Chapter 16: Supervising the Big Shots: A Research Supervisor's Reflections on Supervising High-ranked Educationalists

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Abstract
Research supervisors are deemed experts in supervisory relationships; they hold intellectual authority over research topics and processes and implicit authority over supervisees, whom they must ensure will conduct research progressively and ethically. Supervisory roles thus contain embedded power, which, by institutional expectations, must be ethically enacted. But what happens when supervisees are Big Shots outside the supervisory relationship - meaning they hold high-ranking social positions? What happens when they exert power over supervisors, as they do over subordinates outside of the university environment? This chapter critically deliberates on this probability by drawing from the author's autoethnographic accounts on navigating supervision relationships with power-seeking Big Shots. A reflexive thematic analysis of these accounts uncovers how elements inducing negative power relations between the supervisor and power-seeking Big Shots play out. Consequently, this chapter imparts how supervisory processes can be redressed to establish amicable supervisory relations between supervisors and Big Shot supervisees.

Keywords: supervision, power, contestation, educationalists, autoethnographic

Introduction
In 2019, political and academic communities worldwide applauded the achievements of a high-ranked South African politician. Minister Naledi Pandor, a long-serving Parliamentary Minister, successfully attained her Docto-

rate from a South African university. The minister was undeniably a Big Shot in South African political and educational circles. Big Shot (as applied in this chapter) is a colloquial term used among South Africans to describe those with power and authority who assume high-ranking, influential, professional and social positions (Barrett 2004). In this chapter, the term Big Shot denotes postgraduate students who, like Minister Pandor, held high-ranking, influential positions in their workplaces, particularly within the Educational field. Among them were school managers, curriculum advisors, local and international heads of education departments, national directors employed within the South African Department of Education, and lecturers in higher education institutions.

Despite Minister Pandor being a Big Shot, her research supervisor (also the conferring university's Dean of Education) recollected how the minister established the rules of engagement from the inception of their supervisory relationship. He publicly praised her for demonstrating her respect for his supervisory role by pronouncing that she would call him Professor while requesting that, being his student, he should address her only by her first name (Gower 2019; Petersen 2019). Additionally, the supervisor professed that despite being high ranking, the minister did not misuse her status as a national government leader to attain privileges over other students or among the university's staff (Gower 2019). Instead, her supervisor commended her humility and academic work ethic, describing her as 'the kind of student every supervisor would like to work with' (Gower 2019; Petersen 2019).

On the other hand, though, not all research supervisors can echo such sentiments. As Dinham and Scott (1999) recognise, 'the student-supervisor relationship has the potential to be wonderfully enriching, but it can be equally difficult and devastating' (Dinham & Scott 1999). This chapter focuses on the difficult and devastating supervisory relationships, particularly in instances where certain Big Shots - as students, and unlike Minister Pandor - seem to expect superior treatment in supervision spaces simply because they are educational leaders in their workplaces.

Background

Access as a supervisor to supervisees' registration records revealed that many of my postgraduate supervisees had tasted the sweetness of power, owing to distinguished positions held in their workplaces. Weighing the sweet tastes of power against the pleasures and risks of supervision, Grant (2003) recognises

power as 'a dirty word not spoken of in the codes and guidelines' (Grant 2003: 179). Likewise, this so-called dirty word is inadequately considered in the prevailing supervision guidelines of the institution where I supervise research studies, despite the probability of power clashes erupting within traditional one-on-one student-supervisor relationships (Ramrathan, Cassim & Pather 2023). Whereas rules and procedures to address conflict eruptions exist in the broader scope of policies directing institutional governance, supervision guidelines seem silent on strategies to prevent conflict situations. This burdens me as a supervisor, particularly in cases where students are Big Shots, to assume the responsibility of establishing a conducive supervisory environment.

In search of theoretical recommendations, I turned to the scholarly literature. A review of studies on supervision guidelines for supervisors revealed that research on the wonderfully enriching aspects of supervision (Dinham and Scott 1999) is widely available. In contrast, while research on the difficult and devastating parts (Dinham & Scott 1999) is also widely available, there is a tendency in such studies to blame supervisors when the supervisory relationship is devastating and difficult (Cartwright 2020). Hence, many of these studies implore supervisors to express sensitivity towards supervisees while disregarding the supervisees' part in frustrating the supervision relationship.

Considering the above, this chapter focuses on the difficult and devastating parts of my supervision experience among Big Shots. It draws on autoethnographic reflections of occasions where I (the author of this chapter and a research supervisor) was on the receiving end of difficult and devastating behaviours of particular Big Shot supervisees. In particular, I critically consider where and how, within the supervisory arena, Big Shots asserted self-proclaimed positional power (Capurchande & Almlöv 2024). My principal agenda was to reflect critically on these occurrences and learn how to forge amicable supervisory relations, particularly with egocentric Big Shots I might supervise. Furthermore, I considered my reflections within the framework of related research because I wanted to impart knowledge to others who may experience similar situations from a theoretically informed position. This chapter honours that intention.

Labelling Big Shots: Ethical Deliberations

In this chapter, Big Shot denotes a collective label for research supervisees in high-ranking social positions. I am mindful that my former research supervisees might self-associate with the label from the scenarios described in this chapter

and become offended by how the label is ascribed. However, considering that the label is affirmingly used in society to recognise the social status of highly ranked, powerful, and influential individuals (Barrett 2004), its use in this chapter is not intended to be pejorative. If anything, the connotations of the label are quite the opposite. Even so, throughout this chapter's discussion, I am also cognizant that, like Minister Pandor, some Big Shots are disinclined to seek eminent treatment in the supervisory relationship. Therefore, I highlight that this chapter alludes only to condescending and egotistical Big Shots seeking to impose their positional (workplace) power onto the supervisory relationship, undermining the supervisor whilst frustrating the supervision process. In places where I refer to such individuals, I am mindful to avoid being homogenising and to instead use words like 'some', 'certain', 'particular', and 'specific' to distinguish them from other Big Shots.

In addition, beyond ethical obligations to anonymise Big Shot's identities, I emphasise that my primary intention in this chapter is to focus specifically on elements within certain Big Shot characters that produced negative supervisory relations. Furthermore, I intended to learn from a critical reflection on these elements instead of placing Big Shots' individualities under the analytical lens. For this reason, apart from anonymising the Big Shots' identities, I deliberately do not use pseudonyms to name individual Big Shots or to distinguish between them. I also intentionally do not mention their ages, employment positions, racial categorisation, or postgraduate study level. Instead, in this chapter, the label Big Shots refers collectively to individual supervisees who expressed similar attitudes and behaviours, which, whether or not intentional, caused the supervisory relationship to become difficult and devastating (Dinham & Scott 1999).

Also, as evidenced throughout this chapter, in my deliberations of the phenomenon in question (i.e. supervising Big Shots), I have adopted an autoethnographic approach whereby much of what I discuss pivots on my reflexive accounts of my personal experiences (Fourie 2021; Koopman, Watling & LaDonna 2020). Hence, I intended to focus a reflexive analytical lens on the phenomenon, not intrinsically on the Big Shots (Levitt 2021; Tarisayi 2023). I recognise the opportunity for subjectivity and bias within the adopted approach. On the other hand, autoethnography, by design, enables me to interrogate my subjective position and biased views theoretically rather than dismissing my subjectivity and pretending my personal biases do not exist (Poerwandari 2021). I also recognise that the findings in my theoretical

deliberations are only generalisable to the phenomenon (Levitt 2021; Tarisayi 2023) and 'not to broader populations' (Tarisayi 2023: 59).

A reflexive thematic analysis of my autoethnographic accounts (Terry and Hayfield 2020) on supervising Big Shots yielded a critical finding: the existence of Trojan Horses within the supervision arena. In the discussion that follows, I reveal these Trojan Horses. I describe how their infiltration jeopardised supervisory relations. I further deliberate on the strategic points identified by the analysis, through which Trojan Horses infiltrated my supervision arena. I reflect on the impact of their infiltration. I further deliberate on how Trojan Horses can be managed so that, despite the nature and purpose of their presence, an amicable supervisory environment might be forged within the supervision arena amid their existence.

Trojan Horses of Supervision Arenas

Briefly explained, the concept of the Trojan Horse originates from Greek mythology. It is the name given to a wooden horse believed to have been used by the Greeks to infiltrate the Trojan city of Troy during what is widely known as the Trojan War. According to legend, combatants hid inside the Trojan Horse, and upon entering Troy, they plotted to emerge from inside the horse at an opportune time. The plan was to open the gates of Troy for more warriors to enter, destroy Troy, and ultimately win the war (Chondros *et al.* 2015). Thus, the Trojan Horse is meant metaphorically as a concept. It is used in everyday conversation to describe a strategically positioned entity that conceals destructive elements within itself until a viable time arrives for its contents to escape and ambush the chosen target.

An analysis of autoethnographic reflections on my supervisory experiences found that the Trojan Horses of my supervision arena, responsible for the difficult and devastating parts of my supervisory practices (Dinham & Scott 1999), were, in fact, some of the Big Shots themselves. Like the legendary Greek Trojan Horse, specific Big Shots clandestinely transported destructive elements into the supervisory space, jeopardising amicable supervisory relations. These were emotional elements, invisibly residing within specific Big Shots personas, which were outwardly enacted through antagonistic behaviours. Outward expressions of these elements exposed a suppressed desire within some Big Shots to be treated superiorly in the supervisory space because of their prominent social statuses. Like the mythical Greek Trojan Horse in the city of Troy, these internal elements lay dormant within the identified Trojan Horses

of my supervision arena until strategic opportunities arose to discharge their emotional loads. The section below identifies strategic locations for their discharge.

Showgrounds for Trojan Horses

The analysis of my autoethnographic reflections identified two common spaces that served as showgrounds for Big Shots wanting to express suppressed power-seeking desires. These were the postgraduate administrative and supervision consultation spaces.

Administrative Spaces

Mandatory processes within the administrative spaces of postgraduate supervision comprise several critical stages. These include the initial stage, where the official contractual supervision agreement between the student and supervisor is signed; the proposal writing stage; the proposal defence phase; the ethical clearance application stage; and once the research report is compiled, comes the stage for submitting a formal intention to subject the thesis to examination; the post-examination thesis correction stage follows; and, finally, preceding graduation, is the stage where the final version of the thesis is submitted to the university's respective research office for the postgraduate qualification to be conferred. Within several stages, certain Big Shots (the identified Trojan Horses of the supervision arena) located strategic opportunities for power-seeking displays. Below, I identify each stage and reflect on how, within each stage, the power-seeking agendas of the Trojan Horses played out.

The supervision journey is formalised by signing a student-supervisor contract at the commencement of the supervision relationship. Resonant with what Masuku (2021) describes, supervisory contractual agreements are meant to direct how the thesis process should administratively unfold through the various supervision stages. The supervision agreement is meant to direct that process practically. Its purpose, thus, is to set the scene for the practical parts of the supervision course by outlining the supervisor's practical role and detailing expectations from students regarding the quality of submitted work and submission timeframes. The agreement also documents times and frequencies for mandatory supervision meetings and submitting and receiving supervisor feedback on submitted drafts. The proposal writing stage commences once the student and supervisor understand, agree, and sign the supervision agreement.

The analysis of my reflections on the stages of this process yielded that Trojan Horses seemed to emerge in the journey's latter stages only once this agreement was signed.

Reflecting on the proposal writing stage, I recognised that many Big Shots were unreceptive to critical feedback on their written drafts. Rather than constructively discussing the shortcomings, their queries were intentionally argumentative. This raised the alarm on certain Big Shots wanting to tip the supervisory power scales in their favour. The expectation, it seemed, was that I, the supervisor, should adjust my views on their work to align with what they wished to be told rather than them addressing the highlighted concerns. There also seemed to be a belief among Big Shots that my role as a supervisor was to address theoretical and technical errors in their drafts so that their progress towards the defence stage would not be hindered. Correspondingly, Maistry (2015) highlights the detriment to the progress of students who are ill-prepared for their proposal defences. An analysis of my experiences among my Big Shot supervisees suggested that the journey of higher learning was, for them, especially those at the doctoral level, merely an insignificant part of the process towards attaining the esteemed academic title to complement their prominent social statuses. Jansen (2023) highlights the extent to which some people would go to gain such titles. For example, only a few months preceding Minister Naledi Pandor's doctoral celebrations (Petersen 2019), news reports on the murder of a university professor sent the academic community into deep mourning (Jansen 2023). The murder victim was a well-renowned senior academic who exposed a syndicate that sold doctoral certificates. This occurrence highlighted the desire of many in South African society to receive postgraduate qualifications, even if it meant attaining this through fraudulent and murderous means.

Moreover, the professional identity of the fraudster signals the extent to which some academics are willing to advance equally corrupt postgraduate qualification seekers (Jansen 2023). The mastermind of this fraudulent trade was found to be a lecturer. He also orchestrated the professor's murder. His behaviours can be likened to the Trojan Horse I alluded to earlier in Greek mythology. Therefore, while there may be many socio-economic and political factors underlying why some academics would resort to such criminal behaviours, it nonetheless signals the dangers that Trojan Horses of supervision arenas pose to their supervisors. It further highlighted that among academics as well are Trojan Horses who work hand-in-hand with corrupt students and who are a dangerous threat to their colleagues.

Following the proposal writing stage is the stage for defending the proposal before an appointed panel of reviewers. My reflections identified this as the stage where the Trojan Horses would most likely discharge their loads. For certain Big Shots, the most explicit display of supremacy, entitlement, self-prominence, and arrogance was expressed in this stage. In proposal defences, I witnessed how individual Big Shots publicly negated the supervisory role and the academic seniority of panel members. In such cases, they challenged panel members' examination proficiencies, particularly when panel members criticised the theoretical aspects of the proposal. Arguments would ensue between panel members and the Big Shot in question. This arrogant behaviour embarrassed me and my peers and jeopardised the supervision relations between Big Shots and panel members. They jeopardised their own prospects of their proposal being approved by the review panel.

The ethical clearance application stage follows the proposal defence stage. In this stage, once the amended proposal receives official approval, supervisees must apply for ethical clearance from the institution's ethics committee. Once again, certain Big Shots did not heed my advice at this stage, nor that of the people who reviewed the ethics applications at the various levels. Rather than addressing the shortcomings of their applications, they became confrontational. This resulted in the ethical application becoming caught in the administrative system. In some cases, their refusal to comply with ethical requirements led to this stage being the final point of their postgraduate journey. In such cases, they remained silent until they were administratively excluded from the postgraduate programme.

For supervisees who proceed past the ethical clearance stage, the field research and write-up stage ensues until such time (within the parameters of institutional deadlines) that supervisees are ready to formally declare their intention to subject the thesis to examination. Once examined, the onus rests on the supervisee to address concerns that examiners may have raised. The role of the supervisor is to guide this process. For certain Big Shots, this phase presented yet another opportunity for arrogant displays of undermining behaviour and expressed reluctance to correct the study's shortcomings. The analysis of my reflections on this behaviour flagged a disturbing belief among them; they seemed to think they had already passed by submitting their thesis for examination. This expectation hinged on the condition (in their cases) of the institutional examination rules. The rules specify that, in cases where minor corrections are needed, the supervisor is responsible for the final approval of the thesis. When the Big Shots in question discovered that I was not prepared

to dismiss unaddressed errors before approving their study, they reacted aggressively.

Following the post-examination thesis correction stage is the submission stage of the final version of the thesis to the university's respective research office. On final approval from the supervisor via the relevant administrative structures, this is the stage at which supervisors will officially receive a written notice confirming that their thesis meets the requirements of the prevailing institutional expectations. This stage also presented equal elation for the Big Shots in question and me, but for divergent reasons. I celebrated successfully emerging from the supervision arena despite the barrage of attacks from Trojan Horses received along the course. Hence, for me, it was a celebration of the end of my time with the Trojan Horses of supervision.

However, in my final reflection of the Trojan Horses within the administrative spaces of the supervisory arena, I concluded that - even though many Big Shots' undermined my supervisory authority within the critical stages of the research administration process, in this space, their agendas seemed to be driven by a deep-rooted desire to be revered as high-ranking educationalists among the university's community. Although they became hostile when they perceived that desire as being undermined, undermining my supervisory authority in the administrative spaces of supervision seemed secondary to their aspirations for recognition. However, my reflections on what unfolded in supervision consultation spaces told a different story; in this space, the analysis exposed a deliberately undermining Trojan Horse agenda to unbalance the supervisory power relations, with the scale tipping in their favour.

Supervision Consultation Spaces

An analysis of my reflections on Trojan Horses within supervision consultation spaces illuminated the difficult and devastating challenges (Dinham & Scott 1999) that can arise when a supervisor's positional power and personal identity are deliberately destabilised by particular supervisees. In my supervisory experience, this scenario involved Big Shots who sought to emphasise that their social statuses were above mine. This inferred a belief among them that, by social standards, I should treat them superiorly and be subservient in their presence.

Verbal interactions with certain Big Shots provided opportunities for these power contestations. A critical reflection on these engagements revealed a tendency among these Big Shots to weigh my competencies as a research

supervisor against my professional rank level. Furthermore, being ranked lower than a professor yet supervising research studies brought my supervision capability into question by them. The tendency for Black women in academia to have their credentials and capabilities called into question this way is not an unfamiliar phenomenon (Zulu 2020). My feelings on this experience resonate with what Gazzola (2018) found on the negative emotional effects on supervisors who are undermined by their supervisees; I found these judgements against me to be extremely destabilising.

In addition, specific Big Shots further weighed the supposed incongruence between my professional rank and academic capabilities against my age. The implicit agenda in this enterprise was to further destabilise my confidence and self-esteem as a supervisor by negatively illuminating what my age inferred outside the institutional environment and my social standing compared to theirs. By the prescribed standards of many African cultures, it seemed that because the Big Shots were older than I, they considered themselves my elders. Hence, by cultural codes, the expectation was that I should treat them as my seniors in physical and verbal exchanges, irrespective of the content or context of such exchanges. This revelation illuminates the impact of age disparities in creating relational imbalances within the supervisory relationship, particularly when a supervisor is younger than the supervisee, also proving that in this scenario, the Big Shots' judgements against me were driven by a deliberate, relegating agenda. It also highlights that while the scholarly literature on the oppression of women is ever-expanding, there is a dire need for a conversation on the gendered nature of oppression to turn the focus on the oppression of women by women in academic spaces. In cases where this may be found, again, the plethora of scholarly literature on the topic portrays students as supervisors' victims.

Furthermore, considered against cultural standards, one may be justified in affirming the Big Shot's implied expectations of me to treat them superiorly because, by such standards, they were inarguably my elders. However, by institutional standards and ascriptions, being a supervisor to my so-called elders rendered me a victim of reverse ageism. Whereas ageism refers to discrimination against older people by younger people on account of age (Steward *et al.* 2023), reverse ageism is a term used to describe an occurrence when a younger person is discriminated against by an older person based on age. Also known as youngism and adultism, reverse ageism typically refers to workplace discrimination against persons under forty years old by older people (Raymer *et al.* 2017). Although I was older than forty when I embarked on the

supervision of the Big Shots alluded to in this chapter, the ones I refer to in this section were much older than I. These Big Shots expressed reverse ageism through infantilising behaviours towards me.

Wallace (2022), who explores the intersectional relationship between power and infantilism, explains that in situations of infantilisation of one adult by another, 'power relations become moral ones' (Wallace 2022: 27), meaning that not only would the person being infantilised acknowledge that another is ruling over them, but they would feel, on moral grounds, that there is a moral obligation to allow that form of a power imbalance to continue. My reflections on the power dimensions of my experienced infantilism underscored that among my Big Shot elders, I was infantilised by both female and male Big Shots, but more so by females.

In my experience, older female Big Shots who expressed infantilism against me did so through spoken conversations and professional email communications. In such instances, they would use words such as angel, my darling, my child, and even my baby to address me. Although they used sugary tones and their intentions may thus be interpreted as an obscure intention to be endearing towards me, I found it emotionally destabilising in the supervision arena. Amplifying that I was younger than them and inferior by general social standards was an impactful strategy to undermine my seniority as their research supervisor. A critical reflection of my feelings against the chosen terms of reference suggested that addressing me by these terms was meant to be belittling.

Additionally, infantilism expressed through written and spoken communication also suggested discomfort among my so-called elders to address me by my professional title (i.e. Doctor). On the contrary, I noted that the same Big Shots who addressed me using infantilising titles emphatically self-addressed as Mr or Mrs in written emails and physical engagements. This may be interpreted as basic expectations among Big Shots to be addressed by their titles, not by their first names. However, at a deeper level, it suggests that, based on my lower age, I was expected to use these terms of reference (Mr and Mrs) to demonstrate my respect for them as my elders. Hence, as my social superiors, the expectation among them was that I should address them in a socially appropriate manner, regardless of the context.

While my male Big Shot elders were not inclined to use endearing terms of reference towards me, they expressed infantilism towards me frequently in supervision consultations. In such instances, I experienced older male Big Shots similarly veering away from the academic work meant to be

discussed in consultation meetings and lapsing instead into narratives of their political history for extended periods. They would ignore my alerts that the time lost in their narratives encroached on my other duties. In such scenarios, I, as the notably younger supervisor, was frequently reminded that I was not born in the historical period of their reminiscence. Although the historical narratives of their lived experiences were informative, the context was emotionally destabilising. In these engagements, they disregarded my professional identity and the professional supervisory processes.

On the outskirts, one may consider the reminiscent disclosure of older male Big Shots' detailed political pasts as an endearing attempt to forge a friendly supervisory environment. However, a deeper analysis of this against the induced emotional discomfort unearthed their disregard for my time and their disinterest in using that time to address the academic work. Most importantly, when analysed further against internalised cultural hegemonic generational norms among these men in question (Dharani, Vergo & April 2021), the analysis unearthed internalised sexist, passive misogynistic and inherent patriarchal undertones in their supervisory engagements.

Managing Trojan Horses

Institutions tend to be honoured when Big Shots like Minister Pandor graduate from their programmes. However, simply by the fact that a Big Shot is high-ranking, one cannot know from the onset who, like Minister Pandor, will make the supervision relationship a wonderfully enriching experience (Dinham & Scott 1999) or who will create a difficult and devastating supervision relationship (Dinham & Scott 1999). Therefore, Big Shots should not be deterred from postgraduate spaces on the stereotypical assumption that they are generally egotistical because they are high-ranking. As in the legend of the Trojan Horse, saving the city of Troy by barring the Trojan Horse from entering (or perhaps even destroying the horse) may, on the surface, seem like the most logical route the Trojans should have taken to prevent Troy's demise. However, when one reconsiders this possibility against the Trojans' ignorance of what resided within the wooden horse, one realises they had no reason to be suspicious of its presence in their city, especially not to destroy it. Only when its purpose was precariously revealed did they realise, too late, what its contents meant for them.

Likewise, in the case of egotistical Big Shots, while it may seem logical at the surface level to address unfavourable supervision relations with certain

Big Shots by collectively denying them access to the postgraduate programme altogether, denying them access would be generally unfair and unreasonable (not forgetting unethical and illegal) for many reasons. Therefore, proactive steps must be taken to accommodate Big Shots, whose personas might be inclined toward making the supervisory relationship difficult and devastating. Supervisors need to ensure that clear boundaries guide the supervision journeys from the onset.

To address this, I turned to the scholarly literature for possible ways of establishing boundaries. While this literature is widely available, much of it centres on contexts where supervisors have uncontested authority over compliant supervisees. A paucity of research considers supervision relationships, like mine, where students have higher social statuses regarding age and employment within the wider society than supervisors. Of the reviewed studies, writings by Benmore (2016) seemed most suited to assist me in identifying ways to better manage my supervisory relationships with Big Shots whom I may supervise in future. Benmore (2016) suggests boundary management, which I identified as a useful framework that could assist me in theoretically defining and explaining the official roles that I, as a postgraduate supervisor, should play at different stages of the supervision journey with Big Shot supervisees. Hence, rather than refusing to supervise or avoid Big Shots altogether, by drawing on the boundary management framework that Benmore (2016) presents, I sought ways to establish clear lines that unambiguously distinguish between the roles of the supervisor and the supervisee within supervisory relationships.

Beyond simply distinguishing between the role of supervisor and supervisee, Benmore (2016) further recognises it needs to be considered how these roles should play out as the supervision transitions through the various stages. In this regard, Benmore (2016) delineates primary and secondary boundaries. According to Benmore (2016), primary boundaries include physical, temporal, emotional, and cognitive boundaries. Given this, I realised that the institution where I supervise postgraduate studies has done well in establishing primary boundaries. Within primary boundaries reside the physical aspects; this includes the various administrative stages I alluded to earlier. As mentioned, these processes involve the supervision agreement signing stage, the proposal writing stage, the proposal defence phase, the ethical clearance application stage; the stage for submitting a formal intention to subject the thesis to examination; the post-examination thesis correction stage follows; and the stage where the final version of the thesis is submitted to the university's respective research office for the postgraduate qualification to be conferred.

I also recognised that temporal and cognitive aspects of the supervision journey residing within primary boundaries are addressed through the institution where I supervise postgraduate research by the institutional management, creating opportunities for seminars, workshops, and such that help students to grow cognitively in their academic knowledge within their specialised areas of learning (Pelser 2024). However, from reflections on my supervisory experiences, I also recognised those secondary (relational) boundaries, which, according to Benmore (2016), are relational parameters, seem largely undermined. By their name, relations boundaries focus on the actual relations (i.e. social interactions) within the supervision journey.

Through analysing my supervisory role reflections, I recognised a critical need for these relational boundaries to be formally established at the broader institutional level and not just grappled within the private confines of the consultation spaces within my supervision arena office. As described earlier, my experiences of reverse among Big Shot, for example, have demonstrated how failing to address secondary (relational) boundaries efficiently can negatively impact the primary (physical, temporal, emotional, and cognitive) boundaries directly and the well-being (especially mental health) of the supervisor as a whole.

To address secondary (relational) boundaries for guiding social interaction within supervisory relationships, Pearson and Brew (2002) advise focusing on the relational supervision process rather than exclusively on the roles. Additionally, Taylor (1995) suggests that supervision should be seen as a mentorship rather than an instruction, which can be done through what Knowles (1999) describes as critical conversations. Hence, within secondary boundaries, there is a need for broader opportunities for critical conversation on the emotional geographies of the postgraduate journey for both students and supervisors. Secondary boundary setting thus realises the need for relational limitations within the research supervision arena. However, in contrast to how rules relating to primary boundaries are set, secondary boundary rule setting calls for a cohesive engagement of all role players to play an active part in co-creating relational rules by which supervisory relationships will be guided.

Furthermore, because relational boundaries relate to managing social interaction, they are not static or a one-size-fits-all approach to creating safe relational spaces. Within a broader institutional framework and a supervisor's unique supervision arena, opportunities must be made available for these (relational) boundaries in place to manage social interaction to be ongoingly constructed (and sometimes deconstructed and reconstructed). Restorative

practices within the parameters of secondary boundary setting can play a fundamental role in facilitating this process (Howard 2022).

Big Shots, Trojan Horses, and 'The Real Dirty Words' of Supervision: A Reflexive Conclusion

This chapter has engaged critically with detailed autoethnographic reflections on supervisory experiences among a specific category of men and women: postgraduate supervisees who simultaneously occupy esteemed positions in their workspaces. In the chapter, I began my deliberations by emphatically declaring that the label (Big Shots) employed in this chapter to identify this category of supervisees was not implied with pejorative intentions. A later distinction of a sub-category of Big Shots was introduced, which I likened to Trojan Horses. Hence, this metaphor was applied to distinguish those identified as Trojan Horses from the collective Big Shot group. On the guidance of labelling theory, I remained cognizant of the pros and cons of labelling individuals. However, despite my declaration not to use the label pejoratively, my application of labels in this chapter could raise suspicions about contradictory subliminal intentions.

My further description of the sub-categories of Big Shots (as being hostile, condescending, arrogant, and power-seeking individuals) may further induce suspicion of an underlying vendetta against particular Big Shot supervisees whom I described in this chapter as Trojan Horses and elders – especially when one reconsiders the documented terms of endearment these so-called elders used to address me. From this premise, I might even be accused of using this chapter as a platform to settle this score with supervisees identified under these sub-categories. My discussions based on reflections involving them could be misconstrued as defamatory stories about adversaries rather than a theorised critical reflection on my own experiences among them. Further yet, the nature of my chosen research approach may be construed as a viable means to tacitly (descriptively, subjectively, and biasedly) execute a subliminal negative retributive agenda against Big Shot Supervisees.

As damning as the labels used in this chapter may be perceived, as unfriendly as the accounts of similar scenarios involving labelled individuals may seem, I reaffirm my deliberate intention in this chapter to sustain my focus on the phenomenon and not directly on the individualities of the supervisees alluded to in this chapter. Instead, while mindfully protecting the personal identities of the Big Shots alluded to in this chapter, I have laid myself bare

rather than pretending that I am not an active role player in a supervision phenomenon I encounter daily. Against the personal risks and potential backlashes involved with so doing, I have chosen to humanise myself in the supervisory arena and this chapter's deliberations. This approach has enabled me to underscore that within an institutional space that tends to androgenise supervisors, postgraduate supervisors are humans and, as such, are also emotionally laden beings. Thus, in some ways, they are Trojan Horses, too.

As Trojan Horses, humans also invisibly carry feelings and thoughts within the heart and mind, and there is no way for others to tell their natures of the invisible cargo within until embedded thoughts and feelings are outwardly expressed through our (inter)actions. As Trojan Horses, humans may be different Trojan Horses; emotional baggage may differ and may be discharged in different ways. As individuals, not all power-invested humans are inclined to abuse personal and positional power in oppressive ways; not all are inclined to counter arrogance with arrogance; not all have fraudulent and murderous tendencies. Likewise, as a Big Shot in my own right and a Trojan Horse too with an emotional load that does not carry destructive agendas, and more importantly, as a human with my individuality, this chapter has allowed me to express what has been suppressed inside me: my desire to be rehumanised within the institutional space and to be seen and heard, not just as a Trojan Horse bearing a load of intellectual knowledge into the supervision arena - but as a human being with who is part of a wider social setting, and all the tensions, vulnerabilities, and risks that come with it.

Indeed, as an author, this chapter has allowed me to draw attention to my humanness. As a postgraduate supervisor, I have found a space in this chapter to highlight my gendered and self-identity fluidities, vulnerabilities, and the hidden costs of embodying specific (gendered, social, and institutional) identities. This chapter has allowed me, within my humanness, to expose the daily stress I face of navigating and (re)negotiating my identities within spaces that tend to homogenise research supervisors and negate the emotional burdens that some face, especially burdens inflicted by students. It has enabled me to expose my stresses in the broader scope of academic scholarship in which there is a tendency to expand research that homogenises and villainises supervisors while portraying students as vulnerable to supervisor villainy. Within this scholarly space, exposing my humanness has also drawn attention to how research hides gender-based violence against women by women; it tends to expand and promote findings on men as perpetrators of gender-based violence and equally tends to ignore (or not to hold accountable) women who use age-rankings, and

positional power, and abuse cultural norms, particularly, to justify their oppression and abuse against other women (and in some cases against men too).

In closing, taking all of the above into account, this chapter has revealed that the real 'dirty words' of supervisory relationships are not Big Shot, or Trojan Horse (as it may have been misconstrued in this chapter), nor is 'supervisor' the dirty word of supervision; nor is 'power' (as discussed in the introduction of this chapter) the 'dirty word' of supervisory relationships. Instead, this chapter has exposed misogyny, patriarchy, infantilism, sexism, and reverse ageism as the real 'dirty words of supervision'. This chapter has discussed how misogyny, patriarchy, infantilism, sexism, and reverse ageism permeate supervision structures. Moreover, this chapter has highlighted how they are transported into supervision spaces but has specified that they are not transported into such spaces through Big Shots, Trojan Horses, and even supervisors, per se, but specifically through ill-meaning and corrupt, student and academic Trojan Horses alike, whose presences propose damaging consequences for adversaries, which may even cost adversaries their lives.

This exposure of the 'real dirty words of supervision' illuminates a critical mandate for institutional leaders to establish supervision spaces that are not focused exclusively on growing research output figures and graduation numbers by feeding only the physical, temporal and cognitive dimensions of institutional existence. Instead, it calls on leaders to pay homage to the critical role that emotional intelligence plays in an institution's survival.

In conclusion, the ultimate survival of institutions resides in nurturing the invisible emotional dimension of institutional existence through restorative practices. Through this chapter, the critical call for restorative practices within a social justice framework has thus been sounded.

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