and the community built the school from plank that was donated by a nearby factory called Pinet. My school did not have many resources. There was no furniture, we sat on the floor. I carried an old clothing item to place under my knee so that I could bend and write. We had toilet pits. Teachers used severe corporal punishment. I moved from this primary school to another. This school was far away from home. At one stage, I nearly dropped out of school because of the long distance I had to walk. I had to walk a total of 14 kilometers. I attended this school for four years and completed my Grade 7 here.

At primary school, I was quite a good learner and I excelled. Teachers relied on me to help the other learners. I was given the opportunity to play teacher when my teacher was not there. Mr. Mkhize used to give me his book and I had to ask the learners questions. In Grades 6 and 7, I received first position in class.

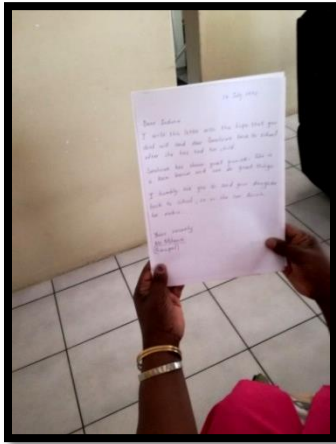
### *Peer pressure*

There were no high schools in my area. I had to move in with my sister. She lived in a place called Donbrow, which was near town. I also performed very well at high school. They called me 'teacher' at this high school. I tried my best as I was away from home though there were no parents to watch my every move. My older sister was in Grade 9. We shared the household responsibilities. We took turns to cook. In Grade 9 I met a boy. It was during this time that I fell pregnant. I was disappointed

myself, I let peer pressure ruin my life. This was a major setback for me. I was only fifteen years old. I had to leave school and stay at home.

### ***My saving grace***

To my surprise, my teachers wrote a letter to my parents telling them of the immense potential I had. They appealed to my parents to send me back to school after the birth of my child. My father was angry and he strongly objected. He felt that a girl that was a wife and a mother could not attend school. My mother, however, supported my cause. The following year I went back to school and completed my Grade 9. It was at this point I decided to take control of my life; I wanted to be the CEO of my dreams. I moved back home to take care of my baby. I had to walk a long distance to school. Again, I did very well at school and I took my school work very seriously.



**Figure 4.7: Sanelisiwe's artefact (the letter from her principal)**

### ***I am an icon***

I finished matric in 1996. I was the first learner at that school to receive a matric exemption. Today, I am an icon in my community. Parents tell their daughters, "Look at her, she had a baby at fifteen but she turned her life around." Parents bring their daughters to me to speak to them, to advise them about life and to mentor them.

### ***Becoming a teacher***

My father did not slaughter a cow like he promised but he gave me three cows to sell so that I could attend university. I enrolled at UDW for a B.A. Admin degree. Life was even harder at university.

While I received financial aid, this did not cover the cost of staying away from home. I managed to supplement my income by running a small stall selling snacks outside the library area. I completed my degree in 1999. And in 2008, I attended Edgewood and completed my PGCE.

### *Current teaching experiences with girl learners*



**Figure 4.8: A collage of my everyday experiences with girl learners**

I continuously talk to my Grade 7 girls about the challenges facing them as girls. I encourage them to make good choices. I do not want my learners to fall pregnant in primary school. When learners stay away from school, I write letters and make phone calls to parents. I try to show my learners how to be independent. I encourage girls to do cultural things. Part of the cultural activity I encourage is virginity testing. This will deter girls from becoming sexually active. I also teach them how to be independent.

### *The School Fields*



**Figures 4.9: Pictures of the girls and myself recycling litter**

I make a concerted effort to take my girl learners into the field to pick up litter. This litter is then collected in bins and sold to recycling companies like Mondi Recycling. In encouraging recycling, I teach girl learners to become entrepreneurs and start their own businesses. One way to earn money is to pick up waste and recycle it. I strongly believe in showing girl learners the many entrepreneurial opportunities that exist while they are young. I actually won a trip to Cape Town with learners for selling litter. I like to see my girls as successful businesswoman that is why I am instilling entrepreneurial skills.

### ***The Team-Teaching area***

It is in the Team-Teaching room that I sit with my girl learners and have private discussions on puberty. We get sanitary wear from the Department of Education (DoE). I explain to girl learners about hygiene and how to take care of themselves and how to behave like a lady, so they know what will happen when boys approach them and how to deal with the situation.





**Figure 4.10: The Team-teaching area and the Library**

### *The Library*

I take my learners twice a week to the library. I encourage my girl learners to take books regularly home to read. Furthermore, I make them read aloud to their friends, in groups. This helps with pronunciation and confidence. My girl learners are second language speakers and are shy to read aloud. By reading with their peers they are able to help one another. I also listen to them read individually to me. I also use this space to conduct debates. I loved debating when I was at school and encourage my learners to participate in debating challenges.

### *The Quad*

I use the area in the quad to conduct my soul buddies programme. The learners in brightly coloured bibs are in the soul buddies programme. The soul buddies programme consists both of boys and girls. Soul buddies teach learners a lot. It teaches girl learners life skills: how to behave when approached by a boy; how to deal with peer pressure; to respect their bodies. If I am able to teach or reach a few girl learners and make a difference in their lives, I am happy. I feel very proud because I introduced the soul buddies programme at my school. This programme makes a big mark in the learners' lives. I took the soul buddies learners to schools on the KZN north coast. There we were also taught a lot of skill by other facilitators. The learners had to mingle with other learners and races and they got to see life differently. This was a real 'eye opener' for the learners in my school, as they do not really leave the rural area. Boys are included in the programme to promote the idea of 'I am my sister's keeper.' Girls must be seen as more than just the opposite sex.

I also coach netball. I recently managed to encourage my principal to start a girls' soccer team. She agreed and a soccer coach was hired to teach them. The girls' soccer team is now playing matches with other schools. We are extremely proud of our girls' soccer team.



**Figure 4.11: My soul buddies programme in the quad**

## **IRENE'S STORY**

### **Pushing the Wheel Barrow**

Throughout my teaching experience, for 30 years now, I have not tired of teaching. I am going to use this wheel barrow and say "I have been pushing and pushing." When I started off 30years ago, it was like all smooth, but now with everything that is going on in education and the work load becoming so much and harder, I feel we have a long way to go with our children, and I am going to carry on pushing and pushing, until one day it is my time to say good-bye.



**Figure 4.12: Irene’s collage portrait**

***Growing up with a strong mother***

My family was moved from the Eastern Cape during the apartheid era. They moved to Gauteng and settled in a small town called Boksburg. It is here that I was born, in 1965. I was the only girl in the family. I had three brothers. It was not easy fitting into my family. My mum was this perfect woman who ruled the household very strictly. She followed the Bible religiously. It was church from Sunday to Sunday. She belonged to the sisters’ committee, Bible study group, the choir; she was a Sunday school teacher, the youth assistant and the secretary of the finance committee. As her daughter, I had to follow her everywhere she went. Most importantly I had to behave like a ‘perfect girl.’ All I wanted to do, however, was be like my brothers and play soccer with them! I was a tomboy!

My mother was the only member of family to get a good education. She went to a Catholic boarding school with white nuns as teachers. Mom loved her schooling here and promised that if she had children, she would send them to boarding school.

### ***My schooling***

I started school in 1975. I went to Drommedaris Primary school. My school was named after one of Jan van Riebeeck's ships. It was a school for coloureds and an Afrikaans medium school. I had beautiful and sophisticated female teachers in primary school. They were always immaculately dressed. They wore fancy jewelry and drove cars. My male teachers were strict and scary. They always had a cane in their hand. If you did not know your multiplication tables, you would "catch it" with the cane. I can still, to this day picture my English teacher with a cane in his hand. He lived in same street as we did. Sometimes, he went overboard with the corporal punishment. He also coached long-distance running. He used to stay in late into the afternoon coaching us. I loved sport, especially long-distance running. I was a good long-distance runner and one of his favourite learners.

### ***Boarding school***

My mother sent me to a Catholic boarding school to complete my secondary education. We were taught by white nuns that moved around like ghosts. The school was extremely strict. Discipline was first and foremost. The first few weeks at boarding school were scary. I felt like I was in jail. My elder brother also attended boarding school with me. I remember him crying to me, "How could they (my parents) do this to us?"

We only went home during the holidays. Luckily, the boarding school was only up till Grade 10.

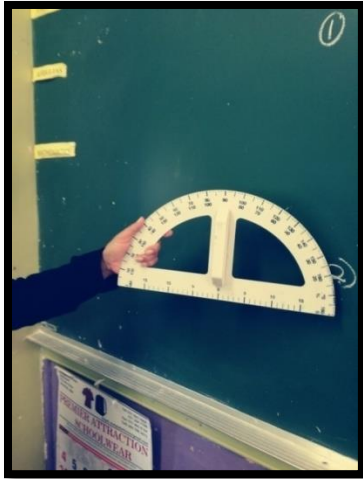
I then attended Oosrand Secondary. This was also an Afrikaans medium school. High school here was the best. I thrived academically and I enjoyed the company of other girl learners. At first, I struggled with subjects like Mathematics but this changed when Mrs. Primrose taught me.

### ***Becoming a teacher***

I always wanted to become a lawyer or a teacher. However, my Grade 10, 11 and 12 Mathematics teacher, Mrs. Primrose, made a great mark on me. She was beautiful, always prim and proper, and passionate about Mathematics. She was strict but loved her learners and would do anything to see her learners excel. She made sums look so easy. She had a special gift. I still remember she used to have this one-on-one conversation with us. She would motivate and encourage us never to give up

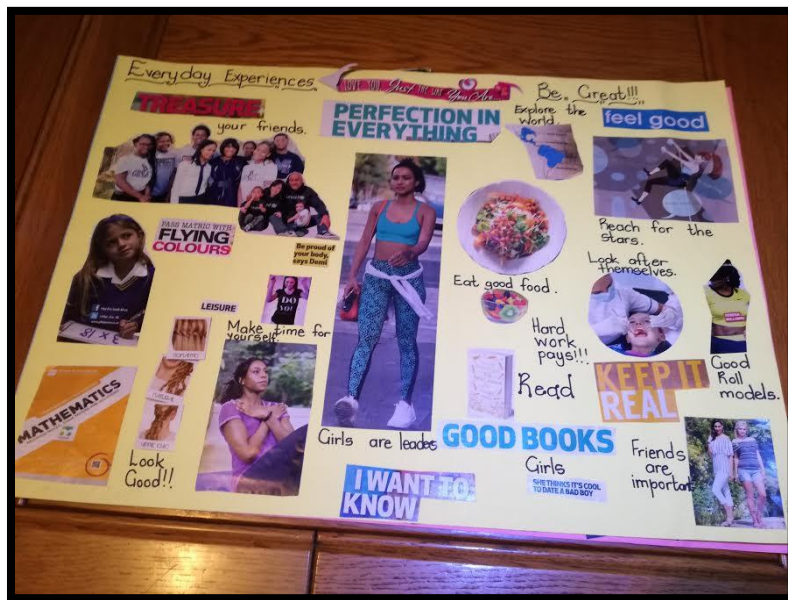
and to work hard. She always said, “Become someone great in life.” I admired Mrs. Primrose and always wanted to be like her one day.

It is for this reason, after high school that I decided to become a teacher. I wanted to be just like my high school Mathematics teacher. She inspired me. Today I think I see a lot of Mrs. Primrose in me. I am a strict Mathematics teacher but love my learners.



**Figure 4.13: Irene’s artefact, a protractor**

*My everyday experiences with girl learners*



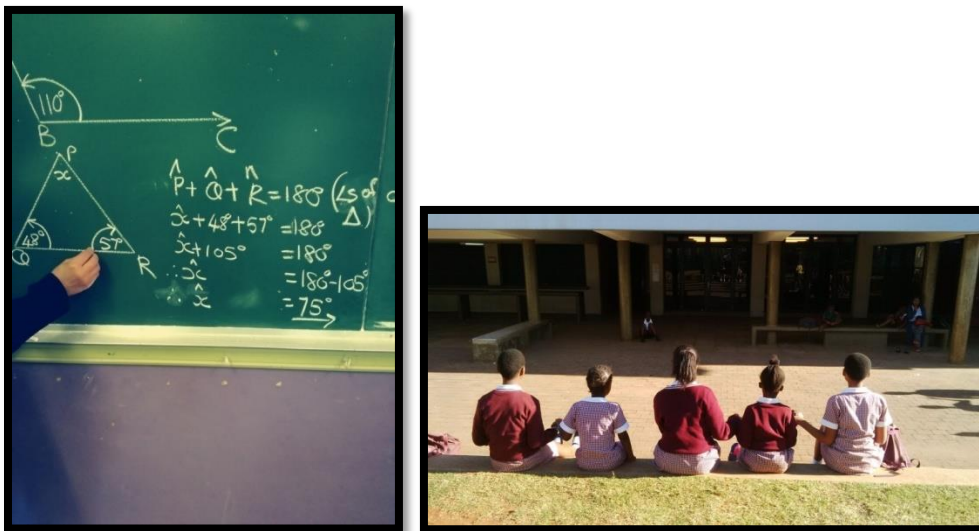
**Figure 4.14: A collage of my everyday experiences with girl learners**

I currently teach Mathematics, Afrikaans and Life Orientation to Grade 7 learners. I also coach the Under-13 boys soccer team as we are short of male teachers. I endeavour every day to be like my

Grade 11 and 12 Mathematics teacher. I want to motivate girl learners like my teachers did. I tell my girl learners, “Don’t go and just get married, and do what everybody expects of you. Go explore the world and be anything you want to be... Knowledge is power! I try to inspire my girl learners in my classes.

### *My classroom*

Maths is a very important subject in Grade 7. Learners have to acquire a forty percent pass in order to progress to the next grade. Girl learners especially find Maths to be abstract. I use the chalk board to help learners grasp the concepts taught. By showing girl learners practical examples, they understand these mathematical concepts. I also hold free extra Maths classes for those girl learners that are struggling with Maths. This is done after school in my classroom. I am quite strict with my learners; if homework is not done I give them demerits. I always tell them that practice makes perfect. Infact other teachers complain that my learners only do Maths during their lessons.



**Figure 4.15: My classroom and Prefects and mentors**

I am part of the prefect committee. Girl are made prefects. They are given special badges and certificates. Here girls are given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. They help teachers to monitor learners during break time. They ensure that other learners follow the rules and regulations of the school. Girl prefects guide their peers during class tasks.

I also get girl learners to be mentors to other smaller girl learners. These Grade 7 mentor learners do not necessarily have to be prefects. They help the younger learners in academics, with behaviour or just advise them with their home issues. Often learners come from troubled homes and this filters into their school life. Having someone to talk to is a great help to the younger learners. This mentorship programme has the ‘big sister’ effect.

### *The Hall*



**Figure 4.16: Talk on puberty and dream girls programme**

Often I talk to girls about puberty. This is part of their Life Orientation curriculum. I talk them about their body changes, personal hygiene and emotional changes. I do a lot of group work as girls shy away from these topics. I also enlist the help of other organisations like the Always road show, which focuses on body changes and hygiene.

My school has a *Dream Girls Programme* run by a non-profit organisation. As the Life Orientation teacher, I oversee this programme. I encourage all my girl learners to attend this programme. Here girls are taught morals, values and life lessons. They are taught to accept other cultures and be respectful. Most of all, this programme draws attention to the idea of ‘sisterhood.’ Girls are taught not to be jealous but to up lift one another.

I want the best for my girl learners as I was once a girl learner. Girls have so many opportunities nowadays. I want to make them aware that they can rise above their circumstances and be anything they want to be. This can be achieved through hard work and self-belief.

## SELVAN'S STORY

### Being the active puppy

The token that I have is a puppy. I would like to think it symbolizes me a lot. I found that I could look at three qualities that symbolize me as a puppy. Loyalty: I place high regard on loyalty, whether it is for family, friends or people I meet. I think loyalty is top of the list. With that comes honesty as well. Like a puppy, I tend to love unconditionally. And the third thing that this puppy symbolizes in me, not so much from the very emotional aspect of it, though, is that puppies are very active. And I would like to think that I am very, very active. I can't think of my life without sport.



Figure 4.17: Selvan's collage portrait

### *My experiences as an Indian boy*

I come from a small family which consists of my dad, mum and sister. I am the eldest. I live in Chatsworth, an area designated for the Indian community during the apartheid era. My dad was the driving force in my education. He always ensured that my sister and I had everything we needed for school. My parents treated us equally. He instilled important values in us and always said, "There is no substitute for hard work, if we wish to succeed." It is because of my dad that I have the neatest writing. My dad's writing was so neat. I wanted to emulate him. Ultimately, as an Indian boy, there



were high expectations placed by my family on academics. My parents were not professionals, but they had a dream for me: I had to go to university. Therefore, I had to perform well. I cannot remember if the same amount of pressure was put on my sister.



**Figure 4.18: Selvan's artefact, a pen**

### *My schooling years*

My formal schooling began in 1977. I attended an Indian primary school in my community called Sunnyvale. I interacted with only Indian teachers and learners. A high premium was placed on academics at this school. I was fortunate to have matched the expectations of my school and family. I excelled academically. I enjoyed my primary school years. I thoroughly enjoyed my teachers, especially my Grade 5 and Grade 7 teachers, Miss. Subben and Mr. Rehman. These teachers have made a major impact in my life.

My high school, Shadowlands Secondary, provided experiences that were contrary to primary school. The attitude and interest shown by teachers were of indifference. They did not show the care my primary teachers showed. It was during this critical time that my interest changed to sport rather than academics. Sport became my priority. I excelled at sports. I represented Natal High Schools at cricket and volleyball. I also won the Marianhill Senior Tennis League and Knock-out Cup.

### *Becoming a teacher*

In the beginning, teaching was not one of the career paths that I considered. If I had the opportunity, I would have taken up sport professionally. But not much could come out of sport for an Indian male

during the apartheid era. It was purely because of my love for sport that I felt I could make a difference to kids by being a sports coach. So, I decided to become a Physical Education (P.E) teacher. This decision to become a teacher was greatly supported by my parents. Teaching was a noble profession and I came out with a professional degree. Members of my extended family also supported my decision to become a teacher, as many of them were in the teaching profession.

As time went by, I realized that becoming a teacher was the best decision I had ever made, as the joy of making a difference in the life of a child is immeasurable. This coupled with the fact that I am more comfortable around children rather than adults meant that I had made the correct decision to become a teacher.

### *My everyday experiences with girl learners*



**Figure 4.19: A collage of my everyday experiences with girl learners**

As a teacher and father of a daughter, I always encourage my girl learners to aspire to be successful. There is no such thing as a boy's job or girl's job. If girls work hard, they can be very successful. I give girls hope, love and support everyday so that gain self-confidence and they are able to achieve their best. I try to use the sports field to build confidence in girl learners.

## *The Sports Field*



**Figure 4.20: Girls on the sports field**

Although we do not have a girls' cricket team, I allow my girl learners to play cricket during the P.E. lessons. They love to put on the cricket gear and play with the boys. This stirs a bit of competition with boys and girls. I even teach girl learners soccer skills during the P.E lessons. I feel sport provides an outlet for boys and girls to bond.

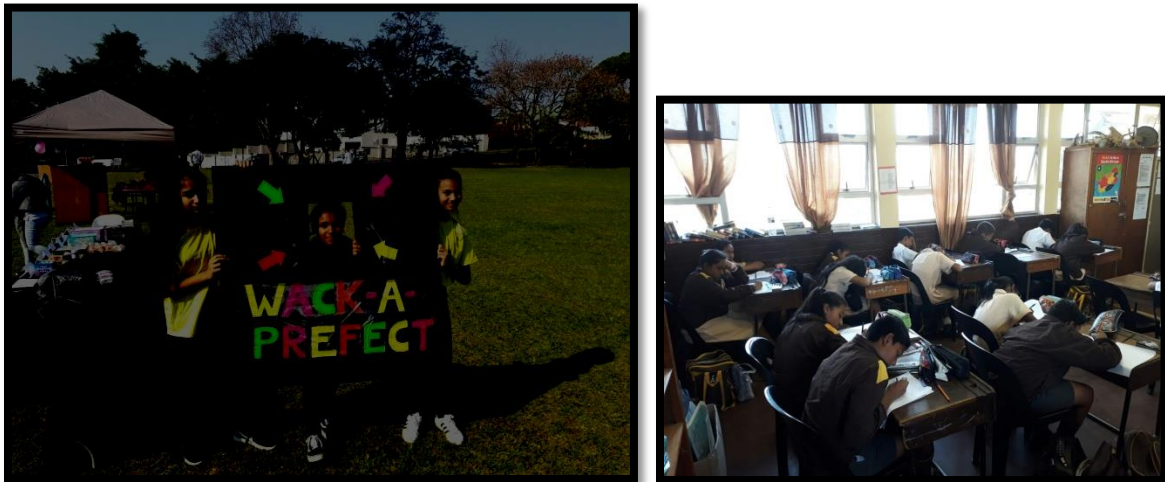
As a sports teacher, I teach girl learners the value of good sportsmanship. It's not about winning but how you play the game. I also speak to them about values like honesty, tolerance and the benefits of hard work. I build trust with girl learners on the field. You have to trust others when you play sport. It is about supporting team members. There is no "I" in *team*. I also speak to them about their health and good eating habits. More often than not, girls tend to outshine boy learners.

### ***My classroom***

In my classroom, I instill independence and hard work. I walk around the class monitoring learners' work, offering positive reinforcement and guidance to those that need it. I insist that learners produce **work** that is neat and tidy. I arrange my classroom with boys sitting next to girls; this helps with discipline and also encourages healthy competition between them. I also afford my girl learners the

opportunity to be class monitors. Girl learners are given equal opportunity in class discussions; when they raise their hands, I give them a chance to answer.

I am also responsible for the selecting and monitoring of prefects in my school. Girl learners are given the opportunity to help teachers with extra-mural tasks. Prefects guide their peers in classrooms, during social events and on the field. Prefects are role model to their peers. Girl learners take their responsibility as prefects seriously.



**Figure 4.21: Prefects and my classroom**

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, as a researcher I presented four recreated stories of four teachers empowering girl learners in diverse primary schools. Each story is different yet similar. I found the collage most useful to plot the remarkable lives of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan. From these textured stories, I come to understand how teachers' personal lives influence their professional lives. The next chapter looks at how teachers derive certain meanings of girl empowerment from their experiences.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TEACHERS LIVES AS POWERFUL SITES FOR MEANINGS OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented four detailed stories of how teachers empower girl learners. These rich stories allow us to take a glimpse into the lives and experiences of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan. This chapter draws on these textured stories to answer my second research question, “*What personal and professional meanings shape teachers’ understanding of girl empowerment?*”

In this chapter, I explore the personal and professional meanings of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan. I look particularly at how these teachers’ personal meanings shape their professional meanings and how then these meanings inform their understanding of girl empowerment. I have elicited nodal moments from their stories that have influenced and shaped their understanding of girl empowerment. Furthermore, I have selected certain excerpts of their experiences, which I find relevant to respond to my research question.

In responding to the aforementioned question, I draw on the Sociocultural Theory used by Lasky (2005) to frame my analysis. The sociocultural theory grew from the work of Vygotsky who believed that parents, caregivers, peers and culture were responsible for developing higher order functions. Lasky (2005) claims that a sociocultural theoretical lens examines the manner in which social context and cultural tools influence the growth of human belief, values and ways of acting. Essentially, a sociocultural approach is based on the premise that “what individuals believe, and how individuals think and act is always shaped by cultural, historical and social structures” (Lasky, 2005, p. 900). The goal of this chapter is to use a sociocultural lens to analyse what personal and professional meaning have shaped teachers’ understanding of girl empowerment. I am particularly interested in how the social, culture and historical structures have influenced and shaped these teachers’ understanding of girl empowerment. Furthermore, I look at what social and cultural beliefs and values have influenced their personal and professional meanings of girl empowerment.

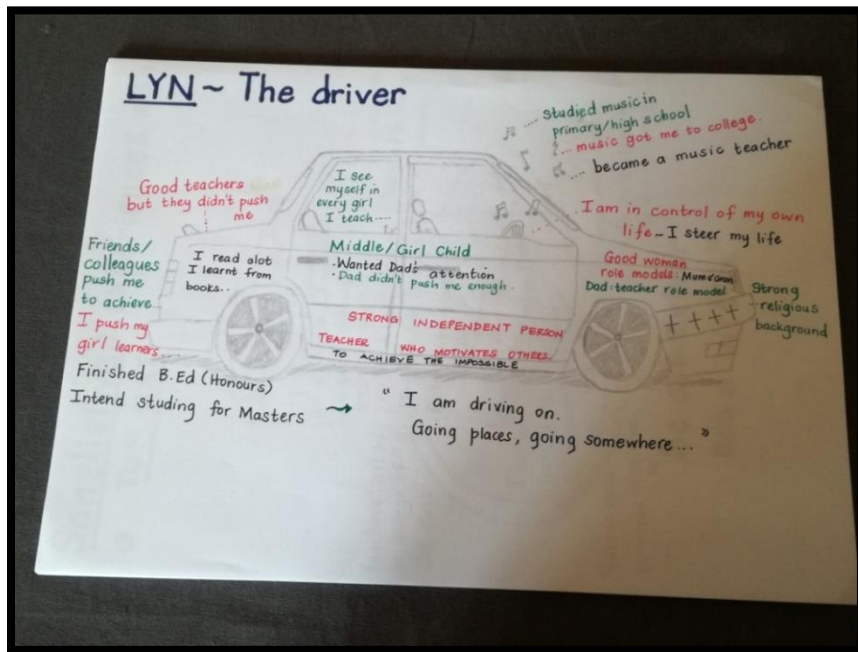
In order to achieve this, I draw to attention the metaphor analogy of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan. During the metaphor activity the teachers have inadvertently given me much insight into their personal and professional selves. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) have conducted studies on how people use metaphors regularly to make meaning of their lives and to understand their experiences. Moreover, Thomas and Beauchamp (2009) maintain that metaphors teachers use divulge their educational values, beliefs and principles. In this instance, the metaphors used were a symbolic representation of themselves. I use their symbolic representation of themselves to highlight how their personal and professional meanings shaped their understanding of girl empowerment.

In order to bring the data alive, I extended the metaphor analogy by creating object-maps of the teachers' personal and professional lives. To create the object-maps, I drew on the concept of body-mapping employed by Gastaldo et al. (2018) in their research study. Body-mapping is an arts-based method that illustrates certain parts of people's lives and their world. This method was quite apt to use, as it allowed me to elicit the critical moments that shaped teachers' personal and professional meanings that informed their understanding of girl empowerment.

To accomplish the object-map, I drew an image of their metaphor. Thereafter, I highlighted the critical experiences from their stories with coloured pens. Furthermore, I consulted the online etymological dictionary to acquire a deeper understanding of the metaphor object. I used the words and phrases found in an etymological dictionary to guide me in strategically placing the teachers' experiences on the object-map, as I wish to juxtapose their critical experiences with the metaphor object. Themes emerged from the object-map which helped me to analyze the personal and professional meanings of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan and how these meanings informed their understanding of girl empowerment.

This chapter will be organized in the following manner: firstly, I present the teachers' object-map; using themes from the object-map, I then create vignettes that bring to light their personal and professional meanings which are rooted in social, cultural and historical structures. Secondly, I analyze how their personal and professional meanings inform their teaching of girl empowerment.

## LYN becoming the Car Driver



**Figure 5.1: Object-map of Lyn's metaphor**

Figure 5.1 is the object-map of Lyn's life and certain nodal moments that I have chosen to highlight. In consulting with the online etymological dictionary, the following words and phrases were offered: "one who drives in various senses; driver's seat, agent; pushing from behind; pursue and rush against." Using these words and phrases found in the etymological dictionary, I strategically placed Lyn's critical experiences around the object-map. To explain further, Lyn states that her teachers did not push her to achieve academically in school, and this critical experience is placed at the back of the car. Using the object-map as my guiding tool, I wish to emphasize how Lyn found agency as a girl learner, as a female teacher and how she is an agent of change for her girl learners. Through these critical nodal experiences Lyn's personal and professional meanings of girl leadership empowerment were shaped.

### **Vignette One - Finding my voice**

### ***Middle girl child***

Lyn was the middle child for her parents. While she was treasured, she often felt ‘unnoticed’ when it came to academics. She wanted her parents’ recognition in important things. Lyn claims, *when it came to academics, my dad focused his attention and energy more on my two elder siblings. I do not think this was intentional. I felt he did not motivate me to achieve.*

Studies have shown that the order in which one is born into the family plays an important role in the development of their personality, character and career choice. As a middle child, Lyn fought for her parents’ attention and tried to find ways to get their attention. Collins (2006) acknowledges that “middle-children are believed to experience less interaction and receive less attention which negatively affects the self- esteem of this child” (p. 4). She further claims that the middle- children feel “squeezed out” (Collins, 2006, p.4) by the older and younger siblings. This is evident in Lyn’s family structure and she looked to her teachers for admiration and motivation.

### ***My teachers***

As pastoral care givers, teachers have a responsibility to motivate learners beyond cultural barriers. However, Lyn recalls, *“I found that most of my teachers had low expectations of us girl learners. My teachers never encouraged me to dream big or think ‘out of the box.’”*

Lyn’s teachers failed to motivate her beyond cultural norms. Girls were taught needlework and home economics. Mahlomaholo (2011) claims that “a culture [of] devaluing girls’ abilities to do well has been in place for centuries in almost all contexts” (p.2). He argues that teachers sometimes create a sense of self-doubt in girl learners by not giving them enough attention in the classroom. Seemingly, Lyn did not receive the recognition and autonomy she craved.

### ***Good woman role models***

While Lyn’s dad and teachers failed to motivated her to achieve beyond cultural norms, she was fortunate to have good woman role models. *I was especially proud of grandmother; it was rare for Indian women to be educated in her time.* Her grandmother was a qualified teacher who provided a positive role model for Lyn. During this time period in the sixties, women were still struggling to



find their place in the workforce. Moreover, Lyn's mum and grandmother made an indelible difference in peoples' lives through the church. Collins (2006) states that family role models are extremely vital in how children view gender roles. She further maintains that if the female of a household is working, then this would affect the daughters' drive to succeed. Similarly, Lyn wanted more for herself as a girl.

### ***Music my savior***

Lyn was introduced to musical instruments because of her family's interest in praise and worship at church: *We were lucky to have a piano. I loved our piano, it was my best friend. When I was sad, happy, excited, I would play my music.* Middle children tend to look outside the family for their autonomy (Collins, 2006). Lyn claims: *In fact, my dad introduced me to music.* Music allowed Lyn to acquire the attention she desired from her parents. She excelled in playing the piano and even acquired qualifications from Trinity College in England. Lyn found agency through music: *Music was my strength.*

### **Lyn's personal meanings influencing her professional meanings**

#### ***Pushing barriers with girls***

*I see myself in every girl that I teach. I want them to know that the world is their 'oyster.'*

As Lyn felt her teachers did not push her to achieve academically, she pushes barriers with her girl learners. She encourages girl learners to be competitive in and out of the classroom: *I give them the opportunity to be part of the class discussion and voice their opinions and feelings.*

Lyn motivates girls to take leading roles in the Science and Technology, insisting they build their own structures, by using tools like the glue gun. Postels (2013) asserts that teachers can contribute to maintaining or breaking gender stereotypes. In her Dance and Drama classes, Lyn encourages girls to lead group plays and speak confidently. She has one-on-one talk sessions with girls, trying to motivate them. She often creates a good rapport with her girl learners.

*The tech room is a place for creativity. Girls tend to show hatred for this subject, they dislike the drawings and building of models.*

While girl learners feel quite unsure about building levers and towers, Lyn encourages them to attempt these activities by building these models herself. She persuades girl learners to use tools like the hammer and glue guns. Teachers play a vital role in shaping learners understanding of gender roles (Postels, 2013). Postels (2013) further explains that teachers can contribute to maintaining or breaking gender stereotypes within schools.

### ***Being a teacher role model***

Lyn is a role model to her girl learners: *I endeavour to be a role model to my learners. I firmly believe in lifelong learning.* She has successfully completed her B. Ed Honours, cum laude. She intends pursuing her Masters degree. Exposure to female teachers and role models changes the aspirations of girls with regards to jobs, marriage and stereotypical perceptions (Glennester & Takavarasha, 2010). Lyn teaches subjects like Science and Technology which research claims to be male-dominated subjects. She also teaches Creative Arts. This combination of Science and Art shows girl learners that *you can be anything you want to be.*

### ***Using music to empower girls***

*I empower girls to come out and lead dance and drama productions.*

Lyn is a qualified music teacher who uses her music knowledge to empower girl learners. She heads the school's choir and trains girl learners to participate in various choir festivals. In addition, she allows some of the girl learners to lead the choir during school assemblies and cultural events. Shahidul and Karim (2015) argue that female teachers have a positive impact on girl learners.

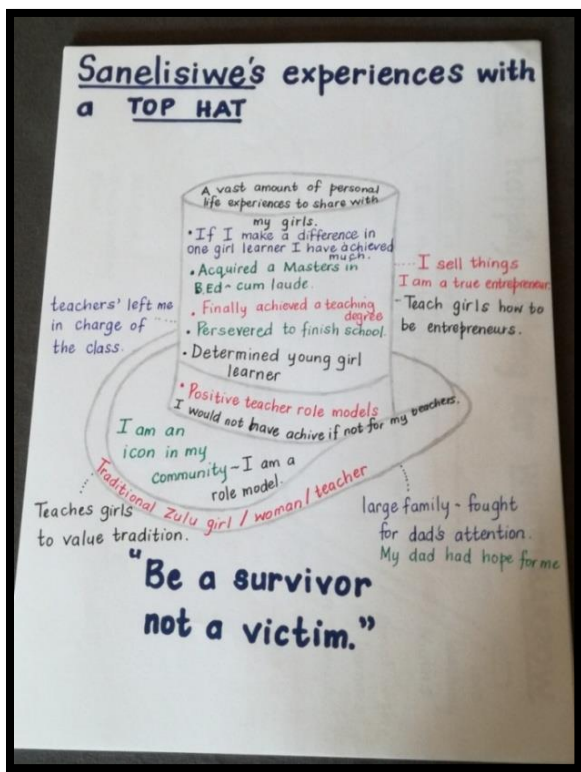
### ***Pulling the strings together***

#### ***How do Lyn's personal and professional meanings inform girl empowerment?***

It can be noted that through Lyn's critical past experiences, her personal meanings have shaped her professional meanings of girl leadership empowerment. As a girl learner, she struggled to get

attention. However, good family role models planted a seed for alternate versions of being girl. Through music as an avenue, she managed to find her own autonomy and agency. Lyn had to negotiate her personal meaning of being a girl and this has influenced the teacher she is today. She is aware of struggles that face girl learners and therefore she provides girl learners with empowering skills, in and out of the classroom. She is the agent of change for her girl learners. Walkington (2005) alludes that “teacher identity is based on core beliefs and values, these beliefs and values are continuously formed and reformed through experience” (p.54). Lyn’s past experiences played a vital role in shaping her understanding of girl empowerment.

### SANELISIWE’S experiences with a top hat



**Figure 5.2: Object-map of Sanelisiwe’s metaphor**

The object-map above is of Sanelisiwe’s life and particular critical nodal moments that I have chosen to highlight. The online etymological dictionary had the following words and phrases for top-hat: highest point; summit, crest and head covering and worn by gentlemen. These words and phrases allowed me to strategically place Sanelisiwe’s critical experiences. Her academic achievement has been placed from being a girl learner, at the base of the top-hat, to achieving her Masters at the highest point of the top-hat. I wish to show how Sanelisiwe’s analogy of a top-hat has made her

achieve agency as a girl learner, and become a respected role model in her community and an empowering teacher. These are the critical nodal experiences that have shaped Sanelisiwe's personal and professional meanings of girl empowerment.

## **Vignette Two - Being a survivor**

### ***Traditional Zulu girl***

*I faced many challenges as a girl growing up in a traditional Zulu family. It was the girl's responsibility to take care of the huge herd of cattle my father had.*

Sanelisiwe had to overcome many personal obstacles to finish school. She remembers, *at one stage I nearly dropped out of school because of the long distance I had to walk.*

Mahlomaholo (2011) confirms that girls' daily household chores, travelling long distances to school and falling pregnant at an early age are some of the challenges facing girl learners in South Africa. Sanelisiwe envisioned a better life for herself. Although she came from a patriarchal family, it was her dad that encouraged her to continue with her studies. Sanelisiwe recalls:

*He promised to slaughter a cow when I finished matric. She wanted to make her dad proud and therefore took her school work seriously and excelled at school.*

### ***Peer pressure ruined my life***

The challenges of rural schooling proved to be difficult for Sanelisiwe. While staying alone, without parental supervision at, high school, she lost focus on her scholastic goals: *I fell pregnant. This was a major setback for me. I was only fifteen years old. I had to leave school and stay at home.*

Sanelisiwe had to leave school in Grade 9, when she was only fifteen years old, to have her baby. Mahlomaholo (2011) argues that unplanned pregnancy solely affects girls as cultural practices dictates that girls care for the unplanned child rather than boys. The pregnancy disappointed her father and he refused to let her go back to school. While her dad was quite open-minded on girl education, he firmly believed that it was the woman's responsibility to take care of her baby.

### ***Positive teacher role models***

Sanelisiwe was thrown a life-line by her teachers. She had good teachers and good female teachers as her role model. They were very supportive of her learning.

*To my surprise, my teachers wrote a letter to my parents telling them of immense potential I had. They appealed to my parents to send me back to school after the birth of my child.*

UNESCO (2006) maintains that female teacher role models influence girl learners to complete their schooling and encourage these girls to become teachers themselves. Sanelisiwe's teachers showed her care and motivated her to complete her studies. Her principal went beyond the call of duty to help change her dad's mind. It was through her teachers that Sanelisiwe managed to go back and finish school.

### **Sanelisiwe's personal meanings influencing her professional meanings**

#### ***Teaching life skills***

*I have started the soul buddies programme with my girl learners which teach them a lot of life skills. I do not want my learners to fall pregnant in primary school.*

Sanelisiwe uses a soul buddies programme to teach her girl learners about sex and sexuality. Research studies show that sex and sexuality are taboo topics in the Zulu culture (Masinga, 2007). Parents do not talk to their children about this, which sometimes results in them making poor decisions. The soul buddies programme teaches girls how to take care of their bodies and how to make informed decisions when they are with boys. Sanelisiwe also uses this programme to teach boys how to behave with girls. In addition, she teaches traditional values to her girl learners: *I encourage virginity testing*. She does this to promote abstinence, so that girls can finish school.

#### ***Imitating my teachers***

Sanelisiwe is a caring and supportive teacher to her girl learners:

*When learners stay away from school, I write letters and make phone calls to parents.* Yunus et al. (2011) states that when there is emotional and academic support, "the classroom is more than just

an academic setting; it also involves humanistic values to learn about life” (p.2637). Sanelisiwe has an open-door policy with her girl learners. She personally knows the challenges that face girl learners in the rural community and therefore she provides them with the guidance, something that her teachers offered her. Sanelisiwe imitates the care and support her teachers afforded her.

### ***Role model to girl learners***

Since, Sanelisiwe’s teachers left an indelible mark on her life, she wanted to emulate her teachers. Presently, Sanelisiwe is a good female role model to her learners; her peers, parents in the community and girl learners look up to her. UNESCO (2006) maintains that female teachers, particularly in rural areas, afford a novel and alternate role model for girl learners. Girl learners can see women with a career outside the household. Sanelisiwe has just completed her Master’s degree in Education and intends enrolling for her doctorate degree. Her value for life-long learning truly makes her a role model for her girl learners.

### ***How do Sanelisiwe’s personal and professional meanings inform girl leadership empowerment?***

Sanelisiwe had to be complicit in being a traditional African girl. On many occasions, she reinforced dominant ways of being. However, her teachers saw her potential and sparked an alternate version of being a girl. Through the support of her teachers, Sanelisiwe became empowered and challenged dominant ways of being girl. She acquired agency and found her voice as a girl. Similarly, when she became a teacher, she provided the same support and guidance to her girl learners. The social and cultural structures of being a traditional Zulu girl and the historical structure of rural schooling, played an integral part in shaping Sanelisiwe’s meanings of girl empowerment. From her early experiences of being girl, her meanings of girl empowerment were acquired shaping her professional life.

## IRENE happily pushing her wheel barrow

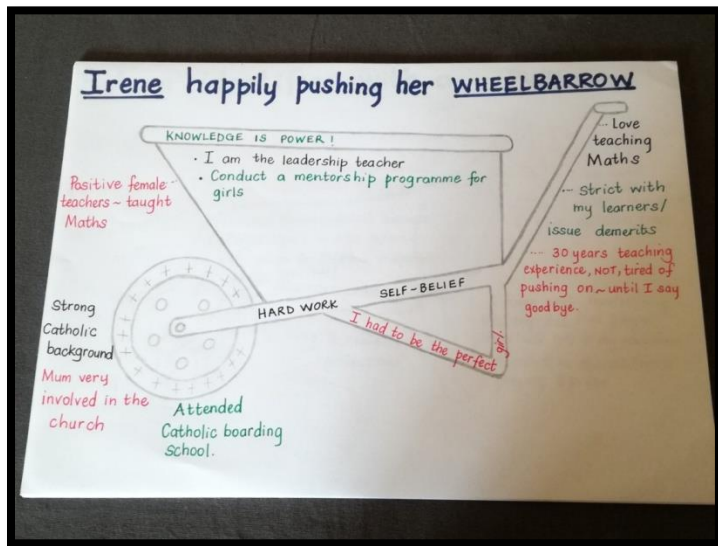


Figure 5.3: An Object-map of Irene's metaphor

Figure 5.3 is the object map of Irene's life and the critical nodal moments that I have chosen to highlight. When I consulted the online etymological dictionary, the following words and phrases were presented: to bear, to carry, mount erect and the wheel synonymous to move around or revolve. From these words and phrases, I wish draw attention to Irene's strong Catholic up-bringing and schooling, which has helped her to stand erect and strong during her thirty-three years of teaching. She has moved provinces in her teaching career and she still happily carries on teaching.

### Vignette Three – Resisting the stereotype

#### *Catholic girl learner*

*My mum was this perfect woman who ruled the household very strictly. She followed the bible religiously. It was not easy fitting into my family.*

Irene was raised by a strong and strict Catholic mother. She had to behave in a very lady-like manner. Joseph and John (2008) affirm that parenting helps children get ready for the demands of their specific culture or sub-culture. *As her daughter I had to follow her everywhere she went. Most importantly I had to behave like a 'perfect girl.'* This reinforces the study by Kangethe et al. (2014)

that claims that gender conditioning is reinforced within the family structure. While she behaved like a perfect girl, Irene really wanted to be with and like her brothers.

### ***Sisterhood***

*She belonged to the sisters' committee,*

Irene entire childhood was entrenched in the Catholic religion. Furthermore, her mother was very involved in the church and thereby insisted Irene attends all church meetings. Irene is a firm believer and a practising Catholic. Baurain (2012) states that spiritual and religious beliefs encompass teacher knowledge, and that more research and dialogue should be encouraged in this area. Irene values honesty, hard work and helping others in need. She values creating a bond of sisterhood and supporting others. These are some of the values entrenched by her mother and her Catholic upbringing.

### ***Replicating numbers***

*Mathematics teacher, Mrs. Primrose left a great mark on me. She was beautiful, always prim and proper who was passionate about Mathematics. She was strict but loved her learners and would do anything to see her learners excel.*

Irene had good teachers who were excellent role models and inspired her to teach Mathematics. Shahidul and Karim (2015) argue that female teachers have a positive impact on girl learners. It is further stated that female teachers play an important role in socializing learners past gender stereotypes and are agents of change (UNESCO, 2006). Research studies like Mahlomaholo (2011) show that Mathematics is difficult and intricate for girl learners. Having female teachers teaching this male-orientated subject made them her role models.

### **Irene's personal meanings influencing her professional meanings**

#### ***Strict teacher***

*I am quite strict with my learners if homework is not done I give them demerits.*

Irene is a strict teacher. She follows the school's discipline policy to 'the letter.' She gives learners demerits if homework is not done. She instills in her girl learners what her mother instilled in her. Joseph and John (2008) allege that children are very likely to be influenced by their parents' views,



beliefs and values. While Irene is strict with her girl learners, she encourages them to stand up to cultural norms. Irene tells her girl learners:

*I tell my girl learners, “Don’t go and just get married and do what everybody expects of you.”*

### ***Maths and Soccer***

Irene loves teaching Mathematics and hopes to inspire her girl learners to love Mathematics as well. Allender and Allender (2006) profess that much of how teachers teach and the teachers they become, is influenced by their past teachers themselves. Irene teaches Mathematics with a passion, supplementing the textbook with concrete examples and holding free extra lessons. In addition, Irene says: *I also coach the Under 13 boys soccer team as there we are short of male teachers.* Rodgers and Scott (2008) affirm that teachers’ reflection on their personal schooling influences the manner in which they think about teaching and teach. Irene always wanted to join her brothers on the soccer field. In addition, Mathematics and soccer are male-dominated disciplines in which she is actively involved.

### ***Big sister***

*This mentorship programme has the ‘big sister’ effect.*

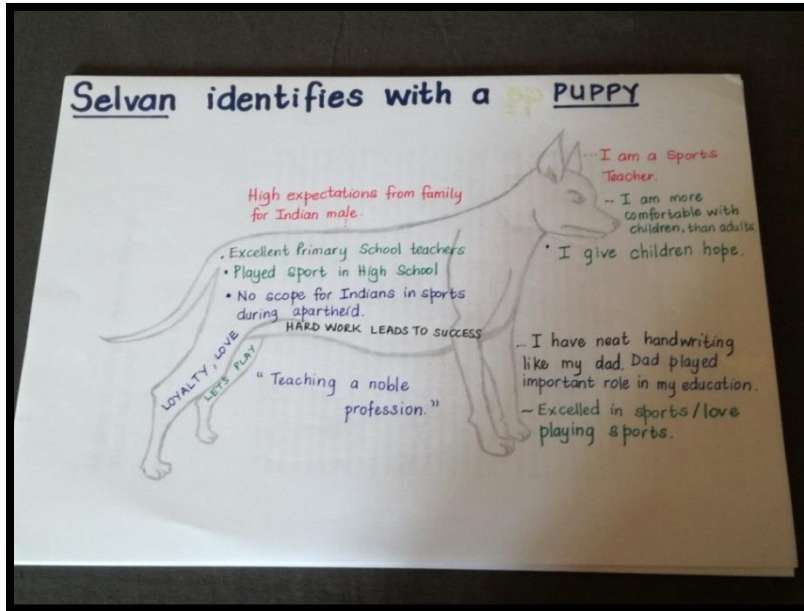
Irene has a mentorship programme for girls, which is called the ‘big sister.’ This programme encourages sisterhood amongst girls. Girls from her Grade 7 class mentor other younger girls who may have emotional, family or learning problems. Teachers’ spiritual and religious beliefs dictate what teachers know and what they do in classroom practices (Baurain, 2012). Irene allows her girl learners to build each other up in the mentoring programmes.

### ***How do Irene’s personal and professional meanings inform girl leadership empowerment?***

Irene had to be complicit in fulfilling the expectations of what it means to be a traditional Catholic girl. Her teachers presented her with an alternate version of being girl. She was able to see through her teachers that girls can do and be anything they want to be. This gave agency to negotiate dominant stereotypical ways of being girl. Irene’s early personal experiences shaped her understanding of girl empowerment. Social structures of the home and school, the culture of the Catholic religion and the

historical structures of how women were perceived, played an important role in shaping Irene's personal meanings of girl empowerment. Clearly, Irene's meaning of girl empowerment was acquired from her personal life which informs her professional life.

SELVAN being the active puppy



**Figure 5.4: Object-map of Selvan's metaphor**

The object-map above is of Selvan's life and specific critical nodal moments that I have chosen to highlight. The etymological dictionary offered the following words and phrases: an animal or dog's life. However, a puppy or a dog is said to be a man's best friend. There is a strong bond between man and dog and I would like to use this analogy to illustrate Selvan's strong bond and relationship with his learners and colleagues.

### **Vignette Four - Doing what I love**

#### ***My family***

*Ultimately, as an Indian boy there were high expectations placed by my family on academics.*

As an Indian boy, family placed high expectations on Selvan: he would ultimately be 'the financial caretaker' of the family. Many Indian parents look to their children to elevate their social status. Kangethe et al. (2014) maintains that boys are taught and reared to be the future breadwinners of the

family. In addition, boys are considered to be ‘apprentice fathers’ because they imitate and copy their father’s roles (Kangethe et al., 2014). *It is because of my dad that I have the neatest writing. My dad’s writing was so neat. I wanted to emulate him.* While, Selvan felt the pressure of being a boy in a traditional Indian family, his family provided his sister with similar educational opportunities. This allowed Selvan to see his sister as an equal. Again, family values play an important role in defining gender perceptions:

*He always ensured that my sister and I had everything we needed for school. My parents treated us equally.*

### ***Memorable and motivating teachers***

*I thoroughly enjoyed my teachers, especially my grade 5 and grade 7 teachers, Miss. Subben and Mr. Rehman. These teachers have made a major impact in my life.*

Selvan had memorable primary school teachers who he remembers by name. Yunus et al. (2011) profess that learners who have a positive relationship with their teachers feel motivated and tend to work harder. Selvan was able to meet the expectations of his family because his teachers motivated him. Emotional and academic support, understanding and respect create a positive teacher- learner relationship (Yunus et al., 2010). Selvan thrived academically, with the support of his primary school teachers. However, his focus changed in High School.

### ***Sport is my life***

*My high school, Shadowlands Secondary, provided experiences that were contrary to primary school. The attitude and interest shown by teachers were one of indifference. They did not show the care my primary school teachers showed. It was during this critical time my interest changed to sport rather than academics. Sport became my priority.*

Selvan played various codes of sports. His love for sport intensified when teachers in High School failed to give him the attention he required. Bhana (2008) asserts that male association with sport is basically about identity. Boys playing sport generally sends an underlying message that they are real men. Selvan, on the other hand, found sport to be a substitute for academic achievement. It was a way for him to continue to maintain and meet the expectations of his family.

## **Selvan's personal meanings influencing his professional meanings**

### ***Non-sexist teacher***

*I am not a sexist. I provide equally opportunities for all my learners.*

*Girl learners are given equal opportunity in class discussions, when they raise their hands; I give them a chance to answer.*

As a teacher, however, Selvan has high expectations of both his boy and girl learners. He pushes his learners to achieve high standards in and out of the class. Selvan allows his girl learners to play cricket, which is a sport predominantly for boys. Teachers, according to Ifegbesan (2010), play an important role in creating a gender-sensitive school environment. In addition, Kangethe et al. (2014) maintains that teachers socialize learners along gender norms by sending multiple gendered messages through classroom practices. Selvan maintains equality in his classes by allowing both boys and girls to participate in all aspects of school life.

### ***Creating a memorable class***

*I arrange my classroom with boys sitting next to girls; this helps with discipline and also encourages healthy competition between them. I also afford my girl learners the opportunity to be class monitors.*

Selvan creates a warm and friendly atmosphere for all his learners. He wants to make a positive impact on his learners, like his primary school teachers did. Likewise, Mitchell and Weber (1998) claim that teachers' early experiences of their schooling come into play in their teaching methods. Selvan attempts to create a personal bond with his learners. He ensures he practises equality in his classroom and on the sports field. He attempts to recreate the warm and caring experiences his primary school teachers afforded him.

### ***Sports master***

*So, I decided to become a P.E teacher. Members of my extended family also supported my decision to become a teacher, as many of whom were in the teaching profession.*

Selvan could not take up sport professionally as in the apartheid era this was a challenging prospect for an Indian male. His family had high hopes for him to become a professional. Sport gave Selvan the opportunity to become a professional. He decided to become a sports teacher. Wolhuter et al. (2012) affirm that family, sports or teaching as an alternate option could be some of the reasons teachers chose the teaching profession. Through sport, Selvan was able to fulfill his family's expectations and do what he loved.

### ***How do Selvan's personal and professional meanings inform girl leadership empowerment?***

Selvan had to negotiate dominant ways of being an Indian male. On the home front Selvan was complicit in reproducing dominant way of being boy. However, the home front also offered him a glimpse of equality, as his parents tried to treat his sister and him alike. It was his primary school teachers and sport which provided that space for him to negotiate these dominant ways of being boy. Social structures like the family unit and school, the culture of being Indian male and the historical structures of sport played an important role in Selvan's negotiation of dominant ways of being boy. From his personal experiences, Selvan derived his meanings of girl empowerment. These meanings of girl empowerment shapes his professional world.

## **CONCLUSION**

The metaphors used by Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan allowed me a creative way to highlight the manner in which their personal meanings influence their professional meanings. These teachers had to make meaning from particular past experiences. They had to negotiate dominant ways of being boy or girl. These past experiences are rooted in social, cultural and historical structures. Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan's personal meanings of girl empowerment shaped their professional lives.

Chapter Six looks at how teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TEACHERS ENACTING PRACTICES OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT

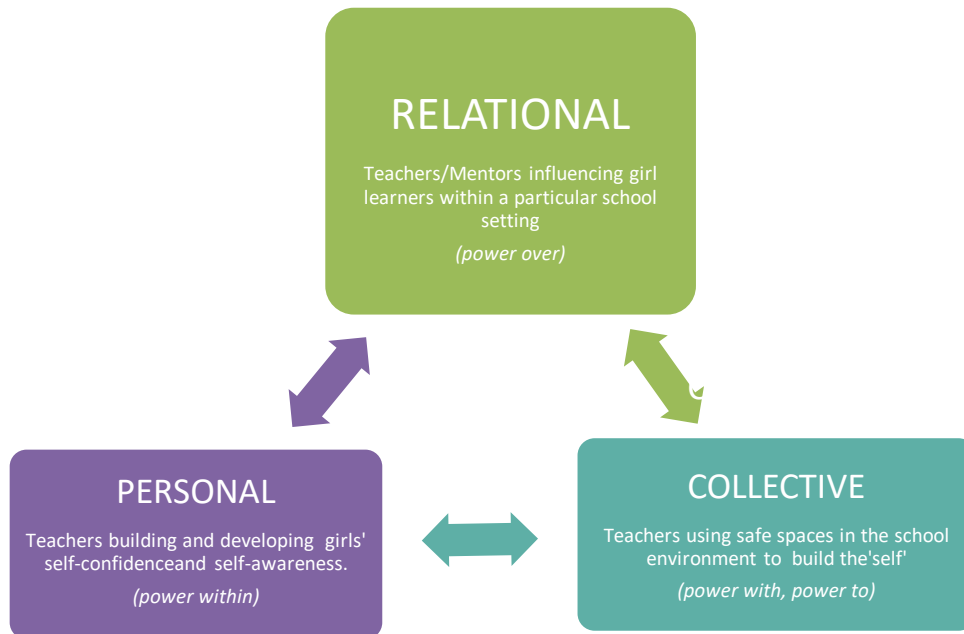
#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five explored the personal and professional meanings that shape teachers' understanding of girl empowerment. Teachers had to negotiate dominant ways of being girl in various social spaces to acquire their personal and professional meanings of girl empowerment. In addition, Chapter Five brings to light how teachers' understanding of girl empowerment is grounded in their beliefs, values and personal experiences. Chapter Six responds to my third research question, *“How do teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools?”*

In Chapter Six I employ Rowland's (1997) Empowerment/Leadership framework to analyse teachers' practices for girl leadership empowerment in diverse primary schools. This framework is most apt as it highlights the empowering influence of the teacher. Rowland (1997) firmly believes that in order to understand empowerment, one must be mindful of the many forms of power. The empowerment/leadership model presents four forms of power: power within (deals with cognitive change and self-belief); power to (focuses on change in behaviour); power over (the ability one has to influence and coerce others) and power with (how one acts with others to confront discriminatory behaviour). Furthermore, Rowland's forms of power are experienced and visible through three dimensions of empowerment. Empowerment then is experienced on a personal level (developing a sense of self and individual confidence), a relational level (developing the ability to negotiate and influence others) and a collective level (individuals' workings together to achieve a greater impact) (Rowland, 1997). I utilize this framework to look at how teachers' enacted practices engage girl learners in developing the various forms of power within and across the three dimensions (personal, relational, and collective).

In the personal level, I am particularly interested in what teachers do to develop and build girl learners' self-esteem and self-confidence. In the relational level, I examine the role teachers play in developing and influencing girl learners in their school. In the collective level I look at how teachers use safe spaces within the school environment to collectively empower girl learners. In addition, I

analyse how teachers create opportunities to engage girl learners and cultivate the forms of ‘power within’, ‘power with’ and ‘power to’, relational to the school environment. Teachers themselves necessitate the form of ‘power over’; they have the power to influence girl learners positively. Below is a diagram of Rowlands’ Empowerment/Leadership framework that I have adapted for my study.



**Figure 6.1: Rowlands’ (1997) Empowerment/Leadership framework**

To work the data and to bring the data alive, I draw on the metaphor analogy and object-map used in the previous chapter. I particularly want to use the metaphor analogy as a common thread. To achieve this, I craft a collage for each teacher. Using the empowerment/leadership theoretical framework as my guiding tool, I extract from the teachers’ stories certain experiences that highlight how teachers enact girl empowerment in their daily practice. I cut out pictures, phrases and words from each teacher’s story. Thereafter, I sketched a large drawing of their metaphor object and cut around it. I stuck the pictures, phrases and words onto the metaphor drawing to create a collage for each teacher. This collage is a visual representation of each teacher’s enacted practices of girl empowerment in their primary school.

To deepen my analysis, I created pantoum poems from each collage. I synthesized the pictures in the collage to create concepts and phrases. I selected six phrases and thereafter followed the format of a pantoum poem which uses repetitive lines. I chose lines from the pantoum poem to create themes. These themes revolve around how teachers enact girl empowerment in their practice daily.

Through these themes, I illustrate how Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan's enacted practices in their schools empower girl learners.

This chapter is organized as follows: firstly, I look at the role teachers play in influencing girl empowerment in their school environment (relational empowerment). Secondly, I look at how teachers' enacted practices empower girl learners (personal empowerment). Finally, I look at the manner in which teachers utilize safe spaces within the school environment to bring about girl empowerment (collective empowerment).

### **LYN, the supportive teacher**



**Figure 6.2: A collage of Lyn's enactment practices of girl leadership empowerment**



*Me as a teacher*

Support, encourage

Drive girls

To compete

Be confident and independent

Drive girls

Dress appropriately

Be confident and independent

Trust girls to lead

Dress appropriately

To compete

Trust girls to lead

Support, encourage

**Figure 6.3: A pantoum poem, taken from the collage activity**

In this chapter, I analyse the role Lyn plays in influencing girl learners, how she cultivates leadership knowledge and skills and the manner in which she uses safe spaces within the school environment to empower girl learner. The pantoum poem above reflects Lyn as a supportive teacher who supports girl learners to achieve their goals and encourages healthy competition with others. She also builds a bond of trust with her girl learners. Lyn extends this bond of trust in her enacted practice. She allows girl learners to come out and lead her dance and drama lessons. For Lyn, the way girls dress is linked to their behaviour and self-esteem. Ultimately, Lyn is a champion for girl learners. She ‘drives’ girl learners, like the metaphor analogy, to succeed.

## **Chauffeuring Support**

Day (2007) asserts that a common factor amongst passionate teachers is their need for all of their learners to succeed. This is envisioned through their classroom spaces, a warm relationship with their learners and support of their learners' personal growth.

*Every year I help girls to enter the Oprah Winfrey School leadership school. I help them to fill out the forms and submit them for them. Two of the girls in my class were successful, Sthembile and Amile.*

Lyn is a supportive and committed teacher who goes beyond the call of duty to motivate girl learners to achieve academically and in extra-murals.

*In 2014, there was a girl learner in my class who always took second position in the grade. I worked with her, motivated her and eventually she got the dux award.*

By supporting her girl learners, Lyn creates opportunities for girl learners to engage in the 'power within' and the 'power to'. Girl learners obtain a sense of self-belief and self-confidence, and this cognitive change allows them to achieve academically and compete with others in confidence. Moreover, Lyn assumes the role of a supportive teacher towards girl learners in her school and positively influences them, thereby presenting the power over in the relational level of empowerment.

## **Directing self-confident girl learners**

### ***Transporting trust***

A study by Lasky (2005) shows that teachers value trust in their relationship with their learners; "all four teachers made themselves available to [learners] outside of class time to be a listening ear, and sometimes to give advice" (p.907).

*The break time is when I am often approached and asked for advice on relationships, domestic issues and so forth because of the non-threat of others not listening in rather than in the classroom. Interaction is friendly and builds trust.*

Lyn develops a good rapport with her girl learners that is based on trust. She uses different methods to develop trust with her girl learners. One method of developing trust used by Lyn is to offer girl learners the opportunity to take responsibility of set tasks. She makes them aware that she has

confidence in them and that she trusts them to do well. In addition, Lyn speaks to her girl learners, offering them advice. By building a trusting relationship with her girl learners, Lyn develops their self-esteem enabling girl learners to become self-confident.

### ***Motoring confidence and independence***

Murphy-Graham (2012) maintains that personal competencies such as self-esteem and communication skills are central in empowering adolescent girls.

*There are girls who are very confident, and in contrast we have girls who use this class as a means of developing confidence. They learn to express themselves through dance. Confidence grows as they learn skills on how to deliver speeches, to play acting and team building exercises. Most importantly though, the girls choreograph their own dances and are given chances to lead the lessons. This gives them a sense of achievement thus building their self-esteem.*

Lyn develops self-confidence and builds self-esteem in every girl learner she teaches. By building confidence, girl learners are most likely to be independent. To develop independence, Lyn allows her girl learners to produce their own dance and drama activities. Lyn facilitates the dance and drama lessons as girls take a leading role in the productions. She allows girl learners the chance to work collaboratively with others to produce these shows. Girl learners need to work independently and negotiate with others in the group. Self-esteem and communication skills are developed with regards to personal competencies. The dance and drama lessons engage girl learners with the power within. Lyn is the catalyst in creating confident and independent girl learners who are self-confident.

### ***Steering good self-image***

Rathore (2012) claims that body image keeps girls preoccupied and pressures her to worry about on trivial things like colours, make-up and clothing. Worrying about dress and looks uses up her energy and distracts her from important matters.

*You need to dress appropriately. Just a simple thing how you dress will determine your behaviour as well. Your dressing skimpily means people will not take you seriously. I always want my girls to be like queens, to dress like royalty and feel like royalty.*

While Lyn is a champion for girl empowerment, she reproduces the ideology of traditional gender dressing. This is quite a contradiction to her values on girl empowerment. However, it can be argued that Lyn is informing girl learners that they can look good and be empowered. Mahajan (2007) asserts that “evidence suggests that society tends to attribute to those who are physically attractive the added qualities of sociability, friendliness and competence” (p.165). She further contends that appearance matters in every aspect of our lives. Similarly, when Lyn enlightens girl learners that good self-image and dress matters, she is strengthening the power within girls. Additionally, Lyn furnishes girl learners with the power over by influencing them to dress appropriately.

### **Driving across safe spaces**

Gayle et al. (2013) allege that safe learning spaces refer to an environment where mistakes can be made free from repercussions, and where knowledge and understanding is gained.

*The photos are of the hall, classroom, grounds, and media centre and technology room.*

*These are the spaces in which I personally inform, educate and teach girls to excel.*

*The hall, specifically the stage, is used during my dance and drama lessons. In this space, the girls are carefree, happy and creative.*

Lyn drives her girl learners through various safe learning spaces. She uses not only her classroom but different specialist teaching rooms and the school playfield as safe learning spaces. She encourages her girl learners to have the confidence to lead group activities, speak their minds and achieve academically.

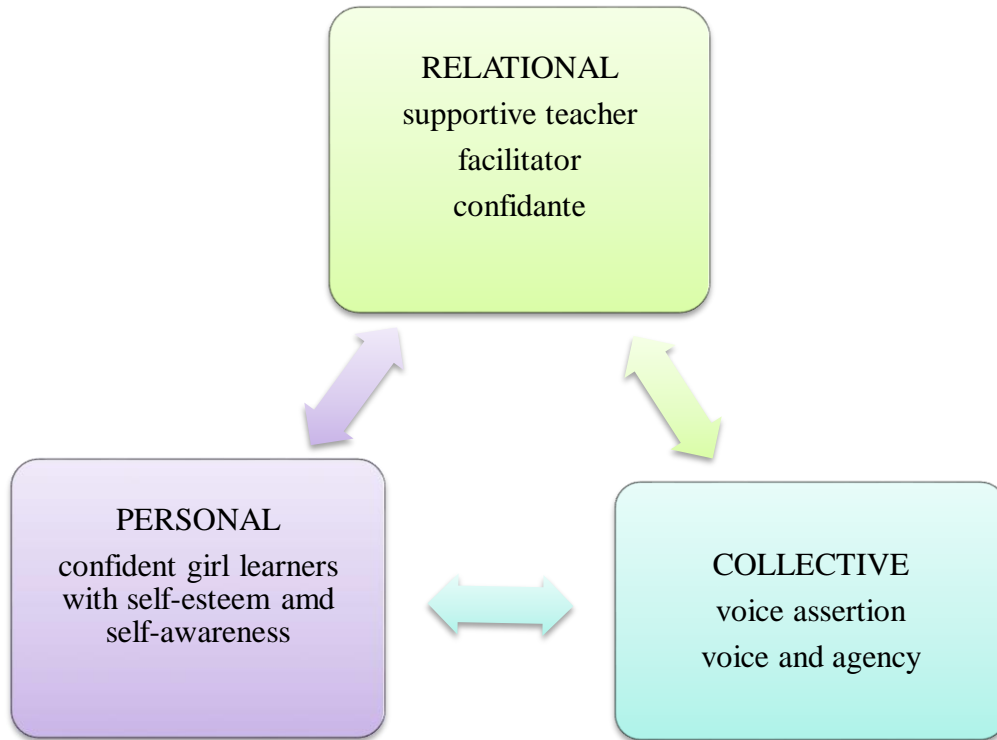
In the school hall, girl learners are free to express themselves in drama activities, to stand up confidently and present drama scenes. In the Technology room Lyn helps girls to build models using tools associated with just boys. Schools, according to Shah (2011), can be a distinctive space that facilitates intrinsic empowerment whereby the learner builds self-confidence and awareness of the self. Furthermore, in the classroom, other growths occur:

*In my classroom, I encourage girls to answer questions. I give them the opportunity to be part of the class discussion and voice their opinions and feelings.*

Lyn uses the safe learning spaces to challenge discriminatory structures and beliefs, like boys are good at building models or boys are more confident in expressing themselves. Challenging these

discriminatory structures gives girl learners the power with. Safe learning spaces enhance the power within and power with. Girl learners gain self-confidence in safe learning spaces.

**How does Lyn enact girl leadership empowerment in her school?**



**Figure 6.4: Forms of power experienced within the three dimensions for Lyn**

In her ex-model C school, Lyn builds supportive relationships in enacting girl empowerment. She takes on the role of a facilitator in many of her lessons, allowing girl learners to lead these lessons. Lyn is a confidante to girl learners. She is able to create a bond of trust with girl learners. This bond of trust builds a good rapport with girl learners and encourages ‘open communication.’ Lyn builds self-confidence and self-awareness in girl learners. Girl learners confidently produce drama and dance productions, deliver speeches and physically build models in the technology class. She enables girls with the power within, power to and the power with. Lyn indulges girls with the power over; she influences and coerces girls to compete confidently with others. She exposes girl learners to various safe spaces to make teaching meaningful. Lyn reinforces the point that one can be and look feminine and exercise independence. Lyn negotiates the four forms of power within the three dimensions of empowerment.

I started my analysis by using the ‘driver’ analogy for Lyn. However, it must be noted that in her enacted practices, Lyn encourages girl learners to become drivers themselves. By empowering girl learners, they have the confidence to voice their opinions and make good decisions pertaining to their lives. As ‘drivers’ of their lives girl learners acquire agency and voice. Lyn enacts girl leadership empowerment practices inside and outside of the classroom that ultimately gives girl learners agency and voice.

### **SANELISIWE, the caring teacher**



**Figure 6.5: A collage of Sanelisiwe’s enactment practices of girl leadership empowerment**

***My dream as a teacher...***

I dream to give hope

I show care

Wearing my different hats

Encourage good choices

I show care

Abide by cultural activities

Encourage good choices

Be a survivor

Abide by cultural activities

Wearing my different hats

Be a survivor

I dream to give hope

**Figure 6.6: Pantoum poem, from the collage activity**

The pantoum poem in Figure 4 depicts Sanelisiwe as a teacher who builds relationships of care by wearing different ‘hats’ for her girl learners. She is a teacher, a role model, a mentor and a care-giver to many of her girl learners. From the pantoum poem, Sanelisiwe professes to give girls hope “*I dream to give hope*”. She hopes to show them that life can be different for rural girls. King and Winthrop (2015) claim that female teachers serve as role models for girl learners; they show girls that women “can be active outside the home and be agents for community development” (p.39). Sanelisiwe shares her personal life experiences with her girl learners. She uses her life experiences to show girls that they can be leaders of their lives. Sanelisiwe conveys to girl learners that they should be survivors and not victims, informing girls they can rise above challenges. She teaches girls learners, relevant and practical skills so that they can make empowering decisions about their lives. By putting on her different hats enveloped with care, Sanelisiwe goes beyond the call of duty to help and empower her girl learners inside and outside of the classroom.

## **A bonnet of care**

Much has been written about need for care in making a difference in learners' lives (Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2010). According to Day and Gu (2010), the manner in which a teacher teaches is embodied in his or her moral character and there are five key virtues that have been identified as central to character; care, honesty, courage, fairness and practical wisdom.

*When learners stay away from school, I write letters and make phone calls to parents. I make house visits. I find out why they are staying away. I try to help where possible.*

Sanelisiwe shows much care for her girl learners in her rural primary school. She is concerned not only with imparting knowledge, but also with the overall well-being of her girl learners. Through care she is able to connect with girl learners. Girl learners trust and listen to Sanelisiwe; they endeavour to follow her example.

Sanelisiwe cares about the well-being of her girl learners; she holds talks on puberty and personal care.

*I sit with my girl learners and have private discussions on puberty. We get sanitary wear from the DoE. I explain to girl learners about hygiene and how to take care of themselves and how to behave like a lady. So, they know what will happen when boys approach them and how to deal with the situation.*

While Masinga (2007) points out that many teachers find it difficult to speak openly about sex, Sanelisiwe deems sex education vitally important for girl learners. She feels that sex education will empower girl learners to make good life choices. UNESCO (2011) confirms that schooling and teachers help girl learners understand their rights and make them aware of their options. Teachers offer girl learners intrinsic value, similar to the power within, which permits personal growth and empowerment. Sanelisiwe provides girl learners with the power within, as they have the knowledge and self-confidence to make proper and sound choices regarding their lives.



## Passing hats of self-confidence to girl learners

### *Hats off good life choices*

King and Winthrop (2015) highlight various initiatives that serve as opportunities for girl learners to develop leadership skills. One of the leadership initiatives is to ‘learn by doing.’ This entails activities initiated within the school to allow girls the opportunity to learn with and from other through interaction and experience.

*Soul buddies teach learners a lot. It teaches girl learners life skills. How to behave when approached by a boy. How to deal with peer pressure? It teaches girls to respect their bodies. If I am able to teach or reach a few girl learners and make a difference their lives I am happy. This programme makes a big mark in the learner lives. I took the soul buddies learners to the north coast. The learners had to mingle with other learners and races and they got to see life differently. This was a real ‘eye opener’ for the learners in my school as they do not really leave the rural area.*

Sanelisiwe uses the soul buddies programme to enable girl learners to learn from other girls in a group experience.

*Boys are included in the programme to promote the idea of ‘I am my sister’s keeper.’ Girls must be seen as more than just the opposite sex.*

Sanelisiwe includes boys in the equation; this in turn assists both sexes in meaningful relations. Both boys and girls are educated on how to behave with and around each other. Boys are taught to see girls as a human rather than the as ‘opposite sex’. Likewise, Kober (2016) stresses the importance of working with boys and girls with regards to empowerment; so that boys and girls grow up feeling equal.

By equipping girl learners with life skill knowledge, they attain the power within; girl learners are able to make good informed decisions about their lives. Girls have the self-confidence to say no to peer pressure and boys. In addition, Sanelisiwe’s soul buddies programme provides girl learners with essential core educational, personal and social competencies (Murphy-Graham, 2012). Girl learners attain skills in critical thinking, social connectedness, sex education, and self-protective skills. These skills, knowledge, attitudes and values are needed to empower girl learners to make good life choices in their daily lives.

### ***Throw one's hat in the ring, be a survivor***

Lloyd (2013) alleges that an empowered, girl-friendly education is relevant and practical to “assure girls of a safe, productive and more empowered passage to adulthood” (p.7).

*I make a concerted effort to take my girl learners into the field to pick up litter. This litter is then collected in bins and sold to recycling companies like Mondi Recycling. In encouraging recycling, I teach girl learners to become entrepreneurs and start their own businesses. One way is to earn money is to pick up waste and recycle it. I strongly believe, in showing girl learners the many entrepreneurial opportunities that exist while they are young. I, actually, won a trip to Cape Town with learners for selling litter. I like to see my girls as successful businesswoman that is why I am instilling entrepreneurial skills.*

Sanelisiwe teaches girl learners relevant and practical skills that will enable them to gain financial independence. Furthermore, Mgonezulu et al. (2013) affirm that “leadership training in schools should teach life skills, such as understanding economics” (p.3). Sanelisiwe instills entrepreneurial skills in girl learners so that they can become self-sufficient and independent citizens. The skills learnt in the recycling and gardening project empowers girls to shape their future. *I started a recycling project that brings in money. We even have a garden that sells vegetables to the community.*

### ***Tipping the hat to culture***

Bathabile Dlamini (2016), Minister of Social Development, asserts that virginity testing supports patriarchal practices that serve to oppress women.

*I encourage girls to do cultural things. Part of the cultural activity I encourage is virginity testing. This will deter girls from becoming sexually active.*

While Sanelisiwe advocates girl empowerment, she supports cultural virginity testing. A growing body of literature asserts that cultural virginity testing discriminates against women and girls. Sanelisiwe acknowledges that the Zulu culture is patriarchal. She subtly teaches her girl learners to respect these customs and traditions, since they are age-old traditions. Mgonezulu et al. (2013) clearly emphasizes that understanding cultural sensitivity is part of empowerment skills training in

schools. In the same way, Sanelisiwe encourages girl learners to part take in virginity testing to ensure abstinence.

### **Drifting through spaces**

When girl learners actively participate, this promotes self- confidence and a positive, safe learning environment (Gayle et al., 2013). Engaging girl learners in the classrooms is a symbol of motivated learning.

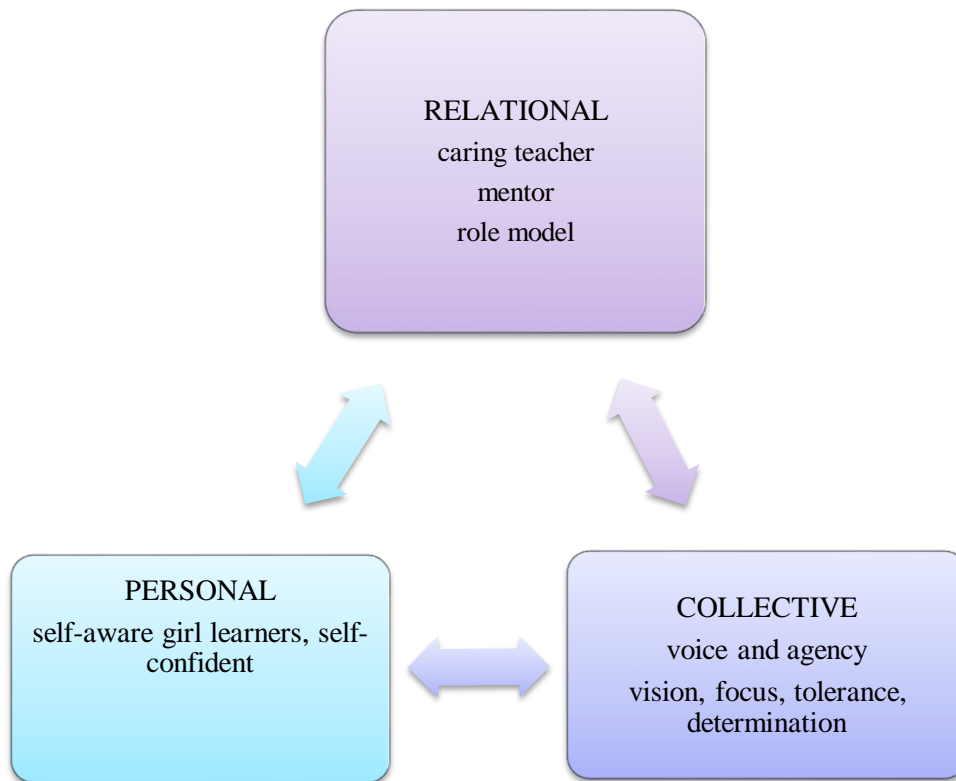
*I take my learners twice a week to the library. I encourage my girl learners to take books regularly home to read. Furthermore, I make them read aloud to their friends, in groups. This helps with pronunciation and confidence. My girl learners are second language speakers and are shy to read aloud.*

Sanelisiwe uses various safe learning spaces as a platform to enact practices of girl empowerment. She drifts with girl learners through different safe learning spaces like specialist rooms and the field. Sanelisiwe creates opportunities for her second language girl learners to read in a participatory manner. Girl learners develop confidence and she further encourages them to participate in debates. This also helps girl learners with articulation.

*We play netball in the quad area. I recently managed to encourage my principal to start a girls' soccer team. She agreed and a soccer coach was hired to teach them. The girls' soccer team is now playing matches with other schools. We are extremely proud of our girls' soccer team.*

David (2012) maintains that sport serves as a universal language to bridge gender divides and develop vital personal qualities such as tolerance and respect for other. These personal qualities, tolerance and respect, are essential virtues in development of the 'self'. Since soccer is considered a boy sport, girls playing soccer builds a sense of confidence within girl learners. This provides girl learners with the power within.

## How does Sanelisiwe enact girl leadership empowerment in her school?



**Figure**

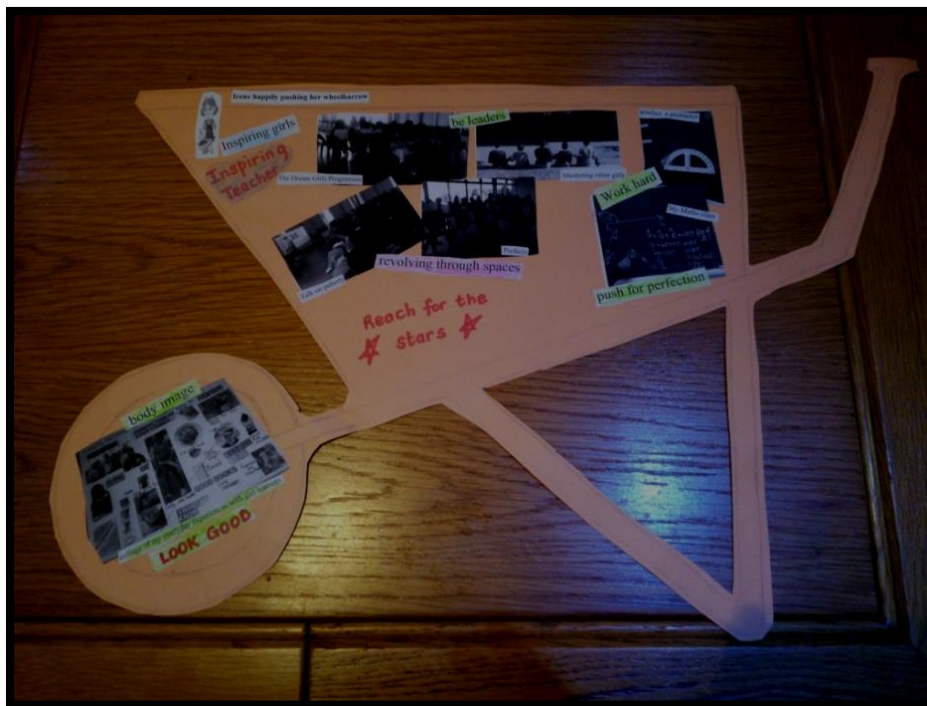
### **6.7: Forms of power experienced within the three dimensions for Sanelisiwe**

Sanelisiwe teaches in a rural school where poverty is rife and tradition is given importance. She wears the hat of a caring teacher in empowering girl learners. She cares for the well-being of her girl learners emotionally and academically. Through care, Sanelisiwe offers her girl learners the power over in the relational level of empowerment. She wears the hat of mentor to influence girl learners to make good life choices. Sanelisiwe teaches girl learners relevant and practical skills that are essential in empowering them. She presents girl learners with the knowledge to empower them to make good life choices, like books before boys. Sex education, self-protective skills and entrepreneurship, all provide girl learners with the power with and the power within, in the personal level of empowerment. These practical skills, knowledge and values boost girl learners' self-confidence. Sanelisiwe wears the hat of role model and uses different safe space within the school environment to empower girl learners. In the school field and surrounding environment, she empowers girl learners with entrepreneurial skills. She also, uses these safe spaces to challenge

discriminatory behaviour like the belief soccer is only for boys. Here she provides girl learners the power with and the power to, in the collective empowerment dimension.

In her enacted practices with girl learners, Sanelisiwe ‘dons’ on her different hats and provides girl learners the skills, knowledge and values they need to make empowering decisions affecting their lives. In wearing her different hats and through her enacted practices Sanelisiwe offers girl learners the opportunity to gain voice and agency.

### **IRENE the inspiring teacher**



**Figure 6.8: A collage of Irene’s enactment practices of girl leadership empowerment**

***Inspiring girls***

I inspire girls to...

Push for perfection

Work hard

Be leaders

Push for perfection

Look good

Be leaders

Reach for the stars

Look good

Work hard

Reach for the stars

I inspire girls to...

**Figure 6.9: A pantoum poem, from the collage activity**

The pantoum poem I created above depicts Irene as an inspiring teacher. She inspires girl learners in Maths, a subject girl learners often feel is too difficult. Irene expects nothing but perfection from girl learners, she urges them to '*push for perfection*'. Like her metaphor analogy of pushing a wheelbarrow which is hard, honest work, Irene is hard on her girl learners and expects hard work from them. She firmly believes in developing girl learners with empowering leadership skills. This belief is extended to various leadership programmes that Irene conducts in her ex-model C school. In her Life Orientation lessons, she teaches girl learners to take care of their bodies and to 'look good.' Irene makes use of various safe spaces within the school environment. She makes use of the Media centre, her classroom, the Team-Teaching room and the field. As an inspiring teacher, Irene wants her girl learners to push boundaries and make a success of their lives, to '*reach for the stars*'.

## **Carrying inspiration**

While there exists a vast amount of literature on subjects like Maths and Science being too difficult for girl learners, Tembone (2008) claims that a girl-friendly education emphasizes Science, Technology, and Mathematics education skills development to support girls in the global economy.

*Maths is a very important subject in grade seven. Learners have to acquire a forty percent in order to progress to the next grade. Girl learners especially find Maths to be abstract. I use the chalk board to help learners grasp the concepts taught. By showing girl learners practical examples they better understand these mathematical concepts.*

Irene inspires her girl learners in her Maths classes. As a female, she shows girl learners that they are more than capable to do well in Maths. Day and Gu (2010) claim that good teachers have the ability for connectedness “they are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects and their students...” (p.181). Irene tries to make her Maths lessons more meaningful and motivates girl learners to persevere with Maths. She uses the chalkboard, textbooks, charts and youtube videos to make her lessons more meaningful. In the same vein, Postels (2013) maintains that teachers must endeavour to make the curriculum and their teaching methods relevant to their learners’ daily lives. Moreover, Maths empowers girl learners to enter good universities and acquire jobs in the Science and Technology fields. Irene cultivates Maths confidence in girl learners, inspiring them to do well. Irene engages girl learners with the power over, in the relational level of empowerment.

## **Transporting confident girl learners**

### ***Push for perfection***

Mart (2013) maintains that teachers, who show commitment to their learners’ learning, activate an important factor in motivating their learners.

*I am quite strict with my learners if homework is not done I give them demerits. I always tell them that, “practice makes perfect.” In fact other teachers complain that my learners only do Maths during their lessons.*

Irene pushes girl learners to excel in Maths. She makes every effort to motivate girl learners to achieve in Maths. Mart (2013) further professes that if learners “know that teachers [are] immersed in their subjects and set high standards for learners, they take their studies more seriously” (p.438). Irene’s girl learners reciprocate her passion for the Maths; they try very hard to complete their Maths work and try hard to please her. Irene influences girl learners to set high standards for themselves and to achieve their best. In gaining Maths confidence, girl learners acquire the power within.

### ***Moving girl learners to be leaders***

King and Winthrop (2015) assert that one way to enhance empowerment in girl learners is through leadership program components. They claim that “ a mentorship model, where teachers or girls who are finishing secondary school serve as mentors for girls, providing opportunities for girls to learn, reflect, and practice leadership skills in their daily lives” (p.51).

*I also get girl learners to be mentors to other smaller girl learners. These grade seven mentor learners do not necessarily have to be prefects. These girl learners help the smaller learners in academics, in behaviours or just advise them with their home issues. Often learners come from troubled homes and this filters into their school life. Having someone to talk is a great help to the smaller learners. This mentorship programme has the ‘big sister’ effect.*

Similarly, Irene creates leadership opportunities for her girl learners in the big sister mentorship programme. Girls are able to learn from each other, they offer support and encouragement to each other. This mentorship programme enables girl learners to attain the power within. Through the mentorship programme girl learners become self-confident and this helps them in making good decisions that affect their lives.

*I am part of the prefect committee. Girls are made prefects. They are given special badges and certificates. Here girls are given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. They help teachers to monitor learners during break time. They ensure that other learners follow the rules and regulations of the school. Girl prefects guide their peers during class tasks.*

The prefect programme is a component that King and Winthrop (2015) stress is important for girl leadership empowerment. The prefect programme allows girl learners to practise leadership skills. Girl learners are able to master leadership skills like decision-making, self-confidence, self-



discipline, organisation, voice-assertion and the ability to motivate others. The prefect programme instils in girl learners the power within and promotes the power over, since girl learners attempt to motivate other girls. Irene makes use of the prefect programme to develop and boost girl learners' leadership skills.

### ***Loading on good body image***

There exists an ongoing debate on what constitutes a good body image for girls and woman. Rathore (2012) alleges that sometimes body image can destroy “a woman's instinctive affiliation with her natural body [and] cheats her of confidence” (p.18).

*Eat healthy, skin problems will sort itself out. Exercise. Make time for yourself. Look good so you feel good.*

Irene replicates some stereotypical gender outlooks. She teaches and encourages girl learners to eat healthily and to look good. However, Irene wants girl learners to be health-conscious. Health knowledge is an essential personal competency (Murphy-Graham, 2012). Likewise, Clay et al. (2005) state that body image is important to adolescent girls because they have been socialized into believing that appearance is important for self-evaluation. Body image determines self-confidence. For this reason, Irene teaches girl learners that if you are healthy and look good, then you will feel good. This boosts girl learner's self-confidence and self-awareness.

### **Revolving through spaces**

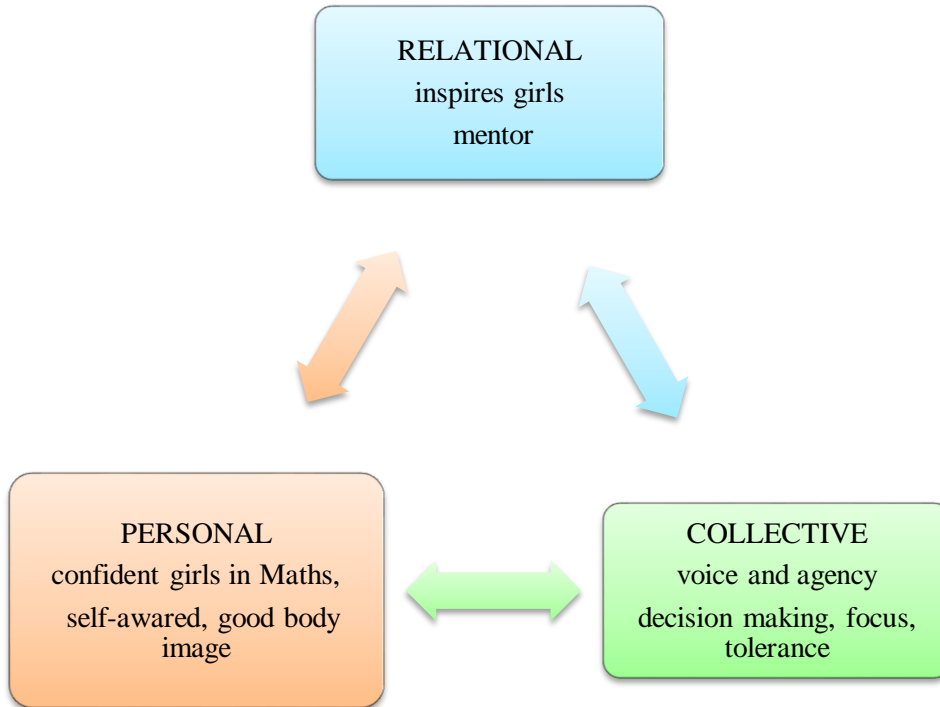
Gayle et al. (2013) claim that the goal of an academic safe place is to create an inclusive and effective learning environment where learners flourish and feel free from incrimination. They further affirm that this safe environment promotes learner dialogue.

*I also hold free extra Maths classes for those girl learners that are struggling with Maths. This is done after school in my classroom.*

Irene revolves around the school environment providing girl learners with safe learning spaces. She makes use of the Media Centre and the entire school environment to empower girl learners with leadership skills in her mentorship and prefect programmes. Additionally, Irene utilizes her classroom to empower girl learners in Maths. Girl learners who struggle with Maths have an opportunity to attend after-school Maths classes. In this class, where numbers are small, girls have

the confidence to ask questions to gain understanding. Girl learners become more confident in Maths, presenting them with the power with and the power to.

### How does Irene enact girl leadership empowerment in her school?



**Figure**

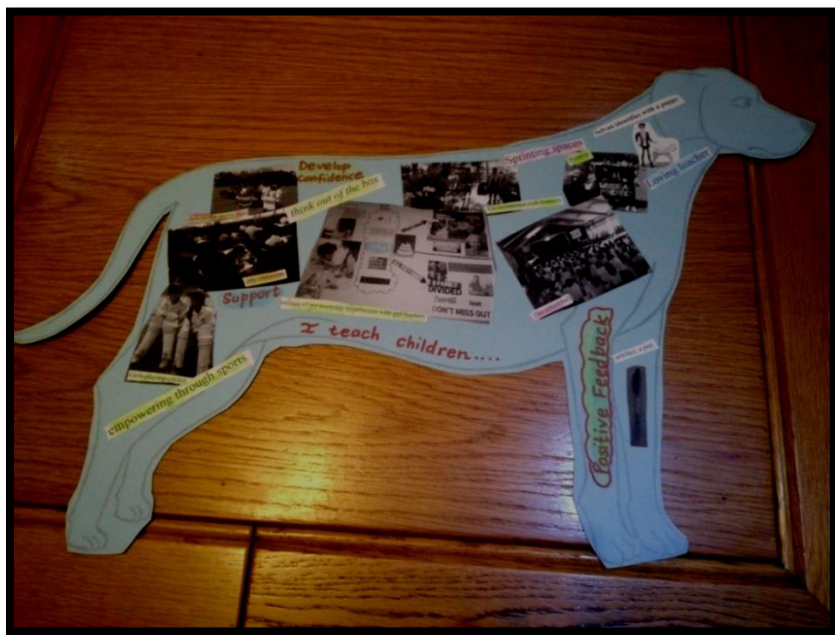
### 6.10: Forms of power experienced within the three dimensions for Irene

Irene creates relationships that inspire girl learners; she is the source of inspiration. She pushes girls with ‘her wheelbarrow’ to succeed in Mathematics. This is inspiring because there is a large amount of literature depicting Mathematics as a subject that is too difficult for girl learners’ cognitive levels. Under Irene’s guidance girl learners become mathematically confident. Irene offers girl learners the power over within the relational level of empowerment. Moreover, Irene heads a mentorship and prefect programme that provides girl learners with numerous opportunities to experiment with leadership skills. The leadership skills like decision-making, tolerance, organization, vision, focus, determination, voice assertion and self-discipline are cultivated within these programmes. Seemingly, Irene uses these leadership programmes to instill the power with and the power within in girl learners. Furthermore, these leadership programmes promote dialogue with other girl learners, thereby building the power over; girl learners are thus able to influence each other. Similarly, by encouraging girl learners to be healthy and take care of their bodies, Irene strengthens girl learners’

self-awareness and self-confidence, reinforcing the power within in the relational level of empowerment. Through the use of safe spaces and the various opportunities made available, Irene collectively provides girl learners the chance to gain self-confidence and to develop self-awareness, fortifying the power with and the power to in the collective level of empowerment.

I take a deeper look at the analogy of pushing a wheelbarrow. A wheelbarrow is supposedly used to carry loads for building work or gardening. In this instance, Irene is the gardener or builder who is working hard, carrying her load of skills, knowledge and values needed to cultivate leadership skills. Irene works hard to build empowered self- confident girl learners who attain voice and agency under her guidance.

### **SELVAN, the loving teacher**



**Figure 6.11: A collage of Selvan's enactment practices of girl leadership empowerment**

***I teach***

I teach children  
Give love and support  
Through sport  
Develop confidence  
  
Give love, support  
Think out of the box  
Develop confidence  
With my pen  
  
Think out of the box  
Through sport  
With my pen  
I teach children

**Figure 6.12: A pantoum poem, from the collage activity**

The pantoum poem above divulges Selvan's love for teaching. He very frankly admits that he teaches children, not just girls nor just boys: *I teach children*. The pantoum poem further discloses Selvan's love and support towards learners. The love and support he claims to offer learners illuminate the analogy of a puppy. A puppy is synonymous with love and has a protective relation with his master. Selvan empowers girl learners through sports. He uses the sport field as a podium to empower girls and boys. King and Winthrop (2015) acknowledge the importance of support from men and boys in girl empowerment. In his classroom practices Selvan tries to give girl learners positive and encouraging feedback, *with my pen*. Selvan attempts to incite girl learners to think critically, '*think out of the box*.' Selvan builds positive relationships of fatherly love with his girl learners.

**Barking love**

Wilmot (2016) claims that teachers and schools need to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment in which girl learners can develop and grow.

*As a teacher and father of a daughter, I always encourage my girl learners to aspire to be successful. There is no such thing as a boys' job or girls' job. If girls work hard, they*

*can be very successful. I give girls hope, love and support everyday so that gain self-confidence and they are able to achieve their best.*

Selvan shoulders the role of a loving and caring teacher who endeavours to provide girl learners with support so that they can achieve their best. His care and support are visible in the opportunities he creates for girl learners in his prefect programme, in his classroom and on the sports field. Selvan is a passionate teacher. Day and Gu (2010) assert that teaching is based on a set of ideals and that “teachers who are passionate about what, how and who they teach remain hopeful” (p.192). However, Selvan claims to give girl learners hope by showing them love and care. His display of love and care encourages self-belief and confidence in girl learners. This allows girl learners to delve in the power with and the power within. Selvan’s positive influence endorses the power over girl learners.

### **Breeding self- esteem and self-confidence in girl learners**

#### ***Fetching empowerment through sports***

David (2012) maintains that school sport programmes serve learners with opportunities to develop the values, knowledge and skills they need to lead physically active lives, which in turn builds self-esteem.

*Although we do not have a girls’ cricket team, I allow my girl learners to play cricket during the P.E lessons. They love to put on the cricket gear and play with the boys. This stirs a bit of competition within the boys and girls. I even teach girl learners soccer skills during the P.E lessons.*

Selvan uses the sport field to develop self-esteem and self-awareness in girl learners. Through positive feedback he makes girl learners feel good; this builds the ‘self’. Selvan allows his girl learners to play sport that is predominantly male. Boys must see girls step out of traditional gender roles through extra-curricular activities like sport (Baric & Tembo, 2010). Furthermore, Selvan allows girls to compete with boys on the sports field during Physical Education lessons. King and Winthrop (2015) assert the importance of boys and girls engaging in extracurricular leadership activities. Seemingly, this healthy competition between boys and girls improves girl learners’ confidence.

*So, we (teachers) must develop confidence in girl learners so that she is able to stand her ground and remain on the top layer with her male partner. Show females, even in a male dominated society that there is lots of scope for them to be successful.*

Timaeus et al. (2011) alleges that girls participating in sport contributes to a feeling of empowerment and allows them to develop a sense of ownership of their bodies, which augments self-esteem. Selvan cultivates self-esteem in girl learners and this provides girls with the power within.

### ***Petting positive feedback, with my pen***

Learner empowerment begins with recognition and encouragement from proactive teachers (Denti, 2012). Positive reinforcement from teachers enables learners to feel capable and competent.

*In my classroom I instill independence and hard work. I walk around the class monitoring learners work offering positive reinforcement and guidance to those that need it. I insist learners produce that is neat and tidy.*

Selvan uses his pen to give learners positive feedback in their class books. Learners work hard to live up to his expectations. Studies have shown that when teachers give learners positive feedback and encouragement, they live up to the teachers' expectations. Positive feedback and encouragement increase learners' self-esteem (Denti, 2012). Through positive feedback and encouragement Selvan cultivates self-esteem in girl learners which in turn heightens the power within.

### ***Howling, thinking 'out of the box'***

Postels (2008) claims that teachers own biases of boys and girls can be reflected through unconscious behaviours.

*Encourage girls to think out of the box. Girls have a flair for languages. Boys tend to perform better in Maths and Science subjects.*

While Selvan concedes that he teaches all learners, he still subconsciously believes that girls have a lower cognitive ability than boys. Girls do not perform well in Maths because they lack the ability to think critically. He does, however, endeavour to motivate girl learners in Maths by giving them positive feedback and praising their efforts. Moreover, Selvan endeavours to use sport to empower leadership skills in girl learners.

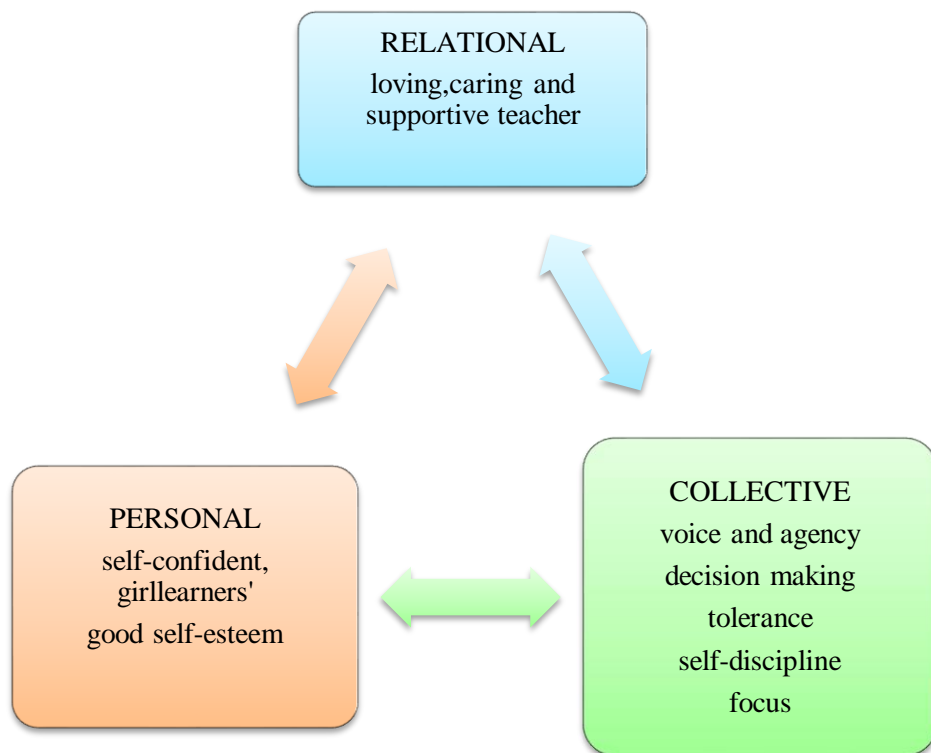
## Sprinting through spaces

King and Winthrop (2015) maintain that safe learning spaces are places in the school or community where girls are able to gather with their teacher or mentor and talk freely.

*As a sports teacher, I teach girl learners the value of good sportsmanship. It's not about winning but how you play the game. I also speak to them about values like, honesty, tolerance and the benefits of hard work. I build trust with girl learners on the field. You have trust others when you play sport. It is about supporting team members.*

Selvan utilizes various safe learning spaces to empower his girl learners. He uses the school sports field and his classrooms. As an outdoor person, he uses as much of the school environment as possible. Selvan makes use of the sports field to allow girls to freely experiment with other codes of sport. His coaching methods allow for girls to gain confidence, enabling the power within girl learners.

### How does Selvan enact girl leadership empowerment in his school?



**Figure 6.13: Forms of power experienced within the three dimensions for Selvan**

Like the traits of a puppy, Selvan's mannerism towards girl learners, his love, care and support, influence girl learners. His influence can be found in the classroom, on the sports field and in various other spaces in the school environment, thereby affording girl learners the power over.

Selvan uses the sports field to develop empowering skills in girl learners. On the sports field, he engages girl learners in skills like self-discipline, focus, tolerance and determination. Moreover, Selvan constantly gives girl learners positive feedback and encouragement, building their self-esteem; boosting their power within. While he acknowledges that girl learners need support in subjects like Mathematics, he endeavours to create opportunities for girl learners to enhance their critical thinking skills on the sports field. Selvan uses the classroom, sports field and the school hall as safe spaces within his school environment to collectively cultivate the development of 'self' in girl learners. Selvan's enacted practices empower girl learners hence they acquire voice and agency.

## **CONCLUSION**

In using a metaphor analogy to analyse teachers' enacted practices with girl learners, I was forced to take deeper look at the role teachers play in their school. From my analysis of how teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools, I found that teachers build relationships of love, care, support and inspiration. Teachers use their disciplines or subjects, interests and personal values and beliefs, to build these relationships. In some instances, teachers I found, have to negotiate their enacted practices as they replicate stereotypical gender norms of dress, cultural practice and beliefs. Furthermore, teachers necessitate the power over and their influence can be found in the relationships they build in the relational level of empowerment.

Within their particular subjects, teachers instruct skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are vital for girl empowerment. Most importantly, I found that teachers play a vital role in offering girl learners the power with and the power within in the personal level of empowerment.

Teachers create meaningful opportunities to develop the 'self' of girl learners. My analysis displays the strong influence of the teacher within the three levels of empowerment. The enacted practices of teachers create a platform for girl learners to attain voice and agency.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **MY LEARNING ABOUT TEACHERS EMPOWERING GIRL LEARNERS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

I began this study with a deep desire to find out more about how teachers empower girl learners in diverse primary schools.

As a female teacher in a primary school, I work with girl learners daily in developing empowered girl learners. I was thus most interested to explore what other teachers in primary schools are doing to empower girl learners. Through my study, I have come understand how teachers' personal and professional meanings, in forceful ways, have shaped what they do within and beyond the teaching and learning space, to enact practices that have developed girl empowerment in diverse primary school.

#### **Context of my study**

This study brings to light four teachers' practices of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools, within South Africa. There are various policies that underscore teachers work and empowerment: the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, the Professional Code of Ethics for Educators in South Africa and the MRTEQ (2011) document. For the purposes of this study, I respond to the MRTEQ (2011) document which highlights pastoral care and empowerment as one of the roles and responsibilities of teachers. Currently, this policy is understood very differently by many (Jansen, 2001; Van den Berg & Schulze, 2014). This thesis draws to attention the importance of pastoral care and empowerment within teacher work. Teachers as agents of change have an ethical and moral responsibility to enact practices of empowerment. Through my study, I have come to realise that teachers' enacted practices nurture psychological, emotional and personal well-being which builds girl learners' self-esteem and self-confidence. When teachers develop the 'self,' they enact practices of empowerment.

This study has demonstrated that teachers work in this kind of contextual reality is complex. Teachers have a choice in how they negotiate their work. Some teachers are able to see beyond just

the functional aspect of delivering content. Teachers use their subjects, disciplines, and interests to cultivate self-esteem and self-confidence in girl learners. These teachers see teaching and learning as more than just spaces of content or subject delivery, but as a means to develop the learners' 'self.'

### **Methodological Reflections**

Narrative inquiry allowed me to elicit a nuanced story of teachers' work and practices of girl empowerment. What really helped me within the narrative inquiry framework was the use of visual metaphors. I utilized visual metaphors as a common thread throughout my analysis. My understanding of teachers' personal and professional meanings was deepened through the use of visual metaphors. I was able to highlight how particular meanings of girl empowerment were acquired from their personal and professional lives. Teachers had to negotiate very conservative and contradictory positions in their personal lives and this informed their enacted practices of girl empowerment. This research study is located in the interpretivist paradigm as I could understand, through the use of stories and visual metaphors, how teachers made meaning of their particular experiences which influenced their enactment practices with girl learners.

In using narrative as research approach, I was able to portray my participants, Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan, as real people in a real-life setting, (Wang & Geale, 2015). The retelling process was of significant value and beneficial to my research study. By using the layered stories of teachers, I found I was able to use an artistic and open-minded approach to emphasize my participants' enacted practices with girl learners. Furthermore, I was able to illuminate the connectedness teachers develop, with girl learners, in their enacted practice. My participants had varied years of teaching experience, so I focused on nodal moments, significant people and critical experiences in their lives during group discussions. In drawing on the work of Clandinin and Connelly, I permitted my participants the time and space to voice their stories; this helped me to obtain data that was rich and thick.

A number of arts-based methods were employed to collect and represent data: collage inquiry, artefact retrieval, metaphor analogy and photo voice, to obtain access the lived stories of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan. A collage which entailed cutting and sticking pictures and words and photo voice which involved taking photographs were two visual methods for my participants to

voice their stories. These allowed me glimpses of their world. I found the metaphor analogy and artefact retrieval most intriguing as they helped me look into my participants' personae and their personal life. These arts-based methods of data collection collectively added invaluable meaning to my research as they underscored the influence and the connectedness teachers develop in empowering girl learners.

Using the data from the metaphor analogy, collage, artefact and Photovoice, I was able to recreate and paint the complex lives of Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan in Chapter Four, *Retelling Teachers' stories of girl empowerment*. To create a more nuanced story, I crafted collage portraiture for each of my participants. The collage portraiture guided me in creating an evocative story line. These stories were plotted around teachers' personal and professional lives and their meanings of girl empowerment. These stories became a powerful space for me to understand teachers' enacted practices of girl empowerment. The textured stories I created in Chapter Four, answered my first research question: *What are teachers' stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary school?*

Again, I drew on the narrative inquiry framework of Clandinin and Connelly to compose my participants' stories. By using several visual arts-based data generation methods, my participants' stories were made believable and authentic. During the artefact retrieval and metaphor analogy my participants bared their personal thoughts, feelings and emotions which added depth to their stories. These methods further gave me more wisdom and clarity to capture salient, nuanced experiences that informed my participants' enacted practices with girl learners.

As a female primary school teacher who is passionate about girl empowerment practices, I had to incessantly be aware of my role as a researcher. While I joined my participants in the group activities, I had to try very hard during the group discussions to talk less and listen with intent so that I take in everything my participants were presenting me. In much of the group discussions, I had to remain voiceless and quiet, to ensure my personal views did not influence my participants. I endeavoured to remain objective and subjective during discussions to acquire an untainted narrative. Another limitation I experienced as a researcher was that I found myself constantly being drawn to stories of girl empowerment and sometimes lost focus on the teacher's story. Again, the metaphor analogy aided me in redirecting my focus on my teacher participants. My study shows how teachers draw on

their personal and professional meanings, which are rooted in their core beliefs and values, to enact practices of girl empowerment.

### **Personal and Professional meanings that shape teachers' understanding of girl empowerment**

I found using a sociocultural theoretical lens to respond to my second research question most apt:

#### ***What personal and professional meanings shape teachers' understanding of girl empowerment?***

From my participants' stories, I examined the fluidity of teachers' meaning-making with regard to girl empowerment. These teachers had to negotiate very conservative and contradictory positions. In their negotiation of these conservative and contradictory positions, teachers acquired agency and voice. Each teacher struggled against the discourse of being girl or boy. They had to negotiate the dominant discourse of being middle girl, African girl, Catholic girl and Indian boy. In their negotiation of dominant ways of being, teachers found other venues as their impetus to choose an alternate path of being teachers. Sanelisiwe and Irene were influenced and inspired by their teachers. Lyn found inspiration in music and family members and Selvan found his inspiration in sports.

#### ***Lyn***

Lyn had to negotiate the dominant discourse of being middle girl. As a middle child, she felt invisible. Through her grandmother who was a teacher, Lyn was able to see an alternate version of being girl. In church and through family, she found music, which gave her agency and a voice. Using music and the inspiration her grandmother planted in her, Lyn was able to negotiate these dominant ways of being girl, to become an inspiring music teacher.

#### ***Sanelisiwe***

Sanelisiwe had to negotiate the dominant discourse of being a traditional African girl, growing up in a patriarchal family. At times in her life she became complicit and reproduced this dominant discourse. She fell pregnant at a young age. Her teachers, who saw the potential in her, provided her with the impetus to find an alternate version of dominant ways of being a traditional African girl. Through her teachers, Sanelisiwe acquired agency and voice. Her personal meaning of being girl has shaped her meaning of being a female African teacher in a rural school.

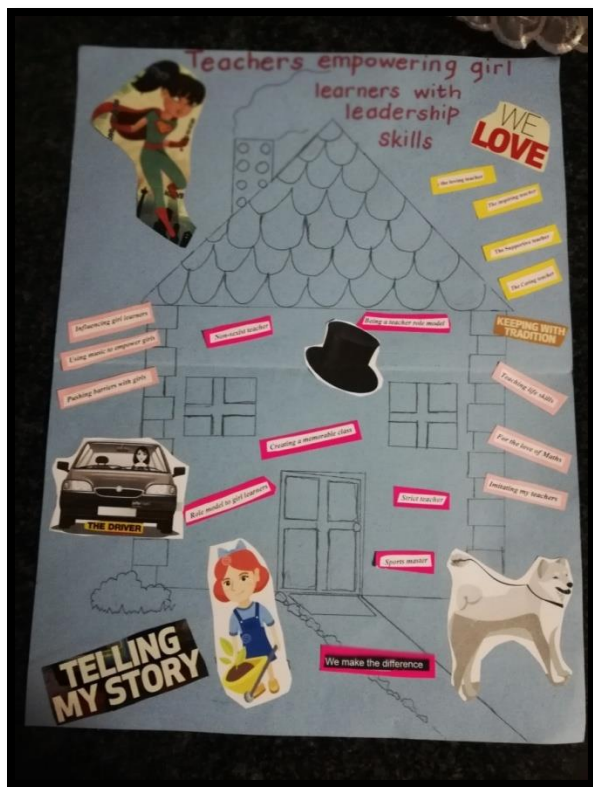
### ***Irene***

Irene had to negotiate the dominant discourse of being a traditional Catholic girl. She always wanted to play soccer rather than follow her mother to church. While her mother forced her into being complicit and replicate ways of being girl, her teachers at school planted a seed that showed her an alternate version of being a girl. Drawing her inspiration from her female teachers who taught the traditionally male-dominated subject Mathematics, Irene is a Mathematics teacher who coaches soccer.

### ***Selvan***

Selvan had to negotiate the dominant discourse of being an Indian male who was groomed by his family to become a breadwinner. Throughout primary school, he was complicit and excelled academically. However, in High School, he found sport. Since he could not play sport professionally during the apartheid era, he became a sports teacher. He further had to negotiate the discourse of apartheid. Through sport, Selvan was able to find agency and voice. Sport provided Selvan with the stimulus to become a primary school sports teacher.

The metaphor analogy provided me with a creative space to explore how my participants negotiated various personal and professional meanings within dominant discourses. Through the metaphor analogy, I was able to look closely at how their personal and professional meanings influenced their understanding of girl empowerment. To culminate the import of all my participants' metaphor analogies, I bring into play the analogy of a house. I draw to attention the object-map below (Figure7.1).



**Figure 7.1: Object-map of my metaphor for my participants**

In the social setting of a house, a car, wheel barrow, hat and a puppy all serve a purpose. The car takes the occupants of the house places. The wheel barrow helps the owner keep the garden pristine. The top-hat offers people from house protection from inclement weather. And the puppy offer protection to the household. All these objects (car, top-hat, wheel barrow and puppy) are moveable items; they can shift from one position to another. Similarly, teachers had to negotiate dominant ways of being girl or boy within various social and cultural spaces to be an alternate version of girl or boy. Essentially, their meanings of dominant ways of being in their personal lives, inform their professional lives.

### **Teachers’ enacted practices of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools**

To respond to my research question three: *How do teachers enact girl empowerment practices in diverse primary schools?* I found Rowlands’ Empowerment/Leadership Framework most appropriate as an analytic lens. To solidify my findings, I composed a pantoum poem (Figure7. 2). I chose six phrases from Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan’s pantoum poems for this poem, which

emphasizes the importance of the relational level of empowerment within Rowlands' Empowerment/Leadership Framework.

**Empowering girl learners**

I drive inspiration....

I show care

Give love and support

I teach children

I show care

Be confident and independent

I teach children

Encourage good choices

Be confident and independent

Give love and support

Encourage good choices

I drive inspiration...

**Figure 7.2: A pantoum poem assembled from Chapter 6**

Lyn builds relationships of support and trust with her girl learners. She accomplishes this through her Dance and Drama, Music and Technology lessons. This bond of trust Lyn forges with girl learners encourages open communication. These relationships of support and trust which Lyn builds, develops self-confidence and self-esteem in girl learners. This allows girl learners to make empowering decisions affecting their lives.

Sanelisiwe builds relationships of care with girl learners. She visits girl learners' homes to offer advice and uses her Life Orientation lessons teach important life lessons. In addition, she shows girl learners how to be entrepreneurial in Economic Management Sciences (EMS) so that they can become financially independent. Through care, Sanelisiwe builds self-esteem and self-confidence

in girl learners and empowers them to have a vision, focus and determination; these skills are crucial for empowerment.

Irene builds relationships of inspiration with girl learners. She holds extra Mathematics lessons and ensures girl learners perform well in this subject. This boosts the self-esteem and self-confidence of girl learners in Mathematics, a subject which literature claims to be male-dominated. By developing their confidence, Irene empowers girl learners with skills like decision-making, focus and self-discipline. These are vital skills for empowerment.

Selvan builds relationships of love and support with girl learners. He uses the sports field to develop girl learners' self-esteem and self-confidence. In the classroom, he uses positive feedback to motivate girl learners. When girl learners feel loved, confident and supported, this allows for empowerment, and they make informed decisions affecting their lives.

From my analysis of how teachers enact practices of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools, I found that teachers build relationships of love, care, support and inspiration. Teachers use their disciplines or subjects, interests and personal values and beliefs, to build these relationships. Within their particular subjects and extra-mural activities, teachers instruct skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are essential for girl empowerment. The enacted practices of teachers create a platform for girl learners to attain voice and agency and skills crucial for empowerment.

### **Theoretical conclusions**

In using the sociocultural theoretical lens, I was able to understand how teachers negotiated their personal and professional meanings. The construction of what it meant to be a particular girl or boy for Lyn, Sanelisiwe, Irene and Selvan, occurred in social spaces. Each teacher experienced certain tensions in their formation of being girl or boy: Lyn the invisible girl, Sanelisiwe the traditional Zulu girl, Irene conservative Catholic girl and Selvan the traditional Indian boy. These tensions influenced their personal meanings and they had to negotiate these tensions to reconstruct their meanings of being girl or boy. Through social structures like teachers and cultural structures like music and sports, these teachers were able to reconstruct what it meant to be girl or boy. These reconstructed meanings of being girl or boy informed their professional self: Lyn a music teacher, Sanelisiwe an



EMS teacher, Irene a Mathematics teacher and Selvan a sports teacher. In addition, all these teachers grew up in the apartheid era and had to negotiate the discourse of apartheid.

While Rowlands' Empowerment/Leadership framework underscores the teacher's influence (power over) in the relational level of empowerment, my study emphasizes the importance of teachers offering emotional care. Teachers build relationships of love, care, inspiration and support to build girl learners' self-esteem and self-confidence. Teachers use their subjects, disciplines and interests to develop self-esteem and self-confidence. When teachers develop the 'self,' girl learners feel confident to make empowering decisions affecting their lives.

### **Policy imperatives**

The DoE policy brief outlining the roles and responsibilities of a teacher (MRTEQ, 2011), clearly stipulates that teachers must create a supportive and empowering environment for all learners and promote democratic values and practices within the school. This alludes to teachers' role in the issue of girl empowerment. While this is a national policy, there are few teacher development programmes in place to assist teachers in instructing values of empowerment in a diverse classroom and school setting. Jansen (2001) cites the Community, Citizenship and Pastoral Role outlined in the MRTEQ (2011) document as a misconception between teacher and policy. However, from this study it can be noted that there are teachers who transgress from just content delivery and develop the emotional, psychological and personal well-being of learners.

### **Practice imperatives**

This study examines the role teachers play in stereotypical gender discourses that affect girl learners. Research conducted shows evidence of teachers positioned to play a crucial role in ensuring gender equality in the schooling process. Rarieya et al. (2014) point out that in South African classrooms, gender inequities continue to filter in, in multiple and inter-related ways: through teachers' attitudes about gender; the curriculum in general and gender and sexual violence against girls. These issues affect girl learners' cognitive development (self), scholastic achievement, career aspirations and their sense of voice and agency. While my study focuses on the positive role teachers' play in

empowering girl learners, literature provides evidence of teachers' helplessness in teaching in a diverse classroom.

With this in mind, Farah et al. (2009) reveal that teachers in South Africa lack the capacity to deal with gender issues in the classroom and their restricted pedagogical repertoire hampers teaching learners in diverse ways. For these reasons, schooling communities must hold teacher development programmes that empower teachers with skills to teach in a diverse 'gender free' classroom and deal with stereotypical discourses that threaten a free and fair education to all.

Teacher training bodies must formulate a course on gender diversity and equality for all student teachers to complete. Furthermore, teacher training bodies must dictate not just how to teach content knowledge, but ought to instruct teachers on how to enact practices that cultivate personal and emotional well-being of not only girl learners, but all learners.

### **Contribution to educational research**

My study foregrounds teachers' practice on the hegemonic discourse of gender empowerment, more especially girl empowerment. Therefore, my findings add to teachers' work in a diverse, inclusive and empowering school setting. Furthermore, this study benefits educational organizations concerned with girl education. Policy-makers looking to formulate gender policies related to gender and education policy can use my study as a stepping stone. Seemingly, there has been a call for a national policy on gender and education to be formed (Rarieya et al., 2014). While there is in existence a vast body of research on girl education, very little captures the role teachers play in empowering girl learners. Moreover, while there is an abundance of literature on girl education, my study underscores the role of the teacher through a narrative inquiry perspective.

### **Further research**

Girl education has become a global issue, as many see educating a girl as an investment in development. Since teachers have great influence over girl learning, more research can be done on creative ways teachers can customize their practice for girl learners. All my participants were seasoned teachers whose schooling and teaching came from the apartheid era. It would be most interesting to note what effect this study would have on teachers who had schooling post-apartheid. Moreover, the following questions can be researched.

- Are tertiary institutions preparing teachers to teach equality and instructing values of equality?
- What are teachers' stories of girl empowerment in High Schools?

### **My final reflections**

In researching teachers' stories of girl leadership empowerment, I came to realise that teachers' lives are powerful sites for exploring girl empowerment. Through glimpses of teachers' personal experiences in particular social spaces, they acquire meanings of girl empowerment. These meanings of girl empowerment influence their enacted practices. Teachers use their disciplinary spaces to build self-esteem and self-confidence, in their formal and informal enacted practices. This allows for girl learners to make good, empowered decisions affecting their lives. Most importantly, I foreground the influential role teachers play in empowering and shaping the minds of girl learners. It is undisputable that teachers make a difference in the lives of girls. I conclude with the words of a famous supporter of the girl learner:

*For every one of us that succeeds, it's because there's somebody there to show you the way out. The light doesn't always necessarily have to be in your family; for me it was teachers and school (Oprah Winfrey).*

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**PHOTOVOICE**

*Collage Inquiry*

**“What are my everyday experiences with girl learners?”**

Use the following prompts when undertaking the collage:

- What are your feelings about this activity?
- Explain further what did this activity mean for you?
- Elaborate on your collage making.
- Do any of the pictures or words on the collage signify critical moments that may have occurred in your teaching career or life?
- Is there any picture or word that stands out from your collage? Why?

*Artefact Retrieval*

Explain how this artefact ‘**exemplifies you as a teacher.**’ Share its significance with the group. In doing your oral presentation, consider the following prompts:

- Explain why you chose this particular artefact?
- What time period does the artefacts come from?
- Does this artefact have any cultural significance?
- Does this artefact represent or symbolize anything specific about your teaching?
- Is this artefact linked to anybody that has an influence on your thinking? What role do they play? Do they see things the way you do?
- What metaphor would you choose to represent, symbolize, and reinforce the significance of this object to you?
- Express an emotion that this artefact brings forth to you. Describe where that emotion generates from and might extend to in your teaching.

## *Photovoice*

Take several photos, using your cell-phone, of spaces you use to encourage girl learners positively in and out of your school. Choose six photos and write a narrative to explain your photo exhibition.

The following prompt found in Olivier, Wood and de Lange (2009), can be used to assist you in your photo choice:

- Why did you choose this image?
- What does it say of your experiences with girl learners?

## **APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL**

10 Junagarth Road  
Merebank  
4052  
8 November 2016

The principal  
Perseverance primary school (pseudonym)  
Durban area

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Ireshni Khiali. I am currently doing Masters (M.Ed) in the Collage of Humanities – School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am specializing in teacher development studies as a result I am required undertake a research to complete a dissertation.

*Title of the study: “Teachers’ stories of girl empowerment in diverse primary schools”*

Educating and empowering girls still continues to be a controversial issue in the twenty-first century. Teachers as pastoral caregivers have an obligation to develop and empower girl learners. Teachers have tremendous power and authority to create an empowering environment by encouraging girl learners, inside and outside the classroom, to do more than they ever believed possible. My study will focus on how teachers in diverse primary schools empower girl learners to have confidence, to develop good communication skills and moreover how they instill leadership development in girl learners.

Your school has been selected as one primary school at Umlazi district under Umkhubane circuit to participate in the study. In this study four teachers who teach either grade 5, 6 or 7 are my participants and no learners will be used in this study. Participation would include a series of research methods that will take place over a period of two months from commencement of data collection activities. The research

methods will be arts-based, making reference to artefact retrieval collage and photovoice. These activities will take place at a time convenient to the teachers and will not disrupt their day-to-day functioning and will be conducted out of instructional time.

Please note that:

- Confidentiality of the school is guaranteed as I will use pseudonym for the school and participants, and their inputs will not be attributed to you in person or to the school.
- There are series of data collection activities that will take place. I will meet with participants for about 1-2 hours per day for approximately three days in two months upon commencement of the data collection process
- Any information obtained cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for the purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and will be destroyed after 5 years.
- The participants have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research and they will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your school involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The following equipment: audio recording, video recording and photographic imaging will be used to validate collected data and participant's names and the school's name will not be used in any presentation or publication of this study that may enable anyone to identify who the participants and the school are.

I hereby request a letter of permission from you as a principal that permits me to conduct this study at your school.

I can be contacted at:

Email: [ireshnikhiali@gmail.com](mailto:ireshnikhiali@gmail.com)

Cell: 0825269378

Office: 031-4655165

My supervisor is Prof. Daisy Pillay who is a senior lecturer at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Edgewood campus, School of Education, of the Contact details:

Email: [pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za),

Telephone: 031-2607598

Cell: 0827765751

For more details you may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms Phumelele Ximba

Ethics office 031 260 3587

Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thanking you for your assistance.

Yours in Education,

Ireshni Khiali (Mrs)

**PRINCIPALS' DECLARATION**

I..... (Full names of principal)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project,  
and I do give consent for the study to be conducted in my school.

I also understand and give permission for the use of the following recording devices during the  
sessions and data production process:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		
Photographic equipment		

**SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL**

**DATE**

.....



## **APPENDIX 3: LETTER TO PARTICIPANT**

10 Junagarth Road  
Merebank  
4052  
8 November 2016

Dear Teacher Participant

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY.**

My name is Ireshni Khiali. I am currently doing Masters (M.ED) in the Collage of Humanities – School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am specializing in teacher development studies as a result I am required undertake a research study to complete a dissertation.

You have been selected as one of the four educators at Umlazi district under Umkhubane circuit to participate in this study. This study aims to explore the narratives of teachers teaching, girl learners between the ages of 10-13, in diverse primary schools. Participation in this study would include a series of research methods that will take place over a period of two months from commencement of data collection activities. The research methods will be arts-based, making reference to artefact retrieval, collage and photovoice. These sessions will take place at a time convenient to you and will not disrupt your day-to-day functioning at school and will be conducted out of your instructional time.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Each session may take up to one hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to participate, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you will allow the group sessions to be recorded by the following equipment: audio recording, video recording and photographic imaging.

I hereby request a letter of permission from you the participant to conduct this research

I can be contacted at:

Email: [ireshnikhiali@gmail.com](mailto:ireshnikhiali@gmail.com)

Cell: 0825269378

Office: 031-4655165

My supervisor is Prof. Daisy Pillay who is a senior lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal Edgewood campus, School of Education, of the Contact details:

Email: [pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za),

Telephone: 031-2607598

Cell: 0827765751

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms Phumelele Ximba

Ethic's office 031 260 3587

Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thanking you for your assistance.

Yours in Education,

Ireshni Khiali (Mrs)

**PARTICIPANT DECLARATION**

I..... (Full names of participant)  
 hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.  
 I also understand and give permission for the use of the following recording devices during the interview and data production process.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording:		
Collage Inquiry – and transcribe data		
Artefact Inquiry – and transcribe data		
Photovoice- and transcribe data		

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

